



1st Practical Exercise

Body scan meditation

1. Introduction (10 lines)

The guided body scan meditation is a powerful instrument to deepen the awareness of the body. The body scan meditation focuses attention on physical sensations in the body. The practice is completed by “scanning” one’s awareness through the entire body on a micro level. Attention is given to every inch of the body.

The body scan meditation works on different aspects of mindfulness such as attention, awareness, embodiment, letting be, leaning into unpleasant sensations, appreciation, getting unstuck. By consciously choosing to place the mind on a specific area of the body, we are training our capacity to pay attention.

Repeatedly bringing attention to our bodies balances the tendency to “live in our heads.” The body senses rather than thinks, so, by allowing body sensations to be felt, we can drop into a fuller sensory palette. Living from our bodies, we tune into a mode of perceiving that’s more centered, grounded and directly in touch with the world around us, rather than always getting caught up in concepts.

2. Target Group

Adults

3. Key Words

Awareness, body perception, acceptance, attention, embodiment

4. Purpose of the practical exercise (5 lines)

The prime intention of a body scan is to incline the mind into sensory experience—to experience how it is to “be a body.” The purpose of this practice is to cultivate the ability to notice what is being experienced in the body. This is a particularly useful practice to learn self-awareness about how physical experience is tied to emotional experience. For each emotion we experience, there is a way in which that emotion resides in the body, and by opening one’s attention to receiving this information, the person can begin to learn how to better respond to physical and emotional cues and their interrelated cognition.

5. Specific reason why this practical exercise has been developed (5 lines)

The exercise has been developed to help people experiencing their own body and to avoid being caught in the overlay of judgmental thinking about it, allowing the whole vision of the body and of the person to change dramatically. The body scan has been developed to reestablish the contact with the body, lost for a lot of people into the daily life. The idea of scanning the body is to actually feel and inhabit each region the person is focusing on and linger in it in the timeless present as best as he/she can. Moreover, the exercise allows people to develop the ability to place their attention systematically anywhere in the body and purposefully direct energy of



various kinds, in the form of acceptance and kindness to whatever sensations might be rising, in to that region or regions.

6. Materials

Comfortable clothes, a surface to lie on (either a bed or a mat)

7. Description & Instruction

Description of the stage	Instruction
1st step:	<p>Lie down in a warm and private place, in a mat on the floor or on the bed, dressed in loose and comfortable clothing at a time when you will not be interrupted.</p> <p>Allow your eyes to gently close, and let your arms lie alongside your body, your feet to fall away from each other and slowly bring your attention to the fact that you are breathing. Try not to control your breath in any way but simply experience it as the air moves in and out of your body. Notice the feeling of rising and falling of your belly with each inbreath and each outbreath, “riding the waves” of your breath with full awareness for the full duration of each inbreath and the full duration of each outbreath. Follow the rhythmic movement of each breath, the rising of your belly on the inbreath and on each outbreath just letting go, letting your body, becoming heavy as it sinks a little bit deeper into relaxation. Just bring full attention to each breath in each moment.</p> <p>Take a few moments to feel your body as a whole, from head to toe, observing the sensations associated with the touch in the places where you are in contact with the floor or the bed.</p>
2nd step:	<p>Now bring your attention to your feet, becoming aware of whatever sensations are there. If you are registering a blank as you tune in, then just experiencing nothing. And as you breathe in, imagine your breath moving all the way down to your feet and then when you reach your feet, begin your outbreath and let it move all the way up your body and out your nose. So that you’re breathing in from your nose and breathing out from your feet. And when you are ready, letting your feet dissolve in your mind’s eye. Become aware of the shins and calf muscles and the sensations in the lower legs, not just on the surface but right down into the bones, experiencing and accepting what you feel here and breathing into it, then breathing out from it. Then letting go of your lower legs as you relax into the bed or mat. And moving now into the thighs and if there’s any tension just noticing that. Breathing into and out from the thighs. Then letting your thighs dissolve and relax. Shift your attention to your pelvis now. From one hip</p>



	<p>to the other. Notice your buttocks in contact with the bed or the mat and the sensations of contact and of weight. Become aware of the region of the genitals, and whatever sensations or lack of sensations you are experiencing. And direct your breath down into your pelvis, breathing with the entirety of your pelvis. And as you breathe out, moving the breath back up through your body and out your nose, letting your pelvis soften and release all tension as you sink even deeper into a state of relaxed awareness and stillness. Stay totally present in each moment, content to just be, and to just be right here as you are right now. Direct your attention now to your lower back and just experience your back as it is. Let your breath penetrate and move into every part of your lower back on the in-breath, and on the out-breath, just let any tension, any tightness, any holding on just flow out as much as it will and then let go of your lower back. Move up into your upper back now, just feeling the sensations in your upper back. You may even feel your ribcage, in back as well as in front, expand on the in-breath and any tightness, fatigue or discomfort in this part of your body, just letting them dissolve and move out with the outbreath as you let go and sink even deeper into stillness and relaxation. Then shift your attention to your belly again and experience the rising and falling of your belly as you breathe, experiencing the chest as it expands on the in-breath and deflates on the out-breath. If you can, tune into the rhythmic beating of your heart within your chest, feeling it if you can. Just experience your chest, your belly, as you lie here, the muscles on the chest wall, the breasts, the entirety of the front of your body. And now just let this region dissolve into relaxation as well.</p> <p>Move your attention now to your fingertips and to both hands together, just becoming aware of the sensations now in the tips of your fingers and thumbs where you may feel some pulsations from the blood flow, a dampness or a warmth or whatever you feel. Just feel your fingers and expand your awareness to include the palms of your hands and the backs of your hands and your wrists. Become aware as well of the forearms and the elbows and of any and all sensations regardless of what they are. Allow the field of your awareness to include now the upper arms right up to your shoulders. Just experiencing your shoulders and if there are any tensions, breathing into your shoulders and arms, letting that tension dissolve as you breathe out. Letting go of the tension and letting go of</p>
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	<p>your arms all the way from your fingertips, right through to your shoulders. As you sink even deeper into a state of relaxed awareness, just be present in each moment, letting go of whatever thoughts come up or whatever impulses to move and just experiencing yourself in this moment. And now focus your attention on your neck and throat and feel this part of your body, experiencing what it feels like perhaps when you swallow and when you breathe. And then letting it go. Letting it relax and dissolve in your mind's eye. Becoming aware of your face now. Focusing on the jaw and the chin, just experiencing them as they are.</p> <p>Becoming aware of your lips and your mouth. Becoming aware of your cheeks now...and your nose, feeling the breath as it moves in and out at the nostrils. And be aware of your eyes and the entire region around your eyes and eyelids. If there's any tension, letting it leave as the breath leaves. And now the forehead, letting it soften to let go of stored emotions. And the temples. And if you sense any emotion associated with the tension or feelings in your face, just being aware of that. Breathing in and letting the face dissolve into relaxation and stillness. And now become aware of your ears, and back and top of your head. Now letting your whole face and head relax. For now, just letting it be as it is. Letting it be still and neutral. Relaxed and at peace.</p> <p>Now letting your breath move through your entire body in whatever way feels natural for you, through the entire length of your body. All of your muscles in a deep state of relaxation. And your mind simply aware of this energy, of this flow of breath. Experiencing your entire body breathing. Sinking deeper and deeper into a state of stillness and deep relaxation. Allow yourself to feel whole. In touch with your essential self in a realm of silence, of stillness, of peace. And seeing that this stillness is in itself healing. And allowing the world to be as it is beyond your personal fears and concerns. Beyond the tendencies of your mind to want everything to be a certain way. Seeing yourself as complete right now as you are. As totally awake right now.</p>
<p>3rd step:</p>	<p>As the exercise ends, bring your awareness back to your body again, feeling the whole of it. You may want to wiggle your toes and fingers. Allow this calmness and this centeredness to remain with you when you move. Congratulate yourself on having taken the time to nourish yourself in this way. And remember that this state of</p>



	relaxation and clarity is accessible to you by simply paying attention to your breath in any moment, no matter what's happening in your day. Let your breath be a source of constant strength and energy for you.
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8. Results of the practical exercise

People practicing the body scan reported a deeper ability to observe and welcome body sensations, the capacity to move the awareness in every moment in different parts of the body, experiencing the breath and the body. The exercise usually produces a sense of relaxation into the mind and into the body. By practicing the exercise regularly, the person develops a deeper understanding and perception of the body, noticing how the body changes constantly and becomes better in identifying the sensations into the body.

9. Queries & Consideration

As we move into body sensations, we may discover feelings that we don't like. Discomfort and pain, irritation and boredom, sadness and numbness are all common experiences for people practicing a body scan. Our usual way of meeting these sensations is to escape from their unpleasantness by distracting from, ruminating on, or battling with them.

Sometimes, though, there isn't anything we can do to make them go away on demand. So, rather than exacerbating our misery by struggling with it, the body scan teaches us how to lean gently into discomfort. Although this seems counter-intuitive, it reduces the unwelcome sensations' power to derail us. When we approach our experience with interest, although we feel even unpleasant sensations fully, we also drop our attachment to the stressful thoughts and reactions that are typically layered on top of them.

When we pay attention with mindfulness, we come to observe and feel the reality that everything is always changing. We notice how stress arises when we try to hold on to pleasant sensations and/or reject painful ones, and we see how sensations are moving, shifting, rising and falling in intensity all the time. We may even see how we are no longer so caught up in ourselves when we drop our sense of fixed identity ("My leg hurts!") and invite an awareness of the aspects and processes of experience ("There is an ache right now, and a thought about that ache"). Getting unstuck from mistaken assumptions about how things are—and how we are—can start to bring some relief.

It's important to remember to not try to relax as this thought will just create additional tension. What you'll be doing instead is becoming aware of each passing moment and just accepting what is happening within you, seeing it as it is. Let go of the tendency of wanting things to be different from how they are now and allow things to be exactly as you find them. Just watch the activity of your mind, letting go of judgmental and critical thoughts when they arise, and just doing what the exercise guides you to do as best you can.

10. Conclusions



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The body scan helps people befriend of their bodies, nurture them with appropriate and wise attention and live more fully embodied lives.

Becoming more tuned in with the body, people can better detect the bodily expressions of their emotions, thus reducing the tendency to eat as a coping response to unpleasant emotions such as stress, sadness or boredom.

By practicing mindfulness, people can change the emotional habits that have sabotaged their eating habits in the past, and regain control over both food and feelings.