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## 1.11. Walking meditation

Walking meditation exists in many traditions and in various forms. It often serves as a break between two meditation sessions to stretch one's legs.

In a Soto Zen temple in Japan, I encountered a very slow form of walking meditation. It was also practiced there between Zazen sitting meditations.

### **Walking meditation: An underestimated practice**

Walking meditation is often seen as a secondary alternative to the main form of sitting. For a long time, I also considered sitting to be the only method to achieve deep meditative states.

For me, walking meditation has become more than just a secondary variation of sitting meditation - it is now one of my primary forms of meditation.

I usually begin in a sitting posture and then switch to walking meditation after 20 to 30 minutes. This also suits my aging body, which finds long sitting sessions increasingly uncomfortable.

**My principle is: The outer form should best support the inner process.**

### **Movement in meditation**

In Zen, there is a rule that one should not move during meditation.

One reason is to interrupt conditioned movements - such as the reflexive scratching of an itch. Instead of reacting impulsively, one is encouraged to consciously observe the itching sensation without moving.

The same applies to constantly adjusting the sitting posture because one feels it isn't comfortable or optimal yet. Such small adjustments can disrupt the meditation.

However, even Zen monks move their breathing muscles during meditation.

The breathing movement is an unconsciously controlled, even, and rhythmic movement. This type of movement supports us in meditation and is by no means disruptive.

Likewise, slow, rhythmic walking - synchronized with the breath - can become a supportive movement.

The key is to practice it in such a way that it flows effortlessly. It takes several weeks for the body to internalize the movement and harmonize it seamlessly with the breath.

Then it no longer disrupts meditation.

# My personal form of walking meditation

I have developed a form of walking meditation for myself that leads me into deep states. It follows no strict outer form, as in Zen, but simply involves very slow walking in rhythm with the breath.

As I inhale, I take a tiny step forward with my left foot - just a few centimeters. Since exhaling is significantly longer and leads us deeper into meditation, I let my full body weight sink down onto my right foot while exhaling.

In the Zen version, you lift the foot while inhaling and place it back down while exhaling. The step length is about half a foot, so you take one full step per breath cycle.

## Finding your own form

I'm not a fan of strict external forms, as every body responds differently. What matters is understanding the principle and finding the form that personally leads you most effectively into meditation.

If you're looking for your own method, it may be helpful to try the Zen version. It's based on the long-standing experience of Zen masters and offers a proven foundation for walking meditation.

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