

How to Perform a Body Scan

Plan time in your day when you will not be disturbed. Remove as many distractions as you can. Find a comfortable chair or place on the floor.

Sit in a comfortable position. You can read through the instructions on the following pages to walk you through the body scan. After 2-3 times you'll be able to close your eyes and do it without guidance.

Take a few deep, cleansing breaths to start the practice. Release tension where you notice it.

Start the scan with a focus on your feet and mentally scan your body from toes to scalp, slowly and with attention and breathing.



Health Benefits of Regular Practice

Body scanning is an effective way to notice any changes or disruptions in your physical body.

- Increases self-awareness
- Reduces stress
- Decreases muscle tension
- May increase pain tolerance

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Body scanning is an effective way to notice any changes or disruptions in your physical body. The aim of this exercise is to bring awareness to the physical sensations in different parts of your body.

Your mind is probably used to labeling these sensations as good or pleasurable; or bad, uncomfortable, or even painful. For this exercise, see if you are able to just notice what you feel without judgment – for example, do you notice tingling, warmth, pulsating, tightness, or other sensations. Again, it's not about whether these sensations are good or bad, it's just about noticing them.

As you mentally scan each part of your body, notice the sensations. As you become aware of tension, discomfort, pain, stiffness, itchiness, or other intense sensations in a particular part of your body, acknowledge any emotions associated with it. Pause on the afflicted area, and take a few deep breaths. Imagine yourself letting go of the sensation or breathing it away, where you can. Exhale your tension when you find it. Remember that any particularly sensitive sensations that cannot be "breathed away" are your body's way of communicating a physical need to you.

Your mind may inevitably wander away from the breath and the body from time to time, which is normal. When you notice your mind has wandered, gently acknowledge it, and then return your attention to the part of the body you intended to focus on.

To practice the body scan technique, follow the steps below. You can read this and still perform the body scan, just take time to allow your mind to really focus on the areas of the body before reading the next step. Read slowly, then scan, gently bring your focus to the next step, read slowly, then scan, etc.

Begin by making yourself comfortable in your chair.

Sit in a comfortable position with your feet flat on the floor, shoulder width apart. Make sure your back is supported and that you're sitting up as straight as you can comfortably. Place your hands gently on your lap.

Take 5 or 6 long, slow, deep breaths.

Breathing in fully and exhaling slowly.
Breathe in through your nose and out through your nose or mouth.
Feel your stomach expand on an inhale and drop your shoulders a little on each exhale to help you relax.

Begin to shift your attention from outside to inside yourself.

If you are distracted by sounds in the room, simply notice this and bring your focus back to your breathing.
Now, bring your awareness to where your body makes contact with the floor and the chair.
Notice how the pressure of the surfaces feels as a sensation.
On each outbreath, allow yourself to let go, to sink a little deeper into the

How to Perform a Body Scan

surface below you.

Now slowly bring your attention down to your feet.

It's perfectly fine if you don't feel anything.
Simply notice all sensations and feel what is happening.

Slowly bring your attention to your left foot and leg.

Scan your left foot for any sensations. Simply become aware of them.

Scan your left ankle.

Scan your left calf.

Scan your left knee.

Scan your left thigh.

Notice and allow any sensations that may be present. Allow yourself to feel any and all sensations.

Next, scan for any sensation in your right foot and leg.

Scan your right foot for any sensations. Simply become aware of them.

Scan your right ankle.

Scan your right calf.

Scan your right knee.

Scan your right thigh.

Notice and allow any sensations that may be present. Allow yourself to feel any and all sensations.

Now move your focus to the sensations in your buttocks, pelvis, and lower back.

Become curious about the sensations in these areas.

You may become aware of sensations in the muscles, temperature or points of contact with furniture.

With each outbreath, try to let go of any tension you sense.

Slowly move your attention up through your mid- and upper back.

Become curious about the sensations in these areas.

You may become aware of sensations in the muscles, temperature or points of contact with furniture.

With each outbreath, try to let go of any tension you sense.

Very gently shift your focus to your stomach and all the internal organs here.

Perhaps you notice the feeling of clothing, the process of digestion or the belly rising or falling with each breath.

If you notice opinions arising about these areas, gently let these go and return to noticing sensations.

Remain aware of your stomach and your breath.

Breathe in... and out...

Continue to notice any sensations in your stomach area.

As you continue to breathe, bring your awareness to the chest and heart region and just notice your heartbeat.

Observe how the chest rises during the inhale and how the chest falls during the exhale.

Let go of any judgments that may arise.

How to Perform a Body Scan

On the next outbreath, shift the focus to your hands and fingertips.

Observe the sensations or lack of sensations that may be occurring there.

You might notice some difference between the left arm and the right arm.

As you exhale, you may experience each arm soften and release tensions.

Scan for any sensations in your left hand and arm.

Scan your left hand and fingertips for any sensations. Simply become aware of the different sensations and feel what is happening.

Scan your left wrist.

Scan your left elbow.

Scan your left arm.

Continue to bring awareness, and a gentle curiosity to the sensations.

Scan for any sensations in your right hand and arm.

Scan your right hand and fingertips for any sensations. Simply become aware of the different sensations and feel what is happening.

Scan your right wrist.

Scan your right elbow.

Scan your right arm.

Continue to bring awareness, and a gentle curiosity to the sensations.

Notice each shoulder, first the left, then the right.

Notice the sensations on each side.

Notice if one feels more sensation than the other.

Make a note of the difference.

Continue to breathe and shift focus to the shoulder, neck, and throat.

This is an area where we often hold tension.

Be with the sensations here.

You may notice tightness, rigidity, pressure, or clenching.

You may notice the shoulders moving along with the breath.

Let go of any thoughts or stories you are telling about this area.

As you breathe, you may feel tension rolling off your shoulders.

On the next outbreath, shift your focus and direct your attention to the jaw, face, head, and scalp.

Observe all of the sensations occurring there.

Feel the sensations in your jaw. You may wish to open and close your jaw, and then yawn. Release any tension you may have noticed in your jaw as you do this.

Notice the movement of the air as you breathe into or out of the nostrils or mouth.

Notice your eyes and how they feel.

Notice your eyebrows and any tension you may be holding there. You may wish to raise your eyebrows a few times.

Release any tension you have noticed in your brow as you do this.

Take note of any sensations you can feel about your ears.

Bring your awareness to the top of your head.

How to Perform a Body Scan

Now, take a moment to notice how *all* your body parts are connected.

Let your attention to expand out to include the entire body as a whole.

Bring into your awareness the top of your head down to the bottom of your toes.

Feel the gentle rhythm of the breath as it moves through your body.

Let any sensations come to you. Just notice what kind of sensation it is – tingling, warmth, coolness, heaviness, floating, etc.

Accept whatever sensation there is as just that, a sensation that will arise and slowly and gradually change.

It is just another part of you.

Continue to focus on your breathing for as long as you like.

As you come to the end of this practice, take a full, deep breath, taking in all the energy of this practice.

Exhale fully.

Return your attention to the present moment.

