

Macro-level efforts are urgently needed to mainstream sustainability, but these need to be complemented by individual and community level efforts.

Mindfulness-based practices have been shown to enhance a variety of health and wellbeing outcomes, but few focus on them in relation to sustainability.

Commitments to replacing shorter automobile trips with walking or cycling, eating plants rather than animals, or just reconnecting with nature, for example, are all intentions that can be meditated on.

Cultivating mindfulness practices may lead to individual behavioral changes that can enhance public health and environmental sustainability (or be hijacked by neoliberalism).



Over time, setting action intentions while meditating may lead to individual behavioral changes that reduce personal environmental impact, cultivate more sustainability-promoting behaviors, and improve one's health.

Mindfulness practices foster attentional awareness, openness, and response flexibility, supporting positive behavior change.

By using mindfulness-based trainings that aim to modify individual-level choices and behaviors related to environmental sustainability, we can set an intention to reduce our ecological footprints while at the same time protect and strengthen our mental, spiritual and physical health.





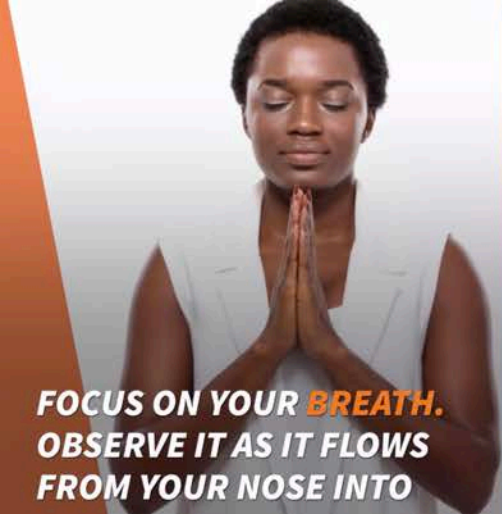
Have you done WALKING MEDITATION before?

Walking meditation is a form of mindfulness-based practice that might help improve personal health and well-being through increasing the attention we pay to:

- valuing nature;
- decreasing energy use;
- reducing automobile use;
- increasing active transport;
- shifting diet towards plant-based foods;
- reducing unnecessary consumption

Meditation doesn't have to be difficult or long. Begin by sitting comfortably for just ten deep, slow breaths. Try and gently clear your mind of the clutter and racing thoughts by concentrating on your breathing. You won't stop the chatter, but you will begin to notice it – just how much your thoughts jump about and where they go. When your mind wanders, try to bring it back to just focusing on your breath. Don't make judgements about where you are in the process. Meditation calms your mind, slows your heart rate and brings awareness to your mind-body connection.


Repeat the process for another ten breaths, this time set an intention that relates to sustainability by repeating a short phrase over and over in your mind as you breathe. Keep it simple, restate your action intention you set in class, or focus on something that might be helpful to you, like “enjoy walking more” or “I cherish our natural world”.



FOCUS ON YOUR BREATH.
OBSERVE IT AS IT FLOWS
FROM YOUR NOSE INTO



**YOUR LUNGS AND OUT
AGAIN.**



**IF YOUR MIND WANDERS,
ACKNOWLEDGE IT, AND
REFOCUS ON YOUR
BREATHING.**



**DON'T OVERTHINK IT. HAVE
FUN AND ENJOY THE
JOURNEY.**

A walking meditation is pretty much the same thing, only you are bringing more stimuli into your circumstance. You will have to contend with far more distractions – noises, people, etc. Therefore it is more difficult, but the point of the exercise is to help you become aware of your surroundings, in a new way, while moving through them. So often we go into autopilot, rushing from place to place, without connecting to our environment. How you feel when you are walking slowly with intention, mindful of where you are, also makes you aware of how shut off you normally are. Try it and see what it brings to you – don't do it on your way to class – or leave far more time to arrive on time!

How to Practice Walking Meditation

Step 1: Find an unobstructed space

It's also recommended you walk bare feet as it brings more awareness to what happens in the body when you're walking.

Step 2: Bring your awareness down to your feet.

Step 3: Lift your head and look straight ahead and hold your chest high.

Step 4: Now begin the process of walking.

Shift your weight from your left leg to your right leg.

Extend the right leg forward and notice the weight redistribution.

You can hold your hands loosely to the side or clasp them behind your back.

When you start this practice, you may notice that your walk is a bit robotic.

The effects of mindfulness-based practices can be understood in relation to the Stages of Change theory.

In relation to sustainability, setting an intention to meditate on while we walk and breathe can be helpful in bringing attention to an action, and might over time, bring it more into our awareness, and thus, result in behavioral change.

Transtheoretical Model Stages of change

