**Body Scan**

This is a recording of a mindful body scan, designed for

you to use regularly to help you assume an active and

powerful role in your own health and well-being.

It is best to listen to this recording — and to do what it

says — while in a comfortable place where you can feel

safe, secure, and free from interruption… Looking at this

practice time as an opportunity to be both by yourself and

fully with yourself… an opportunity to nourish yourself, to

open to and experience the potential of strength and healing

within yourself.

Our culture asks us to live so much in our thoughts, in

our heads, that we may sometimes forget that the whole

body feels and knows… that there is a wisdom beyond

words… we may have built-in habits that ignore, minimize,

or completely shut down the possibility of feeling our own

aliveness… Now, the body scan is an opportunity to connect

a little more to the body — this marvelous sensing

instrument that can bring you closer to yourself, to the

world, and to others… this practice is a time for gentle

exploration of each present moment.

The opportunity to explore bodily experience can be

very helpful… you can begin to notice what feels good,

what you withdraw from, when you tense up, and when

you can give yourself space… this is a time for simply

being your experience … being just as you are… without

criticizing, judging, wishing, or trying to change the experience

in any way… While many people prefer to do the

body scan lying on their back on the floor, the body scan

can be done in any position, lying or sitting… on the floor,

on a bed, or on a chair… what really matters is your presence

in the moment…. what really matters is that you are

choosing to show up for what’s happening now .

Lying on your back, with your arms and hands at your sides

and legs outstretched … or with the knees bent and the

soles of the feet on the floor, if that is more comfortable …

or sitting in a chair in a relaxed posture… making a choice

to allow yourself to be exactly as you are in this

moment…

Coming gently to notice the breath… it’s such a constant

feature of life that it’s easy to ignore… so taking time

with it now… actually feeling the sensations as the breath

enters the body and leaves the body of its own accord…

allowing it to move through its cycle of in-breath and outbreath

without controlling… if it feels right to you, attending

to the belly, the lower abdomen, noticing that it may be

rising and falling with the cycle of the breath… if you care

to, placing your hands on your belly… feeling the movement

of the breath, the rhythm, the waves of the breath…

simply riding the waves of your breath from moment to

moment.

As you listen to this body scan, if at any time sensations in

the body become too uncomfortable, or emotions arise that are

too difficult, knowing that it is always possible to return to the

breath as a safe place, a haven, a retreat for you to rest in, until

you are ready to venture again into the body scan… wherever

this recording is in its progress.

If you’ve placed your hands on your belly, taking them

off now, and moving your attention to the top of your

head… noticing that sensations may arise when you bring

attention to a particular part…maybe tingling, maybe pressure,

maybe a feeling of the breath or the pulse affecting

this area… or perhaps there’s no sensation — that’s OK,

that’s simply your experience of this moment.

And when you’re ready, moving your attention to your

forehead… observing any sensations…perhaps furrows of

tension, or tingling, or a sense of relaxation… allowing

yourself to feel whatever you feel.

Now moving your attention from the forehead to the eyes

and eyelids… noticing how you’re holding them… how much

or how little pressure does it take to keep them closed?

Experiencing the eyes from the inside, from behind the eyelids…

are the eyeballs moving or still? Is there darkness? light?

color? How does the breath affect this area?

When it feels right, beginning to pay attention to the

cheeks… sensing the bones, the muscles, the skin of the

cheeks… noticing the play of air, sensations of coolness or

warmth… noting perhaps that some sensations stay for a

while, while others pass quickly… and that intensity may

change one way or the other as you bring attention to them…

…and attending now to the nose, from the bridge to the edges

of the nostrils… perhaps feeling the breath in the nostrils as it

enters and leaves… noticing temperature, moisture, sensations

on the upper lip perhaps.

Moving the attention to the jaw… being aware of tightness

or softness… allowing the lower jaw to drop down

slightly, and noticing any changes in sensations in the muscles

of the face and neck, or in other parts of the body which

that small movement may create… and expanding your

focus of attention to include the mouth and lips… inside the

mouth, the tongue against the teeth, against the roof of the

mouth… if you care to, breathing in through the nose and out

through the lips… allowing the air to play on its way out…

observing the sensations of dampness, dryness, warmth, or

coolness…

And expanding the attention to encompass the entire

face… not a picture of your face in your mind, but really

feeling the sensations in the area that we call the face….

What’s there for you? …aware of any thoughts and emotions

as well… and if thoughts or emotions arise allowing

them simply to come into awareness and pass, like clouds

in the sky…

Shifting the attention to your neck… noticing how it is

right now in the big muscles in the back of the neck, from

the base of the skull to the shoulders… the throat… aware

perhaps of the play of air or touch of clothing… being present

in this experience…

Moving now to the shoulders, checking into their condition

in this moment, any tightness or softness, recognizing

that this is the condition now … accepting it, knowing that

it does not need to be some other way… and knowing also

that conditions change… noticing if there is a sense of the

breath in the shoulders… how much of the body does

breathing affect?

Allowing the attention to travel to the upper and mid

back… sensing the muscles, tight or loose… aware perhaps

of sensations of the weight of the body here… pressure

against the floor or chair back, feelings of the texture of

clothing…noting how the breath moves in this area…

Bringing attention to the lower back, to the sense of

contact or lack of contact with the floor or chair, the sense

of yielding to gravity or resisting, any tightness or softness…

noticing any tendency to move away from or

towards any sensations or thoughts, feelings, judgments

that may arise… remembering that this is simply how it is

in the lower back at this moment…

And experiencing the whole back now, from the shoulders

to the base of the spine… aware of the subtle and not

so subtle motions of the back as you breathe… dwelling in

the sensations of the back, not watching from your head…

just knowing what the back knows….

Shifting to the arms… to the upper arms and forearms…

aware of the pull of gravity, the weight of the arms… feeling

the muscles and joints, the touch and texture of clothing…

and expanding the attention to include the wrists and

hands… sensations of warmth, or coolness, tingling, moisture,

or dryness… how does the breath affect the arms and

hands? Is it possible to feel the pulse here? Just being with

what’s here now…

And moving, as you’re ready, to the chest… aware of

the lungs and heart in this space… maybe sensing inside,

as the lungs fill and empty… perhaps noticing the heartbeat,

the rhythm of the heart and the breath together…

being present to these sensations of life… and feeling

the surface, the touch of clothing, any sense of

movement…

Now extending attention into the abdomen, the

belly, feeling inside first… this place where we have

our gut feelings — there really are nerves here that

sense and know — feeling into the motion of the diaphragm,

the sense of the breath in the belly…

When it seems right, moving attention to the pelvic

region, from hip to hip… aware of the effects of gravity,

the weight of the lower body … the buttocks pressed into

the floor or chair, sensation in the hip joints… the groin,

the genitals… the lower abdomen… tuning in to the sense

of the breath, of the pulse here… how far do they reach?

And noticing thoughts and feelings that may arise…

aware of judgments, and, as it’s possible for you, letting

them go…

Shifting the focus into the upper legs — the thighs…

aware of gravity’s work, the pressing against the floor or

chair, the feel of clothing against the skin, and moving in…

the quality of the muscles, tight or loose…is it possible to

feel the bone running through?

… and extending the attention now to the lower legs, the

calves and shins… noticing points of contact or lack of

contact with the floor or chair, aware of gravity, aware as

well that the legs are alive — how does the breath affect

them? How about the pulse — is there a sense of the blood

flowing?

When you’re ready, exploring onward… to the feet…

feeling where they are, the floor, perhaps a sense of temperature…

warmth or coolness… a sense of the breath and

heartbeat perhaps?

Now expanding the attention to include the entire body

from the soles of the feet to the top of the head… being

present to the totality of the experience of sitting or lying

here in this moment… perhaps feeling the breath — how it

has been a constant companion, how it brings the whole

body together…as does the pulse, the heart beat…. feeling

the sense of gravity, the sense of being held gently, closely,

without fail… dwelling in what the body feels… in what it

knows …

In the last moments of this body scan, congratulating

yourself for spending the time and energy to nourish yourself

this way… for continuing to make choices to live a

more healthy, satisfying life… and knowing that you can

carry this awareness of your body’s deep wisdom beyond

this practice session and into each moment of the day,

wherever you may find yourself.