

Body Scan

Much of our emotional and psychological distress shows up in our bodies. In this way, the physical sensations we experience in our bodies can be an important alert signal, similar to the way our emotions function as alerts. For example, when experiencing stress or anxiety, you may have bodily sensations such as stomachaches, chest pains, or muscle tension. A body scan involves noticing your bodily sensations in a gradual sequence from your feet to your head. Taking the time to scan yourself in this way helps you to get to know your body better and alerts you to any pain or discomfort you might be experiencing. Having this awareness allows you to be more intentional in implementing tools from your box of coping strategies when necessary for better psychological functioning in the long term. To do a body scan, complete the following steps:

1. **Get in a comfortable position.** Many people are most comfortable doing a body scan while laying down. If laying down is uncomfortable or not possible for you, you can also sit in a chair. The most important thing is to have a relaxed and open body posture. You can also close your eyes if this feels comfortable for you.
2. **Take some deep breaths.** After getting in a comfortable position, allow yourself a few moments to take some deep breaths. You can use the diaphragmatic breathing method, or you can simply breathe in through your nose for 4 counts, hold your breath gently for 2 counts, and breathe out of your mouth as if you are blowing through a straw.
3. **Bring your attention to your feet.** Once you've taken some deep breaths, bring your attention to your feet, noticing any sensations you might feel. These sensations might include aches, pains, tingling, tension, shaking, heaviness, or pressure. As you notice these sensations, continue to breathe and observe the feelings without judgment or trying to stop the feelings.
4. **Scan the rest of your body.** When you're ready, gradually move from your feet up through the rest of your body, continuing to breathe and notice any sensations you might be experiencing. As you scan your body, it's likely that your attention may wander. This is normal. When this occurs, simply bring your attention back to scanning your body, again, without judgment or criticism. Continue this process until you've made it to the top of your head. Once you are finished, spend a few more minutes breathing and then move into the rest of your day, either by implementing other coping strategies you find useful, or by moving forward with any kind of goal-directed behavior.