

A Slow Quiet Walk

An Exercise in Contemplative Walking

Part of the Teach Us to Pray series at Precious Blood Renewal Center.

Presented by Dennis Coday

Watch the video here:

<https://youtu.be/N44FRfWtVoY>



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In this exercise, you are going to notice how you walk. It is a slow walk that can help you slow down when life seems a bit too fast. It is also a walk you can do indoors — you only need space to take 10 steps, although you can lengthen it over time as you become used its rhythm.

First a few pointers.

- Notice your posture. Try to stand straight and tall for this exercise.
- Now notice your arms. Where are they? Folded in front of you or clasped behind you? Are your hands in your pockets? Let your arms hang relaxed by your sides.
- Now your eyes. Look straight ahead. Some people like to focus on something just ahead of themselves. Others like to practice what is called a “soft focus,” which means you open your gaze to the full visual field, looking but not focusing on anything in particular. Do what feels most comfortable to you.

Before walking, pause and rest quietly. Notice your breathing. Be aware of your breath, don’t try to control it. Breath naturally and slowly count to 10.

Next, we will begin the walk. Take a step, putting one foot forward to a distance that feels natural to you. While you do that, inhale. Pause.

Then bring your next foot to the first foot and exhale as you do that. Pause and count Step One. We will do that 10 times.

After 10 steps, we will pause again for a count of 10 or so. Go back to breathing normally and try not to think of anything, try to allow your mind and body to rest.

Three more things:

- To better control their breathing, some people find it helpful to inhale through their noses and exhale through their mouths. Give that a try for this exercise. If it doesn’t come naturally to you, don’t use that method. You want your breathing to help you focus not distract you. Just breath.

- As you step, don't try to think about anything. We're not trying to solve a problem or come to a decision. Thoughts will come, but gently push them aside. Try to keep your mind like your eyes, in "soft focus."
- Today, I will do the counting out loud, but generally you should count silently in your head.

OK. Let's get started.

Stand straight. Focus your eyes on something in front of you or do a soft focus.

Pause. Notice your breath. Count silently to ten.

Step, breath in. Step, breath out. Step 1.
 Step, breath in. Step, breath out. Step 2.
 Step, breath in. Step, breath out. Step 3.
 Step, breath in. Step, breath out. Step 4.
 Step, breath in. Step, breath out. Step 5.
 Step, breath in. Step, breath out. Step 6.
 Step, breath in. Step, breath out. Step 7.
 Step, breath in. Step, breath out. Step 8.
 Step, breath in. Step, breath out. Step 9.
 Step, breath in. Step, breath out. Step 10.

Stand. A pause for a count of ten or so.

There. You've completed the exercise. If you keep a journal, now might be good time to jot some notes in your journal.

Some questions to ponder.

- How did you feel as you walked?
- Some people become aware of the mechanics of walking, feeling how the muscles and joints work together to move you along. Did you experience any of that?
- What came into your awareness as you walked?
- Did you feel different after the walk from before the walk?
- Other thoughts?



This exercise is adapted from an exercise in the book *Just Breathe: Meditation, Mindfulness, Movement and More* by Mallika Chopra. It is a small book with lovely illustrations that aims at introducing mindfulness practices to young people.

Another good resource is *Earth: Our Original Monastery* by Christine Valters Painter. Each chapter of the book ends with a number of mindfulness exercises, including instructions for contemplative walking.