

Deep Relaxation

Lie down on your back with your arms at your sides (you may also practice in a sitting position). Make yourself comfortable. Allow your body to relax. Be aware of the floor underneath you and of the contact of your body with the floor. (Pause)

Allow your body to sink into the floor. (Pause)

Become aware of your breathing, in and out. Be aware of your abdomen rising and falling as you breathe in and out...rising...falling...rising...falling. (Pause)

Breathing in, bring your awareness to your eyes. Breathing out, allow your eyes to relax. Allow your eyes to sink back into your head...let go of the tension in all the tiny muscles around your eyes...our eyes allow us to see a paradise of form and color...allow your eyes to rest...send love and gratitude to your eyes. (Pause)

Breathing in, bring your awareness to your mouth. Breathing out, allow your mouth to relax. Release the tension around your mouth...your lips are the petals of a flower...let a gentle smile bloom on your lips...smiling releases the tension in the hundreds of muscles in your face...feel the tension release in your cheeks...your jaw...your throat. (Pause)

Breathing in, bring your awareness to your shoulders. Breathing out, allow your shoulders to relax. Let them sink into the floor...let all the accumulated tension flow into the floor... we carry so much with our shoulders...now let them relax as we care for our shoulders. (Pause)

Breathing in, become aware of your arms. Breathing out, relax your arms. Let your arms sink into the floor...your upper arms...your elbows...your lower arms...your wrists...hands...fingers...all the tiny muscles...move your fingers a little if you need to, to help the muscles relax. (Pause)

Breathing in, bring your awareness to your heart. Breathing out, allow your heart to relax. (Pause) Our heart beats for us night and day...embrace your heart with mindfulness and tenderness...reconciling and taking care of your heart. (Pause)

Breathing in, bring your awareness to your legs. Breathing out, allow your legs to relax. Release all the tension in your legs...your thighs...your calves...your ankles...your feet...your toes...all the tiny muscles in your toes...you may want to move your toes a little to help them relax...send your love and care to your toes. (Pause)

Breathing in, breathing out...my whole body feels light...like duck weed floating on the water...I have nowhere to go...nothing to do...I am relaxed...send your love and care to your toes. (Pause)

Breathing in, breathing out...my whole body feels light...like duck weed floating on the water...I have nowhere to go...nothing to do...I am free as the cloud floating in the sky. (Pause)

(Music or silence for a few minutes)

Bring your awareness back to your breathing...to your abdomen rising and falling. (Pause)

Following your breathing, become aware of your arms and legs...you may want to move them a little and stretch. (Pause)

When you feel ready, slowly sit up. (Pause)

When you are ready, slowly stand up.

In the above exercise, you can guide awareness to any part of the body – the hair, scalp, brain, ears, neck, lungs, each of the internal organs, the digestive system, pelvis, and to any part of the body that needs healing and attention, embracing each part and sending love, gratitude and care as we hold it in our awareness and breathing in and out.

From:

Thich Nhat Hanh, Buddha Mind, Buddha Body, (Berkeley, Calif.: Parallax Press, 2008).