

Handout #1.2

Body Scan Meditation

Introduction

In the body scan meditation, we return our attention to be in touch with our own body, sensing the simple bodily sensations at the different parts of the body. By contacting our body with mindful attention, we are facilitating the body and subsequently the mind to shift and release unnecessary tensions and mental agitation. Given time, we can help body and mind to settle into a more calm and meditative state.

A similar meditation for scanning the body is also included in the FPMT Buddhist Meditation 101 course. The following can be used as a meditation script to guide ourselves and others into meditation.

Motivation

We bring forth an altruistic motivation for the meditation session. Think that we are meditating not just for our own individual benefit, but we are taking the time now to meditate and develop our mind to become a wiser and kinder person, able to be of benefit to all beings.

The main body of the meditation

We begin by adopting a suitable meditation posture, either sitting or lying down. We can sit on a chair, cross-legged on the floor, or lay down on our back...

We allow our spine to be in its natural and comfortable position. We rest our hands and arms on some physical support to allow our shoulders to be relaxed. We are free to close our eyes or leave them open.

We return our attention to our own body, to be in touch with the simple sensations here in order to settle our body into meditation.

Starting at the crown, notice the sensations at the topmost part of our body. A little bit of tingling..., a feeling of slight pressure..., warmth or coolness..., or maybe nothing at all, which is perfectly fine.

Moving down to our face, notice the sensations here. Are we tensing up any of the facial muscles? Those at the forehead, around our eyes, or at the jaw?

Can we gently relax these muscles and let in a different feeling, one of softness, ease and comfort into our face?

Inviting our attention to come back to our body, to the neck and throat. Just notice the sensations here...

Moving on to the shoulders, how are our shoulders feeling today?

If we notice any tension or uncomfortable feelings here or elsewhere, can we simply acknowledge them for the time being. Don't feel that we have to change them immediately for the better. Just let them be...

Allowing our attention to flow down both arms at the same time, we notice the simple sensations at our upper arms... at both elbows... down to the lower arms... and finally arriving at both hands...

We sense the sensations at the palms, the back of the hands, and in our fingers... Having activated all these sensations into awareness, can we rest both arms and hands on their physical support and release their weight to gravity?

Coming back to our chest, to our heart center, what do we find here? Can we feel the breath along with other sensations?

As we notice our natural out-breath, we can take this opportunity to release. We allow anything unhelpful or unwanted to somehow flow away with the out-breath.

[Long pause... about 5-7 slow breaths]

Coming back to our body, we allow our attention to go deeper and lower till we arrive at our abdomen. We rest our attention within our body, at the level of our navel, and sense the sensations here.

Going deeper and lower, we finally arrive at the base of our spine. Rest our attention at the tip of our tail bone within our pelvic region. Sense the sensations here.

Feel the weight of our pelvis on its physical support and see if we can release that weight, so that our pelvis can rest comfortably here.

Allowing our attention to flow down both legs at the same time, we notice the simple sensations at both hip joints... at the upper legs... at both knees... down to the lower legs... and finally arriving at both feet...

We sense the sensations at the soles of the feet, the top of the feet, and in our toes... Having activated all these sensations into awareness, can we rest both legs on the ground and release their weight to gravity?

Rest our body in this posture. Allow it to settle down and be comfortable here...

Rest our attention here with our body and our breath. Each time we notice ourselves breathing out, let's use it as an opportunity to deepen the sense of release... Releasing anything unhelpful and unwanted, we release ourselves deeper into here and now, into our meditation.

[Long pause... till end of meditation]

Dedication

Finally, dedicate our positive energy and insights to the well-being and happiness of all living beings.