

## The Slow Walker

I want to make the case for the most annoying person you know: the Slow Walker. He saunters through the hallways, indifferent to the people around him. Perhaps you were annoyed. Perhaps you didn't even notice him. Perhaps you yelled at him, 'Get a move on!' To some, the Slow Walker is like a rock in the middle of a stream, a time-wasting, lethargic fool. And don't get me wrong, I once thought this, too. But as I grew older, I started to see something different in him.

So today, I'd like us to take a look at who the Slow Walker is, what makes him unique, and what we can learn from him. First, we'll examine his signature relaxed pace. Then, we'll examine how he's fast (sounds contradictory, right?). Lastly, we'll look at how reflective he is.

First, the Slow Walker takes it slow. 'But isn't this obvious?' you might say. Yes, it is, but it's also very important. Most of us move slowly some of the time, like when we're tired, distracted, or not in a hurry. But the Slow Walker does something different. There's a difference between accidentally and deliberately moving slowly, and the Slow Walker manages to do the latter. We live in a world that rewards fast-moving, enterprising souls who never waste a moment and never stops encouraging us to 'grind'. Social media feeds us videos of people who seem to be doing more with the same 24 hours we have. That pressure quickly turns inward, threatening our mental well-being. The Harvard Business Review labels this mindset as 'hurry sickness,' the feeling that you're always short on time and need to cram in as much as possible. I often experience this, especially concerning school. And it takes a toll, too, on your health, your mood, and eventually, your sanity. However, the Slow Walker manages to avoid this. By taking his day moment-by-moment, he cancels the stress associated with constantly rushing.

Furthermore, the Slow Walker is fast. Now, you may be thinking, 'Isn't this contradictory? I thought he said he's slow?'

Yes, I did say he is slow. But he is also fast...in a sense.

The Slow Walker, counterintuitively, gets more done. While the rest of us are sprinting from task to task, we're also cutting corners and making careless errors, only to have to circle back and fix what we rushed through. The Slow Walker doesn't have this problem. He's actually there for what he's doing, rather than halfway through the next thing in his head.

Think of it this way: who actually arrives at the destination first? The driver who speeds and gets pulled over, or the one who drives the limit without stopping? The Slow Walker is the second driver. His consistency quietly outpaces everyone else's frantic energy.

Aesop figured this out thousands of years ago, through his fable about the tortoise and the hare. In this situation, the Slow Walker is the former, and us the latter. Though he seems to be losing at first, his mentality inevitably hands him the win.

Finally, the Slow Walker is reflective. Naturally, many of us tend to fall into a rhythm of 'Wake up > Eat > School/Work > Sleep > Repeat.' I find myself guilty of this, going about my day with no deep thought about anything I experience. But this is not the ideal way to live, and the Slow Walker shows us this. What the Slow Walker understands, and what most of us don't, is that a life spent on autopilot is barely a life at all. Socrates famously said that 'the unexamined life is not worth living.' The Slow Walker, whether he knows it or not, seems to agree.

I've experienced this firsthand. There have been plenty of times when I rushed through an assignment, told myself it was good enough, only to have it handed back to me by the teacher because it wasn't my best work. The Slow Walker doesn't experience this. He does it correctly the first time.

When's the last time you contemplated how the lockers at your school looked, or the cars that passed you by on the street? Likely never, as is the case for me. However, the Slow Walker manages to do this. His pace enables him to do so.

In conclusion, the Slow Walker is not a bad man. He's not a careless one, either. So, the next time you see him sauntering down the hallway, indifferent to the rushing crowd around him, I'd encourage you not to shrug him off, or worse, push past him in frustration. Watch him instead. He takes it slow and thus gets more done. He moves through life with his eyes open, noticing what the rest of us skim over. He is, in short, more complex than he may seem. In fact, he's not falling behind at all. He's the only one who ever stopped to ask where we're all rushing to.