



Whether you want to work things out, dream things up (Sweeney often thinks about her next novel), or just feel a little brighter, walking delivers, and fast. As few as 10 minutes can pep you up and make you less tense and tired, according to Iowa State University exercise psychology researcher **Panteleimon Ekkekakis, Ph.D.** “Those are feelings people pay a lot of money to get via caffeine, energy drinks, and sugary snacks,” he says.

Not to mention antidepressants. One study of nearly 2,000 women with symptoms of depression found that walking about 30 minutes a day improved how healthy and energetic they felt. Three ways to tap into the mind-changing powers of a walk:



Sweeney says even a short walk is satisfying.

“IT’S REALLY HEALTHY TO GET OUTSIDE, NOT LOOK AT YOUR PHONE, AND TAKE A BREAK FROM THE MILLIONS OF OTHER THINGS YOU’VE GOT GOING ON.”



Make walking meditative.

Tune in and become aware of every physical detail—the feel of your feet hitting the ground, the swing of your arms—while silently repeating a soothing word like *peace*. This turns walking, even a short trip to your car, into a meditation that helps quiet mental chatter.



Gab and go.

Your favorite people can talk you down or cheer you up, even if you didn’t know you needed it. Plus, social contact is essential for health and longevity. Sweeney gathers her girlfriends for walk-and-talk sessions instead of drinks. They tag pictures on Instagram of different places they want to see and sometimes team up and meet there to go for walks, she says.



Listen.

A great playlist keeps you in the groove on a long walk. Sweeney also loves podcasts like *Serial* and *Truth & Justice*. Stay-safe secret: Pick headphones that are designed to let in ambient sounds so you can hear any traffic along with your music or podcast. ■