ChiWalking
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Chi (also spelled "qi" and pronounced chee) is the Chinese concept of a life force that animates all things. It is a type of energy that flows through your body and unites your body, mind and spirit. We all know that walking is good for us physically. But in ChiWalking, you apply the principles of chi to the simple act of walking to achieve more than just a workout for your body -- you also gain balance and alignment in your life.
ChiWalking is a way to get stronger and healthier without stress or strain and with very little chance of injury. Unlike power walking or race walking, it doesn't involve walking in an unnatural or competitive way. Anyone at any age or level of fitness can learn ChiWalking.

MOVEMENT IS THE KEY
ChiWalking uses good walking form to help you walk more efficiently with less wear and tear on the body. The beauty of ChiWalking is that you can feel the benefits quickly. Many people with knee and hip problems can still enjoy ChiWalking, because when your body is in alignment and moving correctly, there's far less impact on your joints. I've even taught ChiWalking to people who use canes or walkers.
The basic principle of chi is that it must flow freely through your body. If your body is misaligned or your joints and muscles are tight, the flow of chi will be blocked, just as a crimp in a hose blocks the flow of water. When the principle of chi is applied to walking, it teaches us to align our spines, engage our core muscles and relax everything else. The energy flows and walking becomes fluid and easy.
A fit mind in a fit body -- isn't that what we all want as we grow older? By following five mindful steps as you walk, your whole being gets an enjoyable workout every time. You can also suit the type of walk you do to harmonize with your current mood and energy level. Here are the five mindful steps to successful ChiWalking...

MINDFUL STEP 1: GET ALIGNED
Body connection: Align your spine so that you stand tall and straight and have good posture while you walk. Stand with your feet hip-width apart and parallel... relax your knees a little... move your shoulders, hipbones and ankles into a vertical line. Your weight is now being carried by your bones, rather than your muscles, just as steel pillars support a skyscraper. Your muscles can now move more freely and easily.
Mind connection: The chi concept of "needle in cotton" applies here. Imagine a needle poked down through the middle of a ball of cotton. The needle is the thin, strong, straight line running through the center of the cotton. Think of your spine as the needle and your arms and legs as being as light as cotton. Gather energy in toward your spine and let your arms and legs relax. Get mentally aligned with your intentions for your walk.

MINDFUL STEP 2: ENGAGE YOUR CORE
Body connection: Your core muscles are the lower abdominal muscles that stabilize your pelvis when you stand, walk or run. They also hold your spine erect and help lift your legs. When your core muscles are strong, your body is stable. You can stand up straight easily and move your arms and legs easily. To engage your core muscles, level your pelvis -- stand up straight in alignment, as described above, and then lift up on your pubic bone by using your lower abdominal muscles. This may take a little practice, but you'll soon learn to feel those muscles and get them to work.
Once you've got your posture aligned and your pelvis level, stand tall and tilt your upper body forward just a quarter of an inch. This will keep your upper body aligned and moving forward -- which allows gravity to do most of the work as you walk.
Mind connection: Your inner core is your internal sense of self. When you engage your inner core, you feel grounded and centered. You have willpower when you need it.
MINDFUL STEP 3: CREATE BALANCE

*Body connection:* Imagine your body in the shape of a letter C -- your spine is straight, your chin is down slightly, and your pelvis is rising slightly in front because you're lifting it slightly, as explained in Step 2. Your upper and lower body are in balance and ready to move forward.

*Mind connection:* Take a balanced approach to your walks, spreading them evenly across the week and never going beyond what your body tells you is right. As you get fitter, feel how your mind and body become more in balance with each other.

MINDFUL STEP 4: MAKE A CHOICE

*Body connection:* Choose to walk regularly, even on days when you don't really feel like it. Try to walk for at least 30 minutes on most days -- but if you can't squeeze it in, even 15 minutes will improve your cardiovascular fitness and improve your outlook on life.

*Mind connection:* Overall, choose to create health. On a daily basis, choose the kind of walk you want. If you're feeling scattered or stressed, a slower, more meditative walk might be better than a fast cardiovascular workout.

MINDFUL STEP 5: MOVE FORWARD

*Body connection:* To walk, push your core ahead with each step, letting gravity move the rest of your body forward. Work with gravity -- don't fight it. Listen to your body and move only as fast as is comfortable for you. Good form is more important than speed.

*Mind connection:* Now is the time for action and resolve. As you walk, focus your mind on maintaining good form. Bear in mind that each step is part of going forward with your quest for lifelong energy and health.

THE PRACTICE OF WALKING

By "practice" I mean walking as a regular, mindful activity that works to enhance your quality of life. When you make walking a regular practice, you raise it beyond just healthful physical exercise. It becomes a way to focus your energy and to channel your thoughts -- because your chi is flowing freely.