



This document is an extract from the full chapter which is available for download in the table via this [link](#) and is intended for use by participants of meetings.

The first anchor of mindfulness: grounding mindfulness

Mindfulness of body, meeting life where it happens

“Your body is a piece of the universe you’ve been given. So mindfulness of the body is not just a practice, it is a celebration.” ~ Thich Nhat Hanh

The island of Grounding Mindfulness

Having set off from the dangerous shore on our basic raft, made up of five foundational planks – the ‘Five Gifts’ – bound together by the rope of compassion, our first stop on our journey will be the ‘Island of Grounding Mindfulness’. As we continue the vital work of grounding ourselves by recognising the reality of being human. Understanding that life is painful, difficult, and disappointing (*dukkha*), and meeting this reality with compassion – we now explore where this human life is actually experienced: through our bodies.

This mindfulness practice is fundamental to securing our ‘RAFT to Freedom’. Our bodies are the most immediate material we have at our disposal – the very substance of our vessel, always in contact with the water of experience.

This awareness directs us towards collecting our first anchor – mindfulness of body.

Why begin our mindfulness training here, with the body? Because the body is our anchor to the present moment – the tangible reality we inhabit from birth until death. While our minds can easily wander into past regrets or future anxieties, the sensations of the body are always happening in the present. By grounding our awareness in physical experience, we move away from abstract concepts and directly engage with life as it unfolds before us.

We frame this first foundation as **Grounding Mindfulness** because it's through our bodies that we directly experience birth, ageing, illness, and eventually death – the core components of *dukkha* outlined in Gotama's first realisation. It is in our bodies that we feel physical pain, pleasure, and the constant flux of sensations, providing a direct field for observing 'impermanence' – the temporary and ever-changing nature of all experience.

Self-reflections - initial body awareness check-in

- ★ Take a few moments to gently check in with your current relationship with your body:
 - ★ Right now, without changing anything, can I feel the physical sensations present in my body? (for example, points of contact, temperature, tingling, pressure, tightness, ease?)
 - ★ How aware am I generally of my body's posture and movements as I go about my day?
 - ★ What is my habitual attitude towards my body? (for example, critical, ignoring, appreciative, anxious, neutral?)
 - ★ How do I physically experience strong compulsions in my body? (For example: cravings, withdrawal symptoms, tension, numbness?)
 - ★ Does the idea of paying closer attention to my body feel inviting, intimidating, or neutral? Why?
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Journaling prompts - exploring embodiment

Use your journal to reflect on these broader themes related to body awareness:

1. **Body as home:** Reflect on the statement "*The body is the only home we truly have in this life.*" What does this mean to you? How well do you currently 'inhabit' your body?
 2. **Messages from the body:** Think about times when your body might have been sending you signals (stress, fatigue, discomfort) that you ignored or overrode, perhaps due to destructive patterns of cravings and compulsions. What were the consequences? How might listening more closely be helpful in recovery?
 3. **Body image and reality:** Explore your relationship with your body's appearance versus its felt sensations. How much attention goes to how the body looks versus how it feels from the inside? How have the forces of craving, clinging, and reactivity impacted this relationship?
 4. **Anchoring in the present:** Recall a time when focusing on a simple physical sensation (like breathing or the feeling of your feet on the ground – dropping anchor) helped you feel more grounded or present during a difficult moment. Describe the experience.
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Remember to Remember

This overview introduces the 'First Anchor of Mindfulness' – Awareness of the body – as our primary tool for **Grounding Mindfulness** in the present reality and continuing the work of recognising what it is to be human. By turning our attention towards physical sensations, postures, and movements, held within the ethical container of the 'Five Gifts' and the warmth of 'Compassion', we start to observe the raw nature of existence directly. This **Grounding Mindfulness** helps us to navigate away from the 'dangerous shore' with increasing clarity.

With each of these six mindfulness of body practices, we are simply changing the lens of our contemplation to help us to see more clearly. These practices

are not stand alone reflections, but can be seen as complementary perspectives. Some practices will resonate more strongly with an individual than others. But it is useful to look at each one in order for us to find which elements we find most helpful within our personal practice

The body is where life happens. It's where we feel the *ouch* of dukkha, but it's also where we can anchor ourselves as we build and navigate our vessel of recovery. In the following chapters, as we continue exploring this **Island of Grounding Mindfulness**, we will systematically explore specific methods for cultivating this vital awareness – starting with the breath, moving through postures, actions, and deeper reflections on the body's impermanent nature. Let's begin this embodied exploration, gathering the essential awareness needed for our journey to the safe shore.

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