

# MindfulLiving™ Module 6

## Compassionate Communication

### Chapter 15 - Body Scan

## The Body Scan Meditation

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Excerpted from *Coming to Our Senses*.

The **Body Scan Meditation** is a deeply healing and transformative mindfulness practice designed to cultivate awareness of the body and its sensations. It involves systematically bringing gentle, affectionate attention to different parts of the body, encouraging an openhearted connection to your present experience. This method helps foster a relationship with the body grounded in curiosity, patience, and non-judgment.



## Process of the Body Scan:

The Body Scan is best practised lying down or sitting comfortably. Let your body settle into stillness, and when you're ready, gently close your eyes or leave them slightly open.

### 1. Begin with Awareness of Breathing:

- Before starting the scan, bring attention to your breath, feeling the natural rhythm of your inhalations and exhalations. This grounding will help prepare you for a more profound journey through the body.

### 2. Starting at the Toes of the Left Foot:

- Begin your scan at the toes of your left foot. Imagine shining a gentle light of awareness on this area. Notice any sensations—whether they are warmth, coolness, tingling, or even numbness. Simply observe without trying to change anything.
- **Metaphor:** Think of your body as a musical instrument. As you scan each part, you are tuning it, helping it vibrate in harmony with the rest of your body.

### 3. Moving Up the Left Leg:

- Move your awareness up the left foot into the sole, heel, and ankle. Slowly guide your attention through the shin, calf, knee, and thigh, observing sensations in each area.
- If there are areas where you don't feel much sensation, that's okay. Simply notice that without judgment. If your mind wanders, gently guide it back to the body part you focus on.

### 4. Shift to the Right Foot and Leg:

- After finishing with the left leg, shift to the toes of the right foot and repeat the process, moving slowly up through the right foot and leg, paying the same mindful attention to each region.

### 5. The Pelvic Area:

- Next, move your attention to the pelvis, lower back, and hips. These areas often carry a lot of tension. Breathe into any areas of discomfort or tightness, allowing them to soften without forcing them to change.
- **Metaphor:** Visualize your body as a house, each part being a different room. As you move through, you're simply "visiting" each room, checking in, and observing what is there.

## 6. The Abdomen and Chest:

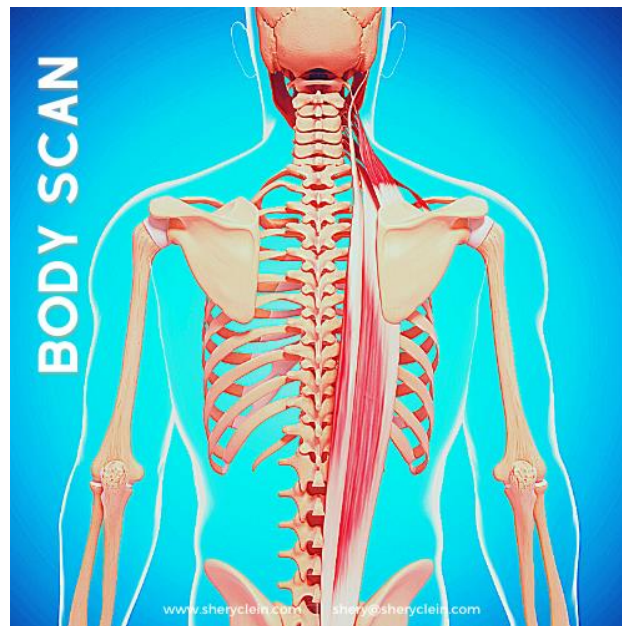
- Bring awareness to the abdomen, feeling the rise and fall of the belly with each breath. Then, move your attention to the chest, ribs, and upper torso. Notice how these areas expand and contract as you breathe, staying present with any sensations that arise.

## 7. Shoulders, Arms, and Hands:

- Focus on your shoulders, and notice if you're holding tension there. Allow your awareness to flow down your arms, moving through the elbows, forearms, wrists, and into the hands, all the way to the fingertips. Pay close attention to subtle sensations here.

## 8. The Neck, Face, and Head:

- Now, bring awareness to your neck and throat. Slowly move up to the jaw, face, and scalp. Pay special attention to the forehead and the area around the eyes, where tension often gathers. Allow these areas to relax and soften with each breath.



## Understanding Physical Sensations, Emotional Reactions and Thoughts

As you progress through the body, you'll notice various sensations, emotions, and thoughts emerging. Jon Kabat-Zinn encourages a mindful and non-judgmental attitude toward these experiences:

- **Physical Sensations:** You may feel warmth, coolness, tingling, or tightness. Sometimes, there may be no sensation at all. This is perfectly natural.
- **Emotional Reactions:** During the practice, you might feel emotions such as peace, frustration, or joy. Rather than getting swept away by these emotions, simply acknowledge them with kindness.
- **Thoughts:** Your mind may wander, bringing thoughts of the past or future, judgments, or memories. When this happens, gently bring your focus back to the body part you are scanning without chastising yourself for getting distracted.

### Decoupling Physical Pain from Emotional Reactions

One of the most powerful aspects of the Body Scan is its ability to help us uncouple physical sensations—particularly pain—from the emotional and cognitive reactions we often have to them.

For instance, when we feel pain or discomfort, our immediate reaction is often to resist it or catastrophise (“This pain is unbearable!”). The Body Scan encourages you to observe pain as it is—a sensation that comes and goes and is distinct from the emotional stories we attach to it. By noticing the pure sensation of pain without judgment, we can often find relief or at least a new sense of freedom in how we experience it.

### Practical Considerations for the Body Scan:

1. **Length of Practice:** The Body Scan can be done for as little as 10 minutes or as long as 45 minutes, depending on your time and comfort. If you're new to the practice, start with shorter sessions and gradually increase the length.
2. **Tuning into Subtle Sensations:** Sometimes, bodily sensations can be very subtle or even absent. If you don't feel much in a particular area, that's perfectly fine. Mindfulness is about noticing *whatever* is present, even if that means observing the absence of sensation.
3. **Dealing with Discomfort:** If you encounter intense sensations or discomfort during the scan, try not to resist or push the discomfort away. Instead, breathe into that area, softening around the sensations. Feel free to open your eyes, focus on your breath, or pause the practice altogether if the discomfort becomes overwhelming. Caring for yourself in this way is an integral part of mindfulness.

## Bringing the Body Scan into Daily Life

The beauty of the Body Scan is that it's a flexible practice. You don't always need to do a full scan—sometimes, a brief check-in with one body part is enough to bring you back to the present moment. Whether you're at work, at home, or even in a public space, taking a moment to focus on the sensations in your body can help anchor you in the here and now.

## Closing Thoughts

The Body Scan is not just a relaxation exercise but a way of returning to your body. By cultivating a non-judgmental awareness of each part of yourself, you create space for healing and self-compassion. With practice, you'll begin to notice not only the subtleties of your body but also how you relate to your experiences in daily life.

**Remember**, this is a continuous practice, one that deepens over time. Each time you engage with the Body Scan, you're tuning into the music of your body, becoming more familiar with its unique rhythms and sensations. Practice with patience and kindness; over time, you'll feel the transformative effects of this powerful meditation.

HAVE ENOUGH  
COURAGE TO  
START AND  
ENOUGH HEART  
TO FINISH



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### Physical sensations you might notice with the body scan

|             |             |                |
|-------------|-------------|----------------|
| Achy        | Pounding    | Soft/rough     |
| Airy/dense  | Prickly     | Stiff/flexible |
| Burning     | Pulling     | Stringing      |
| Clammy/dry  | Pulsing     | Tense/relaxed  |
| Cutting     | Tight/Loose | Throbbing      |
| Itchy       | Tingly      | Sinking        |
| Light/heavy | Shaky       | Trembling      |
| Numb        | Shooting    | Vibrating      |
|             |             |                |

### Emotional reactions you might notice with the body scan

|                               |                             |          |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------|
| Anger                         | Fear                        | Joy      |
| Anticipation                  | Frustration                 | Release  |
| Disgust                       | Grief                       | Sadness  |
| Enjoyment/wanting to continue | Impatience /wanting to stop | Surprise |

### Thoughts that may occur

|                      |                         |                          |
|----------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| Circular thinking    | Judging your experience | Reviewing the past       |
| Evaluating/analysing | Labelling/cataloguing   | Thinking about others    |
| Imagining the future | Planning                | Wishing/hoping/comparing |

**NOTE:** If, at any point, you experience too much discomfort or become panicky or scared, stay with your breath until you feel better. If things are still too much, try opening your eyes, looking around the room to orient yourself, and looking at something comforting or soothing (a favourite piece of art or photo of a loved one or pet). You may even want to reach out to a friend, walk, or have a cup of tea. Taking care of yourself, even if it means interrupting the process, is mindfulness in action.

Shery Clein Personal Coach would like to take the opportunity to thank you so much for your very valuable participation. We appreciate your dedication and commitment. Our expectation is to help you deal with uncomfortable issues and any other obstacles. The main thing is to enjoy, chill out, and have fun! Remember to contact us with any questions or for any assistance you may need along the way.

**Blessings. Stay Healthy 🙏 Love, Shery.**

