**Brief Body Scan**

This guided body scan is a way to practice the ability to stay present. To really be here for whatever is here in your life. It’s a time to intentionally focus your attention to whatever is present in the body. You may wish to lie on a mat on the floor or on a bed, and with a blanket if you like, for warmth. Or for some a chair may be most comfortable. Simply choosing what is right for you in this moment. And settling in now, in a comfortable, stable, position.

You’re invited to take this opportunity to be both by yourself and with yourself, in a time of peace and quiet. It’s not a time to try to be thinking about the body, or trying to change it in any way. Rather, this is a time to connect with this body...as it is right now. To really experience it in a way that is gentle and with deep kindness to yourself.

So perhaps taking a moment to set your intention to stay awake and alert for the duration of this exercise. Carefully noticing what’s here, with great curiosity.

And when you’re ready closing your eyes...And directing your attention to the sensation of the body being supported by the floor or the chair. Seeing how it might be to simply notice the sensations of lying or sitting here.

And if there’s a quality of liking or disliking this experience, seeing how it might be to just lightly notice that without holding onto it.

You may or may not notice areas of tightness or holding. Perhaps seeing if there is something being held that may not need to be held right now...Releasing on an out breath any unnecessary tightness, as you let go and allow the earth to support you.

And when you are ready moving your awareness to the breath, breathing deep in the body.

Resting in awareness of the breath. Without trying to manipulate the breath or control it. But, simply experiencing it as the air moves in and as it moves out from the body. The breath is always already here and it happens on it’s own. So without needing to change it, just being aware of the breath...here and now. Just as it is.

Breathing through the nose if you can. Noticing the rise and fall of the belly as you breathe in and out. The expansion of the belly on the in breath, and the contraction of the belly on the out breath.

And when you’re ready directing attention to the toes of both feet. Just taking your mind and moving it away from the belly and down the legs. All the way down to focus attention on the feet. Paying attention to whatever is here in the toes. There may be sensations of your socks or tingling or moisture or itching or warmth. Or there may be no sensation at all. If you find that as we practice that some areas of the body don’t have much sensation, then seeing if you can be curious about that. About what not much sensation is like right now. Remember, we’re just practicing being aware and whatever you notice is fine.

So just feeling the toes as they are, breathing with these sensations. And now expanding the focus of your attention to take in all of both feet. Aware of any sensations in the balls of the feet, the soles. Any sense of pressure where the heel or soles connect with the floor. The sides of the feet, the top. Or even deep within the feet.
And as you breathe in, if it’s alright with you, just imagining that the breath is moving in through the body and continuing down all the way to the feet. And as you breathe out that the breath is moving back out from the feet, through the body, and out your nose. So that you are breathing in...down to the feet, and breathing out from the feet.

And now, shifting your attention to the lower legs. The region from the ankles to the knees. Being aware now of the lower legs, including the ankles, calves and shin. Any sensations here, or lack of sensation. The skin around this region, the muscle, and the bones within. Breathing with the legs. And if it seems right to you, directing your breath down all the way to the lower legs, and breathing out from the lower legs.

And when you’re ready letting go of attention from this part of the body...letting the focus move up now to the upper legs. The area from the knees to the hips. Noticing any sensations in the knees... The thighs... Paying attention to whatever is here. The top of the thighs, the sides, the back. Noticing whether there might be any sensations associated with the muscles of the thigh. And even whether it might be possible to feel the bones running through.

If there is any tension here, or in any other region when you come to it, just allowing it to exit on the out breath. Allowing the thigh to be soft and relaxed. Noticing with acceptance of what your current experience is. Breathing into and out from the thighs.

And now allowing your span of attention to widen to take in all of both legs from the toes to the hips. Breathing into and out from all of both legs.

And now letting go of the focus on your legs and shifting your attention to the pelvic bowl. The entire area extending from one hip to the other. Noticing what is present here. Perhaps aware of the buttocks in contact with the mat or floor. Or if you’re in a chair, with the seat. Any sensation of contact, or lack of sensation. And making the entire pelvic region the focus of your attention just now...seeing if there might be sensations from deep within the pelvis.

Breathing into the pelvis, and on an out breath letting it dissolve and shifting the focus of attention to the rest of the lower torso. The abdomen...The lower back...

And allowing awareness now of the lower back. Just paying attention to what is here. This is a region that for many of us is a source of struggle. So, just for now experiencing your lower back as it is.

And now... becoming aware of the sides of the belly. The front, as the belly expands on an inbreath and contracts on an outbreath. You may notice sensations...or movement...or even sounds in the abdomen. Just paying attention to whatever is here. Breathing into and out from the abdominal region.

You may be noticing that the attention tends to drift to other areas of the body on it’s own. Or perhaps to sounds. You may also notice that thoughts come into the mind. Pulling the attention away from the body. There’s no need to see this as a problem. Whenever you notice that the mind has wandered off into thoughts, say about something that happened earlier, or something you need to do later. Or even thoughts about whether you like or dislike this experience, or wish things were different. Simply notice that the mind is doing what minds do. Thinking. Just gently and kindly bringing the attention back to this body in this moment. Aware of what it feels like...just as it is.
And when you’re ready, moving the spotlight of your attention to the chest. With awareness of the effects of the breath in this region. Noticing sensations in the sides of the chest...possibly noticing a subtle expansion of the ribcage on the in breath, and a return on the out breath. Perhaps seeing if it’s possible to feel the lungs filling up and then emptying, in this life-giving flow of the breath.

And when you’re ready, being aware of the heart space. Here in the center of the chest, while you may or may not be able to perceive it, the heart beats persistently...And, it has continued to do so every single moment since you were born – and before birth. Without any instruction from you. Here is the heart center. The place we often consider the source of our caring and tenderness. We speak of things that are heart felt...of experiencing heartache. This is the part of the body we associate with love and compassion.

Noticing if there are thoughts and emotions that arise. Knowing that we can return our attention to the breath any time we choose.

Taking a moment to breathe into and out from the entire torso now.

Feeling the sensation of being alive. And if the mind has wandered...lightly noticing and coming back to the body and the present moment.

When you are ready, shifting your awareness to both arms and hands. The sensitive finger tips...the palms of the hands...the backs. The wrists and on up to the elbows. Noticing any sensations in the arms as they lie here...and, all the way up to the armpits.

And now breathing into and out from both arms and hands as a whole.

And now paying particular attention to the shoulders. This is an area where day to day tension is often felt by many of us. Noticing what’s here now. And perhaps letting go of any tension that does not need to be held here. Possibly becoming aware that the sensations you are noticing...change from moment to moment. Sensations come and they go. Appearing and disappearing as we observe closely in this way.

And when you are ready, shifting attention to the neck and throat area. This place that houses the vocal chords that brings the gift of speech and song. Perhaps experiencing what it feels like when you swallow. Or when air passes through this channel to support your whole body.

And now letting the attention to the neck and throat dissolve, and becoming aware of your face. Focusing attention on the jaw...the chin. Experiencing it as it is...any sensations. Softening, letting go of any tension that does not need to be held here. Becoming aware of the mouth...lips...teeth...tongue. The roof of your mouth...and the cheeks. And becoming aware of the nose. Any sensations in the nostrils, as the air moves in and out. Perhaps noticing that the air is cooler going in...warmer going out.

Noticing the ears...our receptors of sounds. Any sensations either inside or outside of the ears.

And when you are ready...attending to the eyes...and the softness that may be experienced here. And the forehead and temples. Breathing with your forehead...allowing it to soften.

And now breathing with the entirety of your face...and letting your face relax and be still and neutral. At peace.
And now...shifting your awareness to the entire head. The scalp and skull region. Noticing any effect of gravity, if you are lying down, where the skull and scalp make contact with whatever is supporting it. Or if seated, noticing the way your body knows just how to balance the head on the neck.

And seeing if there may or may not be a sense of the deeper structures within the skull. The brain with all its amazing connections. As you allow your skull to be heavy and sink deeper into the mat.

And now opening to be fully present for the entire body.

Connecting to the breath. Open to things just as they are. Realizing here that you are whole...complete. This body breathing...just as it is.

Just this breath...this life...as it is.

Resting in the stillness and peace of this precious moment.

Relaxed...open...allowing. Experiencing the fullness of our capacity to love and to care. And experiencing being fully awake right now...in this moment.

And...allowing this sense of calmness and centeredness to stay with you as you prepare to go about the rest of your day. Remembering that this state of clarity and calmness is accessible to you at any moment...simply by attending to the breath as an anchor to the present moment. No matter what’s happening any time of day.