

6 ACT* Conversations

*Acceptance & Commitment Training

Session 4: Mindfulness and Being Present

Exercise 4: Walking Mindfully – Instructions

The fourth exercise is simply called Walking. You can do this anywhere, but the ideal place is somewhere quiet where you won't be disturbed. A hall is best because you can practise in any weather, but outdoors is fine. If the only place you can find to practise is noisy, that is just another challenge, not a reason to avoid practising.

Like eating a raisin, the purpose is to walk mindfully. Unlike the eating a raisin exercise though, you don't have to listen to this recording segment to do the exercise. In fact, I suggest you use this segment to set up the exercise and then do it in your own time. Here are the instructions, which are also in written form on the 6 ACT Conversations website, so if you like, you can download them and print them to take with you.

1. Begin your walk by acknowledging that you are beginning it.

You can do this by saying to yourself:

- “This is my walk”,
- “I am now starting my walk” or
- just “Start”.

Or you can take note of a particular landmark or point on your walk – a kerb, lamppost, floorboard or such – and acknowledge the start of your walk as you pass that point.

2. As you walk, firstly pay attention to the sensations in your body.

Feel the contact your feet make with the ground.

Which part of your foot leaves the ground last at the end of each step?

Which part strikes the ground first at the beginning of each step?

Notice the pivoting of your ankle as you take a step.

Feel the bend in your knee as you walk.

Notice the alternating flexing and contracting of muscles in your calves [PAUSE 15 secs] and in your thighs [PAUSE 15 secs].

How are your hips moving? [PAUSE].

Now pay attention to your back and chest. [PAUSE].

How much are your arms swinging? [PAUSE].

Without changing anything about the way you walk, just notice any differences between the right and left sides of your body:

- do you move one hip or shoulder or arm more than the other?
- Is one foot turned out more than the other?
- Has your breathing changed while you've been making these observations?

3. Now I'd like you to shift your attention away from your body to your environment.

But I want you to attend to your environment in a specific way. Let me explain.

Sometimes as I walk around the university campus where I work, I cross paths with a colleague or student I know well enough to recognise, but not really well enough to engage in conversation. What do you do in such situations? Well I'm sure many people would have a different answer to mine, but generally I simply acknowledge the person non-verbally, by say nodding my head in their direction, making eye contact and raising an eyebrow or by a wave of the hand. In a non-verbal way, I'm saying 'I see you Joe'

