



RHYMING BODY SCAN FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

"The world is full of magic things, patiently waiting for our senses to grow sharper."

—W.B. Yeats

OVERVIEW

This rhyming script leads children through a brief body scan where they notice, breath into, and relax their body parts.

PLANNING FOR IT

WHEN YOU MIGHT USE THIS PRACTICE

- Daily, for at least one week or longer
- At the start of a school day, before or after nap time, to close a class
- When you or your students are experiencing tension, anger, or anxiety

TIME REQUIRED

- 10-15 minutes

LEVEL

- PreK-Lower Elementary

MATERIALS

- Chairs for students to sit in or mats/rugs for them to lie on

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Students will:

- Practice relaxing their bodies from head to toe

SEL COMPETENCIES

- Self-Awareness
- Self-Management

HOW TO DO IT

REFLECTION BEFORE THE PRACTICE

Take a quiet moment at home or during a break in the school day to try a body scan practice—a mindfulness practice that asks you to systematically focus your attention on different parts of your body, from your feet to the muscles in your face. It is designed to help you develop a mindful awareness of your bodily sensations, and to relieve tension wherever it is found. How did this exercise make you feel?

INSTRUCTIONS

GETTING STARTED

- Begin by asking students to sit quietly in their chairs, or invite them to lie down on their backs on a mat or rug.
- Tell the students that they are going to spend a few minutes relaxing and noticing different body parts like toes, legs, arms, shoulders, and eyes. They will also be breathing deeply and sensing how each body part feels (warm or cold, relaxed or tense).
- Then, share this body scan script with them, and invite them to listen carefully to your rhyming directions.

THE PRACTICE

*Relax your body, close your eyes if you please;
allow your arms and hands to be at ease.*

*Sit up tall, and breathe in through your nose;
just quietly watch where your mind goes.*

*Now I invite you to wiggle your toes,
so slowly that nobody knows.*

*Next, go to your ankles and then to your knees;
do your legs feel strong, like two trees?*

*Are they warm or cold, relaxed or tense;
breathe in deeply, what do you sense?*

*Now let's go to your thighs and each hip;
can you look inward, for just a bit?*

*Do you feel warm or cold, relaxed or tense;
breathe in deeply, what do you sense?*

*Breathe into your lower back and belly;
do you feel your stomach move like jelly?*

*Do you feel warm or cold, relaxed or tense;
breathe in deeply, what do you sense?*

*Try breathing into your upper back and chest;
feel your lungs expanding, then coming to rest.*

*Do you feel warm or cold, relaxed or tense;
breathe in deeply, what do you sense?*

*Now to your shoulders, arms, and each hand,
notice your blood flowing like moving sand.*

*Do you feel warm or cold, relaxed or tense;
breathe in deeply, what do you sense?*

*Let's travel up to your neck and head;
do you feel your jaw relax and spread?*

*Is your face warm or cold, relaxed or tense;
breathe in deeply, what do you sense?*

*Take in one big breath, like a gentle breeze;
let your body and mind feel more at ease.*

*When you are ready, open your eyes, and smile;
Do you feel more focused—even just for a while?*

CLOSURE

- Ask students, "What is it like to notice your body and how it feels? What did you notice while you were relaxing your body?"

REFLECTION AFTER THE PRACTICE

How did students respond to this practice? Where might you try it again? When might it be most well-received?

THE RESEARCH BEHIND THE PRACTICE

EVIDENCE THAT IT WORKS

While research on the effects of mindfulness on children is still in the early stages, a [2016 review of 12 studies](#) suggests some promising outcomes for young children relative to attention, self-regulation, and motor skills. A [2014 meta-analysis](#) that focuses on 24 studies of K-12 students demonstrated changes in students' attention and resilience to stress, including positive emotions, self-esteem and self-concept, and well-being.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Children face numerous daily stressors that can negatively affect their learning and development. Teaching students a practice that directly addresses these stressors in their bodies may ultimately bolster their personal well-being—and improve their [executive function](#) (e.g., self-control, planning, decision-making, etc.) and [academic achievement](#).

SOURCE

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