

Scanning the Body

Calming the mind:

Focus your attention on your breathing. Breathe naturally. Become present in the moment and place where you are. Just focus the mind on the rising and falling of your shoulders and chest as you inhale and exhale gently. Allow your mind to settle and become calm and present, ready to engage in meditation.

Motivation:

Create an altruistic motivation for the meditation session. Think that you are meditating not just for your own individual benefit, but you are taking the time now to meditate and develop your mind to become a wiser and kinder person, able to be of benefit to all beings.

The main body of the meditation:

Focus your attention on your physical body. Find the most suitable sitting position for meditation, with your spine straight and erect, a position in which you can be aware and awake, but not stiff or rigid.

Focus your attention on the lowermost point of your body, where your body is in contact with the earth. Feel the substance and earthy character of your body. Concentrate for a moment on that contact, on the weight and substance of this physical form. Pay attention to the character of your mind, your consciousness, while focusing here.

Now slowly and mindfully move your attention upward through your body. Pay close attention to every aspect of your body, your physical sensations. Note areas of tension, and relax them. Note sensations of coolness or warmth. Note places where one part of your body is touching another.

Move upward, through your legs ... your hips, your hands in your lap. Note the curves of your body's silhouette.

Move upward ... your belly, your waist, the curves of your arms.

Continue to move upward ... the rising and falling of your chest with your breathing ... the curves of your shoulders.

Keep moving upward ... slowly, mindfully. Pay special attention to your shoulders, neck, and jaw. If there is tension there, relax those areas.

Move still upward ... the tilt of your head ... until you reach the crown of your head.

Allow your attention to rest at your crown for a moment. Pay attention to the character of your mind, your consciousness, while focusing here. Is your mind's character different while concentrating here than it was when you were focusing on the lowermost point of your body? What differences can you note?

Now slowly move your attention back downward through your body, in the same way. Move slowly, mindfully, noting everything about your body as you move your attention back downward.

Bring your attention all the way back down to the cushion or floor, where your body is in contact with the earth. Again focus your concentration at this point and note the character of your consciousness when focusing here. Again, note the nature of your mind-state when concentrating here and any differences from your mind's state when concentrating at your crown.

Dedication:

Finally, dedicate your positive energy and insights to the well-being and happiness of all living beings.

N.B.

As you engage in this exercise, you can learn much about your mind and your body and how they can work together. You may notice differences in your mind's tone or character when you are focusing on different parts of the body, e.g., a lighter, airy tone when focusing at the crown, or a more grounded, stable character when focusing at earth level. These insights may be useful in managing your own mental states.