



08 - The First Anchor - Mindfulness of Body

This document is an extract from the full chapter, which is available for download in the table via this link: <https://raft2freedom.org/raft-to-freedom-downloads/>

... this is the direct path for the purification of beings, for the surmounting of sorrow and lamentation, for the disappearance of pain and grief, for the attainment of the true way, for the realisation of Nirvāṇa - namely, the four foundations of mindfulness.

- Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (MN 10), translated by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi

This chapter introduces the first Anchor of Mindfulness: awareness of the body. Having recognised, through the Five Gifts and the rope of compassion, that life is naturally painful, difficult and disappointing, we now turn to where this human life is actually experienced - through our bodies. This is the first task, Recognise, brought down to the most immediate ground there is.

The body anchors us to the present moment. While the mind wanders freely into past regret or future anxiety, bodily sensation is always happening now - so grounding our awareness here moves us away from abstract thought and into direct contact with life as it unfolds. Investigating the body's constantly changing, conditioned nature also loosens our grip on a fixed sense of “me” and “mine”, without needing force or suppression to do so.

This overview opens onto six further lenses - breathing, posture, clear comprehension, the body's reality, its elements, its impermanence - each taking up this same anchor from a different angle. Together they help us see the body clearly, without aversion or clinging, steadying the raft as we continue the journey outward.

Self-reflections

Take a few moments to gently check in with my current relationship with my body:

- 1 Right now, without changing anything, can I feel the physical sensations present in my body - points of contact, temperature, tingling, pressure, tightness, ease? ([view card](#))

- 2 How aware am I, generally, of my body's posture and movements as I go about my day? ([view card](#))
- 3 What is my habitual attitude towards my body - critical, ignoring, appreciative, anxious, neutral? ([view card](#))
- 4 How do I physically experience a strong craving or compulsion in my body - tension, restlessness, numbness, a pull towards or push away from something? ([view card](#))
- 5 Does the idea of paying closer attention to my body feel inviting, intimidating, or neutral? Why? ([view card](#))
- 6 When I think of my body as "the only home I truly have in this life", how well do I feel I currently inhabit it? ([view card](#))
- 7 Can I recall a time when simply noticing a physical sensation - my feet on the ground, my breath - helped me feel more grounded during a difficult moment? ([view card](#))

Journaling prompts

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

- 1 **Body as home:** reflect on the idea that the body is the only home you 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 your body may have been sending you signals - stress, fatigue, discomfort - that you ignored or overrode, perhaps in the pull of old, compulsive patterns. What were the consequences? How might listening more closely help you now?
- 3 **Body image and reality:** explore your relationship with your body's appearance versus its felt sensations. How much attention goes to how your body looks, versus how it feels from the inside?
- 4 **Anchoring in the present:** recall a time when focusing on a simple physical sensation - breathing, or the feeling of your feet on the ground - helped you feel more grounded or present during a difficult moment. Describe the experience.
- 5 **A body worth trusting:** write about one small way you could treat your body as a trustworthy companion this week, rather than as a problem to manage or a source of shame.
- 6 **Ageing and change:** notice, without judgment, one way your body has changed over the years. What does it feel like to hold that change with curiosity rather than resistance?

- 7 **Six lenses ahead:** of the six aspects of body mindfulness listed in this chapter - breathing, posture, clear comprehension, anatomy, the elements, impermanence - which feels most relevant to you right now, and why?

For a printable reminder to carry this stage's practice into daily life, see the Self-Compassion card: <https://raft2freedom.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/08/appropriate-response-self-compassion.png>

Remember to remember

This overview introduces the first Anchor of Mindfulness - awareness of the body - as our primary tool for grounding ourselves in 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 begin to observe the raw nature of our existence directly.

The body is where life happens. It is where we feel the 'ouch' of dukkha, but it is also where we can anchor ourselves as we build and navigate our vessel. Each of the six lenses that follow simply changes the angle of our contemplation, so that we can see this same terrain more clearly.

Now one of the marvelous things about the body is that it is always in the present moment. Our thoughts and our mind might be somewhere else, but the body is always here and now.

- Gil Fronsdal, *Introduction to Mindfulness Meditation*, Week 2 transcript, Insight Meditation Center, 10 October 2007

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