

Heart Scan: Scanning our Body for Emotions

Overview of Tiny Tool:

One of the most important ways of connecting to our authentic self is to understand our feelings and make friends with them – yes, all of them. Each of us knows that the energy of our emotions lives in our bodies. For example, think about when you have experienced joy. You probably felt an open expansiveness in your chest or a sense that you were glowing from the inside out! Joy feels spacious within us.

When emotional energy is unpleasant in our bodies, we experience emotions such as anxiety, frustration, fear, anger, and hopelessness. For these emotions, we might feel a lump in our throat, an ache in our chest, throbbing temples, butterflies in our stomach, or a draining of energy out of our body. Unpleasant or difficult emotions are much harder to lean into, stay open and curious about their locations and sensations, and observe and soothe.

In fact, most of us are very good at not even noticing unpleasant feelings in our bodies! We ignore them. Deny them. Push them away. The ways we resist them is through blaming others or our self, numbing out by using our addictions (e.g., drinking, food, sex, work, exercise), pushing them down, or being dazed by them. **When we resist them, we don't "feel" them.**

An emotion like water is flowing energy. So when we try to hold it back, the energy builds and builds and usually floods us. We feel overwhelmed.

However, another approach is letting the emotional energy flow ever so gently as we lean lightly toward it, observe the energy and pleasantness with curiosity, and get familiar with the feeling. **When we are able to befriend our emotions more openly, they have less power and we can handle them more skillfully.**

Directions:

This is a body scan exercise to gain awareness of physical sensations in your body and your feelings. Doing a "Heart Scan" only takes a minute and allows you to focus on and get familiar with the sensations of your feelings.

1. To begin, sit or stand in a comfortable position.
2. Take a few natural breaths, gently inhaling and then letting it go. Easy in, easy out.
3. Now go through your body, step by step and put your attention on the place and notice any physical sensation. Put your mind's focus on the feeling.
 - TOP OF the HEAD.
 - The HEAD and FACE
 - The NECK and SHOULDERS
 - The TORSO
 - THE WHOLE BODY AT ONCE.
4. Now notice the locations of the feelings and specifically note any sensation in a feeling. Is it tingling, burning, full of pressure, edgy, constricted? Is the sensation hard or soft, fluid, heated? Does it have a color or a texture?
5. Gently breathe into the feeling and sensation. Again.
6. It's OK to name the emotion such as anxiety, frustration, joy, loneliness, etc. **However the most important piece is to notice the physical cues of the feeling.**
7. Now take a soothing breath to bring you back to a calmer inner state.