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## **2.3. Gymnastics as a Mindfulness Exercise**

A very essential mindfulness exercise for me is morning gymnastics before meditation.

In the morning, our minds are often still daydreaming. Sometimes dreams continue, or many thoughts and images arise.

During my physical exercises, I gently bring myself into a mindful state. Thoughts and dreams are allowed to be there - I increasingly ground myself in my physical perception.

Of course, you could also bring yourself into a waking state very quickly - for example with an adrenaline rush, like a cold shower can trigger. This would dispel the daydreams and bring us quickly into the body.

Both ways have their advantages and disadvantages.

For me, the gentle method is more in tune. On the one hand, I am doing exactly what I also practice during the day - or repeatedly in everyday life:

**cultivating the mental ability to lead myself into a mindful state.**

We cannot permanently keep ourselves in a state of body awareness through external stimuli such as adrenaline kicks. At some point, we have to learn to achieve and maintain this through our own mental strength

On the other hand, important processing and clarification processes often take place in the mind in the morning, which I don't want to interrupt or suppress.

**Between willpower and mindfulness: the path to sustainable change**

In my younger years, I worked a lot with willpower here. Through martial arts, discipline, and fasting, I was able to reach a clear inner state.

But in doing so, I also suppressed many emotional processes. This sometimes led to a yo-yo effect: phases of concentration and discipline alternated with times when it no longer worked.

In these moments, emotional needs became very strong - and an inner resistance against the over-disciplined state built up.

That's why it became important for me to find a gentle way. A way in which I stay in touch with my mind and don't suppress inner processes, but instead consciously perceive them.

**With an open, loving mindfulness - even towards myself - I have made deeper and more lasting changes.**

I also shape my morning physical exercises according to this principle.

At first, I feel individual, distinct physical sensations. My inner self is often still dreaming,

images and stories pass by. I breathe and feel my body at the same time. Sometimes I lose myself briefly in thoughts or in planning the day.

Then I gently return to body perception.

During yoga or stretching exercises, I try to consciously relax all the muscles that I don't actively need. With each exhalation, I let go of unnecessary tension and allow myself to sink a little deeper into the stretch.

Between the exercises, I walk a few steps around the room.

I feel my soles, my hands, the weight of my body that I trust to the ground.

After about 20 to 30 minutes, I am fully arrived in my body, awake and present.

Then I begin with meditation.

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