

Connecting to my body

Welcome to the RelationKit mindfulness series. Today we will be practicing mindfulness of body where you will be really living in your body for the next 15 minutes, or so.

Mindfulness allows us to re-connect with our bodies because a lot of the time we are totally cut off from them. We live so much up there in our busy heads with our thoughts. We have little awareness of what is going on there inside our body, and if we did, it would help us to discover how we are actually feeling moment by moment.

Remembering when we are present with what is going on inside us, it gives us the space and the choice to respond better, if necessary, to what is needed in that moment. So if we notice that we have physical feelings of tension, or stress, or anxiety in the body, we can respond to that by, for example, breathing to soften those feelings before the mind begins to take over or become filled with thoughts about that stress or anxiety.

Feelings live in the body, and we can take care of them there in the body before our mind becomes too reactive with wanting to try fix and solve and do all the time.

If we can drop into the calmness of our body more, and practice just being with our moment-to-moment experiences, quite often what we realise is that what is there doesn't need to be fixed or reacted towards; it just needs to be noticed and given space to be felt. Trying too hard to solve a problem often makes things worse.

In this practice you'll be sending your attention to different parts of your body and seeing what you sense there moment by moment. You will build the attention muscles of your mind as you stay focused and learn to just be with what you find there, staying interested in all the different feelings in your body without doing anything with them: you are just watching your moment-by-moment experience, staying present with it, without reacting to it. With practice, this calm presence and non-reactivity can then be taken into your daily life.

So bring yourself now to a comfortable position, I recommend lying down on a rug or mat for this one unless you are very tired or drowsy; in that case, sit up.

If it is helpful, gently stretch your neck side to side, or roll your shoulders before you get too comfy in your posture. Relax your jaw and soften your face, and can your eyes be softer also? Maybe closing your eyes down now.

And begin by really inviting yourself into your room. Invite yourself into this space where you are sitting or lying. Invite yourself into your body now.

Start to take some deeper breaths in and deeper breaths out to ground you in your body.

Now bringing your attention to your breath at the centre of your body, to your belly; feeling the rise and fall of your belly. Follow those movements with you mind's eye. Now take a deeper in-breath and on your out-breath see if you can send your breath along with your

attention all the way down your body to your feet. Let your attention be there at the soles of your feet and notice any feelings like a tingling or a fizzing. Become aware of your toes now, the big toes, the little toes and feeling all the toes in between. Bringing your attention to your heels feel now. What do you feel there? Is it the same kind of feeling here? And what about the top of your feet? Can you include your ankles in your awareness now? Feeling into your ankles and just seeing if the feelings there stay the same, or if they change. Don't worry, it's no bother if you don't feel anything, just note that as your experience right now.

Now inviting your attention upwards into the lower legs. What's there right now? What do you feel in this part of your body? Be with those feelings as they arise and fall. Now drawing your attention up into your knees, the space within your knees. How does it feel here? What do you notice? Can you hold your attention here in your knees and can you feel what happens moment by moment? So you're feeling the knees, not thinking about them.

And now bring your attention up to your thighs, your upper legs. Maybe you can notice the fabric of your clothes touching your skin there. And what about if you take your attention inside the legs. What do you sense there? Feeling into the muscles. Perhaps sense the blood flowing, pulsing through your veins. Can you become aware of how your bones feel, resting here? So, a felt sense of your bones now. Just see.

Now travel your attention up to your hips - the right hip and then the left hip - then to your bottom, and the feeling of contact your bottom makes with the seat or the ground beneath you. What does that feel like?

Now allow your awareness to move upwards and to flow into your lower back, noticing what you notice there, trying to be with anything that you find there, even any feelings of discomfort, aches, or pains. You are gently touching them with your awareness. Then take in the middle of your back and then your upper back, feeling you whole back now and breathing with whatever is there. This feeling, and this feeling.

Allow your awareness to fill your shoulders now: the back, the top and the front of your shoulders. You are living there in your shoulders, moment by moment, feeling your shoulders from inside out, not changing anything about what you find just watching, sensing, and feeling what's there.

Can you allow your attention to flow down through your arms, and hands and fingers now? What do you find there? Feeling your arm, hands and fingers from inside out, staying with those feelings. Maybe it's a tingling, pulsing, vibration. A heavy or a light feeling maybe. Allow things to come and go as they do - not pushing anything away or trying to change what's happening, nor grasping onto anything, wanting it to stay the same - just watching things flow through with an interest.

Now gently shift your attention over onto your belly, feeling the breath there once again, the rising and the falling. Any other sensations?

And taking a journey with your awareness up through the front of your body, to your chest, and into your heart space. Be with whatever you find there, with a friendliness towards it. Meet it with your tender breath.

And now let your awareness arrive in your neck. Feel your neck from all sides and inside. Notice what's there in this moment...and in this moment. Then come up into your head and

around to your face, feeling your jaw, your mouth, your lips, teeth, tongue, nostrils, the top of your nose, your cheekbones, the sides of your face and your ears, your eyes, your eyebrows, your forehead, your temples, the top of your head, and your scalp.

Now see if you can widen out your attention to include your whole body, so you have a sense of your whole body sitting or lying here, right now. Your outer body may be still, but you are feeling the flow of life and movement within you, with things rising and falling in your awareness. It's the part of you here that's just watching; watching your inner experience play out, to be just as it is, without needing to change, fix or do anything about it.

Just being here with your moment-to-moment experience. Seeing how restful, more easeful, this sense of 'being' rather than 'doing' is. No need to judge, react, get anywhere, be anyone right now, not even needing to know anything right now, you are just simply 'being'. What do you notice about yourself moment by moment?

Resting back in your body; resting in the space of you. Watching the flow for a few more moments.

Now, start to take some deeper in-breaths and longer out-breaths, and begin to return to feeling the parts of your body resting on the seat or the ground beneath you. And when you feel ready, gently blinking your eyes open.

Take care of yourself, and I'll see you next time.