



Compassionate Body Scan

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Start by finding a comfortable position for your body, resting on your back, perhaps with a pillow or cushion supporting your head, with your hands comfortably to your sides and your feet comfortably apart. Then place one or two hands over your heart (or you could choose another soothing place). This serves to remind you to bring kind awareness to yourself throughout this exercise. Feel the warmth and gentle touch of your hands. If this is difficult for you, can you bring to mind a being that you care about – a person or an animal... imagine yourself feeling kindness and empathy for that person or animal. Feel that warmth and kindness in your hands as you rest them over your heart or on another part of your body that feels good to you. Rest there for a moment.

Take three slow, relaxing breaths, and then return your arms to your sides.

In this exercise, we will be bringing warm-hearted attention to each part of the body, moving from one part to another. We will be inclining our awareness toward the body, perhaps as you might incline toward a young child or someone you care about – with interest, with care. If you have judgments or unpleasant associations with a particular body part, or if you experience

physical discomfort, you may wish to place a hand on that part of your body as a gesture of kindness, perhaps imagining warmth and kindness flowing through your hand to that part of your body. And if an area of your body is too difficult to stay with, moving gently to another body part for the time being, allowing this exercise be as gentle and peaceful as possible.

Starting with the toes of both feet, notice if there are any sensations there. Are your toes warm or cool, dry or moist? Just feeling the sensations of your toes - ease, discomfort, or perhaps nothing at all - letting each sensation be just as it is. You might give your toes an inner smile of recognition or appreciation. Remembering that your feet support your body for many hours a day. They work hard. See if you can give them a little appreciation, if only for a moment. If there is any discomfort, seeing if it's possible to release any tension and allowing that area to soften as if it were wrapped in a warm blanket. Now feeling your feet as a whole. If they feel good today, you can also extend gratitude for the discomfort that you don't have.

Moving the attention slowly now to your ankles. Noticing any sensations or lack of sensation here. Bringing kindness... perhaps appreciation for all that your ankles enable you to do.

Now moving to the shins and calves of both legs. What is here now? What sensations are you aware of? Is there pain or discomfort here? Perhaps judgment? Appreciating if they feel fine and sending kindness if there is any discomfort. Just like you would to a wounded pet or a small child that got hurt. Let your heart be open.

Moving the attention now to the knees. The part of our bodies that enable us to bend, walk, jump, and run. What sensations are you aware of here? Perhaps there are none, that's ok too.

When you notice your mind has wandered, as it likely will do, simply returning to the sensations in the particular part of your body. If you notice unease or that you're judging one specific body part try putting a hand over your heart and breathing gently, or else place a hand directly on the body part. You might also try saying some words of kindness, "May my [knees] be at ease. May they be well." Then returning your attention to the simple sensations that are arising.

Moving the attention now to the thighs of your legs. This part of the body can be a source of emotional pain. If this is so for you, breathe compassion and kindness into your thighs, and as you breathe out, gently say to your thighs 'may you be peaceful' 'may you be at ease.'

Gently moving the attention now to the pelvis, hips, groin, and buttocks. What sensations do you notice here? Perhaps you feel the pressure of your body against whatever you're lying on. What else are you aware of in this part of your body? If there's any pain or discomfort, perhaps place a hand there and give yourself a gentle, loving touch. If there's no discomfort, then giving some appreciation to this area for the absence of discomfort.

Bringing the awareness now to the whole of your back. What sensations are you aware of here? Is there pain? Our backs work hard to support us. They can carry a lot of tension too. If you're aware of any of this, perhaps breathe in kindness and direct it towards your back. When you breathe out, see if any tension wants to let go. You can also offer your back some loving kindness – 'may you be at ease, back.'

And now, turning our attention towards the front of the torso – the stomach and chest area. What are you aware of here? Are there subtle sensations of ease? Or sensations of discomfort? For now, stay with the sensations related to physical discomfort rather than any emotional discomfort with this area. What do you notice? If there's any pain or physical discomfort, perhaps a soothing touch might be helpful... This area is also often a source of emotional pain. If that's so for you, see if you can soften your heart to this part of your body. It's doing the best it can. Perhaps send it some wishes of kindness 'may you be at ease, may you be peaceful.'

Now we move to the neck, throat, head, and face. Noticing any and all sensations in this part of your body. What are you aware of? ... Is there pain? Tension? Some discomfort? As you breathe, direct the breath here and see if any of that might be able to let go a little. Perhaps you could send some appreciation to this part of your body?

Now getting a sense of your body as a whole... being aware of sensations sweeping through your body – and bringing kind attention to this – an open heart towards your own body...

Allow yourself to lie here as long as you'd like to – and when you're ready, very gently open your eyes and bring yourself back, with an intention to take this sense of compassion for your body, and all bodies, into your day.