

Women Walk at Midnight

An all women's space where we venture around different parts of the city post midnight to see, hear and feel our city at a time when most of us do not dare to be out. Each month, a different woman takes us around her neighbourhood. The point of this event is pretty simple - We walk. Because... why not?

Nothing much happens on the walks... and yet, a lot happens. We meet different women, we hear, see and smell the city scape change over the two hours, we talk about safety, we share experiences, we encounter cops, curious gazes and dropping jaws.

The walks are free of cost and open to all women. And shall remain so.

Note: By all-women's space, we mean the space is open to all persons assigned female at birth or who identify as women. We have had several gender fluid and queer folx join our walks. If you feel you identify with the classification of 'woman', for all its multitudes and layered meanings, then do sign up! We too are learning and evolving with the stretching of these definitions!

Who are we?

We are a volunteer run initiative that recognises the need for women to come together, and share a safe space, while experiencing the night like we aren't normally allowed to/able to.

A key aspect of creating this space, and ensuring that the experience of the walk is authentic and personal for each woman, in the hope that each one of us will be able to walk one day by ourselves. We would like to see the walk through each others' experiences and therefore encourage to read/see the documented 'walk experiences' by women who walked.

Who can be a Guide of the Night ?

The Guide of the Night should ideally be somebody who has already been a part of the walk so they can imagine the walk in their locality. However, this is not a compulsion and walks can be hosted even if this is not the case.

How to Curate the Walk?

The Guide of the Night is free to curate the walk according to their idea of a midnight walk. The route hence chosen could have a personal narrative, around different localities, through different types of experiences, or around areas that you wouldn't walk alone. Sometimes we start from a metro station or someone's home so that there is a toilet available, and it's an easy spot to find transport and wait around while the transport arrives. Other times we start from a market area, for similar reasons. For those driving, a parking space and circuitous route is preferred.

Duration and the timing of the walk

The walks could last up to 2 hours and over 5-7 Km. However the distance and duration is best decided by the Guide of the Night based on their experience, comfort and the reality of the area they are walking in.

You could redefine the meaning of midnight according to the neighborhood and your idea of the walk.

Communication before the walk with the team

We could help you with outreach by making a poster if needed and sharing it on our channels. We use Whatsapp, Facebook groups and Instagram for outreach about a week before the walk. We recommend getting into local groups of the area to encourage more women to join.

Outreach could look like the following:

1. **Spread the word**, talk to friends/people in your community about the idea. Gauge interest. Numbers is essential - the more the women, the safer we are.
2. **Facebook page** - The walk details would be hosted by our Facebook page, with you as a co-host. Share wide and far.
3. **Instagram post** - The walk details would be posted on our Instagram account. You could use the post to spread the word.
4. **Google Form for *mandatory registration** - We add this in the event description/everywhere on social media. We use a basic template for this form, feel free to add/subtract from it. Registration helps keep a tab on numbers and who registers. There is no preselection but sometimes the neighborhood enthusiastic uncle registers. By mistake.
5. Approx 4-5 days before the event, **we make a Whatsapp group** for all the people registered. Only share the meeting point, route, etc. here and nowhere else on social media. This is an important safety measure.

Communication for the walk

The Guide of the night could brief the group of walkers on the following before the beginning of the walk:

- the idea/ inspiration of the walk
- the kind of experience the group should expect, including the safety guidelines
- route for the walk and the alternate routes in case of need
- availability of washrooms before/during/after the walk
- area for parking, if available (Whatsapp group)
- the nearest metro station (Whatsapp group)

- announce the options to carpool or stay overnight at someone's place in case some people in the group would prefer to (Whatsapp group). Usually, people volunteer for this on the Whatsapp group, the leader should encourage people to find buddies to carpool with, using this group.

Operating guidelines to share on whatsapp

(feel free to add to this depending on the type of walk you're curating)

1. This iwalk is for all those who identify as woman
2. This is not a fitness event. It's more like a stroll around the city.
3. We walk for about 2 hours. Water, comfy clothes and a snack is advised.
4. There are no formal mechanisms for safety. We will experience the city as it presents itself on any other given night. We are each other's biggest safety net. The larger the group, the less people will think of messing with us. It works! But also, carry with you whatever makes you feel safe - pepper spray, a danda, safety pin, your attitude, SOS speed dials... whatever!
5. Feel free to bring something to share - a song, a poem, some cake!
6. This is not an organised protest. Please do not carry banners or raise slogans during the walk.

Build a Chapter

Women Walk at Midnight has several chapters running across different cities. The chapters are old and new, ongoing and paused, happen at varying frequencies and draw a wide range of women who walk. These chapters are created on the experience of various other chapters, their research and learnings. We ask that while building your own chapter, you keep this in mind and remain in solidarity with us.

A city that has held two walks and is finding a way to do a third can call itself a chapter. Chapters take time to form and require consistent work. We ask you to take the time you need.

We walk once a month. It could be more or less depending on your capacity.

Some steps to create chapter -

1. Hold your very first walk! Please follow the guidelines above!
2. Talk to the walkers about joining in for more walks to gauge interest and enthusiasm
3. Ask a participant from the walk to volunteer to be the next Guide of the Night in a different neighborhood
4. Walk again. And then again.
5. Keep it light, fun and non ticketed or sponsored.

As time goes by and as you set into your rhythm of hosting walks you may consider -

1. Setting up an instagram page for your chapter (womenwalkatmidnight*cityname*) and let us know!
2. Setting up a small team that runs the chapter together. Doing it all alone is daunting and unsustainable over time
3. Getting in touch with various community based initiatives and communication channels that could help spread the word/co-host/join the walks.
4. Writing reflective pieces on the walks and inviting participants to write as well. Create a blog to share it on.

Building a chapter takes time and effort. It may need you to pause for a few months and start again. A large part of building a chapter is to not give up even if it means having to pause, take stock. Please remember, every walk shifts something. We may not be able to see it... but it does.