

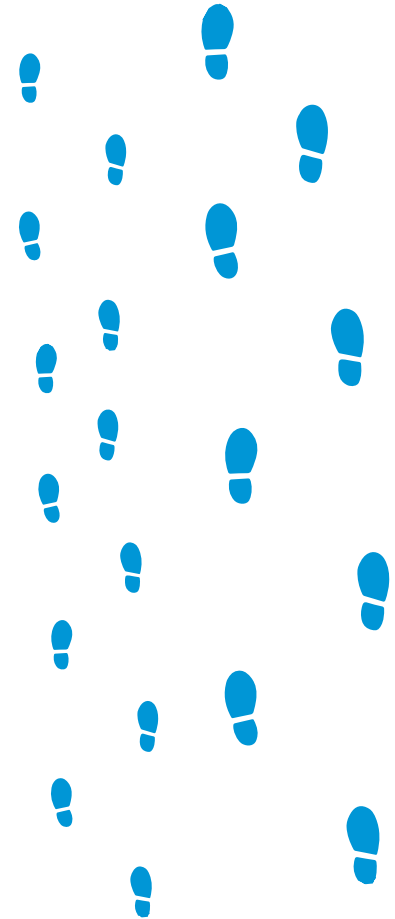
WALK, TALK, LISTEN

Spending time outdoors on walks supports children's development across the primary years. When the everyday walk to school is paired with opportunities to talk and listen, it promotes learning, wellbeing, and strengthens relationships built on curiosity, respect and shared experiences - benefiting children and the adults walking with them alike.

This resource explores the value of making time to walk, talk and listen, and offers practical ideas, hints and tips to help you get the most out of everyday walks.

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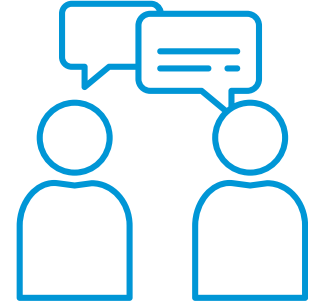
- **Walk, Talk, Listen - The Benefits** - Explores some of the many advantages of combining everyday walks with opportunities to talk and listen.
- **The Power of Routine** - Explores how the routine of a daily walk to school can support children's wellbeing and learning.
- **The Benefits of Side by Side** - Explores the benefits of having conversations side by side whilst walking.
- **Supporting Wellbeing** - How walking, talking and listening support your children's wellbeing.
- **Active Listening** - How positive listening supports wellbeing, and simple ways to practise active listening on walks.
- **Tricky Conversations** - Walking side by side can help children open up about their worries and problems. This page explores ways we can explore these conversations beneficially and supportively.
- **Making Everyday Walks Fun and Talkative** - Activities and conversation starters to help children get the most out of walk-and-talk time.



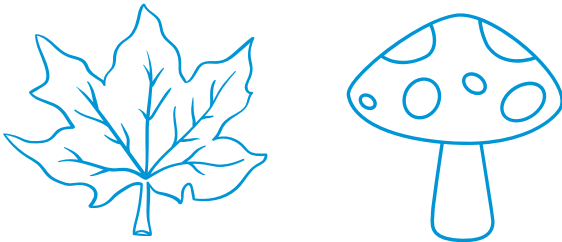
WALK, TALK, LISTEN- THE BENEFITS

Walking, talking and listening together has numerous benefits for children, and also the adults accompanying them on their walks. Below are just some of the benefits that getting out on a walk and making time to talk can bring.

Every conversation counts. When we chat with young children, we're doing so much more than just talking — we're helping them grow their language, make sense of the world, build confidence, and understand their feelings. Even something as simple as a walk to school or the park can turn into a great moment for learning and connection.



Spending time outdoors is great for our health and wellbeing. Active travel helps children stay physically healthy while also giving them the chance to explore, notice, and connect with the world around them in a fun and meaningful way.



Walking, talking and listening together creates special moments. It's a simple way to build positive relationships, nurture trust and respect, slow down, and enjoy some quality time with one another.



Learning is everywhere. A simple walk gives us the chance to talk about our feelings, share what's happened or what's coming up, notice changes around us, supports confidence and independence - the possibilities really are endless!



THE POWER OF ROUTINE

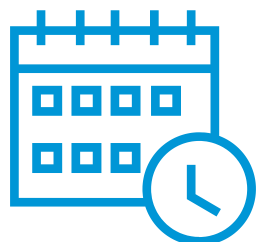
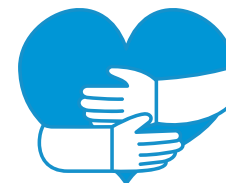
Our routine walks to school provides a brilliant opportunity to walk, talk and listen. Because these walks happen every day, their routine brings additional benefits. Building a regular walk into family life - especially on the way to school - supports young children's development in many meaningful ways.

Feeling Safe and Secure. The predictability of a daily walk helps children feel emotionally safe. When they feel secure, their minds are freer to talk, explore and notice the world around them.



Repetition supports early learning. Following the same route each day creates natural opportunities to repeat and gradually expand both language and understanding. What begins as 'tree' can, over time and with gentle adult support, grow into 'the tall, beautiful oak tree' as familiarity deepens.

Supports emotional regulation. The gentle rhythm of walking helps children feel calm and reduces stress. Combined with the security of a familiar routine, this helps young children arrive regulated, settled and ready to learn.



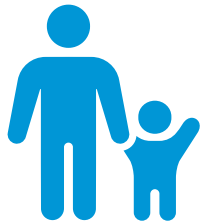
A consistent, calm and active start to the day supports smoother transitions. During the walk, we can help children prepare for what's ahead - talking through the day, giving them time to get ready for learning and play, and offering space to express their feelings.

Routine, everyday walks allow children to enter their school **calm and regulated, emotionally connected** after shared time with a trusted adult, **mentally alert, ready to engage, solve problems and explore**, and **open to language development and social interaction.**

THE BENEFITS OF SIDE BY SIDE

Walking together, rather than sitting face to face, creates a unique environment that can make communication easier and more positive for both children and adults in a number of ways.

Reduced pressure and anxiety. Being next to someone, rather than opposite, can remove some of the potential intensity out of interactions. Children don't have to maintain eye contact, which can lower stress, particularly for children who may be shy, talking about a sensitive topic or are neurodivergent. Being side by side can remove any potential sense of scrutiny, making them more comfortable to share their thoughts, feelings or comment on the world around them.



Walking side by side is a powerful tool for helping children regulate their emotions. The gentle, repetitive left-right movement of walking naturally calms the nervous system, helping the body shift into a more relaxed, balanced state. Walking also lowers stress hormones like cortisol and supports healthier emotional processing, making it easier for children to feel calmer, think more clearly, and cope with big feelings.

Walking side by side opens us up to the world. Our perspective shifts when being side by side, easily opening up conversations about what we are experiencing on our walks and the world around us.



SUPPORTING WELLBEING

Taking the time to get outside on the journey to school to walk, talk and listen can support children's development and wellbeing in a number of ways.

Walking for health - Walking is a form of physical exercise that contributes to overall health and wellbeing. By discussing the importance of incorporating regular physical activity into our routines, we help shape awareness of health and wellbeing in a positive, active and supportive way.



Emotional regulation - Spending time outdoors, and where possible in green spaces, has been shown to improve mood and sense of wellbeing. By combining this with meaningful conversations exploring our emotions, shows children their feelings are valued and models positive behaviours to support wellbeing.

Mindfulness for wellbeing - Walking is a great way to be present in the moment, observing our surroundings and developing a sense of mindfulness. Movement linked with natural stimuli can contribute to mental clarity. By introducing children to the concept of mindfulness when out walking, we can help them promote calm, focus and awareness.



Linking communication with relationship building - walking and talking helps create a relaxed atmosphere that fosters open conversations, active listening and building bonds. Adults can model communication skills and draw the link between communication and relationship building.



ACTIVE LISTENING

Letting children lead conversations allows them to express themselves and their interests, shows them their thoughts and talk is valued and helps build their confidence. As adults we can actively listen to children and follow their lead to help them in a number of ways.

Feeling listened to boosts children's self-esteem. When we actively listen, we help build their confidence, self-awareness and wellbeing. We can show we're listening by echoing their words, asking curious follow-up questions and showing genuine enthusiasm for what they share.



Listening builds trust and closeness. When we actively listen to children, we strengthen our bond with them, encourage them to open up, and show that they are valued, respected and cared for.

Listen - avoid the urge to try and fix. It's natural to want to solve a child's problems, but the first goal of listening is to help them feel understood and valued. When children approach adults with an issue they are facing and feel truly heard, they're more likely to open up in future, making them feel supported and confident to share.



Give your full attention. Ensure there are no distractions, like phones and comment on what they are saying. Walking side by side can be beneficial for opening up conversations and can relieve the potential pressure of face to face conversations, so ensure you show you are listening through other means, such as comments and acknowledgement.

Be honest if you don't understand. Sometimes it's not clear what children are trying to say. Acknowledging this not only shows we are listening and want to understand, but inviting them to explain again gives them a chance to learn by reshaping their language. Where possible, we can also gently recast what they've said to support shared understanding and model language.



TRICKY CONVERSATIONS

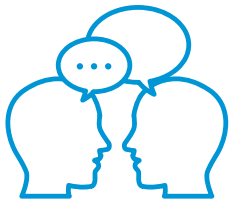
Sadly not all conversations with children are fun and lighthearted. Walking side by side can promote a sense of ease and can be a comfortable setting for children to open up. Children who feel safe and listened to can often discuss what is troubling them, negative emotions or issues in their school lives or the wider world. Below are some hints and tips for supporting children through talking and listening.

Acknowledge how they are feeling - this helps validate their emotions by showing you understand them and accept them. This builds trust, teaches emotional intelligence, models healthy expression and helps them manage 'big' emotions healthily.



Show your listening - encourage them to talk openly and make it clear that you value their opinion. As adults we can quickly slip into 'fixing' mode. Try to stay listening to let them know they have been understood and you care about not only about the situation but also how it has made them feel.

Give them time - allow children to lead the conversation, set the pace and say as much as they want to say. Avoid pushing them to say more than they want to. Some topics and emotions can take a long time to process, so let them know they can talk to you at another time if that they need to.



Be open and honest - if you don't know an answer to a question, say so. You can look for the answer together, or you can signpost where to find out. Being honest builds trust and confidence.

Regulate your own emotions - try to stay calm. Showing strong emotions, such as anger or shock at to what's being said as this may discourage them from sharing and opening up in future.



MAKING OUR EVERYDAY WALKS FUN AND TALKATIVE

Being out and about offers plenty of opportunities for conversation, but keeping talk fresh whilst on a repeated daily journey can sometimes be a challenge. Below are some ideas and activities to help start conversations and keep them flowing more easily.

Sounds: What sounds can we hear on our walk? Can we identify animals and birds? Natural sounds vs artificial? Which direction are the sounds coming from?

Journey Story: Start a shared story as you walk. One person begins with a simple sentence such as "On my way to school I found a tiny door under a leaf..." Take turns to build your story and see where it takes you!

Forage Walk: Keep your eyes peeled for feathers, leaves, seed cases and so on. Talk about their texture, colour, where they might have come from or what might happen to them next.

I-Spy variations: There's lots of way to play I-Spy! Can you spot something that makes you feel a certain way, a colour hunt, something that grows, and so on.

Mindful Moment: Take a moment to pause and notice what is around you. Perhaps focus on your breathing, is it fast or slow? Can you count five breaths in silence? How does it make you feel?

Memory Trail: Take note of three small things on your walk to school. Can you remember them the following day? Can you add to the list and test your memory each day?

One Minute Topic: Can you talk about a topic for one minute? Set a timer and take turns to try and talk until it runs out.

Journey Navigator: Nominate a journey navigator to make simple, safe choices about today's journey. Is there more than one way you can go? With adult supervision, this can give a sense of responsibility, build confidence and promote problem solving.

Would you rather?: This can be a funny game to get conversations started. Would you rather have a magic bag or magic shoes? Would you rather explore space or the deep sea?

