A person is shown in silhouette, sitting in a meditative pose on a wooden deck. The background is a soft-focus view of water and trees, suggesting a peaceful outdoor setting. The overall tone is calm and serene.

MINDFULNESS · COMPLETE GUIDE

BODY SCAN

MEDITATION

A step-by-step practice for stillness, sleep, and stress relief

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide walks you through the body scan — one of the most researched and accessible mindfulness techniques in the world. Originally developed by Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn as the foundation of MBSR (Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction), it is now used in hospitals, clinics, and homes across the globe to ease anxiety, chronic pain, and insomnia.

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“Wherever you go, there you are.” — Jon Kabat-Zinn



Quiet attention through the body builds the same calm response as deep sleep.

WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

Body scan meditation activates the parasympathetic nervous system — the branch that slows the heart, deepens breathing, and signals safety to the brain. Brain-imaging studies show consistent practice thickens areas tied to self-awareness and emotional regulation, while shrinking the amygdala's stress reactivity.

It is the cornerstone of MBSR, an 8-week program proven in hundreds of clinical trials to reduce anxiety, depression, and chronic pain. Unlike concentration meditation, the body scan asks for nothing more than gentle noticing — which makes it accessible even when your mind feels too busy to 'sit still'.

SIX BENEFITS YOU'LL NOTICE

01

Lower Stress

Cortisol drops within 10 minutes of practice.

02

Better Sleep

Tense muscles release; mind quiets faster at night.

03

Less Pain

Changes perception of chronic discomfort.

04

Sharper Focus

Strengthens sustained attention like a muscle.

05

Emotional Steadiness

Reduces reactivity to triggers and worry loops.

06

Body Wisdom

Notice hunger, fatigue, and emotion sooner.

8 weeks

to measurable change in MBSR studies

10 min/day

minimum for noticeable stress drop

30+ years

of clinical research backing the practice

CHOOSE YOUR POSTURE



OPTION A — LYING DOWN

Best for relaxation, sleep, full release

- Lie on your back on a yoga mat or bed.
- Arms at sides, palms up, feet falling open.
- Small pillow under head and behind knees.
- Cover with a light blanket — body cools.



OPTION B — SITTING UPRIGHT

Best for alertness, morning practice, focus

- Sit on a cushion or sturdy chair.
- Spine tall but soft; chin slightly tucked.
- Hands resting on thighs, palms down.
- Feet flat on the floor, shoulder-width.

SET UP YOUR SPACE

- **Quiet** — Silence phone. Use earplugs or soft instrumental music if needed.
- **Dim** — Low light helps the nervous system downshift. Curtains drawn.
- **Warm** — Body temperature drops during stillness — keep a layer nearby.
- **Free of clutter** — A tidy space tells the brain: nothing to fix right now.
- **Same spot daily** — A consistent corner builds an automatic 'this is rest' cue.
- **Timer set** — Use a gentle bell timer (Insight Timer, Calm) — not a phone alarm.

The 10-Step Body Scan



01

Settle In

Time: 1 min

Lie down or sit. Close your eyes. Take three slow, deep breaths — in through the nose for a count of 4, out through the mouth for a count of 6. With each exhale, feel your body settle a little more into the surface beneath you.



02

Anchor in the Breath

Time: 1–2 min

Let breathing return to normal. Don't control it. Simply notice the rise and fall of your belly or chest. Feel the weight of your body. Sense the points of contact: heels, hips, shoulders, head. You have arrived.



03

Toes & Feet

Time: 1–2 min

Move your attention to the toes of your left foot. Notice temperature, tingling, pressure, or simply nothing — all valid. Slowly expand to the sole, heel, and top of the foot. Repeat on the right foot. No need to wiggle; just observe.



04

Lower Legs

Time: 2 min

Travel up to the ankles, calves, and shins. Many people store tension here from standing and walking. With each out-breath, imagine the muscles softening — like a tight fist slowly unfurling into an open palm.



05

Knees & Thighs

Time: 2 min

Bring awareness behind the knees, then to the front and back of the thighs. These are big, dense muscles — let them feel heavy. If the mind drifts to a worry, gently say 'thinking' to yourself and return to the thigh.

The 10-Step Body Scan



06

Hips, Belly & Lower Back

Time: 2 min

Rest awareness in the pelvis. Feel the belly rise with each in-breath, fall with each out-breath. This is often where emotion is stored — fear, grief, knots. Don't try to fix. Just keep it company with kind attention.



07

Chest, Upper Back & Shoulders

Time: 2 min

Feel the heart space expand and contract with the breath. Let the shoulders drop away from the ears. Most of us hold the shoulders raised all day; consciously sink them now. Soften between the shoulder blades.



08

Arms, Hands & Fingers

Time: 1–2 min

Sweep attention from the shoulders down through the upper arms, elbows, forearms, wrists, palms, and out through each fingertip. Notice pulse, warmth, or stillness. Hands often feel surprisingly alive once we tune in.

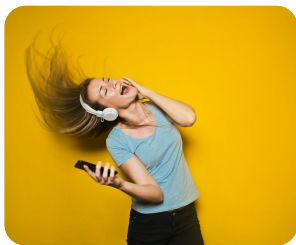


09

Neck, Jaw & Face

Time: 2 min

Soften the jaw — let teeth unclench. Relax the tongue, the space between the eyebrows, the eyelids, the scalp. The face holds enormous tension. Allow a tiny half-smile if it feels natural; it signals safety to the brain.



10

Whole Body & Gentle Return

Time: 2 min

Sense the entire body as one connected field of awareness. Breathe into it as a whole. After a minute, wiggle fingers and toes. Take a deep breath. Open your eyes slowly. Pause before standing — carry the calm with you.

BREATH & IMAGERY ANCHORS

- **4-7-8 Breath**

Inhale 4 counts, hold 7, exhale 8. Calms the nervous system within minutes — perfect before starting.

- **Box Breath**

Inhale 4, hold 4, exhale 4, hold 4. Used by Navy SEALs to steady focus. Great mid-scan reset.

- **Wave Imagery**

Picture each breath as a wave washing in and out across the body part you're scanning.

- **Light Sweep**

Imagine warm golden light slowly moving from toes to head, dissolving tension as it passes.

- **Melting Snow**

Visualize tense muscles as ice slowly melting into pooled water with each out-breath.



COMMON CHALLENGES & HOW TO RESPOND

“My mind keeps wandering”

This IS the practice. Each time you notice and return, you're strengthening focus. Don't judge yourself.

“I fall asleep every time”

Try the sitting posture instead, or practice earlier in the day. Falling asleep just means you needed rest.

“I feel restless or itchy”

Acknowledge the urge with curiosity. Wait 10 seconds before scratching. Often it dissolves on its own.

“I don't feel anything in some parts”

Numbness is also data. Simply note 'no sensation' and move on. Awareness grows over weeks, not minutes.

“Painful or emotional feelings come up”

Breathe gently into the area. If overwhelming, open your eyes and orient to the room. Practice is never punishment.

“I'm not sure I'm doing it right”

If you're noticing your body without trying to change it, you're doing it right. There is no perfect scan.

Your 4-Week Practice Plan

WEEK 1

Foundation

5 min

daily

Lying down · Focus on feet & legs only. Get comfortable with the practice itself.

WEEK 2

Expand

10 min

daily

Lying down · Add torso and arms. Begin to notice tension patterns.

WEEK 3

Full Body

15 min

daily

Sitting or lying · Complete head-to-toe scan. Start using a breath anchor.

WEEK 4

Deepen

20 min

daily

Either posture · Add imagery. Practice without guided audio if possible.

FIVE GOLDEN RULES

- 1 **Consistency beats duration.**
10 minutes daily transforms more than 1 hour once a week.
- 2 **There is no failure.**
Even a 'distracted' session rewires the brain toward awareness.
- 3 **Be kind to yourself.**
Speak to your body the way you'd speak to a tired friend.
- 4 **Notice, don't fix.**
The goal is awareness, not relaxation. Relaxation is a side effect.
- 5 **Track your week.**
Mark a calendar X each day. Visible streaks build motivation.

“The little things? The little moments? They aren't little.”

— Jon Kabat-Zinn

Begin today. Just five minutes. Then again tomorrow.

Your body has been waiting to be heard.