

Learning to listen to and respect your body is a process that requires patience and compassion. You can begin this process by paying attention to your body as you practice the following steps. Go slowly and come back to it as needed.

Make note of those things in your life that are difficult, painful, joyful, and the like. As these things come up, notice your breathing, your heart rate, and your bodily sensations. What are they? Where are they?

Pay attention to what your body feels like. Do certain parts of you feel numb? Tired? Do you feel like crying? These feelings are your body's wisdom. They are part of your inner guidance system.

When you experience a bodily sensation such as back pain, ‘a gut reaction’, a headache, or abdominal pain, pay attention to it. Are emotions such as anger or sensation arises in your body, stop what you are doing, lie down, breathe, and wait with your symptom, emotion, or feeling. You may be surprised at what other feelings or insights come up.

Notice how you routinely talk to your body. What happens when you look in the mirror each morning Do you criticize your face, your legs, your hair? Do you routinely apologize to others for how you look? Or do you give your body positive messages, such as ‘Thank you very much for digesting last night’s dinner without any conscious input from me.’ Cultivate the link between your mouth and your ear – and the rest of you – so that you get used to hearing yourself.

Understand that your health is at risk if you are constantly undermining certain parts or functions of your body. If someone at work has a cold, you automatically undermine your body's ability to stay healthy by obsessing about how many germs you've been exposed to. Instead, say to your body, 'Don't worry – I know that you have the ability to stay healthy when I nourish and rest you optimally.'

You can learn to accept your body unconditionally right now., regardless of where you are starting. Stand in front of a mirror regularly, and thank your body for all it has done for you. Notice what comes up when you do this. Write the following sentence down on a piece of paper and tape it to the mirror. 'I accept myself unconditionally right now.' I often write it on a prescription blank and hand it to my patient with the following instructions: 'Say this sentence out loud to yourself in the mirror while gazing into your eyes. Do this twice a day for thirty days.'

Remember always that 90 percent of your bodily functions take place without your conscious input. Who keeps your heart beating? Who metabolizes your food? Who heals your skin when you cut yourself? Who tells your ears to listen to beautiful music? Acknowledge that your body is a miracle.