

FEEL YOUR BODY*

- experiencing your own body

The aim with the 'Feel your body' exercise is for participants to use a sensory exercise to become aware of their bodies. *Grounding* is about finding a deep inner physical depth and sense of weight pulling down into the body. *Grounding* is also a matter of experiencing an inner and outer balance and stability. Getting a good bodily experience is important for people with a chronic illness since it can help them discover symptoms. When participants increase their awareness of the lower half of their body, they can get a greater sense of what lies below, the ground in fact. Standing and sitting firmly is often connected to being realistic and without illusions, of being anchored in reality.

The exercise can be done sitting, standing or lying down.



Minimum 10 - 15 minutes



Good floor space so participants can sit or stand in a circle
Possibly gentle, relaxing music



Individual
Group dialogue



Link to The Balancing Person
Mindfulness

* Source: Alexander Lowen

STEP BY STEP

1. The educator introduces the aim of the exercise: To be aware of your own body and recognize and understand its signals.
2. The educator asks the participants to sit in a circle or around the table.
3. The educator says that the exercise is about finding peace and calmness and of being aware of your own body and for the body to be in focus. She explains the importance of being able to feel your own body so as to be able to react to bodily reactions. It can be a good idea to do a grounding exercise if participants feel stressed, or short of breath, or feel out of balance and so on. In such situations, it is good to feel solid ground under your feet.
4. The *grounding* exercise is spoken with a calm voice: "Get really comfortable in your chair. You decide for yourselves what to do with your hands. It may be easier to do the exercise if you close your eyes. Now breathe deeply through nose and deeply into the lungs and breathe out slowly through your mouth." Repeat this a couple of times. "Try to sense how your body feels. Is it calm or unsettled? Are you sitting comfortably? If not, try to sit a little differently."
5. Allow participants to sit and be aware of themselves a little while before continuing the exercise.
6. Continue by saying: "Now try thinking about your feet. Note how your feet touch the floor. Try to press the balls of your feet hard against the floor. Press the toes into the floor a bit. Keep pressing.....and then slowly relax. Now lift your toes and press them against the top of your shoes. Keep pressing....relax again and let the toes relax where they feel most comfortable. Now think about the soles of your feet. How do they feel? Try to make your feet as heavy as possible. Some of you might find it helps to think that your feet can grow roots just like a tree." Let the participants sit for a while before continuing the exercise. Remember to mention breathing once in a while.
7. Continue by saying: "Now move your thoughts up to your lower legs. How do they feel? Try to see if you can get them to feel heavy. Breathe in deeply and breathe out while imagining that your legs are sinking further and further down, getting heavier and heavier. ►

8. Continue: "Now think about your knees. Feel your knees. Are you tensing them, are they uncomfortable or do they feel fine? Try using your breathing to get your knees to feel heavy so they pull you down to the floor."
9. "Feel the contact of your thighs with the chair. Focus your thoughts on your thighs; let them spread out so they feel heavy. If you are feeling any tension, try to release it. Some of you may find it helps to actively use your breathing to make your thighs feel heavier and heavier for each breath."
10. "Now think about your buttocks; note how they touch the chair. Try moving a little on your chair to make you more aware of the contact. Try again to think of being so heavy that you become one with the chair and that you are being pulled downwards. Get the feeling of rooting through the seat of the chair right down into the floor, through the floor and into the earth. Now try sitting a little straighter, notice the tension in the small of your back, between the shoulder blades but keep the sense of being well grounded, that you are stable. Slowly breathe in and out. Let your shoulders drop. Feel your breathing go all the way through your back, buttocks, thighs, lower legs, feet and down through your roots. Breathe out and then in, while moving your thoughts up your feet, lower legs, knees, thighs, and buttocks and back and breathe out." Allow the participants to sit quietly doing this exercise for a short while before continuing the exercise.
11. End by saying: "Now gently turn your thoughts back into this room and when you are ready, open your eyes and move a little. You might like to stretch a little."
12. The educator ends the exercise by talking briefly to participants on their reactions to the exercise. How many felt it was difficult to focus on the body's signals? Who felt it helped to find a better position question? Who might be able to use this in their daily routines and how?