

## Body Gratitude Imagery (adapted from Sobczack & Scott, 2017)

**Objective:** Utilizing imagery to create gratitude can foster acceptance in a more powerful way because it integrates more of an experiential event.

**Instructions:** So much of the time we are either taking our bodies for granted or actively disparaging them. And yet they keep serving us, day after day. Take a few moments to think about how your body has been loyally functioning on your behalf. There is no "right" way to reflect. You might want to simply read through the following, or you might want to print off this page and have someone read it to you, or you can make a tape of yourself reading the words. You can do a relaxation first, or not. You might want to have a journal ready to write down what you feel as you finish the meditation. If you feel like you need to stop at any time, please do so. You may experience powerful feelings from doing meditation, or no feelings, or anything in between. If you have painful emotions emerge, please treat yourself gently. Doing an exercise that puts you in touch with your body may put you in touch with emotions you have "lived above the chin" to avoid. Treat yourself with compassion. You might like some comforting - a hug or a soothing bath or a talk with a trusted friend. Consider writing down what you are feeling.

Close your eyes and let your awareness settle gradually on your breath, traveling in and out. You do not need to try to breathe, your breath just breathes itself effortlessly. Allow yourself to feel the support of the cushions beneath you and behind you, the floor beneath your feet. Notice any sensations in your body: places where you may feel an itch, or an ache, chill or warmth, or an emptiness, or a fullness . . . or even places that seem to feel numb. Just sit with this awareness of your body for a moment.

Imagine the path of your breath, traveling into and out of your body. As it comes in it warms your body, flowing through your nose, down your throat, into your lungs. You can imagine that it keeps flowing down, warming your stomach, your pelvis, radiating out into your limbs, all the way to the tips of your fingers and toes. Your breath travels through your body, and as you breathe out, you take any tension that it finds out of your body. Like a warm ocean wave, your breath brings in relaxation, and takes away tension. Feel these waves for a few moments.

Now listen to all the ways that you may have experienced a gift from your body lately. As you listen, let your mind create pictures of the recent past, pictures that fade in and out, creating a kaleidoscope of images.

Perhaps your body has:

- ✓ Fought off an infection
- ✓ Taken you to the top of a hill
- ✓ Stayed awake so you could drive home safely
- ✓ Learned a new physical skill

- ✓ Rewarded you with the sight of a sunset
- ✓ Healed a bruise
- ✓ Given you a new sensual sensation
- ✓ Gotten stronger
- ✓ Kept working despite being in pain
- ✓ Expressed a strong emotion through your face or body language
- ✓ Created another human being
- ✓ Defended you from an attack, or healed from an attack
- ✓ Grown into its current form from two cells: a sperm and an egg
- ✓ Given you sexual pleasure
- ✓ Let you know through pain that something needs your attention
- ✓ Released you from pain
- ✓ Given you the sound of children laughing
- ✓ Rejuvenated during sleep
- ✓ Allowed you to feel the exquisite touch of another person

Notice any feelings you are having as you let these images come and go. Perhaps you are feeling some positive feelings toward your body, and perhaps there are also some angry or frustrated feelings too. Let all of your feelings be present and just notice them. Think of one thing in particular that you appreciate. It may be hard, but try to let a focus happen.

Let yourself feel the specialness of this gift from your body, the awe and wonder of it. What would you like to say to your body from this place of appreciation? Create a phrase that expresses your appreciation. Take some time to let this phrase form in your mind.

Now say your phrase to your body self. Notice how you feel saying it, and how you feel hearing it. Maybe this is something you could make time to say more often.

Think of a time during your day when you want to be aware of this body appreciation. It could be any time of your day, but pick a situation that usually happens as a matter of your daily routine already. Whatever this time and place is, it only needs to allow you a few moments of reflection.

What is happening at this time of day? Visualize the environment in as much detail as possible - sights, sounds, smells, sensations of touch, temperature, texture, etc. Now visualize yourself saying your body appreciation phrase. Imagine yourself having feelings about saying it, and hearing yourself say it.

Resolve to let this situation trigger the thought of your body appreciation phrase so that you can feel this appreciation for your body, sincerely and deeply, every day.

Notice any thoughts or feelings you are having before you allow your awareness to return

to your surroundings. Now you may want to write about the feelings that came up for you during the meditation. Remember, you may have had powerful feelings or no feelings, or anything in between. There is no "right" set of feelings or images. Try to encourage an attitude of curiosity and respect for whatever your experience is.