

The Blooming of a Lotus

#6 Touching, connecting with Body

1. Aware of the hair on my head, I breathe in.
Smiling to the hair on my head, I breathe out.
Hair, Smiling

2. Aware of my eyes, I breathe in.
Smiling to my eyes, I breathe out.
Eyes, Smiling

3. Aware of my ears, I breathe in.
Smiling to my ears, I breathe out.
Ears, Smiling

4. Aware of my teeth, I breathe in.
Smiling to my teeth, I breathe out.
Teeth Smiling

5. Aware of my smile, I breathe in.
Smiling to my smile, I breathe out.
Smile Smiling

6. Aware of my shoulders, I breathe in.
Smiling to my shoulders, I breathe out.
Shoulders Smiling

7. Aware of my arms, I breathe in.
Smiling to my arms, I breathe out.
Arms, Smiling

8. Aware of my feet, I breathe in.
Smiling to my feet, I breathe out.
Feet, Smiling

9. Aware of my lungs, I breathe in.
Smiling to my lungs, I breathe out.
Lungs, Smiling

10. Aware of my heart, I breathe in.
Smiling to my heart, I breathe out.
Heart, Smiling

This exercise helps the meditation practitioner to become more attuned to her body. The in-breath is to touch a certain part of the body: eyes, ears, heart, lungs, and so on. The out-breath smiles to that part of the body. The half smile can soften and heal. It expresses care and affection for the body. The lungs, the heart, and the liver work diligently over many decades, but how often do we take the time to show them any attention and/or compassion? Not only do we fail to recognize when these parts of the body are tired and out of sorts, but we frequently treat them in a brutal way, weakening them even further. The liver is destroyed by drinking alcohol. Incorrect breathing weakens the lungs, makes them vulnerable to disease, and at the same time undermines the other organs of the body. If we are always anxious and worrying and over-emotional, if we eat too much fat, we can put our hearts at risk. But by breathing consciously and putting ourselves in touch with all the different parts of the body, we come to feel and understand the body and we learn in a concrete way how we can bring it peace and joy. The peace and joy of the body is nothing other than our own peace and joy. This exercise is an exercise of love meditation toward the body. If we are not able to love our bodies, then how can we love anyone?

The first time you practice this exercise you might think that it is too simple, but after you have been practicing it for some time, you shall see how important it is. At first you just recognize and smile to the different parts of your body, but gradually you shall see each individual part very clearly and deeply. Every hair and every cell contains all the data necessary to make the universe. That is the teaching of interdependence found in the Avatamsaka sutra. Every hair on your head is a message from the universe. You can realize awakening by meditating on a single hair.

If you are practicing on your own, you can use this exercise when you are lying down to relax or to go to sleep.