

Body scan: Helping areas that feel unsafe learn to relax

Relaxation can sometimes trigger trauma defenses in our body like freeze and flight. Our bodies carry the memories of surviving unsafe and dangerous events. It is normal for some areas to feel tight, painful, tingly, agitated, restless, electric, fuzzy, or numb both occasionally and chronically. In this exercise you will be encouraged to explore what is happening in your own body and to gradually work towards inviting in relaxation.

Scan your body from the crown of your head to the tips of your toes.

- Notice areas of tension and areas of openness. What feels safer to you?
- Which parts of your body feel strong? Which parts feel weak?
- Which parts feel tired? Where do you feel rested?

Place your attention on an area of your body that feels vulnerable/weak or tired and overworked. What is a compassionate statement you can offer to this part of your body? For example:

- *In this moment I am safe.*
- *Thank you for working so hard for me, I am here with you.*
- *It is ok to soften a little right now.*
- *This is painful, may I be kind to myself.*
- *I have what I need right now.*

Trace the outlines of an area of the body that hold the trauma. Imagine the edges of that shape softening a little, like warm butter. See what it is like to invite that to happen, even if just for one second. Remind parts of you that are resistant to that that you are safe now, relaxation is not dangerous in this moment, and this is an opportunity to do something kind for your body in this moment.

Now trace the outlines of an area of the body that feels safe, open, calm, relaxed, or strong. This should be an area that does not feel tired and overworked. It may be an area that feels neutral, like the tip of your nose or your ear lobe. Just notice this part of your body and notice what it is like to notice.

Oscillate back and forth between these 2 different experiences in your body several different times. What do you experience physically and emotionally?