

Calm Intentional Awareness Practice

Here's a five minute exercise you can do to gently shift your physiology toward calm, intentional, awareness. You can do it alone or with a partner taking turns reading the instructions to each other. As you progress through the exercise take the opportunity to be curious about your body - What do you notice? Is anything changing or shifting in your posture, muscles, or emotional experience?

- 1) Take your shoes off and find a space without many distractions, (it could be a bedroom or the bathroom if you're in a crowded house).
- 2) Slowly rise up on your toes, feeling your weight on the balls of your feet. Slowly lower your heels while keeping your weight forward on the balls of your feet. Do this 2-3 times and feel the ground support you as you do. Let your muscles relax so your feet "hang" on the floor.
- 3) Be aware of the ground a few cm beneath the floor. Even though you can't see it, this part of the ground is helping to support you as you stand.
- 4) Look up at the ceiling - tilt your head back, and find a spot directly above your head.
- 5) While keeping some of your attention on the spot you chose, let your chin return back to a neutral position. You'll be facing forward and your eyes will no longer be looking at the spot.
- 6) Feel your feet supported by the ground. Remember the spot on the ceiling above your head. Take a moment or two to let your body adjust.
- 7) Notice your hands and your fingertips. Gently wiggle your fingers and turn your wrists.
- 8) Comfortably raise your arms from the side of your body. Your left arm extends to the left. Your right arm to the right. There is no need to strain, or stretch, or try to reach far.
- 9) Rotate your wrists so your palms are forward and the thumb-side of your hand is up. With your hands opened and relaxed, gently "feel" into the space surrounding your fingers and hands, (ie., touch the space just beyond your fingertips).
- 10) Take a few moments to allow your muscles and posture to shift. Breathe gently and comfortably for a few breath cycles. Give attention to your breath, feel your feet hanging on the ground, remember the spot above you on the ceiling, and feel the space beyond your fingers.
- 11) When you're ready, relax your arms to your sides and take a few moments to notice your body and the room you're in. Let your eyes wonder where they'd like. Notice your breath and your feet on the floor.

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12) Do you feel differently than you did before this exercise? What do you notice? It can be helpful to share your experience with another person, or to write down what you notice. Return to this exercise as often as you find helpful.

Modifications for continued practice:

If the exercise is too challenging or unsettling you can reduce the intensity.

- 1) In step 8, do not extend your arms far from your sides. A 10-15 degree angle is fine. You can even keep them at your side and rotate your palms to face forward with your thumbs out. Notice the level of arm reach that feels helpful to you and continue with the rest of the exercise.
- 2) Alternatively, do steps 1-7 and then 10-12, skipping steps 8 and 9 altogether.

If you want to increase the “reach” of the exercise...

- 1) Try extending your awareness deeper into the ground, imagining a point farther up than your ceiling, “feeling” the space farther beyond your fingertips.
- 2) Add forward and backward directions - Imagine your exhales extending straight forward from your belly, and straight back from your mid-to-upper back.
- 3) In step 6) take a moment to imagine something that makes you smile (it might be the face of a loved one, a friendly pet, or a beautiful day at the beach). How does this addition impact your posture, spine, chest, and shoulders?

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