

Chapter 21

Dip Your Toe In Body Scan Script

In this exercise, I encourage the therapist to use their hands on their own bodies to model the checking we are asking the client to do. This is a very quick exercise. You will be checking each place for only a few seconds.

In this resource, we use our hands to briefly check on the experience of our bodies in the present. I'll do this exercise with you and check on the experience of my own body in the present. We will just quickly check the speed of our thoughts as well as the tightness of our jaw, neck, and shoulder muscles. We will also check the chest, central body, and stomach areas for any stress or other sensations. We will only check each place for a few seconds, and whatever you notice or don't notice is fine. This entire exercise should be over in less than 45 seconds. We can stop anytime you like. Do all parts of you think trying this exercise is an okay thing to do right now?

Very quickly, put a hand on each side of the top of your head. How fast are your thoughts running in this moment? You don't need to tell me; just notice. Good.

Using information from your fingertips and from your jaw muscles, touch your jaw muscles and notice if they are soft like a pillow or tight like a steel cable. A pillow is a zero, a steel cable is a ten. Give it a quick number, and don't overthink it. Good.

Same thing with your neck muscles; just reach around and check from zero to ten. Good.

Now, the muscles on the top of your shoulders. Quickly check from zero to ten. Good.

Place a hand over the center of your chest. Do you notice a knot, pressure, tension, heaviness, emptiness, movement, or upset? If so, identify which and give it a number zero to ten. Good.

Place a hand between your chest and your stomach, where your ribs come together. Again, do you notice a knot, pressure, tension, heaviness, emptiness, movement, or upset? If so, identify which and give it a number zero to ten. Good.

Now, check your stomach. Is there a knot, pressure, tension, heaviness, emptiness, movement, or upset. If so, identify which and give it a number zero to ten. Good.

Have a conversation when done with this resource about what they noticed. If the client presents with complaints of severe anxiety and panic, yet has zeros below the jaw, that may indicate some somatic disconnection or dissociation. This is one of the most helpful resources to assess for embodiment. You should not assume that clients with complex trauma are in their bodies enough to notice. If they are not, we need to try to get them embodied enough to notice and that can take time. I typically do this by pairing this resource with other resources.

Notes:

- The purpose of this resource is to quickly assess for embodiment today. Results may vary based on the client's current emotional state and current window of tolerance. Don't assume that difficulty accessing baseline stress in the body today means that this is always the case for this client. Have a conversation about awareness and where the client usually notices distress or stress.
- Do not mistake the fact that a client has panic attacks as evidence that they are embodied enough to do EMDR therapy.
- If we are going to be asking the client to notice for 45 minutes at a time in EMDR therapy and notice things that may be very distressing, we need to test the client's capacity to notice.