



Greater Good in Education
SCIENCE-BASED PRACTICES FOR KINDER, HAPPIER SCHOOLS

APPRECIATING OUR BODIES: A BODY SCAN WITH GRATITUDE

"I stand in awe of my body."

—Henry David Thoreau

OVERVIEW

Students practice a mindful body scan and experience a sense of gratitude for all that their bodies allow them to do.

PLANNING FOR IT

WHEN YOU MIGHT USE THIS PRACTICE

- During a science unit on the body
- Anytime during the year

TIME REQUIRED

- 15-20 minutes

LEVEL

- Pre-K & Lower Elementary

MATERIALS

- Whiteboard and marker
- Drawing/writing materials

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Students will:

- Practice deepening awareness of their bodies

- Experience a sense of gratitude for all that their bodies allow them to do

ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS

- [Making Practices Culturally Responsive](#)
- [Adapting Practices for Students with Special Needs](#)
- [Making a Practice Trauma-Informed](#)
- [Making Classrooms and Schools Trauma-Informed and Healing-Centered](#)

SEL COMPETENCIES

- Self-Awareness

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.
- Here is a [recorded practice](#) of a body scan.
- When you've finished, choose a part of your body to say "thank you" to for all it helps you to do. How did this exercise make you feel?

INSTRUCTIONS

GETTING STARTED

- Ask the class:
 - *What is one amazing thing your body has done today?*
- Write responses on the board.
- Tell the class that they are going to spend some time noticing their bodies and all the things they can do. Bodies have many different parts, so they are just going to notice a few of them today.

THE PRACTICE

- Ask students to get into a comfortable sitting or lying position, depending on space. Invite them to close their eyes so they can really notice how their bodies feel. Direct their focus to three or four different parts of their bodies, depending on their attention span. Encourage them to notice how that part of the body feels, recall how they have used that part of their body today, and feel a sense of gratitude for that part of their body. Use the text below as a guide for how to do this (adapt the text to your class and classroom):

- *With your eyes closed or looking at a spot on the floor in front of you, start to pay attention to your breathing...how the breath goes in and out of your body...Inside your chest, you have lungs that take air in and let it out...Do you feel your chest moving when you breathe in and out?...Do you feel your belly moving?... You can put your hand on your chest and your belly and see if you feel them moving...This happens all day long, even when we are not paying attention to it...Take a moment to say "Thank you" to your lungs and for your breathing...*
- *Now pay attention to your feet...how they feel where they are touching the floor...your socks...your shoes...Do they feel warm or cold?...Heavy or light?...Now think about some of the things your feet have done today...Try to see a picture in your mind of where your feet have been, and what they have done for you today...Take a moment to thank your feet for what they do for you..*
- *Now pay attention to your arms...how they feel where they are touching the floor (or your chair, desk, the rest of your body)...Do they feel warm or cold?...Heavy or light?...Now think about some of the things your arms have done today...Try to see a picture in your mind of what your arms have done for you today...Take a moment to thank your arms for what they do for you...*
- *Now pay attention to your ears...you can touch them if you would like to...Are they warm or cold?...What sounds are your ears hearing right now?...Now think about some of the things your ears have heard today...Try to see a picture in your mind of where those sounds were coming from...Take a moment to be thankful for your ears and what they can do for you...*
- *Choose one more part of your body and say "Thank you" silently for all that it does for you every day...*
- *Take a few more deep breaths...and open your eyes.*

[Note: Adapt script as necessary to acknowledge any differences in the physical abilities your students may have—for example, leg braces, asthma, visual impairment.]

RESPONDING TO THE PRACTICE

- Ask students to share what this experience was like for them. Then ask if anyone wants to share something that their feet (arms, ears, hands) have done that they feel grateful for.
- After students have had a chance to share, ask them to:
 - Draw a picture of one of the things they saw a part of their body doing during the visualization.
 - Now, add a caption that says where they are grateful for this part of their body.
- Students can read these aloud to the class.

CLOSURE

- You may want to revisit the question that you began the activity with, and see if their answers have changed. Ask:
 - *What is one amazing thing your body has done today?*
- Invite the class to show their gratitude for their bodies by giving themselves a hug!

EXTENSIONS

- This activity can be repeated on different days, each time focusing on different parts of the body—legs, arms, stomach, heart, eyes, nose, etc. Students can also repeat the drawing activity, ultimately creating a personal book about gratitude for their bodies.

- A number of children’s books can be found that teach children about their bodies, including organs such as the heart, lungs, and stomach that constantly work without our conscious awareness. These can be used in conjunction with this activity. Here’s a list of books: <https://www.the-best-childrens-books.org/human-body-for-kids.html>
- Discuss with the class ways that we can take good care of our bodies -- for example, eating healthy food, getting enough sleep, getting exercise, washing our hands, etc. Keeping our bodies healthy is a way to show our gratitude.

REFLECTION AFTER THE PRACTICE

How did students respond to this practice? Do you notice any difference in how they act and/or feel afterwards?

THE RESEARCH BEHIND THE PRACTICE

EVIDENCE THAT IT WORKS

While research on the effectiveness of mindfulness programs in schools is still in the early stages, studies have found that mindfulness may reduce stress in students, increase their [well-being](#), and improve their [attention](#) and executive functioning.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Children face numerous stressors everyday, from school, home, and society, which can negatively impact their learning and development. Teaching students a practice that directly addresses these stressors in their bodies can ultimately help them to manage their own stress, improving both their academic achievement and personal well-being.

SOURCE

“[Nurturing Gratitude From the Inside Out: 30 Activities for Grades K–8](#)” was originally developed by [The Inner Resilience Program](#), in partnership with the Greater Good Science Center and the John Templeton Foundation.

For the entire curriculum, click [here](#).