

## West Virginia Extension

### Stress Less with Mindfulness

#### Lesson 3

### Mindful Walking and Thought Surfing

#### Handout Packet

Mindful walking is a way to practice moving without a goal or intention. It *simply means walking while being aware of each step and of our breath. Noticing your surroundings (such as noises, lighting, temperature) It can be practiced anywhere, whether you are alone, in nature, at the office, or street in your town.*

Mindful walking is simply walking. It's about the journey not about "getting anywhere."

***Optional activity: Depending on the space in your room, you might have participants walking in a circle or back and forth across the room. If space and weather allow, this is a wonderful exercise to do outside.***

***-Experiment with using a bell or chime to begin and end the practice. Sound can link to other times practicing mindfulness in other ways. "The body loves routine."***

- *Bringing awareness into the body as you begin to move.*
- *Begin walking more slowly than normal. Just notice the sensation of your foot as it touches the ground, how it feels when you lift the other foot and swing it forward to begin the next step. Take your time, the goal is simply to pay attention.*
- *Hands can be simply at our sides moving naturally or held in front or in back of the body.*
- *"Mindfulness knows no speed limits." While usually done slowly, you can actually "hurry mindfully."*

*Find a pace that begins to put you at ease. When the mind is calm, slow walking may feel more natural. Your speed might change during a period of mindful walking.*

- *Dedicate your attention to the sensations of walking and let go of everything else.*
- *If emotions or thoughts arise and call your attention away from the walking, it is often helpful to stop walking and attend to them. When they are no longer compelling, return to mindful walking.*
- *To stay in the present, you can use a quiet mental label for your steps such as "stepping, stepping" or "left, right." Labeling occupies the mind so it is less likely to wander off. Labeling also points the mind towards what you want to **observe**.*
- ***Focus on sensations:*** *With your attention on the legs and feet, feel the sensations of each step. Feel the legs and feet tense as you lift the leg. Feel the movement of the leg as it swings through the air. Feel the contact of the foot with the ground.*
- *There is no "right" **experience**. Just see how the experience feels to you. Whenever you notice that the mind has wandered, bring it back to the sensations of the feet walking.*

- *You might also notice your posture, your sense of balance, one part of the body or another moving through space.*
- *Slow down enough to notice the shift of weight and pressure that happens from one foot to the other. Notice that when the foot is lifted up, muscles may be working in your side.*
- *Observe how the foot glides across the surface of the ground. Acknowledge placing the foot on the ground. Then let the sequence happen again, staying connected perhaps by saying, “lifting, stepping, shifting”—lifting, stepping, shifting.”*

**Ask about their experiences: What did you notice? Was it easy? Difficult?**

**Discussion Points:**

- *Many people find that their minds are more active during walking than during mindful breathing. This may be because walking is more active, and the eyes are open.*
- *If so, it does not mean it is less useful. Many people find mindful walking favorable practice over time.*
- *Mindful walking can be useful in extending practice in daily life as we move about during the day.*
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- *Where might you practice mindful walking?*



Stress Less with Mindfulness is a program of West Virginia University Extension Service Families and Health Programs

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## Learn Thought Surfing

- Notice your sensations or thoughts.
- Say a number from 1 to 10 to show the intensity of the upset.
- Breathe into that thought. Make room for it.
- Watch as the wave rises, crests, and falls.
- Notice your sensation, thought or urge as the wave falls.
- Like all waves, the agitation, urge, or thought will peak and pass.
- Say your number again as the thought wave passes on by, rolls on into the shore.

“The calm underneath the waves” This is the practice that help us return to our calm center when we are able to step back from negative thinking.

What is your experience with thought surfing? When do you think it could be most helpful to you?

- Train yourself to notice first,
- Relax a bit into the moment, and
- Ride the wave of your thought before taking quick action.

Result: We have more resources to solve problems and take actions in line with our values.

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## What You Can and Cannot Control

Read each statement and then, without much thought, circle the number next to each situation you believe you can control. Don't circle numbers for situations that are outside your control.

1. What someone else is thinking.
2. The choices I make.
3. How nervous I get.
4. How I respond to other people.
5. What other people value and care about.
6. What I say and do in a situation.
7. Worries I have from time to time.
8. The direction I want my life to take.
9. How others respond to my choices, expressed thoughts, feelings, and actions.
10. My beliefs about other people.
11. The choices others make.
12. What I do when I get anxious.
13. How often the same thoughts or images come back into my mind.
14. How I respond to my thoughts and feelings (positive or negative).
15. Other people following rules or standards.
16. Whether I follow through with commitments.
17. What other people do.
18. Whether I follow certain rules or standards.
19. Other people liking me.
20. If I prepare for tasks and do my best.
21. What I feel at any point.
22. What I do with my precious time on this earth.
23. The thoughts I have from time to time.

**Total odd numbers circled:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Total even numbers circled:** \_\_\_\_\_

Source: Forsythe, J. P., & Eifert, G. H. (2007). *The Mindfulness and Acceptance Workbook for Anxiety*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications.

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### WV SLM Lesson 3 Walking References

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Fair, G. E. (1989). The Man Who Wrote the Serenity Prayer. Employee Assistance Quarterly, 4(4), 57-65.

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Wood, D., & Andreasen, D. (2002). A Quiet Place. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers.

Silver, G. (2009). Anh's anger. Parallax Press.

### WV SLM Lesson 3 Walking Links to Videos and Resources

*Mindfulness Guided Meditation – 5 Minutes Guided by Dr. Robert Eric Dinenberg*

<https://youtu.be/dEzbdLn2bJc>

Relaxing Nature Sounds of the Ocean for relaxation, yoga, meditation, reading, sleep, study. MP3

Download: <http://art.acerting.com/album/nature-...>

<https://youtu.be/MD0tXdSsnBA>

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