

## Body Scan Relaxation Exercise

Find a comfortable spot either in a chair or lie down. Take turns reading this exercise to your partner in a *very slow* and low voice, taking adequate pauses for your partner to finish cycles of breathing.

1. Close your eyes. Let us begin with five complete breath cycles. Inhale deeply into your belly while you count to four ...and exhale completely counting from four back down to one. Breathe. Again inhaling deeply into the belly...and exhaling completely. (Pause until 5 full breaths have been completed.)
2. Now let's focus on your forehead. Notice how it feels. Are your muscles tightened? Is your brow furrowed? Become aware of any tension you are holding in your forehead. With your next exhale, let any tension go and feel your forehead relax. (Pause for 2 breaths)
3. Move to the area around your eyes. Notice how your eyes feel – are they tired, are you squinting, do you perceive fatigue in the muscles around your eyes? With the next three complete breath cycles, release the outer corners of your eyes with the exhale.
4. Continue to breath slowly, pulling air into your nose and down deep into your belly and then letting go of tension with your exhale. Release.
5. Good. Come down to your mouth and jaw. Observe any anxiety or stress that you are holding in the muscles around your mouth and the bones of your jaw. With your next exhale, let your lower jawbone drop down and your mouth open slightly. Release the tension completely in your mouth and jawbone. Inhale and then exhale releasing the tension. (Pause for one breath, wait until the mouth is open slightly.)
6. Become aware of the juncture between your neck and shoulders. Concentrate on bringing your inhalation deep into your belly and with the exhale releasing your shoulders so that they float down toward your feet. Feel the weight of your collarbone drop several inches with your exhale. Breathe in and feel your neck lengthening as you leave your shoulders down in the relaxed position. Exhale and feel your shoulders drop lower and lower.
7. Shift your attention to your elbows, wrists and fingers. Can you perceive any tension or holding in these joints and the muscles that support them? Just take notice of this as you feel your upper arm, (read slowly) lower arm, the palms of your hands and your thumb and fingers. Use your inhale to pull fresh cleansing air deep into your body's center and with the exhale release the tension in your arms and hands. Feel your arms get heavy as they let go and sink to the floor.

8. Sense the floor beneath you. Give your complete weight to the floor and let it support your whole being. Continue your slow inhalations and exhalations as you let your body sink down into the floor – lower (pause) and lower (pause.) Exhale completely and discharge all of the stress and tension that has built up in the muscles of your back. Let the ground support you now.
9. Internally scan your upper and lower legs for signs that you are contracting your muscles unnecessarily. Inhale and hold this awareness about your lower body. Exhale slowly and completely. With your next inhalation let go of all the worry and stress that you have stored in your lower body. Exhale and let your legs feel heavy against the floor. Let your feet drop away at your ankle joint.
10. Breathe. Release. Revisit your forehead, eyes, mouth and jawbone. If any tension has slipped back into these areas, just use your deep slow exhalations to erase it and let go again. Feel your neck long and your shoulders down, the floor rising up to support your back and pelvis, legs and feet. Feel your connection to the Earth and let gravity support you. Breathe.