



## Therapeutic Walking

- ★ **Walking is the most natural activity we can perform and is underappreciated as a movement.**
- ★ **Walking is a baseline activity. Although many people consider it fitness, they generally have poor technique, which wouldn't be acceptable with their other exercise activity.**
- ★ **If you walk better, you could be finding a hidden strategy to improve your foundational wellness.**
- ★ **Here are a few techniques you could attempt to improve your technique, to minimize stress upon the physical and mental body, and to calm the nervous system through the use of primitive movements.**

**Upright Posture:** When walking, don't slouch or look down at the ground. Instead, look forward and lean forward a little bit with your chest up. Don't strain, but hold your shoulders a little back, yet don't shrug. Be sure to check in to your basic posture every few minutes or so.

- ★ Movements that improve mid-back, thoracic twisting can actually help upright posture.

**Breathing:** Breathing is how we deliver oxygen to the cells, tissues, organs and brain. We need oxygen within the cells to produce metabolic energy and maintain consistent healing function. Your breathing pattern can reflect how stressed the nervous system is. There are many techniques which utilize breathing to help calm down or amp up the nervous system. But, in this exercise I'd like you to simply notice how you breathe, or don't breathe... If you get winded, then slow down a bit or stop talking. If your breathing isn't noticeable, then you might want to pick up the pace a bit.

- ★ In daily life, notice if you hold your breath through basic tasks that you really don't need to. For example: reaching to pick something up, going up stairs, or when moving in bed.

**Speed:** Most people simply walk too slow. Getting 6-10K steps a day isn't of great use if they are shuffled, short, slow movements with minimal body control or range of motion. You don't have to sprint walk, but think about moving at a 70% effort level. Having good speed will help normalize poor technique and a more natural flow of your body's movement. As you become more fit with walking then your 70% intensity will result in faster walking. From there we can discuss running.

- ★ The shoes you wear can influence the speed at which you move. For example: Wearing flip-flops and other unlaced shoes simply won't allow a normal walking movement. They rather train one's body to become dysfunctional in habit.

**Hip Extension & Push-Off:** Most people simply don't extend their hips when they walk. This is partially due to tightness of the musculature, particularly the quadriceps and hip flexors in the front of the thigh. But, it is also due to the inactivation of the gluteals and core muscles to promote a walking pattern where the hips can reach back. If the speed of walking is increased, then there should be more propulsion through the stride, resulting in hip extension. But Pushing Off can make a huge difference. If you can wrap your head around the fact that walking is more about "pushing" yourself forward, rather than "pulling" yourself forward, then you'll be able to better initiate more hip extension and burst forward.

**Arm Swing:** If you watch someone walk slowly, with minimal hip extension and without a push off, then you'll see that there is no need to swing their arms. In fact, if one leg doesn't push off well then that same arm won't swing forward much. So, when walking, try to notice whether your arms are "active" or not. Do they swing? Do they swing equally? If not, then that leg needs to be doing more work to help propel you forward.