

From Jon Kabat-Zinn's

***Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness.*** (New York: Delta Book, 1990, p. 76-77)

## **The Body-Scan**

One very powerful technique we can use to reestablish contact with the body is known as body scanning. Because of the thorough and minute focus on the body in body scanning, it is an effective technique for developing both concentration and flexibility of attention simultaneously. It involves lying on your back and moving your mind through the different regions of your body.

We start with the toes of the left foot and slowly move up the foot and leg, feeling the sensations as we go and directing the breath in to and out from different regions. From the pelvis, we go to the toes of the right foot and move up the right leg back to the pelvis. From there, we move through the torso, through the low back and abdomen, the upper back and chest, and the shoulders.

Then we go to the fingers of both hands and move up simultaneously in both arms, returning to the shoulders. Then we move through the neck and throat, and finally all regions of the face, the back of the head, and the top of the head.

We wind up breathing through an imaginary "hole" in the very top of the head, as if we were a whale with a blowhole. We let our breathing move through the entire body from one end to the other, as if it were flowing in the top of the head and out through the toes, and then in through the toes and through the top of the head.

By the time we have completed the body scan, it can feel as if the entire body has dropped away or has become transparent, as if its substance were in some way erased. It can feel as if there is nothing but breath flowing freely across all the boundaries of the body.

As we complete the body scan, we let ourselves dwell in silence and stillness, in an awareness that may have by this point gone beyond the body altogether. After a time, when we feel ready to, we return to our body, to a sense of it as a whole. We feel it as solid again. We move our hands and feet intentionally. We might also massage the face and rock a little from side to side before opening our eyes and returning to the activities of the day.

The idea in scanning your body is to actually *feel* each region you focus on and linger there with your mind right *on* it or *in* it. You breathe *in* to and *out* from each region a few times and then let go of it in your mind's eye as your attention moves to the next region. As you let go of the sensations you find in each region and of any of the thoughts and inner images you may have found associated with it, the muscles in that region literally let go too, lengthening and releasing much of the tension they have accumulated. It helps if you can feel or imagine that tension in your body and the feelings of fatigue associated with it are flowing out on each outbreath and that, on each inbreath, you are breathing in energy, vitality, and relaxation.