Walking as Practice

Walking taps into our earliest evolution as a species and reconnects us to our humanity.
Walking isn’t just exercise; it’s a conduit for thought and emotion

“We think with our whole body, not just with our brain.”

–Ben Madlock, developer of the SwiftKey predictive texting app
We cannot separate walking from our evolution as a species

• For every step a human takes, it’s estimated that our brain makes over a billion calculations.

• The earliest evidence of any mammal that was obligatorily bipedal in the way that Homo sapiens are is six million years old.

• Famous fossils like Lucy (approximately 3.2 million years old) and Turkana Boy (approximately 1.5 million years old) show evidence of more evolved bipedal walking, just a hint of how long it’s taken us to evolve our walking alongside the planet’s evolution.

• Walking brings us back into relationship with the planet, and with ourselves.
Children have a natural need to move their bodies around constantly. Their bodies crave movement, but so do their brains. It’s vital for:

• Hippocampus development

• Reading ability

• Visualizing differences and spatial relations in ways that help with learning arithmetic and geometry
Walking is key to keeping mental health in balance

• When we lose connection with our bodies—if we don’t use our bodies, for example—we begin to feel, as historian Yuval Noah Harari has put it, “alienated and disoriented.”

• Several studies have found that walking just 30 minutes 5 days a week has a noticeable impact on depression and anxiety, and can lower the risk of dementia and Alzheimer’s.

• “Forest bathing” measurably lowers blood pressure and cortisol levels—even a few hours in the woods can lower blood pressure and the effects of stress for up to a week.

• Our brains play a complex and vital role in our walking; it shouldn’t be surprising that walking, then, plays an equally vital role in our mental well-being.
Walking is a practice that connects us with our humanity

“To walk is by a thought to go;
To move in spirit to and fro;
To mind the good we see;
To taste the sweet;
Observing all the things we meet
How choice and rich they be.”
—Thomas Traherne (b. 1636/7, d.1674), from “Walking”