Working with the Body

1. BODY SCAN

In this guided meditation you will bring awareness to your entire body and curiously notice any physical sensations, as well as thoughts and feelings, which may arise.

**As we go about our day, we tend to remain stuck in our heads, disconnecting from our emotional and physical needs. Although our body is constantly communicating with us, we neglect or misinterpret the body’s signals to pause, rest, or simply listen.**

**In this way, we allow stress to accumulate throughout our body, causing physical ailments or severe emotional distress in the long-term. In truth, it is possible to understand our emotions and bodily sensations for what they really are, and therefore regulate them, living healthier, more conscious lives.**

[INSTRUCTIONS] For this guided meditation you may choose a quiet space where you may lie down comfortably on a mat, a sofa, or your own bed. You may also sit with your back straight in a meditative position, or with your feet touching the ground.

[PREPARATION] Gently close your eyelids and leave your arms hanging loosely by your sides. Uncross your legs to allow your energy to flow more easily, and wiggle your toes, which we so often forget about. You may keep your eyes closed throughout the meditation if this feels comfortable.

[BREATHING AND CONNECTION] Become aware of your breath by delicately placing a hand on your belly. Take a few deep breaths, in through your nose and out through your mouth. Curiously observe your breathing and notice your stomach expanding and contracting at each inhale and exhale. At this stage already, you may become aware of certain thoughts or feelings that come up. Take a moment to notice whether you hold any resistance towards these thoughts or feelings, and where the resistance may show up in your body.

[BODY AWARENESS] As you continue to be conscious of your breath, gently shift your awareness to your body. Know that whenever the mind wanders off you may use your breath as an anchor, allowing you to slowly return to your centre. Feel the weight of your body on the mattress, or on the ground. Are certain parts of your body more exposed than others? Remember to not seek sensation, rather simply notice whether anything arises, without assigning any particular meaning to the experience. Now, you may bring your attention to your feet, the inner arches, top, bottom, both left and right. Your ankles, your calves, and shins.

Take a few deep breaths, be a witness. Has your mind been wandering off to certain places, or does it seem to not follow any specific pattern?

Now, gently stirring your awareness back to your body, notice your knees. Do they feel tired, or do they feel strong? Befriend your inner thighs and legs. Moving towards your pelvic area, where we store our emotions, observe your hips; your stomach expanding and contracting at a certain pace. Try to visualise your internal organs, such as your liver, kidneys, and bladder. Feel your lower abdominal area becoming whole and receive any sensations in a completely non-judgemental way.

Breathe into the lower parts of your body and feel it entering a deeper state of relaxation. Take a few moments to become aware of each breath.

Move towards your chest. Notice any sensations of tightness or openness, heaviness or lightness. Maybe nothing comes up, and that’s fine too. Consciously scan your spine from the bottom to the top. Notice any residual stiffness in your shoulders. Witness your arms, elbows, wrists, hands, and finger-tips. Notice any differences in temperature, or maybe you don’t notice anything at all. As it is named, every inch of your body comes to life and re-awakens.

Consciously inhale and exhale a few more times.

Bring your awareness to your neck, your jaw, the inside of your mouth. The position of your tongue, and clenching of the teeth. Notice whether your lips are parted or joint together. Sense any feelings of warmth or coldness around the ears. Now, witness your eyebrows and forehead. Move your awareness to the crown of your head and notice any sensations on your scalp. How does your head feel?

[RETURNING] As we end our meditation, explore any residual thoughts and emotions. Know that these are not to be identified with, as most of them are only passing clouds. Finally, as you breathe in, visualise a wave of light spreading throughout your body, from the crown of your head to the tip of your toes. Embrace any lingering sensations wholeheartedly, and thank yourself for taking the time to listen to the messages your body had in store for you.

By Asia Charles