



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

Mindful Muscles Workbook: MODULE 3



MINDFUL
MUSCLES

Compassionate body scan

What do I have to do? The first exercise in this module is something that can be done at any time of day, lying down in a comfortable place.

Why is this helpful? This exercise is similar to a Mindfulness exercise for developing awareness of the body's sensations but focuses more on what these sensations *mean* for us.

How to do this exercise?

- ❖ Find a comfortable place where you can lie down and relax.
- ❖ Place a hand on your heart and use your heartbeat as a reminder of how you're feeling, keeping note of any changes in your heartbeat.
- ❖ Begin by focusing on your feet. Focus on any sensations that arise. Don't try to relax, and don't try to control the sensation, simply be aware of what it means to you.
- ❖ When you begin to feel aware of the sensation in your feet, move upwards to your legs. Eventually, move upwards to your hips, waist, abdomen, chest, arms, neck, and head.
- ❖ Focus on the sensations for each part of your body.
- ❖ If you notice yourself passing judgement on any part of your body, return to feeling your heartbeat, breathe deeply, shake off this judgement, and go back to simply feeling the sensations.

NOTE: This exercise is also available as an audio recording, through the website of Professor Kristin Neff, a leading researcher on self-compassion. To access the audio file please click below (approx. 23 minutes):

https://self-compassion.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/bodyscan_cleanedbydanmp3.mp3

Self-compassion

Loving-Kindness Meditation

(Audio device required)

by Prof. Christine Neff

This is an audio exercise that can help you practice self-compassion. Select an event that is related to your exercise, performance or physical appearance that has made you feel dysphoric or uncomfortable. The first time you do this exercise, you may want to recall a simple event that doesn't cause too much distress, and as you become more familiarized with this exercise, you can use more complex events that cause more dysphoric emotions. This exercise can take around 20 minutes, so find a comfortable space where you can do it. Over time, you may wish to devote more time to this exercise.

https://self-compassion.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/LKM.self-compassion_cleaned_01-cleanedbydan.mp3



Loving-kindness or meta-meditation

What do I have to do? This exercise intends to develop self-compassion. Naturally, given that you will be addressing a difficult or potentially uncomfortable issue (e.g., a concern you may have with your physical appearance, stress, or worry over your performance at the gym), this exercise can be challenging. Initially, the exercise might bring up feelings different to those you're aiming to explore. You might feel frustrated or angered, but this is okay. The focus of this task is to allow yourself to be kind, and patient with yourself. As you repeat this exercise you will find it easier to engage in self-compassion.

Why is this helpful? By learning how to practice self-compassion you actually re-train your mind to be more resilient to negative thoughts and feelings or even to stressful situations, by using a more positive, self-compassionate approach.

How to do this exercise?

- Begin by sitting in a straight-backed chair and begin to focus on your breathing.
- Try to make yourself as comfortable as possible. Allow yourself to make any small adjustments to your posture as you need to. You might wish to put a hand on your heart to form a connection with yourself.
- Remain focused on your breathing.
- As you focus on your breathing, form a picture of yourself sat in your chair.
- As you hold the image of yourself in mind, imagine yourself being held in a position of affection, appreciation, and love.
- Whilst you form these thoughts, repeat the following in your mind: "May I be safe. May I be peaceful. May I be kind to myself. May I accept myself as I am."
- For a few minutes, continue to ponder yourself in a position where you are held compassionately and safely.
- If you wish, allow your thoughts to move towards something that you consider to be negative about yourself. Do not try to get swept up in this though, simply identify it.
- As you hold the "negative" in mind, repeat the phrase: "May I be safe. May I be peaceful. May I be kind to myself. May I accept myself as I am."

- Remind yourself of how it feels to be held in a safe, kind a loving space.
- Remind yourself that these feelings of kindness and compassion also encompass what you perceive to be negative. Remind yourself of a feeling of warmth and comfort that has developed with this “negative” present too.
- Repeat: “May I be safe. May I be peaceful. May I be kind to myself. May I accept myself as I am.”
- Begin to let the negative feeling go, and bring yourself back to a picture of you, sat in your chair as you are now, with your breathing relaxed and your heartrate steady.
- Repeat to yourself: “May I be safe. May I be peaceful. May I be kind to myself. May I accept myself as I am.”
- Repeat this phrase as many times as you feel necessary.
- When the time you have set aside for this exercise is nearly passed, begin to let go of this phrase.
- Return your focus to your steady breathing and relax the focused attention you’ve given to the phrase and the experiencing of warmth and compassion.
- As you steadily breathe in and out, allow yourself to let go of this exercise.



Compassionate self-validation

What do I have to do? This exercise is called the **Compassionate self-validation** and involves understanding what kind of compassion you are receptive to.

Why is this helpful? This exercise allows you to practice and strengthen your self-compassion skills, so that you can use self-compassion more readily next time you may need it.

How to do this exercise? Use the form below to note down what you experience whenever you engage in this exercise. Try to think of the most compassionate, nurturant, and loving person you can imagine. Now imagine that person talking with you. They might be talking to you about your worries or pressures you feel when exercising. Imagine this person telling you your needs are important, soothing you, and telling you your pain is heard and felt.

What would this compassionate person say to you? What would this voice sound like? How would this compassion make you feel?

What my compassionate voice can tell me about my needs. What would it say or do?	How would this make me feel?



Disclaimer Notice

The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.