

Audio Exercise 6: Body Scan / Progressive Body Awareness

The purpose of this exercise is simply to notice your body. It is not necessarily about relaxing your body; however, this may well occur. Usually, our response to bodily pain or discomfort is to distract ourselves or try to numb the pain. In this exercise you will accept and notice with gentle curiosity your body in its comfort and discomfort.

Sit or lie down in a comfortable position, making sure that you do not have any constriction. Loosen any tight clothing.

Starting with your feet, pay attention to the physical feelings in them: any pain, discomfort, coolness, warmth, tension, tightness, whatever. Simply pay attention to the physical feelings and sensations. Don't judge them as good or bad, do not try to change them, just be aware of them.

Slowly allow your awareness to drift up from your feet to your lower legs, again simply paying attention to any physical sensations in that part of your body, including any tightness, pain, or discomfort.

Then slowly let your awareness drift further up your body, doing the same gentle noticing for all of the parts of your body – your upper legs, hips, buttocks, pelvic region, stomach, chest, your lower back, upper back, fingers and hands, lower arms, upper arms, shoulders, neck, your head, forehead, temples, face – eyes, cheeks, nose, mouth, jaw line.

Then let your awareness drift gently and slowly back down your body, noticing any other places where there is pain, discomfort or tension and simply noticing this, until your awareness settles back at your feet.

Commence doing this exercise just for 5 minutes. It can be done sitting down in a chair or lying in bed. Over time, don't worry about how long it takes – just allow yourself to pay attention to the sensations in your body. If, while doing this exercise, thoughts intrude, that is okay – just notice the thoughts, notice yourself noticing the thoughts and gently guide your awareness back to your body.

Note: One variation on this is to focus on parts of your body that you don't like – do this in front of a mirror, noticing your thoughts & feelings as you do the exercise.