



Move...your body

Move...to flow

Move...to live

SomaFocus

When you are balanced and when you listen and attend to the needs of your body, mind, and spirit, your natural beauty comes out.

~Christy Turlington

Are your soma and your psyche in harmony?

In the last seven modules, we have explored our bodies with tips and exercises to cultivate body awareness, and at this point you may be asking, what is the point of body awareness? Body awareness asks us to be mindful about how we use our bodies daily, whether we're brushing our teeth, holding our children, walking our dogs, hugging our mothers, holding our partners' hands, sitting in a meeting at work, speaking to a group of strangers, or teaching a class. Body awareness also gives us valuable information about our responses (thoughts, emotions, and actions) in relation to the world around us, bringing our internal experiences into consciousness as we relate to external circumstances.

When we become familiar with the pieces (body parts and subtle energies) that are a part of the puzzle (whole body) and how they relate to one another, what we feel and think about what is occurring internally - in our bodies and in our minds - and how we respond to external circumstances, we have access to a greater variety of choices in our lives as to how we treat ourselves and how we relate to others. We become more aware of what hurts and what gives us pleasure, of what is easy and what is difficult. We become more aware of our strengths and weaknesses and can address issues that arise from these differences. We begin to find balance to create more of what we want, more ease, more mobility, and we realize that we have options where we once thought there were none. The process will reveal valuable information about the "what, how, when, and why" of what we do.



If we should have to fight, we should be prepared to so from the neck up instead of from the neck down.

~Jimmy Doolittle

We've explored the feet, legs, hips, torso, shoulders, arms/hands, and neck/head as separate entities, and now, it's time to integrate the parts into the whole persons that we are. We'll add breathing cues to the movement to integrate breath, muscle contraction and muscle release, and include a movement flow to increase our holistic awareness of how our bodies move. The three sections of movement exercises can be done in one session or at different times throughout the day. The first section is full of tense and release exercises that will get your blood flowing, release tension, and help you identify sensations of tension and relaxation in your body. The second section, a Sun Salutation, is a Vinyasa or flow that engages your entire body, especially your core, to get you moving, and the last section, inspired by Yin Yoga, is introspective and meditative, allowing time for stillness. Grab a yoga or Pilates mat or make yourself comfortable on a cushioned, yet stable surface, and get into your flow. If you have an injury or chronic condition, consult your healthcare provider before attempting these movement exercises.

Try this exercise for 5 minutes several times a day. Choose any moment during your day, such as waiting in line or checking social media on your phone. Observe your posture, note uncomfortable and comfortable sensations in your body, and pay attention to any thoughts and emotions that arise. Simply observe. If you feel adventurous and open to change, ask yourself if there is anything different you can do in that moment to make changes in your posture or stance that would give you more ease, and maybe even give you more rest

It is the mind that makes the body.

~Sojourner Truth

MINDFUL MOVEMENT

Take care of your body. It's
the only place you have to
live.

~Jim Rohn

PART I

Tense & Release Body Scan with Breath

Inhale to tense or contract each part. Exhale to let go or release. Start standing with feet hip-width distance apart.

1. **Feet:** Inhale, flex toes, scrunching feet. Exhale, release the muscle contraction.
2. **Legs:** Inhale, contract thigh muscles to straighten knees, pulling kneecaps up toward pubic bone. Exhale, release the muscle contraction.
3. **Hips:** Inhale, tighten gluteal muscles. Exhale, release the muscle contraction.
4. **Torso:** Inhale, pull navel to spine, make a C-curve with your back, and pull shoulders forward. Exhale, release the muscle contraction.
5. **Shoulders:** Inhale, raise shoulders to ears. Exhale, release the muscle contraction.
6. **Arms & Hands:** Inhale, straighten elbows and make fists. Exhale, release muscle contraction.
7. **Neck & Head:** Inhale, close eyes, and contract facial muscles, bringing eyebrows, cheeks, lips, and chin closer to nose. Exhale, release muscle contraction.

Mountain Pose/Heel Beats

Begin standing with feet hip-width distance apart, arms by your sides. Bend your knees, pull your navel to your spine to stabilize your core, and beat your heels into the mat, lifting and lowering your heels quickly. Notice the reverberation this action creates all the way up your spine, from your sacrum to your neck. Allow your shoulders to be soft.

Mountain Pose Tense & Relax

Inhale, straighten your knees and lift your arms over head, reaching your fingertips toward the ceiling. Exhale, drop arms by your sides and bend knees. Repeat 5 times. If you are lifting your shoulders when you lift your arms, think about sending the lower tips of your shoulder blades down your back when you raise your arms, lower the height of your arms, and/or raise your arms slightly in front of you.

Mountain Pose to Forward Fold

Inhale, straighten your knees, and contract your quadriceps muscles on the front of your thighs to lift the kneecaps. Raise your arms overhead, fingertips extended toward the ceiling into Mountain Pose. Exhale, lower arms, and move into Forward Fold by rolling down slowly through your spine, one vertebra at a time, beginning with your head. When you reach the bottom, bend your knees. Pull your navel toward your spine, inhale, and roll up through your spine beginning with your sacrum (the triangular-shaped bone in your lower back), head coming up last. Reach your arms high. Repeat 3 times. If you feel strain in your lower back or hamstrings, keep your knees bent while you roll up and down through your spine.

PART II

Sun Salutation (Surya Namaskar)

Repeat the Sun Salutation 10 times, preferably in the morning, before you start your day.

Mountain Pose (Tadasana): Begin with feet hip-width apart. Inhale, straighten your knees, and contract the quadriceps muscles on the front of your thighs to lift the kneecaps. Raise your arms overhead, fingertips extended toward the ceiling into Mountain Pose. Root your feet into the mat. Look at a point directly in front of you.

Forward Fold (Uttanasana): Exhale, lower arms and move into Forward Fold by rolling down slowly through your spine, one vertebra at a time, beginning with your head. When you reach the bottom, bend your knees. Gaze at your knees or shins to lengthen the back of your neck. If you feel strain in your lower back or hamstrings, keep your knees bent when you roll up and down through your spine.

Standing Half Forward Fold (Ardha Uttanasana): Inhale, and lift your chest, neck, and head to straighten your spine into a “flat back”. Chest is parallel to the floor. Place your hands on your shins and root your feet into the mat for Half Standing Forward Fold. If you feel strain in your lower back or hamstrings, bend your knees.

Transition to Forward Fold: Exhale, and lower your chest, neck, and head back into Forward Fold.

Plank (Uttihita Chatarunga Dandasana): From Forward Fold, bend knees and place hands on the mat in front of your feet. Extend your fingers and spread them wide to create stability. Create an “L” shape with your thumb and index finger on each hand. Push hands into the mat, then step your right foot back, extending your right leg. Step your left foot back, extending your left leg. Redistribute your weight equally between your hands and feet. You are now in Plank. Align your head and neck with the rest of your spine so a straight line can be drawn from the top of your head to your heels. Exhale and push your navel toward your spine. Inhale and lengthen the space between your hips and ribs on both sides of your body. Hold for 10 breath cycles of exhalation and inhalation, pushing navel to spine and lengthening the space between your hips and ribs.

- **Modification:** Lower your knees to the mat or do plank on a wall. Stand in front of a wall, with your arms extended. Place your hands on the wall, aligned with your shoulders. Step right foot, then left foot back, raise your heels and shift your weight forward into your hands. Keep arms extended and maintain a straight line between the top of your head and your heels.

Low Plank (Chatarunga Dandasana): From Plank, exhale, push navel to spine, and bend your elbows, keeping them by your sides to lower body toward the mat. Stop a few inches above the mat and maintain the straight line from head to heels.

- **Modification:** At the wall, from Plank, exhale, push your navel to spine, then bend your elbows, keeping them by your sides.

Low Cobra (Bhujangasana): From Low Plank, exhale and slowly lower your body to the mat, toes tucked under your heels, keeping elbows close to your sides. Inhale, push hands into the mat and lift your head, neck, and chest off the mat while keeping your lower ribcage in contact with the mat. Roll your shoulders back and gaze toward your mat.

Did you know?

The Trapezius (or “traps”, as it is commonly called) a large muscle located on the back spanning from the base of the skull to the middle of the spine and laterally to the outermost portion of each scapula (shoulder blade), is involved movements of the head, neck, and shoulders.

- **Modification:** From Plank (on the wall), walk your feet forward until your toes touch the wall, bending your elbows and keeping your arms close to your sides. Exhale and push your hands into the wall. Inhale and arch (extend) your upper back, lifting your sternum (breastbone) to the ceiling. Roll your shoulders back and gaze upward.

Downward Dog (Adho Mukha Svanasana): From Cobra push down through your hands and the balls of your feet, and lift your hips high into Downward Dog. Bend your knees and lift your heels high to take the strain off your lower back and hamstrings. Gaze at your feet to keep your head and neck in line with your spine. Hold this position for 5 breath cycles, pushing your navel to your spine as you exhale and lengthening the space between your hips and ribs as you inhale.

- **Modification:** From Cobra (on the wall), push hands into the wall, push navel to spine, and walk feet backward, keeping your hands in contact with the wall. Bend forward at your waist, keeping your back straight until your upper body is in a tabletop position. Bend your knees to take the strain off your lower back and hamstrings. Hold this position for 5 breath cycles, pushing your navel to your spine as you exhale and lengthening the space between your hips and ribs as you inhale.

Transition to Forward Fold: Walk your feet towards your hands to return to Forward Fold.

Transition to Half Standing Forward Fold: Inhale and lift your chest, neck and head to straighten your spine. Place your hands on your shins and root your feet into the mat. If you feel strain in your lower back or hamstrings, bend your knees.

Transition to Mountain Pose: Exhale and lower your chest, neck, and head back into Forward Fold. Inhale and roll up through your spine to Mountain Pose, lifting your arms above your head.

PART III

Yin Yoga

Gather pillows or blankets for support in these passive poses. Hold each pose for 2-5 minutes, focusing on your breath.

Butterfly: Sit on the floor, knees bent, soles of your feet on the floor. Open both knees out to the sides and bring the soles of your feet together. Place your hands on top of your feet, shins, or on the floor. Allow your back to round and fold over, directing your torso toward your inner thighs. Place pillows under your knees for extra support if necessary. Allow your head to hang low. Hold this position for 2 to 5 minutes. Focus on your breath. To come out of Butterfly, slowly roll up through your spine, place your hands on the outside of your knees, and push your knees together.

Reclining Twist: Lie on your back, bring both knees to your chest, and open your arms out to the sides in a T-shape, palms facing up. Allow your knees to fall to the right, keeping knees together and both shoulders on the mat. Place a pillow or rolled-up blanket under your left shoulder for support, especially if it lifts off the mat. Place a pillow or blanket under your bottom knee to support your knees if necessary. Hold this position for 2 to 5 minutes. Focus on your breath, inhaling ease and exhaling tension. Remove the blanket or pillow from beneath your shoulder and knee and bring your knees back to center. Repeat to the left, using the props as needed.

Savasana (Final Resting Pose): Lie on your back, head and knees supported by a pillow or blanket. Rest your arms by your sides, palms facing up. Close your eyes and breathe naturally. Allow your feet, legs, hips, torso, shoulders, arms, hands, neck, and head to release into the surface below you and feel the surface beneath your body. Breathe naturally and allow yourself to rest here for 3 – 10 minutes.

For every thought supported by feeling, there is muscle change. Primary muscle patterns being the biological heritage of man, man's whole body records his emotional thinking.

This information is not intended to replace the advice of a healthcare provider. SomaFlows, LLC and Allegra D. Estreet, MS, MSN, RN, LMT, disclaim any liability for the decisions you make based on this information.