

Body Scan Meditation

. = 1 second
 . . = 2 seconds

INTRODUCTION

Finding a place where you'll not be disturbed by the phone, family or pets during this practice of the body scan .

Wearing loose and comfortable clothing .

Lying down on the bed or the carpet , your feet lined up with the hips and falling apart just a bit .

Extending your arms at a comfortable distance from your sides, with palms up

If you wish, using pillows to support your head and lower legs to ease any strain on your neck and lower back .

Making whatever adjustments are needed to find a position that is best for you right now .

You may also sit in a chair with your feet up, or with the soles of your feet in full contact with the floor . resting your hands on your thighs or in your lap .

Covering yourself with a blanket if needed to stay warm (3 sec)

MEDITATION

Allowing your eyes to gently close if you wish, settling into the body . . .

Taking a few deeper than usual breaths and on each out breath, letting go of what doesn't need to be held (15 seconds)

relaxed and attentive (3 sec)

Considering for a moment the aim of this body scan practice .

For this bit of time, setting an intention to simply bring attention to the body as you find it . . .

With an attitude of friendly curiosity . openness . and caring (3 sec)

Letting go of any expectations you might have about the outcome of this practice, such as becoming more relaxed .

You may become more relaxed, or you may not . allowing yourself to be present with whatever is experienced moment to moment, just as it is .

Noticing any judgments that may come up about the body and letting go of any urge to change or fix anything .

Perhaps acknowledging your wholeness just as you are in this moment (3 sec)

Now becoming aware of the movement of the breath in and out of the body, wherever this movement is most noticeable to you (5 seconds)

This could be the rise and fall of the belly

or the changing temperature and movement of air in and around the nostrils with each breath . . .

.
 or perhaps some other location such as the chest or throat

Resting in the natural flow of the breath wherever it is easiest for you to sense it (10 sec)

When you are ready, opening the awareness from the focus on the breath to take in how the body feels as a whole (5 sec)

Paying particular attention to any sense of pressure, temperature or texture where the body comes in contact with something else, like the bed, the floor, clothing (5 sec)

Noticing how it feels to have the body supported by the earth . grounded (5 sec)

Perhaps noticing the sensation of the air in contact with the skin . can you sense the air moving? . the temperature of the air? (5 sec)

From time to time you may notice your attention being drawn away from the body to thoughts or images .

This is a common experience and not in any way a failure .

Simply noting that this has happened with a soft label . “thinking” .

and gently but firmly escorting the attention back to the changing field of sensations that is the body .

This actually IS the practice of mindfulness . noticing that the mind has wandered and bringing it back, over and over , to whatever you were aiming to observe . . .

When you are ready, bringing the focus of awareness all the way down to the great toe of the left foot .

Not so much looking at the great toe in your mind’s eye . rather, feeling into the great toe from the inside out . . .

Now focusing one at a time on each toe of the left foot . . .

Curious about whatever is noticed .

Perhaps aware of toes touching other toes . .

noting the quality of any sensations, such as tingling or pulsing, warmth or coolness . . .

or possibly noticing no sensation at all as this is not uncommon . . . as attention deepens or conditions within the body change, you may notice sensations that haven’t been noticed before .

Keeping in mind that whatever you experience - sensation or no sensation - is perfectly all right . .

There is no need for your experience to be anything other than what it is . .

On the next in breath, feeling the breath entering the nose, passing through the windpipe to the lungs, to the belly, to the left leg, the left foot, all the way out to the toes .

Then on the out breath, feeling the breath travelling back from the left toes, to the foot, the leg, through the belly, the lungs, the windpipe and out through the nose .

As best you can, for a few more breaths, continue breathing in all the way to the toes and breathing back out from the toes (5 sec)

It may take some practice to get the hang of this .

As best you can, approach this practice playfully, letting go of any struggle or striving . . .

When you are ready, on an out breath, shifting the focus of awareness from the toes to the sensations on the bottom of the left foot .

Gently exploring the ball of the foot, the arch, the heel .

Perhaps exploring sensations where the heel or bottom of the foot is in contact with whatever is supporting it (3 sec)

Playing with the possibility of “breathing with” any sensations that you experience in the bottom of the left foot (3 sec)

If it is helpful, you might consider the awareness to be like a spotlight, that you can now open a bit to take in the rest of the foot - the top of the foot, the ankle, including the bones and muscles that make up the foot and ankle joint (3 sec)

Notice with a kind curiosity how your left foot as a whole feels - is it warm or cool . moist or dry . restless or still? (3 sec)

Now taking in a slightly deeper breath, directing the breath down into the entire left foot, and, on the out breath, letting go of the left foot completely, allowing the spotlight of awareness to shift to the lower left leg .

Noting any sensations in the calf, shin, or knee - are the muscles of the lower left leg tight or loose? (3 sec)

If you care to, practice breathing into and out of the lower left leg (3 sec)

Now shifting the spotlight of awareness to the left upper leg, the large thigh muscles and long bone, the hip joint bathed in fluid, again noting any sensations in this area while breathing into and out of the left upper leg (5 sec)

and with the next out breath, letting go of the left leg completely

Next, shifting the "spotlight" of awareness down the right leg, to the right foot and all the way out to the tips of the right toes (3 sec)

Focusing for a few moments on each toe of the right foot noticing the type and intensity of any sensations you find (5 sec)

Bringing a gentle curiosity that allows whatever is already there to be just as you find it . .

When you are ready, on an out breath, letting go of awareness of the toes and bringing the spotlight of awareness to the sensations on the bottom of your right foot .

to the ball of the right foot, the arch, and the heel .

Again, explore the possibility of "breathing with" the sensations that you find as you explore the bottom of the right foot . perhaps pulsing, tingling, or no sensation at all (3 sec)

Now, allowing the spotlight of awareness to expand to taking in the rest of the right foot - the top of the foot, the ankle, the many bones of different shapes and sizes that make up the foot (3 sec)

Then, taking a slightly deeper breath, directing the breath down into the whole of the right foot, and, with the next out breath, letting go of the right foot completely .

Perhaps noting with compassion any challenges the feet have experienced and expressing gratitude that the feet have brought you to this part of your day as they have many times before (5 sec)

Now allowing the spotlight of awareness to shift into the lower right leg .

Noting any sensations or lack of sensation in the calf, shin, knee joint including the knee cap (5 sec)

Breathing into and out of the right lower leg (3 sec)

When you are ready, shifting the spotlight of awareness to the right upper leg, the thigh and hip joint . .

again noting any sensations deep in the muscles that surround the long bone, around to the back of the thigh and the hamstring (5 sec)

breathing into and out of the right upper leg . .

And with the next out breath, letting go of the right leg completely .

Perhaps taking a moment to acknowledge with compassion and gratitude how the legs have supported you each day of your life (5 sec)

During this practice, if the awareness is drawn to a strong sensation located somewhere else in the body . perhaps to an itch or an ache .

bringing a kind curiosity to the sensation .

letting go of any stories the mind is spinning about the sensation by breathing with the sensation (3 sec)

perhaps sensing the edges of the sensation (3 sec)

noting the qualities of the sensation that may even change as you observe (3 sec)

letting go as best you can of any tendency to struggle with your attention or to try and control the sensation in any way (3 sec)

once you have explored the sensation, if a change of position is called for take care of yourself with awareness (3 sec)

and when you are ready, gently escorting your attention back to the body scan (3 sec)

Next, shifting the "spotlight" of awareness to the trunk of the body, beginning with the pelvis including the genital area and moving up the lower abdomen to the waist . this area of the body that houses the bladder, large intestine and around back to the buttocks, and above, the kidneys .

exploring any sensations, perhaps sounds, that you find here while breathing into and out of this area (5 sec)

Now shifting the "spotlight" of awareness to the stomach . this part of the body we refer to when we know something that we may not be able to express in words .

this wisdom of our body that we call a "gut" reaction . where we feel the stabbing sensation of fear and the "butterflies" of anxiety .

exploring any sensations you find in the stomach, perhaps noting looseness or tightness of the stomach muscles, while breathing into and out of this area (10 sec)

And if, at any point, you find yourself falling asleep, you might find it helpful to open the eyes briefly or to shift position from lying down to sitting or from sitting to standing for a bit .

Letting go of any urge to scold yourself .

Next, shifting the "spotlight" of awareness to the chest and breastbone, underneath which lies the heart .

This heart that may be soft and open or heavy or tight .

Noting any sensations in the area of the heart (5 sec)

this heart that we associate with emotion .

that has the capacity to feel so deeply - kindhearted, courageous .

and experience emotional pain - "heartbroken", "heartsick" (3 sec)

Shifting the awareness around to the upper back, the shoulder blades, the area between the shoulder blades and the shoulder joints (5 sec)

this area that is associated with carrying the burdens of life .

Now taking in the entire rib cage that protects the heart and lungs .

Noticing any sensations you find while breathing into and out of this area .

including any sounds and movement associated with breathing or the heartbeat (5 sec)

Following the spinal column from the base of the skull all the way to the tip of the tailbone, noting sensations and/or lack of sensations (10 sec)

Now, turning the "spotlight" of awareness down both arms to the hands and out to the tips of the fingers .

Focus the attention on each finger in turn, with genuine curiosity, noticing the quality of any sensations you find (5 sec)

When you are ready, on an out breath, letting go of awareness of the fingers, bringing awareness to the sensations of the palms and backs of the hands, including the wrists and feeling into the center of the wrist joints (5 sec)

These hands that you use to take care of yourself and others (3 sec)

Taking a slightly deeper breath, directing the breath down into both hands and with the out breath, letting go of the hands completely, allowing the awareness to shift to the lower arms and elbow joints, sensing the muscles, bones and blood flow from within (5 sec)

Now shifting the awareness to the upper arms all the way to the shoulder joints, noting any sensations while breathing into and out of these areas (5 sec)

Allowing compassion and gratitude to flow throughout both of the arms .
these arms with which you embrace and carry (3 sec)
and with the next out breath, letting go of the arms completely . .

Shifting the awareness to the neck, the throat . . .
The neck which houses the organs that allow expression through words .
Noticing any sensations such as constriction or looseness, vibration, sound
Breathing into and out of this area (5 sec)
and with the next outbreath, letting go of the neck completely .

Shifting the awareness to the head, starting with the chin, and moving outward to the jaws, the lips and inward to the tongue, the teeth and cheeks .
Noting any sensations such as softness or tightness, moisture or dryness (5 sec)

When you are ready, shifting the awareness to the ears, eyes and eye sockets, nose, temples, (5 sec)
Shifting the awareness to the skin of the entire face . . .
noting any presence or absence of sensation perhaps smoothness, wrinkling, tightness, smoothness (5 sec)
aware of this face that communicates so much to the world . . .

Shifting the awareness to the entire head including the scalp and the hair and the many underlying bones of the skull that protect the brain . the source of thoughts and our ability to reason .
taking your time, observing from inside out (10 sec)
And on the next outbreath, letting go of the head entirely .

Now that you have scanned the whole body in this way, spending a few moments in awareness of the body as a whole (3 sec)
Aware of the breath flowing freely in and out of the body (3 sec)
Congratulating yourself for the courage and compassion of your heart to spend this time giving caring attention to the body .
And as you are ready beginning small movements in the feet and hands gradually awakening the whole body to movement, perhaps stretching in whatever way feels called for before rolling onto you side and slowly sitting up or moving from sitting to standing .