



# THE BODY SCAN

## instructions

The Body Scan is the first practice introduced in Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction. It supports increased awareness of the body and integration of body and mind. The Body Scan is also a great way to start working with mindfulness of attention.

The Body Scan is usually a relaxing experience, though not always. If you meet discomfort along the way, see if you can stay with it. If you find yourself overwhelmed, you might open the eyes, shift attention to a neutral area of the body, or take a break from the practice for now.

Best done with verbal guidance, the Body Scan is usually done lying down on your back. Find a comfortable, quiet place to lie down. Reclining in a comfortable chair is an option. A bed can be too comfortable – you might fall asleep. Jon Kabat-Zinn’s line about falling asleep during the Body Scan is that our goal is actually to “fall awake”! However, if the Body Scan helps to ameliorate sleeping problems, so much the better.

Starting with the toes we systematically “listen to sensation” – just noting sensation in areas of the body moving slowly up from the toes to the top of the head. If the attention wanders (and it will!), gently bring it back to the current area of the body. Short body scans can be done without listening to verbal instructions but for the full 30-40 minute practice, listening to the audio is essential.

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