

We can regain our freedom if, as a first step, we simply acknowledge the actuality of our situation, without immediately being hooked into automatic tendencies to judge, fix, or want things to be other than they are. The body scan exercise provides an opportunity to practice simply bringing an interested and friendly awareness to the way things are in the moment, without having to do anything to change things.

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Tips for the Body Scan

by Zindel Segal

1. Regardless of what happens (e.g., if you fall asleep, lose concentration, keep thinking of other things or focusing on the wrong bit of body, or not feeling anything), just do it! These are your experiences in the moment. Just be aware of them.
2. If your mind is wandering a lot, simply note the thoughts (as passing events) and bring the mind gently back to the body scan.
3. Let go of ideas of "success," "failure," "doing it well," or trying to "purify the body." This is not a competition. It is not a skill for which you need to strive. The only discipline involved is regular and frequent practice. Just do it with an attitude of openness and curiosity.
4. Let go of any expectations about what the body scan will do for you. Imagine it as a seed you have planted. The more you poke around and interfere, the less it will be able to develop. So with the body scan, just give it the right conditions — peace and quiet, and regular and frequent practice. That is all. The more you try to influence what it will do for you, the less it will do.
5. Try approaching your experience in each moment with the attitude: "OK, that's just the way things are right now." If you try to fight off unpleasant thoughts, feelings, or body sensations, the upsetting feelings will only distract you from doing anything else. Be aware, be non-striving, be in the moment, and accept things as they are. Just do it.