

PRESS RELEASE

Now in bookstores: "Zen – The Art of Conscious Living – A Guide to a Modern Attitude to Life"

A groundbreaking work connecting Eastern wisdom with Western everyday life

With "Zen – The Art of Conscious Living," author Hermann Candahashi counters the current hectic pace, overstimulation, and constant accessibility with a book that shows an alternative path. The work not only offers a theoretical exploration of the millennia-old Zen philosophy, but also translates it into concrete guidelines for life in the 21st century.

The Zen Buddhist tradition, whose origins date back to the 6th century, may at first glance seem far removed from our digitalized, performance-oriented society. Yet this is precisely where the book comes in: It builds a bridge between Far Eastern wisdom and Western realities. The author convincingly argues that the principles of Zen—mindfulness, presence in the moment, letting go, and acceptance of imperfection—can provide an antidote to the prevailing stressors of our time.

The book is divided into several thematic sections, encompassing both philosophical foundations and practical applications. Beginning with a historical context of Zen Buddhism, the author carefully introduces readers to key concepts. The dialogic nature of the work is particularly noteworthy: questions are repeatedly raised that stimulate thought and invite readers to reflect on their own life patterns.

"What does it really mean to live in the here and now?" or "How can we find inner peace in a world full of distractions?"—such questions serve as a common thread throughout the book. The author does not answer them with simple, panaceas, but rather develops nuanced perspectives that do justice to the complexity of human experience.

The connection between theory and practice is particularly impressive. Each conceptual section is followed by concrete exercises that can be integrated into everyday life – from mindful walking and breathing exercises to meditation techniques designed specifically for beginners. The author deliberately avoids esoteric idealization and instead emphasizes the pragmatic benefits of these practices for mental health, emotional balance, and cognitive well-being.

The scientific underpinnings of the concepts presented are another plus. The author does not limit himself to traditional Zen teachings but draws connections to modern neuroscientific findings, psychological studies, and sociological observations. This makes it clear that Zen practices not only have spiritual value but also empirically verifiable positive effects on stress reduction, attention focus, and emotional regulation.

At the same time, the book remains pleasantly down-to-earth. The author knows how to convey complex philosophical concepts in accessible, sometimes even humorous language. Anecdotes from his own life are repeatedly included, illustrating how Zen principles can be applied even under adverse circumstances – be it in everyday work, in relationships, or in times of personal crisis.

A particularly valuable aspect of the book is its exploration of typically Western challenges: How can Zen be combined with

career aspirations? How can one live the principle of non-attachment in a performance-oriented society? How can one find balance between digital life and inner concentration? The author is not afraid to address such areas of tension and develops nuanced perspectives that neither degenerate into cultural appropriation nor into naive escapism.

"Zen – The Art of Conscious Living" is aimed at a broad audience: from Zen novices who want to take their first steps toward mindfulness to experienced meditators who want to deepen their understanding. Even those who have previously been skeptical of Eastern philosophies will find an unbiased approach here, one that avoids missionary zeal and instead encourages independent thinking.

The author Hermann Candahashi, who has been intensively involved with Zen Buddhism for over two decades, brings not only theoretical knowledge but also practical experience to this work. His expertise is particularly evident in his ability to perform cultural translation work and free Zen concepts from their historical and cultural baggage without diluting their essence.

The book comes at a time when the longing for deceleration and a search for meaning is noticeably increasing in society. The COVID pandemic has caused many people to pause and reflect on their life priorities.

The ongoing geopolitical tensions, ecological crises, and technological upheavals are intensifying the need for inner stability and a more conscious approach to oneself and the world. "Zen – The Art of Conscious Living" offers not simple consolations, but a substantial path to cultivating inner resources.

The section on Zen and creativity is also noteworthy. The author demonstrates how Zen practices can enrich artistic and intellectual creative processes by freeing the mind from restrictive thought patterns and opening it to new perspectives. Connections are made to various art forms – from traditional Japanese calligraphy to modern forms of expression in literature, music, and the visual arts.

The exploration of the topic of transience and death is one of the most moving passages in the book. The author is not afraid to address existential questions directly and shows how the Zen perspective can help us understand finitude not as a threatening taboo, but as a valuable part of life. His reflections on the "art of dying" as part of the "art of living" are both profound and comforting, without slipping into religious dogma or superficial appeasement.

The topic of Zen and working life is also addressed in detail. In times of rising burnout rates and growing alienation in the workplace, the author offers concrete strategies for how Zen principles can contribute to the humanization of the workplace. This not only concerns individual stress management, but also provides inspiration for creating cooperative, meaningful work environments.

A recurring theme is the "unity of mind and body." The author criticizes the Cartesian separation, which is deeply rooted in Western culture, and shows how Zen practices can contribute to a more holistic understanding of oneself. The physical exercises presented are not conceived as mere relaxation techniques, but as paths to deeper self-knowledge and presence.

The nuanced approach to addressing cultural issues is particularly noteworthy. The author neither falls into uncritical idealization of

Eastern traditions nor into Eurocentric appropriation. Instead, he sensitively reflects on the challenges of intercultural understanding and develops a form of "transcultural Zen" that respects its historical roots while remaining relevant in the contemporary global context.

"Zen: The Art of Conscious Living" is more than just another self-help book in an oversaturated market. It is a thoughtful contribution to the question of how we can lead a meaningful, conscious life under the conditions of late modernity. The combination of philosophical depth, practical applicability, and contemporary relevance makes it a valuable companion for anyone seeking guidance in confusing times.

Critics might argue that the appropriation of Buddhist practices by Western consumers presents problematic aspects of cultural appropriation. The author proactively addresses this objection by respectfully presenting the historical and cultural contexts of Zen while also referencing the long history of cultural exchange between East and West. He convincingly argues that genuine appreciation and deep understanding are the opposite of superficial appropriation.

Another potential point of criticism concerns the question of whether Zen practices are actually compatible with a capitalist meritocracy or whether they might not, rather, contribute to its affirmation by promoting individual coping rather than structural change. This tension is also addressed in the book. The author advocates for an "engaged Zen" that combines inner transformation with social responsibility and shows how mindful presence can lead not to escapist withdrawal but to more conscious action in the world.

The book is aimed at various audiences: people in stressful jobs seeking ways to maintain their mental health; spiritually inclined individuals seeking an unbiased approach to Zen Buddhism; those interested in philosophy who are enthusiastic about intercultural dialogues between Eastern and Western traditions of thought; but also, more generally, at readers seeking orientation and inner stability in turbulent times.

With "Zen – The Art of Conscious Living," the interested reader has a work that has the potential to transcend the current mindfulness trend and provide substantial inspiration for a more conscious, fulfilling life in the 21st century. It is a book that one not only reads, but lives with – a companion on the path to greater presence, clarity, and inner freedom in a complex, often overwhelming world.

About the Author

The author is an expert on Japanese culture and religion, known for his books, and has published numerous articles on these topics. He spent several years, with interruptions, in Japan, where he intensified his knowledge in various places and cities. His field research took him to numerous regions of Japan, from Hokkaido to Okinawa, and gave him deep insights into local traditions and customs. In addition to his travels, he also sees himself as a cultural mediator and has authored numerous books on Japanese spirituality and folklore. He is particularly interested in the connection between traditional ideas and modern society, as well as the intercultural dialogue between Japan and Western culture.

"Zen – The Art of Conscious Living" is one of his most comprehensive works to date and the result of intensive research and personal encounters.

Availability

"Zen – The Art of Conscious Living" is now available in three languages ??(German, English, and French) from bookstores, in hardcover, paperback, e-book, and audiobook formats. Further information, excerpts, and event information can be found on the publisher's website.

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ZEN - THE ART OF LIVING CONSCIOUSLY

Instructions for a modern and
fulfilling attitude to life



Hermann Candahashi

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