

**Feel Tension and Welcome It**

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY \*\*

Scan your body with awareness.  
 Seek out a place of tension or discomfort,  
 And rest there with your attention.  
 Feel this place exactly as it is.  
 Feel it, be with it, just as it is.  
 Feel it not so that it will go away,  
 But with an invitation that it may stay forever.  
 Kiss the tension with the softness of awareness.  
 Bring the breath all the way into this place,  
 As though you are pouring water into a dry sponge.  
 Wait, linger, until the flower opens,  
 Until your awareness is completely there.  
 Move on to another place of tension,  
 And then another.  
 Discover the lotus growing in the mud.

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We generally have an unfriendly relationship to sensations in the body. Tension and pain are the body's cries for attention, just like the call of a newborn baby who knows no words. When we try to ignore the body's signals, whether directly with painkillers or just blocking them out through distraction, we cut off our connection to the real, to the world that can be truly known only through the senses. This tendency to block out the sensations in the body goes

so deep that we rarely even know what it means to experience the body as it is. A fleeting feeling arises, and it is met with an immediate thought that it should not be this way. *This sensation is bad; this one is good.* One single thought can set in motion a pattern of tension, for instance in the pelvis, solar plexus, or chest, that shuts down the flow of blood and energy in such a way as to almost completely inhibit our capacity to feel. Only numbness and thoughts are left. When this knee-jerk reaction occurs, stop for a moment. Retrace your steps. Whether you're sitting in your office, waiting in traffic, or lying in bed, return to that which has been locked out. Open the door with welcome, and consciously linger with that which has been banished. If we acknowledge and welcome tension and pain, not in an effort to make them go away but with a loving embrace, they will transform themselves. It is in this embrace of our greatest discomfort that we are initiated into the body of bliss, into wisdom of the body.

You cannot try to relax: it is only counterproductive. The more you try to make any part of your body relax, the more tense it will become. The body relaxes through just the opposite: through feeling tension and welcoming it completely. It is a paradox: the more you are all right with being tense, the more relaxed you will become, and the more you try to relax, the more tense you will become.

Relaxation is the natural state of the body. It is where it returns to when it is left alone. A relaxed body is the natural temple for relaxed and natural consciousness: free, limitless, and experiencing spontaneous Oneness with all that it encounters.