

Instructions for mindfulness of body sensations

Often when we find ourselves caught up with thoughts such as ‘I must relax’, we can put pressure on ourselves to feel relaxed, and when we don’t achieve this we can feel worse. If you have ever struggled with trying to control your physical sensations you may have noticed that this struggling increased the intensity of your sensations.

In mindfulness of body sensations, the focus of practise is on feeling and connecting to the sensations in your body, simply observing what you feel from moment to moment.

Through practise, you will learn to become accepting of all sensations felt in your body, whether they are pleasant or unpleasant, as you learn not to avoid certain sensations. Learning to become accepting even if the body isn’t relaxed and acknowledging that sensations are normal and harmless, and not something to be feared.

Mindfulness of Body Sensations Exercise

To begin, allow yourself to find a quiet and comfortable position, free from noise and distraction. You may choose to complete this practise whilst sitting or lying down, whichever is the most comfortable position for you. If you are feeling a bit sleepy then I would invite you to assume a comfortable, upright position.

I encourage you to turn your phone off, loosen any tight clothing and to take your shoes off if this will make you feel more comfortable.

Gently allow your eyes to close or focus your attention on a point in front of you.

Allow yourself to have the next few minutes of quiet time, away from your daily tasks and to begin to let go of any worries or concerns.

Become aware of your body. Notice your body in the space you are in. Pay attention to where your body connects to the space around you. You may notice your feet as they connect to the floor underneath you. You may notice your buttocks sitting on the chair. You may also notice your arms resting on your chair. You may feel your back supported by cushions. Allow yourself to really become aware and connected to your body at this moment.

Now, begin to tune into your body. Begin to scan through any sensations that you can notice in your body. Direct your attention to your feet. Let's start to observe the sensations in your feet, all the way to the tips of your toes. Become aware of how these sensations feel.

Next, observe sensations in your ankles. Connect to any sensations that you can feel in your ankles.

Bring your attention up towards your calves. Notice any sensations that can be felt in your calves. Continuing to focus your attention up towards your knees and thighs. Connecting and observing any sensations in your knees and thighs.

Pay attention to how your sensations feel from moment to moment and how your sensations can change from moment to moment.

Next, bring your attention to your buttocks. Notice any sensations that you can feel in your buttocks. Notice any physical sensations that can be observed here.

Focus your attention on your lower back. Observe the sensations in your lower back.

Follow your attention up towards your shoulders. Notice the natural slump of your shoulders, in a comfortable and relaxed position. Observe any sensations in your shoulders.

Next, bring your attention to your arms. Notice what sensations can be felt in your arms. You may feel a natural heaviness in your arms. Observe any sensations in your wrists and hands, all the way to the tips of your fingers.

Now observe sensations in your throat. Simply observe any sensations in your throat.

Observe the sensations in your chest. Observe the natural rise and fall of your chest, as you breathe. Focus your attention on the sensations in your stomach.

Now, again connect to your body as a whole. Observing all sensations that can be felt in your body at this time. Paying all of your attention to any physical sensations in the body.

Sometimes you may feel warm or heavy sensations in your body. In other places, you may feel cool and light sensations.

Sometimes as you notice a sensation it may become bigger, increasing with your focus, and at other times you may feel it becoming smaller, noticing that the size of the sensation does not really matter.

Try not to avoid any sensations that are unpleasant or uncomfortable for you. Scan your body now for any tension or discomfort that you can feel in your body at this time. Take a couple of quiet moments to identify any areas in your body that you feel unpleasant sensations. Tune your attention into this area of the body. Do not try to change your experience of the

sensation. Simply observe this sensation, ask yourself is it hot or cold? Light or heavy? Simply observing and allowing these sensations to be there in the body.

Learn to breath into and feel these sensations. Begin to recognise that it is often how we interpret our sensations that can lead us to want to avoid them. Notice what your mind is telling you about this sensation. And then moving on, directing your attention back to your entire body. Refocus your attention on any sensations that you can feel in the body.

With practise you will learn to become more aware of the sensations in your body and not to become distracted by any unpleasant sensations or feel a need to avoid discomfort.

Shortly, this practise will be coming to an end. It is important to remember that in daily life your body will be responding to your experiences with sensations in the body. Take the time each day to reflect upon your reactions, to simply observe and pay mindful attention to any sensations as they arise in your body.

Gently focus your attention on your body as it connects to the space you are in. The points of contact may be in your buttocks on the chair or feeling the floor beneath your feet.

If you have had your eyes closed for this practise, I invite you to gently blink your eyes back open and connect back to your surroundings, allowing yourself to take some of this mindful awareness with you into your day.