

Frequently asked questions



WHAT IS FIREWALKING?

Firewalking is the act of walking barefoot over a bed of hot coals. A combination of pine, ash and oak is burnt and then broken down into a smooth red hot path of embers. The lane itself is between 15-20ft long and 2-3ft wide. During the course of the burn down the temperature of the fire reaches over 1236* Fahrenheit and when it comes time to walk on the coals the fire lane will be burning at a core temperature of over 800* degrees Fahrenheit.

WHAT IS A SPONSORED FIREWALK?

In essence it's the same as a normal sponsored walk except the event takes place over twenty feet as opposed to twenty miles! The same structure exists and participants seek people to sponsor them in recognition of such a courageous undertaking. All proceeds minus the costs of the event go straight to the fundraising body concerned.

THE HISTORY OF FIREWALKING

The history of humanity and the discovery of the technology of fire are intimately connected and recent evidence suggests our ancestors Australopithecus mastered fire over 1.5 million years ago. The oldest recorded firewalk took place in India over 3000 years ago and evidence of firewalking has been found on every continent except Antarctica. From the shamanic Hawaiian Kahunas walking over red hot lava to the healing ceremonies of the !Kung Bushmen of the African Kalahari desert; the act of firewalking still forms a key religious and spiritual practice of indigenous people the world over.

The roots of modern firewalking can be traced back to the flowering of the human potential movement in the seventies and the search for non-western techniques of rapid brain change and spiritual development. Three specific American individuals Tolly Burkan, Peggy Dylan and Tony Robbins are credited with this development. During the eighties, our trainer Cliff Mann with the company 'Blaze' developed and popularised firewalking here in the UK as both a tool of rapid brain change and as a template for fundraising. This model has been further developed, expanded upon and professionalized as Time4Change takes firewalking into the 21st Century.

Today, firewalking has gone from an esoteric discipline bordering on the 'supernatural' to a practice that is utilised by such mainstream corporations as Microsoft, American Express and Barclays. Even the former US President Bill Clinton has walked over fire!

"Firewalking is a powerful technique that can accelerate a radical transformation in consciousness. People constantly say it changes their lives for ever." Tolly Burkan (co-founder of the American firewalking movement)

HOW IS FIREWALKING POSSIBLE?

There are multiple theories as to why it is possible to walk barefoot over a bed of hot coals without injury. At one end of the spectrum we have a scientific explanation based upon the principles of heat conductivity and thermal insulation. Many of these reports focus on both the poor conductivity of wooden coals in terms of heat transfer to the skin (that is why iron saucepans favour wooden handles) and the short contact time between the sole of the foot and the hot coals themselves (in the same way we can juggle a very hot baked potato between the hands). Some scientists even suggest the 'Leidenfrost Effect' may play a part. This occurs when a cold wet object (the foot) contacts a hot dry object (the coals); the resulting water vapours form a barrier of steam and since steam is a relatively poor conductor of heat, the foot remains unharmed. On the other hand, the fact that there is no definitive 'physical' explanation for why firewalking is possible leaves room for a more 'non-scientific' understanding and certainly the American founders of the modern firewalking movement adopt this approach. This 'esoteric' or 'spiritual' explanation is based upon the concepts of 'heightened body energy' and an enhanced state of consciousness.

At T4C, we adopt a very pragmatic approach to firewalking and believe that every single person has the innate ability and skill set to walk safely across hot coals without injury; regardless of the belief system that is adopted.



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WHO WILL BE TEACHING ME FIREWALKING?

The firewalk will be run by Time4Change; a training and events company based in Nottingham. For over three decades our instructor Cliff Mann has safely guided literally thousands of people from all walks of life over hot coals and today is recognised as the most experienced firewalking instructor operating in the UK and Europe. Amongst countless others, he has taught the art and science of firewalking to clients as diverse as Barclays Bank, Watford Football Club, Games Workshop, The Royal National Lifeboat Institution and The Big Issue.

Cliff has worked with the BBC as a firewalking consultant and has appeared on Discovery Health, GMTV Inch Loss Island, The House of Fear and Record Breakers where he broke the European firewalk record for distance. In addition to this, Cliff is a fully qualified hypnotherapist, veteran martial arts instructor and Neuro Linguistic Programming [NLP] Master Practitioner.

HOW DO I LEARN TO FIREWALK?

Each participant will take part in a mandatory two hour training seminar before being given the opportunity to walk across hot coals. Our approach is very simple; we believe human beings learn best through a combination of humour, metaphor, experience and experiment and the seminar reflects this. In essence we explore and experiment with the psychological, emotional and most of all, physical consequences of adopting a given belief system. We draw upon a wide range of disciplines and practices such as motivational psychology, NLP and the martial arts. It is important to bear in mind that there is no illusion or 'trick' to firewalking. No special materials are used and nor are you hypnotised or put into any altered state of consciousness.

WHAT DOES WALKING OVER HOT COALS FEEL LIKE?

First of all, the most important thing to remember is you will not be walking over flames! The wood is burnt down to a bed of smooth embers before the walk takes place. The actual experience of firewalking seems to be completely subjective; some people report a pleasant warm sensation, others like it was 'walking on snow' and others still say they can remember absolutely no sensation at all.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I STOP HALFWAY THROUGH OR FALL?

Despite the fact that no-one has ever to our knowledge stopped halfway through a firewalk, it is a question that is often asked! The fact that you will be in an energised state when you are about to cross the fire lane does not in anyway take your attention away from the task in hand. We often make the analogy of the state of mind we are in when we cross the road as the green light flashes; people seldom stop their journey at this point! The training you receive has been developed over three decades to ensure you walk over hot coals in safety with a smile on your face! Finally, in keeping with our strict health and safety guidelines, we ensure at least two members of T4C are constantly monitoring the lane as each walker crosses.

HAS ANYONE EVER BEEN INJURED WALKING ACROSS HOT COALS?

Activities such as parachuting, bungee jumping or abseiling all involve an element of risk and firewalking is no exception to this. Unlike these activities, no mortalities have ever occurred firewalking as far as we know. Firewalking can indeed be a dangerous activity if the training is carried out by inexperienced instructors or fire team members. Likewise, injuries can occur should the participants fail to adhere to the exact instructions given to them during the seminar.

Time4Change follows strict health and safety guidelines within the framework of our standard operating procedures. As a result of this, our training methods and our attention to detail, no-one has ever suffered an injury while crossing a T4C fire lane. We are very proud of our 100% safety record and take every precaution to ensure it remains this way.





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HAS ANYONE DECLINED TO WALK ACROSS HOT COALS?

Firewalking is a courageous undertaking regardless of the reasons why the participant is doing it and the training is specifically designed to tap into the inner resources of fearlessness, commitment and self-belief we all possess. We suggest to those who are unsure as to whether they will actually walk to leave that decision until after the training seminar. For us the training is easily as important as the actual firewalk itself and the skills and attitudes one learns in the seminar become tools which last a lifetime. Having said that, out of the thousands of people who have been taught the art of firewalking by Cliff Mann, not a single person has declined to walk across fire when given the opportunity to do so. Another 100% record of success we are very proud of.



HOW DO I PERSONALLY BENEFIT FROM WALKING ACROSS HOT COALS?

Even now, after three decades teaching firewalking, we are still astonished by the amount of people who tell us it has transformed their lives. The skills and positive belief systems one adopts during a firewalk seminar are applicable to all areas of life where fear and doubt can prevent an individual from becoming the person they are truly capable of being. When an individual firewalks, an increased awareness of how to achieve goals develops along with an enhanced view of the potential to succeed. Finally and perhaps the most important reason of all, it's so much fun to do!



WHAT HAPPENS ON THE NIGHT OF THE EVENT?

Registration begins at 5.30pm. We strongly recommend you arrive at least fifteen minutes before the registration process begins. You will then register for the event and provide the sponsorship monies you have been pledged. A 'disclaimer' is provided for you to read and sign (this document states that you are taking part in this event of your own free will and fully understand the potential risks involved in firewalking). After the two hour training session you will be brought out to the prepared fire lane. An experienced member of the T4C team always crosses the lane first to ensure it meets our strict safety criteria and once the go ahead has been given, each walker is then given the opportunity to walk across the fire lane. After all the walkers have safely crossed the lane you will be led back to the training room for a quick debrief and presentation of a certificate of achievement.



WHAT DO I WEAR ON THE NIGHT?

No special clothes are required, but you will be provided with a Rainbow Trust t-shirt. Casual clothing is fine as long as your trousers can be rolled up and there is no obstacle to removing your socks. Wet wipes are a good idea afterwards to wipe any soot off your feet.



ALCOHOL AND PRESCRIBED/NON-PRESCRIBED DRUGS

Due to the inherent risks associated with firewalking, any substances which adversely affect the operation of your nervous system will have a negative impact on your ability to walk safely over hot coals. Any person who appears to be visibly intoxicated will be declined the opportunity to firewalk. If you are taking any prescribed medication you are unsure about, please refer to your local GP for advice.

