



## MINDFULNESS TEACHER TRAINING COURSE

# Mindfulness Teacher Training Course – Stage 1, Week 2

## The Body Scan

Our contemporary Western culture emphasises the cognitive (thinking) domain over the domains of emotion and embodiment. Most of us are barely aware of our bodies at all. We can easily spend so much time ‘in our head’ that we almost forget we have a body at all. We can spend ages ruminating, daydreaming, planning, remembering and comparing. None of this is wrong but it's the overuse of thought that can become problematic and affect our well being. That's why it's very important to introduce the body scan early in any mindfulness course. The body scan takes us out of the thinking mode and into the being mode.

- This activity helps you to reconnect with your body. It's another opportunity to practise focussing your attention on one thing at a time.
- With the body scan we are invited to experience whatever body sensations are arising, without judgment.
- The guidance for the body scan provides permission for *any* experience to be present; we begin, say, at the top of the head, bringing our attention there, and offering language that names a range of experiences, from variations in temperature, to tingling, itching, pressure, to “nothing at all” — with an emphasis that “nothing at all” is a possible, acceptable experience.
- To embrace mindfulness authentically, we need to become fully integrated with our body once more.
- Knowing in advance that our mind is designed to wander helps you in your mindfulness practice. With repetition comes success – you don't have to like the body scan or find it relaxing, you just have to do it. Being agitated or wanting to be better at this won't help you master this skill – these emotions just make it harder, so be kind to yourself if you're struggling. When (not if!) your mind wanders, give yourself credit for having recognised that your mind has wandered and gently escort your mind back to the body.
- If you have a tendency to fall asleep during the body scan meditation sit up rather than lie down. You can also do the meditation at a different time of the day, for example when you are less tired or perhaps not to do the exercise immediately after eating

- Reassure yourself that meditation is not about expecting to be able to clear the minds miraculously of all thoughts. It's helpful to use that analogy of bringing a puppy out on a lead for its very first walk - it will meander and roam in all directions, except the one you want it to go in! That's the way the beginners mind works in the early stages of mindfulness and meditation.
- There's no connection between how much you enjoy the practice and its longer-term benefits. It takes time for mind and body neural connections to integrate.



## Guided Body Scan Meditation Script

**There is also an Audio Version of this meditation to listen to and download.**

This guided body scan meditation is intended to help you enter a very deep state of relaxation. It is best if you can manage to stay awake throughout the entire exercise. It's important to remember to not try to relax. This will just create tension. What you'll be doing instead is becoming aware of each passing moment and just accepting what is happening within you, seeing it as it is. Let go of the tendency of wanting things to be different from how they are now and allow things to be exactly as you find them. Just watch the activity of your mind, letting go of judgmental and critical thoughts when they arise, and just doing what the exercise guides you to do as best you can.

Lie down or be seated in a warm and private place, dressed in loose and comfortable clothing at a time when you will not be interrupted. Closing your eyes, and letting your arms lie alongside your body, your feet falling away from each other/or flat on the floor and slowly bringing your attention to the fact that you are breathing.....Not trying to control your breath in any way...but simply experiencing it as the air moves in and out of your body.... and noticing your abdomen and feeling the sensations there as your breath comes into your body... and your abdomen gently expands.... Then noticing your belly deflate as the breath comes out of your body..... And following the rhythmic movement of each breath...the rising of your belly on the in-breath... and on each out-breath... just letting go.... letting your body become heavy..... as it sinks a little bit deeper into relaxation..... Just bringing full attention to each breath in each moment.

Now bringing your attention to your feet.... becoming aware of whatever sensations are there... If you are registering a blank as you tune in... then just experiencing nothing.... And as you breathe in imagine your breath moving all the way down to your feet... and then when you reach your feet... begin your out-breath and let it move all the way up your body.... and out your nose..... So that you're breathing in from your nose... and breathing out from your feet ..... And when you are ready.... letting your feet dissolve in your mind's eye..... Become aware of the shins and calf muscles .....and the sensations in the lower legs....not just on the surface but right down into the bones.... experiencing and accepting what you feel here.... and breathing into it.... then breathing out from it..... Then letting go of your lower legs as you relax into your

seat or bed or mat..... And moving now into the thighs.... and if there's any tension just noticing that..... Breathing into and out from the thighs..... Then letting your thighs dissolve and relax.

Shift your attention to your pelvis now.... From one hip to the other..... Noticing your buttocks in contact with the bed or the mat... And the sensations of contact and of weight..... And whatever sensations or lack of sensations you are experiencing..... And directing your breath down into your pelvis.... breathing with the entirety of your pelvis.... And as you breath out.... moving the breath back up through your body and out your nose.... letting your pelvis soften ....and release all tension as you sink even deeper... into a state of relaxed awareness and stillness..... Totally present in each moment..... Content to just be, and to just be right here as you are right now..... Direct your attention now to your lower back.... And just experiencing your back as it is..... Letting your breath penetrate and move into every part of your lower back on the in-breath..... And on the out-breath.... just letting any tension... any tightness... any holding on... just flow out as much as it will..... And then letting go of your lower back..... And moving up into your upper back now.... Just feeling the sensations in your upper back..... You may even feel your ribcage, in back as well as in front.... expand on the in-breath..... And any tightness.... fatigue or discomfort in this part of your body... just letting them dissolve and move out with the out-breath... as you let go and sink even deeper into stillness and relaxation.

And now shifting your attention to your belly again... and experiencing the rising and falling of your belly as you breathe..... Feeling the movements of your diaphragm.... that umbrella-like muscle that separates your belly from your chest..... And experiencing the chest as it expands on the in-breath and deflates on the out-breath.... And if you can, tune into the rhythmic beating of your heart within your chest..... Feeling it if you can..... As well as the lungs expanding on either side of your heart..... Just experiencing your chest.... your belly.... as you lie here...the muscles on the chest wall.... the entirety of the front of your body..... And now just letting this region dissolve into relaxation as well.

Moving your attention now to your fingertips.... and to both hands together..... just becoming aware of the sensations now in the tips of your fingers and thumbs.... where you may feel some pulsations from the blood flow... a dampness or a warmth or whatever you feel..... Just feeling your fingers..... And expand your awareness to include the palms of your hands.... and the backs of your hands.... and your wrists..... And here again perhaps picking up the pulsations of the arteries in your wrists.... as the blood flows to ...and from your hands..... And becoming aware as well of the forearms..... And the elbows..... Any and all sensations regardless of what they are..... Allowing the field of your awareness to include now the upper arms..... Right up to your shoulders..... Just experiencing your shoulders... and if there are any tensions.... breathing into your shoulders and arms..... And letting that tension dissolve as you breathe out.... Letting go of the tension and letting go of your arms.... All the way from your fingertips..... right through to your shoulders..... As you sink even deeper into a state of relaxed awareness..... Just being present in each moment..... Letting go of whatever thoughts come up or whatever impulses to move and just experiencing yourself in this moment....

And now focus your attention on your neck and throat..... and feel this part of your body... experiencing what it feels like perhaps when you swallow ...and when you breathe..... And then letting it go.... Letting it relax ...and dissolve in your mind's eye..... Becoming aware of your face now..... Focusing on the jaw and the chin.... just experiencing them as they are....

Becoming aware of your lips and your mouth.... And becoming aware of your cheeks now...and your nose.... feeling the breath as it moves in ...and out at the nostrils..... And be aware of your eyes.... And the entire region around your eyes and eyelids..... And if there's any tension.... letting it leave as the breath leaves..... And now the forehead..... letting it soften to let go of stored emotions..... And the temples..... And if you sense any emotion associated with the tension or feelings in your face... just being aware of that... Breathing in and letting the face dissolve into relaxation and stillness..... And now become aware of

your ears.... and back and top of your head..... Now letting your whole face and head relax..... For now, just letting it be as it is..... Letting it be still and neutral..... Relaxed and at peace.

Now letting your breath move through your entire body in whatever way feels natural for you..... Through the entire length of your body..... All of your muscles in a deep state of relaxation..... And your mind simply aware of this energy..... of this flow of breath. Experiencing your entire body breathing..... Sinking deeper and deeper into a state of stillness.... and deep relaxation..... Allow yourself to feel whole..... In touch with your essential self in a realm of silence..... of stillness.... of peace..... And seeing that this stillness is in itself healing.... And allowing the world to be as it is beyond your personal fears and concerns..... Beyond the tendencies of your mind.... to want everything to be a certain way..... Seeing yourself as complete right now as you are..... As totally awake right now.....

As the exercise ends.... bring your awareness back to your body again.....feeling the whole of it.... You may want to wiggle your toes and fingers.... Allow this calmness and this centeredness to remain with you when you move.... Congratulate yourself on having taken the time to nourish yourself in this way..... And remember that this state of relaxation and clarity is accessible to you by simply paying attention to your breath in any moment..... no matter what's happening in your day. Let your breath be a source of constant strength and energy for you.

## **Reflection on Body Scan Meditation**

Reflect on the following questions, and write your reflections on the course journal sheet:

- How did you find this meditation?
- Did you manage to keep your attention focused throughout, or did your mind wander?
- Did you find this exercise harder or easier than the mindful breathing exercise?
- Did you notice any marked differences between sensations in different parts of your body or on different sides of your body?
- Can you make any other observations about this experience?