

## Why I walk *by Denise Schipani*

The big white house on Prospect Drive North is not for sale. I didn't expect it to be, but every time I walk past I hope to see a real estate sign poking out from the lawn, to feed my fantasy that I could trade my humbler house for this stately Colonial. Pondering life's possibilities: That's one reason I walk.

There are other reasons, and curiously, they have nothing to do with exercise (which I get in sweatier, less contemplative ways). I walk to mark the changes in my community: a stork decoration announcing a new baby, a porch newly built, a garden coming into bloom. At dusk, as neighbors flick on their lights, I catch glimpses of kitchens, dining rooms, lives unfolding. A reality show for an audience of one.

When my family and I moved to this town from the city eight years ago, I walked to understand how the curving streets interconnect, how to get from point A to point B. I relished making unexpected discoveries, like the tiny old graveyard barely visible through a fence. Whizzing by on wheels, I never would have noticed it.

Now that the streets are familiar, I walk to take stock of my experiences. I find myself silently retelling old stories and new—the happy ones and the less-so—turning them over in my mind until I come to fresh conclusions: walking as therapy.

As a writer, I walk to free ideas that are stuck. The rhythmic movement of my body, the steady slapping of one foot in front of the other—it soothes the mental static that comes from facing deadlines, difficult paragraphs, a blank screen. When the words finally come, I'm rarely sitting still.

Walking gives me energy, stirring up my blood with oxygen I can't seem to get indoors. I walk because my happiness depends on it—feet on the ground, thoughts free to wander.

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