

The Body Scan

The body scan is a mindfulness meditation practice. It can help you become more familiar with your own body; learn to work effectively with body sensations and feelings of discomfort, pain and stress; and cultivate increasing powers of concentration and relaxation. The one key to this practice is to simply notice and accept whatever is present in the current moment—sensations, moods or thoughts.

As you go through the practice, try and focus clearly on each area of the body, noticing whatever arises. If you realize that you have become distracted, simply pick up from where you drifted off...

Begin by sitting or lying down comfortably. Gently close your eyes. Become aware of your body: Notice your posture and feel the weight of your body supported by the seat beneath you. Bring attention to the natural flow of your breath. Try not to change it or deepen it in any way—simply notice it.

Try following the full cycle of breath, noticing the breath entering the nostrils on an inhale, filling the lungs, and continue following the breath as it makes its way out of the body on an exhale. If thoughts intrude, simply notice them, and gently refocus your attention on the breath.

Maintaining this focus, bring your attention to the toes, noticing any sensations that may arise—perhaps feelings of tension, temperature, tingling. Rest your attention here for a few moments, exploring the entire surface and structure of the toes.

Now direct your attention to the balls of the feet, the arches, the heels, the ankles, becoming aware of all sensations. Then bring your attention to the shins, the calves, becoming aware of the bones, the skin, the muscles, continue noticing...

Bring awareness to the knees, the thighs, the pelvis, the buttocks—noticing. As thoughts or emotions arise, notice them and then return to the body scan.

Become aware of the entire back body, the placement of the spine, the shoulder blades—noticing. Bring awareness to the front body, the abdomen, the lungs, the rib cage, noticing the rise and fall of each breath, perhaps sensing the beating of the heart. Note the intimate connections of the systems of the body. Become aware of the arms, the hands, the fingers—noticing...

Be aware of the throat, the jaw, the tongue, the face, the brow. Now bring your awareness to the crown of your head. Take a moment to feel the body as a whole. Return your attention to the breath, and notice the effect of the practice.

Allow yourself to feel relaxed and complete, right now, in this moment...