

Body-Based Practice*:

Body Loops Variation Teaching Notes

- **General Set Up:** Describe the whole practice and expected timings and how you can choose how much to engage with it and can dip in and out of what is being suggested with the different invitations through the practice. Emphasise how this practice is all about learning how you can choose to direct your attention towards and away from what you can sense in different areas of your body. Really noticing how it is to deliberately choose not to do something can offer many opportunities to be mindful and self-compassionate as deliberately choosing to do something. Invite movements at any time – emphasise how this helps everyone else as it keeps the practice real. Possibly do a brief test drive: Home Base (see below), focus on one foot, then the other foot, then back to Home Base (or give choice of hands or feet). Perhaps do first practice sitting – or after first loop give invitation to move from sitting to lying or standing if wish: offers great contrasts if they do. Repeating that they can move to any position at any time and can make these movements part of the practice to notice the changing sensations as they move.

While the sequence here is leg, arm, torso loop, some groups may suit a different order. For home practice people can choose the loop order they prefer and miss out any loop that, for now, feels too difficult to engage with.

You could suggest that if they are really struggling with the practice they could do something else instead: another practice they are familiar with, sing a song in your mind, daydream, have a snooze, put together a shopping list, pray, think about things you appreciate.

Note that the version below typically takes about 30 minutes. A briefer version can be offered by using fewer areas of the body as points to notice. But if time is short consider doing just one or just two loops. Any sense of incompleteness is a great focus for inquiry.

The principles of having a mindful movement break can be integrated into any version of a body-based practice, as can the idea of a clearly set-up Home Base.

- **Beginning Guidance:**

- a. **Comfort:** Find a comfortable position, you can move at any time. Choose to have eyes open or close: you can open or close your eyes anytime. Cough, sneeze, have a sip of water at any time. Have blankets available and have one near so can cover if wish to.
- b. **Contact Points:** Notice where your body is in contact with what is supporting your body – contact points. Notice the sensations at these points. Notice how it is to rest your body into these supports.
- c. **Home Base Anchor:** Choose a familiar sensory anchor for mindfulness practice (sight, sound, touch, breath, holding object). At any point you can return to this Home Base Anchor. If you are choosing to follow the invitation to focus on different body areas, please look after yourself: skip past any body areas you do not wish to focus on, or have them in more at the edge of your awareness, dipping your attention in and out in whatever way feels best for you. Notice if there is an area you don't at present want to focus on, possibly spend the time practising with your Home Base Anchor.

*The term **body scan** is quite evocative of medical procedures and, especially in the context of trauma in some way linked to medical interventions, may be unnecessarily triggering. As it is only a label for a practice it seems a small consideration to change it when even the word 'body' may be quite enough of a challenge.

- **Leg Loop**

- Leg Loop Narrowing:** Start with one foot (or a toe of that foot) – loop up that leg, pausing at each body area noticing what there is to be noticed. This may be nothing much, vagueness or more definite sensations: each area will be different. When your attention wanders, notice what hooked your attention and gently return your attention to that body area. Allow what is present to fill your awareness, holding that body area and its sensations, however vague or vivid, in the foreground of your attention. Progressively move the attention up that leg, then to the base of the body, then down the other leg to the other foot.
- Leg Loop Widening:** Widen your attention to be aware of the whole of both feet and legs – noticing whether your attention dotting is around, sweeping around the loop, or aware of all of your feet and legs at the same time. Notice when your attention narrows or drifts, then coming back to wide awareness of your legs and feet once again.
- Widening to whole body:** body moving with breath, sounds, room around you, other people present. Perhaps noticing thoughts and feeling passing through your awareness.
- Mindful Movement** – if you want to: stretching, opening eyes, sipping water, changing position. Really notice changing sensations as you make any movements.
- Home Base** – invite a brief reconnection with the Home Base Anchor; noticing how it is to shift attention to your Home Base and making choices about staying with the Home Base, moving on to the next loop and remembering can return to the Home Base anytime.
- Optional Brief Inquiry** – Perhaps stop the practice at this point and check-in with a brief inquiry. It can be very helpful to actively invite in experiences of discomfort or struggle and explore how the person responded to these experiences. An inquiry here can help address practical issues and reinforce the choices that are available. Pausing the practice also is a concrete demonstration that it is ok to pause it. If you do pause for an inquiry, perhaps restart the next part with a brief reconnection to the Home Base.
- Optional ending** - The end of the leg loop could also be an end point for the whole practice and the home practice could be to do just the leg loop with other loops explored in later sessions.

- **Arm Loop**

- Arm Loop Narrowing** – same invitations as for the Leg Loop, standing with one hand (or a finger of one hand) then up arm and across shoulders to other arm and then hand.
- Arm Loop Widening** – **widen** your attention to be aware of the whole of your hands, arms and shoulders - noticing whether your attention dotting is around, sweeping around the loop, or aware of all of your hands, arms and shoulders at the same time. **Notice** when your attention narrows or drifts, then coming back to wide awareness of your hands, arms, and shoulders once again.
- Widening to whole body:** body moving with breath, sounds, room around you, other people present. Perhaps noticing thoughts and feeling passing through your awareness.
- Mindful Movement** - if you want to: stretching, opening eyes, sipping water, changing position. Really notice changing sensations as you make any movements
- Home Base** - invite a brief reconnection with the Home Base Anchor; noticing how it is to shift attention to your Home Base and making choices about staying with the Home Base, moving on to the next loop and remembering can return to the Home Base anytime
- Optional Brief Inquiry:** This may seem helpful or it may seem to interrupt the opportunity for the shift from Home Base to the torso loop within a practice period.

• Torso & Head Loop

- a. **Torso & Head Loop Narrowing** – With same invitations as for the leg loop, starting with the sensation of contact with the sitting bones, move up the back, round head face, then quickly as a sweep through the neck, chest, belly, pelvis and back to the sitting bones once more. In later practices lingering longer at the front, in the belly and pelvis perhaps – but this first time through it may be helpful to very briefly engage in these areas that often carry emotional intensity.
- b. **Torso & Head Loop Widening**: widen your attention to be aware of the whole of your torso, front and back, top and bottom - noticing whether your attention dotting is around, sweeping around the loop, or aware of all of your torso at the same time. Notice when your attention narrows or drifts, then coming back to wide awareness of your whole torso once again.
- c. **Widening to whole body**: body moving with breath, sounds, room around you, other people present. Perhaps noticing thoughts and feeling passing through your awareness.

• Ending

- a. **Ending movements**: Exploring how you want to bring the practice to an end. Perhaps with small movements first like moving fingers and toes. Perhaps bringing in bigger movements leading to stretches and yawning. Listen out for what you can hear, look around at what you can see: taking in more of what is happening around you. Notice what is passing through your mind and any feelings that are present. Shifting position, gradually bringing the practice to an end.
- b. **Ending Inquiry**: actively invite all experiences into the inquiry and, especially if there has been mostly positive experiences, specifically ask for any less pleasant experiences. This can be with initially closed questions.

Possibilities include:

- Who noticed their attention wandering?
- Did anyone find their attention was hooked by something less welcome?
- Did anyone find the position they were in stopped being comfortable?
- Did anyone start noticing pain or discomfort that they weren't aware of before doing the practice?
- Did anyone really want to stop at any point?
- Did anyone find any of the words I used or my voice irritating?
- Did anyone find it soooo boring?
- Anyone struggle with sleep?
- Did anyone choose to skip an area of stop doing following my invitations at some stage?
- If there was some external interruption in the practice like a siren going by, inquire into whether people noticed it and if they did, how did they react?

Treating the negative as being as richly important as the positive (or neutral) helps create the safety for people to share what is difficult.

A recorded version of the Body Loop practice is available as freely downloadable audio files at:

<https://soundcloud.com/resilienceplus/sets/looped-body-based-practice>

A final thought is to always ask yourself what capacities you are aiming to cultivate by offering a practice and whether these aims are appropriate to this group's needs at this time.