

SPEAKER: The exercise we are about to do is called a body scan. The purpose of the body scan is to practice paying attention. Before we begin, please find a comfortable position. Place your feet on the floor, hands in your lap or on your legs. Back straight, head erect, not uncomfortably stiff but what we call a dignified posture.

You may allow the eyes to close if you're comfortable doing so. Or if you would prefer, leave the eyes open, gazing softly a few feet in front of you. To begin this exercise, notice the state of your body. Does the body feel relaxed? Or perhaps there's some tension, or maybe some discomfort somewhere.

In doing this exercise, we're not trying to fix anything or change anything. We're just noticing our experience. So begin by noticing your body.

Notice the rise and fall of the chest with each in breath and out breath. Notice the feet on the floor. Allow your attention now to focus on your left big toe.

When you bring your attention to the toe, you may notice some sensations or you may not. If there are no particular sensations, just focus on the region of your toe. And as we go through the body scan, we'll progressively move our attention from one area of the body to another.

So from the great toe, move the attention to the second toe, and the third toe, and the fourth toe, and the fifth toe. And then through the ball of the foot, and the arch, and the heel, and up to the left ankle, and the left lower leg. And the left knee, and the upper leg, the thigh, noticing the region of the muscles in the front of the leg and in the back of the leg, and there noticing the points of contact of the thigh with the chair.

Moving the attention now to the right foot and the right great toe, and the second toe, and the third toe, and the fourth toe, and the fifth toe. And the ball of the foot, and the arch, and the heel, and then the entire right foot. Again, as we do this exercise you may notice sensations in the region we're focusing on, or you may not. Either is fine.

Moving the attention on to the right ankle, the right lower leg, the region of the calf, the back of the leg, and the shin, and the front of the leg, and the right knee. Moving the attention upward to the right thigh, the muscles on the front of the right thigh, and the back of the thigh, and the points of contact with the chair.

And as we move through different parts of the body, you may find that your attention wanders, that you've become caught up in thoughts or perhaps bodily sensations. And when you notice that your attention has wandered, simply let go. Detach from the thought or from the focus on the bodily sensation and return your attention to whatever the part of the body I'm discussing.

So moving the attention now to the region of the pelvis and up into the lower abdomen and the upper abdomen, noticing the rise and fall of the abdomen as we breathe in and out, and also noticing if there are any sensations from within the abdomen. Perhaps we haven't eaten, so there's some sensation of hunger.

Or perhaps we have just eaten and we're feeling full. Whatever we experience, we're not trying to change it, or to fix it, or to make it any different than it is. We're just noticing what this experience is, we're just paying attention.

From the abdomen moving the attention up into the region of the chest, noticing the rise and fall of the chest as we breathe in and out. Feeling the sensation of air as it enters the chest. Cooler air on the inhalation, and warmer, moister air on the exhalation.

Noticing how far into the chest we can actually notice the movement of air. Bringing the attention now to the region of the heart and the left side of the chest, perhaps we can actually feel some sensation of the heart beating, or perhaps not. Either is fine.

And from the region of the chest, moving the attention to the lower back and allowing our attention to follow the spine from the lower back to the mid back to the upper back and out into the left shoulder. And from the left shoulder, moving into the left upper arm, and the left elbow, and the left forearm. Remembering when you notice that the mind has wandered to simply detach the attention from whatever has attracted it and return it to the part of the body we're discussing. Now the left forearm, and then the left wrist and the left hand, the thumb, the index finger, the middle finger, the ring finger, the little finger.

And from the left hand, moving the attention to the right hand. To the right thumb, the right index finger, middle finger, ring finger, and little finger. And up to the right wrist, and forearm, and elbow, and the upper arm, and the region of the biceps on the front of the upper arm and the triceps on the back and on up into the right shoulder.

And now bringing attention to the region of the upper back, an area where many of us often carry tension, tightness. And so just noticing now, what's the state of the upper back? Is there some tension there, or is it relaxed? Again, we're not trying to change it, to make it any different than it is. We're just noticing what our experience is right now.

And moving the attention from the upper back into the neck, the back part of the neck, the spine, and then forward and on up to the chin and the mouth. And breathing through the mouth, noticing the flow of air across the lips and into the mouth, and moisture in the mouth, any sensation on the tongue or the cheeks.

And then bringing the attention to the nose and breathing in and out through the nose, feeling the flow of air and also noticing any sensation of smell. From the nose, moving the attention to the ears and focusing our attention on sound. The sound of my voice, any other sounds that may be arising inside or outside the room, sounds from the body.

And now moving the attention to the eyes, notice any sensations that arise from the eyes, and then noticing our experience of sight. If the eyes are closed, this may just be shades of light and dark. If the eyes are open, noticing shapes and colors. And then bringing attention to the face, and the scalp, and under the scalp, the skull, and within the skull, the brain.

And then noticing the skin, the largest sense organ. Noticing any sensations that are arising from the skin now. The points of contact where we're sitting, other points of contact, the rustle of clothing, the sensation of air crossing the skin.

And now returning the attention again to the entire body. What's the experience of the entire body now in this moment? Is it tense or relaxed, or maybe some other state?

Whatever it is, we just notice it without fixing it or changing it. Just practicing paying attention. And now as you're ready, you can bring your attention back to the room, opening your eyes if they've been closed as we end this body scan.