

The Gifts of a Walk

April 1, 2023

April 4th, 2007 marked the first National Walking Day. This holiday, celebrated on the first Wednesday of April, was promoted by the American Heart Association. Their objective was and is to create better health for the population by increasing our physical activity. They hoped to accomplish this goal by educating us about how this simple form of exercise could bring about a large return in results.

Their studies found that walking 30 minutes during a work day -

Increased cardiovascular and pulmonary fitness

Reduced risk of heart disease and stroke

Improved management of conditions such as hypertension, high cholesterol, joint and muscle stiffness and diabetes

Other studies by other organizations found additional and interesting important results. Harvard University concluded that those 30 minute walks also helped to maintain one's weight. They found that the effects of the weight-promoting genes we have were cut in half.

The University of Exeter found another way that walking helped with weight control. Their results showed that walking helped to curb cravings for sweets and chocolate.

Walking also boosts the immune functions. People who walk at least five times a week have been shown to have fewer sick days and faster recovery when sick.

All of the above benefits are great reasons to dust off your sneakers. AND we are Body Mind Spirit, so we would like to address additional mental and spiritual reasons for walking. First, like all exercise, walking produces endorphins so one's overall mood is improved.

Walking has also been shown to clear the mind, to trigger new ideas and get creative juices flowing.

Walking can get you breathing a little more deeply. Breathing fresh air helps get more blood and oxygen to the brain for better concentration and focus.

Taking walks can offer more social interactions and occasions, which could be from walking with others or talking with people you meet along the way.

Or, you could make your walk be a practice of mindfulness. Have a set route and observe what changes on a day-to-day basis in the environment or with a change of time or season.

The benefits of walking are enormous and the financial investment is small. You don't need to invest in special equipment other than a good pair of shoes. You do, however, need to invest the small amount of time required for this wonderful form of self-care. Spring is here. Take advantage of the warming weather and Spring flowers to get yourself out there walking. We would like to leave you with a few final thoughts.

- Walking is a low impact exercise and you can go at your own pace.
- It is a good way to start exercising if you haven't done much lately.
- If you don't have your own dog and need some motivation, offer to walk your neighbor's dog.
- You could take a garbage bag and gloves to pick up trash to celebrate Earth Day.
- If your feet get tired and sore, we know where you can get a good pedicure as a treat for yourself for a job well done.

"An early morning walk is a blessing for the whole day." - Henry David Thoreau

"A walk in nature walks the soul back home." - Mary Davis

"All truly great thoughts were conceived while walking." - Friedrich Nietzsche

"I took a walk in nature and came out taller than the trees." - Henry David Thoreau

"I don't get it. The trail looked so flat on the map." - Unknown