

Body Scan

1. The purpose of the body scan is to cultivate awareness of the body and a state of “embodiment”—meaning fully living in your body. Most of us spend a large part of our daily lives cut off from our body and living in our minds. We often see our bodily sensations as inconvenient and disruptive rather than an integral part of our moment-to-moment life experience.
2. Begin the body scan by finding a comfortable position in a chair or lying down on the floor. If you choose to lie down, you may want to keep your eyes open so that you do not fall asleep.
3. Starting with your left big toe, focus your attention on each part of your anatomy. Notice any and all sensations, or the feeling of no sensation, in each area. You may choose to focus on the pressure of the floor, or the feeling of air currents or your clothing against the skin. You may also choose to focus on the internal feeling of each part of the body—the mass of muscle and bone. Notice tingling, itching, painful sensations. Notice relaxation and tension in your muscles. Any and all phenomena existing in your body are the object of your awareness.
4. Once you have reached your pelvis, start with your right big toe and ascend the right leg.
5. Once you have reached your shoulders, descend the left arm and once you have done the left hand, begin with the right hand and ascend the right arm.
6. If a particular area of your body repeatedly draws your attention (at least three times), you may choose to focus on that part of the body—on the internal and external sensations—for as long as it holds your interest, and then return to the body scan where you left off.
7. You may spend as much or as little time on each part as you prefer and have the time. Allow sufficient time to “get inside” that part of your body and experience what existence is like in that part.
8. Once you have gone through your entire body, focus on your body as a whole. Feel the outline of your skin against the air, your clothing, and the chair or floor. Feel the inside mass and substance of your body.
9. Finish by focusing on your breathing, noticing where it is occurring and its ripple effect through your body.
10. The body scan can be done while sitting at your desk at work or while watching television. It may be energizing and for that reason you may not want to do it right before going to sleep. Doing a body scan of part of your body is better than doing no body scan at all.