

Being Well, Being Mindful, Being at Home in this Body

"I feel at home in my body for the first time in my life" said Melinda. We hear comments like this from patients and students who learn to listen to the messages their body gives them as they begin a practice of physical movement with a mindful attitude.

Rather than the "workouts" they may have tried periodically over the years these folks are now working with a more inward focus. They are paying better attention to the experience of being alive as they walk, run, or exercise.

This cultivates an attitude of acceptance as they learn the lessons taught by body sensations: the physical experiences of breath, stretching, fatigue, strength, soreness, even the thoughts that evoke tension. Rather than an ambition to achieve the correct number of "reps," they turn their attention to the physical, mental and emotional experiences of the moment. Rather than watching the video screen as they exercise they turn toward their experience of life right now, this life.

Over time they grow to know much more about themselves than they had thought possible. One young man who was learning to stay calm wrote that he realized after this inward way of practicing "my body knows more about what is going on than I do" and he was much more able to stay calm. Many folks find that this allows them to learn to move beyond physical limitations they thought were permanent. Ironically this comes not as a result of "pushing" but of letting go and just letting things unfold in the present moment.

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