

Body Scan

“When we put energy into actually experiencing our body and we refuse to get caught up in the overlay of judgmental thinking about it, our whole view of it and of ourself can change dramatically.”

Jon Kabat-Zinn

The body scan is an exercise in which we focus our attention on individual areas of the body while gradually moving our awareness throughout the entire body. The important thing is to feel each part of the body attentively without judging any thoughts or feelings that may arise.

This exercise is usually performed while lying on one’s back. Alternatively, it can of course also be practiced in a sitting position, for example at a desk in the office or as a relaxation exercise during class.

The exercise was popularized by Jon Kabat-Zinn, a professor of medicine and a pioneer in the mindfulness movement, who developed it in the late 1970s as part of his MBSR program for patients with chronic pain at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center.

There are many forms of body scanning, and numerous tutorials can be found in books and audio media, as well as on the internet. The length of time required for this exercise also varies greatly depending on the tutorial.

In class, we follow Jon Kabat-Zinn’s description of the exercise. However, the duration of the exercise is shorter in our case and usually lasts a quarter of an hour. A singing bowl is struck as a signal for participants to shift their attention from one part of the body to the next part. The tone announces the transition and also serves as a gentle reminder for any participants who might be falling asleep to focus anew.



Body scan is practiced while lying down. It also can help if you have problems falling asleep.

Instructions

Singing bowl 1x strike

We lay on our backs in a relaxed manner on a mat on the floor. We note how the body feels the floor and the surface of the mat. One can also imagine lying in the sand by the sea, in a meadow, on the sofa at home or simply here in the classroom. We are in a state of complete relaxation. Now we note our breath; it comes and goes by itself. We breathe in a completely relaxed manner – in and out ... in ... out ...

Now we take our attention to the left foot and continue to the toes of the left foot. We note how they feel. We simply feel and observe without judging the feeling. Just scan, hence the name body scan. If one wishes to, one can also move the toes a little bit. Then we take our attention to the middle area of the left foot ...

the left ankle

the left lower leg (the calf, the shin ...)

the left knee

the left thigh (we can also momentarily tighten and relax it)

the left side of the pelvis

The singing bowl is struck once

Now we take our attention to the right foot. We note what the toes feel like. Again we just feel and observe without judging the feeling. We just scan. If we want, we can also move the toes a little. Then we move our awareness to the middle area of the right foot ...

the right ankle

the right lower leg (the calf, the shin ...)

the right knee

the right thigh (we can also momentarily tighten and relax it)

the right side of the pelvis

The singing bowl is struck once

Now we move our awareness to the tailbone and from there scan slowly upwards along the vertebrae. In the front of the body, we scan the groin area and from there we move slowly towards the stomach.

the hips

further up along the vertebrae

in the front up towards the sternum

the chest area

the back of the shoulders

The singing bowl is struck once

Now we move our awareness to the left hand and then to the fingers.

We can also direct our breath to the fingers. Maybe even breathe with our fingers. Just give it a try. Then continue to the middle part of the left hand. Here too we only feel, observe.

the left wrist

the left forearm

the left elbow

the upper left arm ... the triceps, the biceps

If you wish to, you can also momentarily contract and then relax these parts.

the left shoulder

The singing bowl is struck once

Now to the right hand and here to the fingers.

We can also direct our breath there. Maybe even breathe with our fingers. Just try it.

Then move on to the middle part of the right hand. Feel here too, observe.

the right wrist

the right forearm

the right elbow

the upper part of the right ... the triceps, the biceps

If you wish to, you can also momentarily contract and then relax these parts

the left shoulder

The singing bowl is struck once

Now the neck area, feel into it. Relax.

the front of the neck and throat area

the chin

the area of the mouth

the nose and sinuses

the ears

the eyes – comfortably let them drop towards the back of the head

the forehead area

Now the crown. Here we can imagine an imaginary opening through which we breathe.

Breathe in at the top of the crown and let the breath flow throughout the whole body.

Finally, let it flow out again through the soles of the feet.

And just repeat this: breathe in at the top of the head, let it flow throughout the body and out through the soles of the feet.

Repeat this a few more times, and if somewhere in the body we feel a place that does not feel so pleasant, we can direct the breath to that place. We can even breathe into that place.

Now we slowly come back again.

The singing bowl is struck three times

Slowly open your eyes. Don't sit up right away. Maybe move your toes and fingers a little first. Or simply just continue to lay there on your back.

Moderator: "How was it?"

When the exercise is tried for the first time, a conversation follows in teams of two, and then afterwards among the entire group.

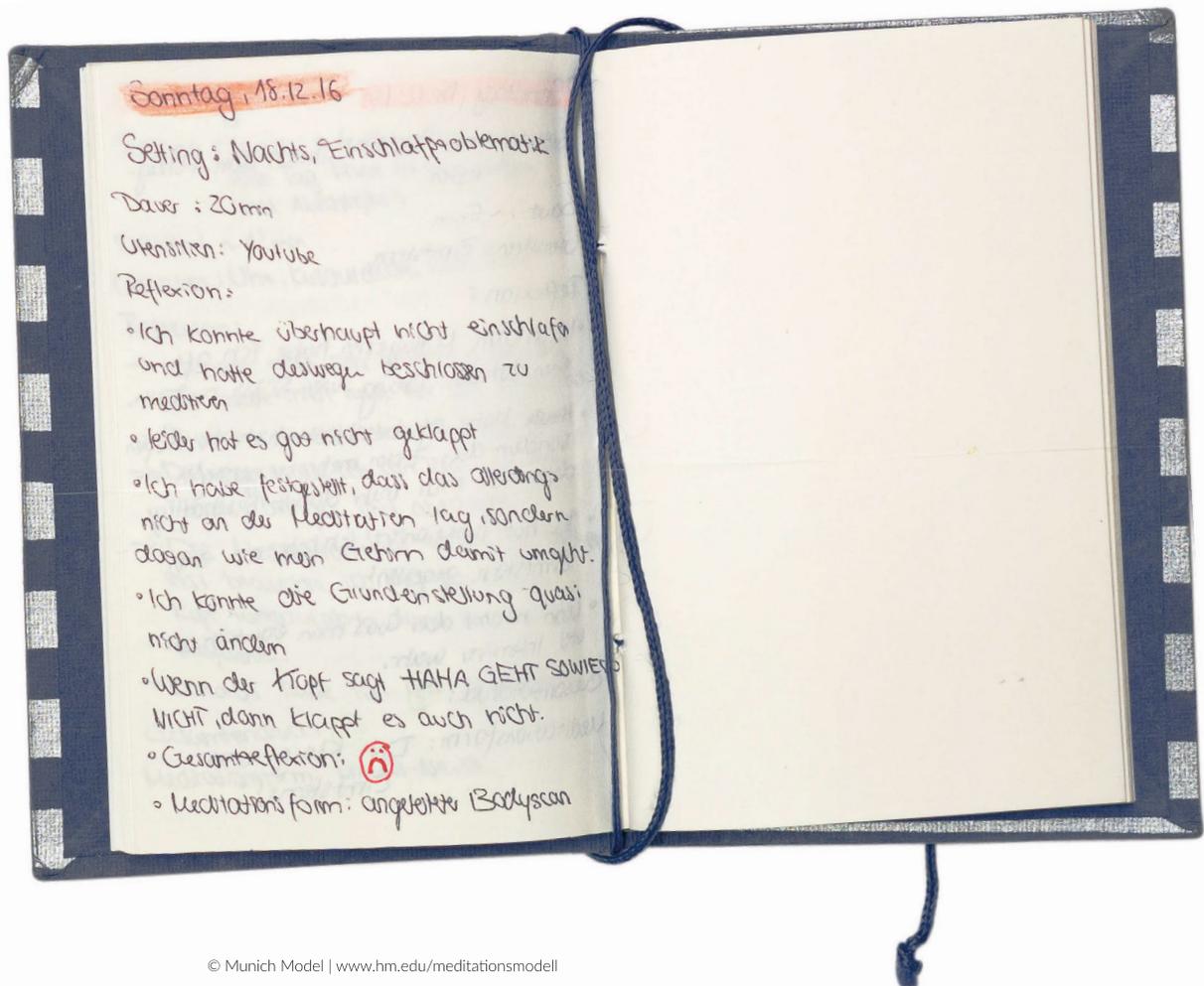
My experience thus far indicates that usually a large number of participants are not able to remain attentive and focused for the entire time. Many report that they have missed one or more passages, i.e. they have drifted off for a moment or fallen asleep.

This shows that many participants are relatively tired and through this exercise are able to relax and come to rest.

From the meditation journals it can be seen that many participants use the body scan exercise in the evening to help them fall asleep. Although the exercise is not primarily intended for this purpose, many participants are able to fall asleep more quickly and better as a result.

Primary literature used for the lessons

Kabat-Zinn, Jon (2013). *Full Catastrophe Living. Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness*. New York: Bantam Books.



Journal Notes

Body Scan

F. S.

6/6/19

Duration: 15 min

Today the day began early for me, at 8am at the university. After attending two courses I was finished and went home. There I felt very tired and as if I had no strength. So I lay down on the couch and chose a guided meditation – body scan – on YouTube. Before I started, I prepared myself with a short breathing meditation to allow myself to mentally switch off. I was able to do this very well. During the body scan I was able to intensely feel the individual parts I was concentrating on. I flooded my feet and legs with energy, as well as my hips, arms and finally my head. At the end, I took a few deep breaths and felt ready for the second part of the day.

H. V.

I'm lying in bed. I'm restless. Flower belly. How can I calm myself down a bit?

I started to breathe calmly and consciously. Feeling my toes.

The air current continued up the shin. Then the kneecap and the hip. It all felt heavy. I became calmer, slower and more tired.

The body scan was particularly good for my stomach; it was flushed with air and widened and relaxed.

The chest also widened.

At this point the eyes became so very heavy. The body scan was lost in sleep.

J. Z.

12/14/14

One evening I couldn't fall asleep, so I decided to do a body scan. In my head I went through the body parts bit by bit [...]. It did me good to direct my thoughts to my body and I noticed how I was getting more tired. When I had completed it, I was satisfied and calm and could fall asleep relatively quickly.

This week I also again noticed progress in myself. I reacted more calmly in stressful situations and didn't get upset about people or circumstances that had always annoyed

Bodyscann

Ich liege im Bett. Bin unruhig. Flower Bauch. Wie kann ich mich bisschen beruhigen?
 Ich fing an ruhig und bewusst zu atmen.
 Meine Zehen zu spüren.
 Der Luftstrom ging weiter das Schienbein hinauf.
 Dann die Kniescheibe und die Hüfte. Es fühlte sich alles schwer an. Ich wurde ruhiger, träger und müder.
 Dem Magen hat der Bodyscan besonders gut getan, er wurde mit Luft durchströmt und weitete sich und entspannte sich.
 Die Brust weitete sich ebenfalls.
 An dieser Stelle wurden die Augen so sehr schwer. Der Bodyscann verlor sich im Schlaf.

me. I also had the feeling that I perceived my surroundings more intensely and could concentrate better on one thing.

M. K.

At night, difficulty falling asleep

Duration: 20 min

Tools: YouTube

- I could not fall asleep at all and therefore decided to meditate.
- Unfortunately it didn't work at all.
- I found out that this was not due to the meditation, but because of how my brain deals with it.
- I could not change my basic attitude.
- If the head says: "Ha ha, it won't work anyway", then it doesn't work.
- Total reflection: ☹
- Meditation form: aspired to do the body scan

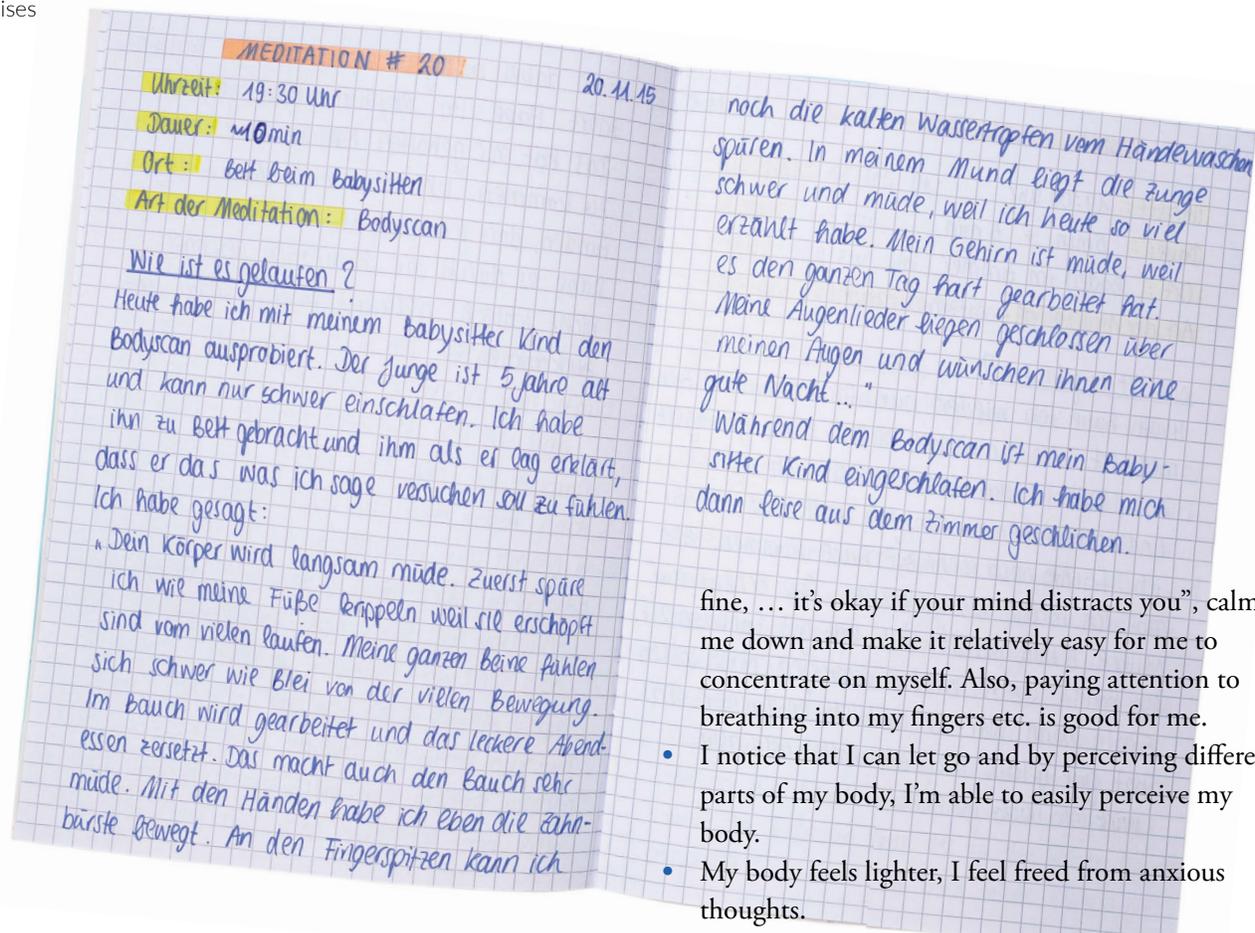
M. M.

When: Monday, 11/10/14, 4:25 p.m.

Where: in the bedroom on the wooden floor, lying on a blanket

Why: better ability to concentrate; the week begins and I have to learn different things for my studies, let anxious thoughts go, feel my body

Research: The body scan is a meditation exercise that has its origin in the Buddhist Vipassana tradition. This exercise strengthens body awareness, as we usually only



perceive our body from the outside. The body scan is a journey through the body, a mental scanning of one's own body. The focus of the thoughts is directed to different areas of the body, one after the other. Thus one's line of vision is changed, we examine our body from the inside. The body scan can be very challenging, because often our mind is constantly jumping from thought to thought, and doesn't come to rest. The exercise is about perceiving our own body sensations, thoughts and feelings and becoming aware of them without judging them. The body scan is also well suited for strengthening one's own concentration, which is a prerequisite for the practice of mindfulness.

Body Scan exercise:

- I watch various body scan videos on YouTube to find out which [is narrated by a] pleasant voice and appeals to me.
- I decide to do the body scan with the following instructions: "a 15 minute guided body scan" (pleasant voice of speaker ☺).
- As in the meditation seminar, the body scan makes me feel "at peace with myself" relatively quickly, I'm quickly able to relax.
- The sentences of the speaker: "... you are in no hurry, let go as best you can, ... take your time, there is nothing to do in this moment, ... everything is

fine, ... it's okay if your mind distracts you", calm me down and make it relatively easy for me to concentrate on myself. Also, paying attention to breathing into my fingers etc. is good for me.

- I notice that I can let go and by perceiving different parts of my body, I'm able to easily perceive my body.
- My body feels lighter, I feel freed from anxious thoughts.
- I notice (despite closed eyes) that I have a smiling expression on my face during the body scan. ☺

N. H.

11/20/15, 7:15 p.m.

Duration: 10 min

Place: bed while babysitting

Type of meditation: body scan

Today I tried the body scan with the child I babysit. The boy is 5 years old and has difficulty falling asleep. I put him to bed and when he lay down I explained to him that he should try to feel what I am saying.

I said: "My body is slowly getting tired. At first I feel my feet tingling because they are exhausted from all the running around. My legs feel heavy like lead from all the movement. My stomach is working and the delicious dinner is being digested. This also makes the stomach very tired. I have just used my hand to hold my toothbrush, while brushing my teeth. After washing my hands, I can still feel the cold drops of water on my fingertips. In my mouth my tongue lies heavy and tired, because I have talked so much today. My brain is tired because it has been working hard all day. My eyelids are closed over my eyes and I wish them a good night ..."

During the body scan, the child I babysit fell asleep. I then quietly snuck out of the room.

T. O.**When: on night duty, about 2:30 a.m.****Where: in my bedroom, in bed****What/how:** tonight's night shift was very unsettling and labor-intensive. Therefore it was hard for me to fall asleep, especially with the thought of having to get up at 6am for

the early shift again. So I tried the body scan again. At first it was a little difficult to get started, but soon I was able to ignore my thoughts and concentrate on my body. I can't say exactly how far I've come or when I fell asleep. In any case, I was able to relax quickly and sleep well.

06.06.19: Bodyscan
Dauer: ca. 15 Min.

Heute begann der Tag für mich früh um 8:00 Uhr in der Uni. Nach zwei Kursen hatte ich aus und fuhr nach Hause. Dort war ich sehr geschäftig und antriebslos. Deshalb legte ich mich auf die Couch und suchte mir auf YouTube eine geführte Meditation – Bodyscan – aus. Bevor ich anfang bereite ich mich mit einer kurzen Atemmeditation vor, um gedanklich ganz abschalten zu können. Dies gelang mir sehr gut. Beim Bodyscan konnte ich die einzelnen Partien, auf die ich mich konzentrierte intensiv spüren. Meine Füße und Beine durchflutete ich mit Energie; genauso meine Hüfte, Arme und zum Schluss meinen Kopf. Am Ende atmete ich einige Male tief ein und fühlte mich bereit für den zweiten Teil des Tages.

16.6.16 BodyscanWann: im Nachtdienst, ca. 2³⁰ Uhr

Wo: in der Schlafkammer, im Bett

Was/Wie: Der heutige Nachtdienst war sehr unruhig und arbeits-

intensiv. Deshalb war es schwer für mich zur Ruhe zu kommen, v.a.

mit dem Gedanken daran, dass ich um 6⁰⁰ Uhr wieder für den Frühdienst

aufstehen muss. Also versuchte ich es wieder mit dem Bodyscan. Der Einstieg

fiel mir zunächst etwas schwer, doch schon bald gelang es mir meine

Gedanken zu ignorieren und mich auf meinen Körper zu konzentrieren. Ich

kann gar nicht genau sagen, wie weit ich gekommen bin oder wann ich

eingeschlafen bin. Auf jeden Fall konnte ich mich schnell entspannen und gut schlafen.

19.6.16 Mantram „Mara-natta“Wann: abends, ca. 23³⁰ Uhr

Wo: WG-Zimmer, am Boden im Schneidersitz

Was/Wie: Nach einem Streit mit meinem Freund kam ich ziemlich spät und gestresst in München an.

Da mich die Gedanken daran nicht

losließen, versuchte ich mit Meditation

etwas zur Ruhe zu kommen. Da ich

noch sehr aufgewühlt war, fiel mir der

Einstieg schwer und ich brauchte 5 Minuten,

bis ich fokussiert war. Dann fand ich

aber relativ schnell in meinen Rhythmus

„Mara-natta“. Ich merkte, wie meine

Gedanken immer weiter weg waren und

ich mich immer besser auf die

Meditation einlassen konnte. Den

Wecker hatte ich auf 20 Minuten

11.5.16

„liebende Güte“

wie sie es so nett sagen,
hatte ich heute den ganzen Nachmittag in
Gedanken mit einem /einer „Nerverlein“
zu kämpfen.

Ich habe mich derart über diese Person
aufgeregt, dass ich mir dachte „jetzt reiß
dich zusammen, das bringt doch alles
nix, dass Du dich aufregst... weder Du
lust etwas davon noch das „Nerverlein“.
Also habe ich einen Konter versucht:

„liebende Güte“... das andere Extrem:

Also habe ich mich auf den Boden gesetzt,
und die Sätze der Liebenden Güte für
andere Personen langsam vorgelesen
und jeden Satz noch einmal leise
in Gedanken wiederholt.

„Möge diese Person sicher und geborgew sein
und frei von innerer und äußerer Not.“

Möge sie glücklich und zufrieden sein.

Möge sie gesund und heil sein.

Möge sie die Leichtigkeit d. Wohlbefindens
erfahren.“ Und tatsächlich, ich selbst war
glücklicher darüber, nicht schlecht über