



## BRIEF BODY SCAN

*"Tension is who you think you should be. Relaxation is who you are."*

*—Chinese Proverb*

### OVERVIEW

A mindfulness practice that relaxes each body part, helping you to release tension and calm the mind.

### PLANNING FOR IT

#### WHEN YOU MIGHT USE THIS PRACTICE

- Any time during the year
- Before class begins, during prep time, during lunch, during any break between classes
- When you are feeling stressed and overwhelmed
- Before a staff meeting

#### TIME REQUIRED

- Less than 3 minutes

#### LEVEL

- Adult
- College

#### MATERIALS

- Quiet place to practice

#### LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Participants will:

- Practice relaxing your body from head to toe in under five minutes

## ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS

- [Making Classrooms and Schools Trauma-Informed and Healing-Centered](#)

## SEL COMPETENCIES

- Self-Awareness
- Self-Management

## HOW TO DO IT

### REFLECTION BEFORE THE PRACTICE

If using this practice with staff, be sure to try it yourself first to see how it feels. Before starting, ask yourself: Can I allow myself to focus on my body right now? Am I able to kindly redirect my attention to my body as thoughts continue to pop up for me? Do I believe I deserve a few minutes for rest and relaxation?

### INSTRUCTIONS

Click [here](#) to listen to the audio recording and/or read the transcript below.

### THE PRACTICE

- Begin by bringing your attention into your body.
- You can close your eyes if that's comfortable for you.
- You can notice your body seated wherever you're seated, feeling the weight of your body on the chair, on the floor.
- Take a few deep breaths.
- And as you take a deep breath, bring in more oxygen enlivening the body. And as you exhale, have a sense of relaxing more deeply.
- You can notice your feet on the floor; notice the sensations of your feet touching the floor. The weight and pressure, vibration, heat.
- You can notice your legs against the chair, pressure, pulsing, heaviness, lightness.
- Notice your back against the chair.
- Bring your attention into your stomach area. If your stomach is tense or tight, let it soften. Take a breath.
- Notice your hands. Are your hands tense or tight? See if you can allow them to soften.
- Notice your arms. Feel any sensation in your arms. Let your shoulders be soft.
- Notice your neck and throat. Let them be soft. Relax.
- Soften your jaw. Let your face and facial muscles be soft.
- Then notice your whole body, present. Take one more breath.
- Be aware of your whole body as best as you can. Take a breath. And then when you're ready, you can open your eyes.

\* You can also listen to a [45-minute version](#) of the Body Scan that the UC San Diego Center for Mindfulness uses in its trainings in Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction.

## REFLECTION AFTER THE PRACTICE

How did you feel during the practice? How do you feel now? Were you able to let go of your thoughts to focus on your body?

## THE RESEARCH BEHIND THE PRACTICE

### EVIDENCE THAT IT WORKS

Of all the mindfulness practices on offer, the [body scan](#) is the most popular—and it's a great introduction to mindfulness. Adults who regularly engage in the body scan report greater [psychological well-being](#) and [self-compassion](#), less [reactivity to stress](#), and a decrease in [depression](#).

And teachers who practice mindfulness, in general, for just a few weeks report a decrease in [burnout](#), [stress](#), [anxiety](#), and [depression](#). They also experience a range of physical [health](#) benefits, including lowered blood pressure and better sleep quality.

### WHY DOES IT MATTER?

When work stress is high at school, we tend to get caught up in the stream of thoughts and feelings we experience, so it's crucial to take regular breaks to reboot our nervous systems. The body scan helps us to shift away from our thoughts to focus on physical sensations. Because the mind can only be aware of one thing at a time, a systematic, head-to-toe focus on the body can provide relief from a barrage of thoughts, slowly stabilizing our minds.

If you take time for self-care by practicing body scans regularly, you will likely feel more energized, less stressed, and more equipped to meet the needs of your students.

## SOURCE

Mindful Meditations created by Diana Winston for the UCLA Mindful Awareness Research Center.  
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