



Mind the Gap Exercise

Walking

Take a 10 minute walk during your working day.

1. Just take an ordinary walk, letting your arms do what feels most natural for you.
2. As you begin the walk, count to 10. When you get to 10, start again. This will help stop the chatter in your mind. You may notice at first that you are counting quickly. Try slowing the count a little and seeing if your pace slows a little too. This is fine.
3. When you feel your mind is more settled, start to notice how your body feels. Give your attention to your feet, - how do they strike the ground, - how are your legs moving, what do you notice happening in your hips, your shoulders?
4. Spend a minute or two noticing your breathing.
5. When the mind is a little more settled again, give your attention to all the sounds you can hear in your environment.
6. Then notice all the different sights you can see.
7. As you near the end of the walk, return your attention to your body.
8. Remember your mind will most likely wander. Each time it does, gently bring your mind back to focusing on the walk.

Does it work and further enhancements?

See if you can walk in a park.

A 2016 review of 52 Japanese research studies on the effects of walking on various indicators of stress (e.g. cortisol levels, heart rate, blood pressure) showed some support that walking does make people calmer. They review suggested that walking or spending time in nature produces the best results and that spending time in an urban park is probably better than spending time walking the streets. Song et al (2016) [Int J Environ Res Public Health](#).

In a Stanford University study, 38 healthy participants were asked to complete a questionnaire about their rumination as well as a brain scan on the area of the brain associated with rumination. Half were then sent for a 90 minute walk in nature, and half through the city. Afterwards the group who walked in nature showed self-reported changes in their rumination, and in the brain scan, whereas the group who walked in the city did not. Bratman et al, (2015)

A UK study looked at walking groups. Compared to group walks in urban environments, group walks in farmland were significantly associated with less perceived stress and negative mood, and greater mental well-being. Group walks in urban parks were significantly associated with less perceived stress and negative mood. There were no significant differences between the effect of any environment types on depression or positive mood. The effects may also be accounted for by simply being with others. Marselle et al (2013)

All of the research needs more subjects and longer follow up periods.