

STRATEGY #3: THE “MIND-BODY SCAN”

Mindfulness is a well-established resiliency skill. There are many variations, though all involve some form of focused attention. One definition, for example, might be that it is “paying attention on purpose”, in a “nonjudgmental” manner, with the focus on the “present moment”, and avoiding thoughts about the past or future. [60]

Mindfulness tools are well-researched, and have been shown to literally increase the “thickness” of the prefrontal cortex of the brain associated with judgment and emotion regulation. It also has been shown to reduce stress as well as physical pain, bolster your mood, and improve powers of concentration in stressful situations.

Use the following method to obtain those benefits as well as to reduce the “mind chatter” which can be so disruptive in today’s modern world. And damaging to your telomeres!

- Step one begins by creating time to practice this technique, setting aside approximately ten minutes (daily). Arrange for a quiet and comfortable place where you can lie or sit.
- Next, turn your attention to the parts of your body that are in contact with the surface on which you are sitting or lying. Gently notice any sensations where there may be tension such as your stomach, the back of your neck or your shoulders. Attempt to consciously release any particular areas of tension, and allow yourself to become as relaxed as possible.
- Next, focus solely on the present moment for the time being. Allow any thoughts of the past or present to pass, and zero in on your bodily sensations, allowing any other images or feelings to diminish.

- Now, allow your mind to “scan” your body. Begin at your feet, and pay complete attention to any sensations there. Just allow yourself to experience any feelings in that part of your body.

Notice these sensations; pay attention to the room temperature and become aware of any clothing that may be in contact with your skin.

- As any sensations are noticed, just welcome them. Do they feel heavy or light? Focus on being aware of these sensations, and continue moving your attention progressively up your body. From one leg to the next, then to your buttocks and lower back, the backs of your arms, your head, neck and shoulders, focusing on each, one step at a time.
- Once you have scanned your entire body, the last step is to become aware of your body as a completely interconnected system. Pay attention to any physical sensations anywhere in your body, and maintain that awareness for a few minutes.
- Stay fully focused on the present. Make no conscious effort to direct your thoughts, and allow your awareness to expand in the present moment.
- Begin practicing the Mind Body Scan daily for a period of approximately ten minutes; many expand the time frame as they begin to experience the benefits. Incorporate it into your life, make it one of your healthy rituals, and one that can easily be integrated with the other mind-body strategies described.

Mind Body Scan Practice Log

Day	Minutes	Comments/ Observations
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