

Body Scan

GETTING READY

The Body Scan is a mindfulness practice that can help us begin to develop more awareness of the physical sensations within the various parts of the body. As your awareness turns to these different parts of your body, allow yourself to experience the sensations. You don't have to label any of the sensations, just allow yourself to fully feel the sensations and accept them as they are – without labelling them as bad or good, sore or uncomfortable. Just stay with the sensations.

This practice should be done in a quiet space. Group members can sit on the floor or in a chair. It can even be done lying on your back on the floor with your arms at your side. If you are lying down and find yourself drifting off, you can open your eyes or even move into a chair. Make sure that you are warm enough.

WHAT TO DO

- Close your eyes and turn your attention to your breathing. Breathe in and out quietly through your nose. Notice your abdomen rising and falling as you inhale and exhale.
- Sitting or lying quietly, notice where your body is touching the chair or floor. Notice the sensation in each part of the body this is in contact with them.
- Notice the sensations of your clothes against your skin as you move up the body, starting with your toes – all the way up to the top of your head. If you have glasses on, note the sensations of the glasses on your face, nose, and the top of your ears.
- Notice the sensation of any jewellery you might have on.
- Now as we turn our attention to the various parts of the body, just notice the sensations you feel within each part. Try not to “visualise” or move the body part. As you focus on the various parts of your body, feel free to “breathe into” a certain part or consciously allow it to relax a little more—as you see fit.
- Begin with your left big toe. Is it cold or hot? Is it relaxed or somewhat tense? Does it tingle? Just notice that. Then move your attention to each of the remaining toes, one by one. Let go of your awareness on your toes and move your attention to the sole of your left foot and into your left heel.
- Continue moving up to your ankle, calf, knee, and then your thigh. Then, moving to the right foot, begin again with your right big toe and up through your right thigh.
- Let your awareness move next to your hips, feeling the sensation first on your right buttock and then the left one. Notice the sensations in your genitals also.
- Focusing on the back side of your body, experience the sensations in your lower back, and then move slowly up to the upper back and shoulder blades. Notice the feeling of the sensations. Then move around each side of your torso, first to the abdomen and then up into the chest.
- Investigate the sensations within the right shoulder and move down the forearm, wrist, hands, and the fingers—taking time to experience the different sensations in each part. Then move your awareness over to the left arm and repeat.

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- Allow your awareness to turn to the back of the neck and next to the front of the neck. Become aware of the sensations within the back of your head, then the crown and finally onto your face. Explore the various areas of your face, beginning with your chin, lips, upper lip, cheeks, nose, eyes, and forehead.
- Feel the entire body, experience how the individual parts connect and form your whole body. Become aware of the various sensations in your body as a whole. Breathe in more deeply and fully—in and out of your body.
- When you are ready, slowly open your eyes. If you have been lying down, turn over onto your right side. Slowly sit up and open your eyes.

HOME PRACTICE

You can find recordings of guided Body Scan meditation on the internet. Or you can make your own recording using your mobile phone or a small recorder. You can also use this handout and keep it nearby during your home practice session. Allow 10—30 minutes for this practice.