



Myofascial Release for Fibromyalgia

The art of listening touch

“There are no limits to sensitivity”

Jean-Pierre Barral, Osteopath and founder of visceral manipulation

“We all have two hands, but who among us really knows how to use them? No one argues with the wine taster who, by using their palette, can tell us the characteristics of the wine - its region, its vineyard or even its vintage. The education of touch can go at least as far”

Jean-Pierre Barral

“Presence is more important than technique. Beginners want to learn more and more techniques. When you achieve mastery, one technique will do. It is amazing how much how little will do. Approach touching the client with the utmost respect for her sanctity-that is with reverence. This form of touch allows for transformational change to occur at a level of being that might take years to reach in non-touching therapies”

Hugh Milne, visionary cranial sacral osteopath.

At Jing we firmly believe that technique alone is not enough to get good results with clients. A more important element is the art of touch; the ability to literally develop “brain cells in your fingertips”

Exemplified by the above quotes from some legendary bodyworkers

The key to true transformation lies not in learning technique but in our ability to connect with the client, truly listen to the tissues and be directed by the body, rather than our intellect. This is beyond science, beyond textbooks. This is the true art of bodywork, the sweet place where we are able to let go of our ego, our fear of “not knowing” or “having to get it right” and enter a place where we can just be. The place where there is just you, your hands, the body, the breath, the interface. In that state lies the key to true change.

When we truly connect with the client’s body through focused touch in this way we have the ability enter a state that the psychologist Mihály Csikszentmihalyi, calls “flow”

Flow is the feeling you get when you are fully immersed in a feeling of energized focus, full involvement, and enjoyment in the process of the activity.

Csikszentmihályi describes flow as “being completely involved in an activity for its own sake. The ego falls away. Time flies. Every action, movement, and thought follows inevitably from the previous one, like playing jazz. Your whole being is involved, and you’re using your skills to the utmost.”

This state of flow is the place where you truly get results in bodywork. As the 60s counterculture slogan goes “tune in, turn on, drop out” – in our case:

Tune in to the tissues. Turn on your healing powers. Drop out of everyday reality.

“ When you achieve mastery, one technique will do.”



"It is as if all of my joints were locked and I am caught inside, as though imprisoned in a kind of body or an envelope that has padlocks inside, like doors that I cannot open."

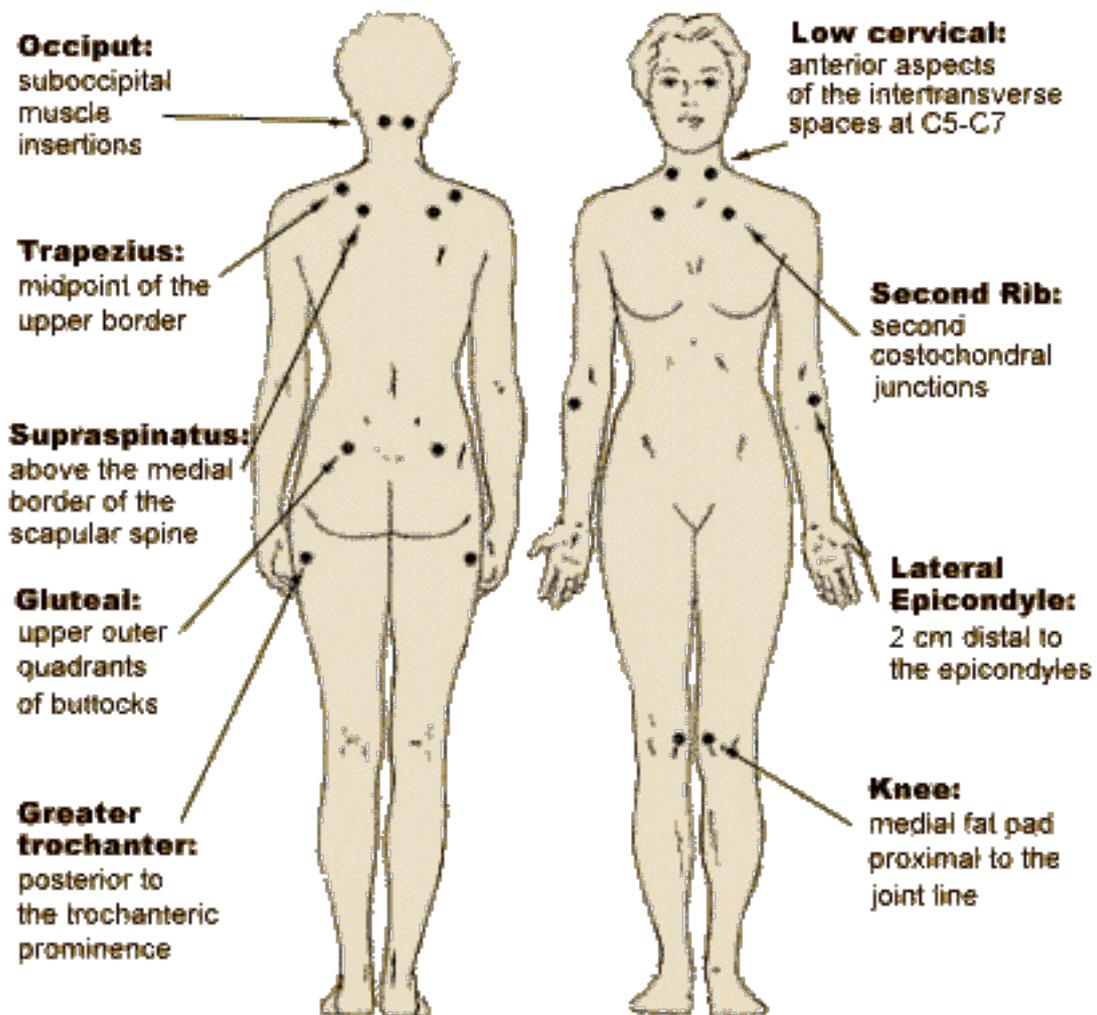
*Fibromyalgia patient interview
(Valenzuela-Moguillansky, 2012)*

What are the symptoms that are likely to appear?

- Widespread constant pain in muscles, soft tissue, joints
- Skin very tender or painful to touch
- Burning, tingling, ripping, pins and needles
- Stabbing, like scalpels or needles going in
- Shooting pains
- Restless legs
- Numbness, no feeling, fogginess, cotton wool
- Tender points
- Trigger points
- Deep aching, like toothache, 'sick' pain
- Pain that moves, or the client can't identify exactly where it is
- Terrible stiffness
- Muscle weakness
- Nausea
- Giddiness, lack of balance, lurching, visual disturbances like blurring
- Dry eyes alternating with watering eyes
- IBS, constipation, diarrhoea
- Allergies and sensitivities
- Heightened sensitivity to light, sound, smell, touch
- Sensitivity to cold, feel the cold very easily, low body temperature
- Low grade fever
- Tender lymph nodes in neck or arm pit
- Sore throat
- Increased sensitivity to pain because of increase in substance P, a chemical that tells the brain that there is pain in an area
- No energy, exhaustion, feeling wiped out all the time
- Feeling as if one has 'flu
- Very long recovery time for any type of exertion
- 'Disproportionate response' to treatment and exertion; normal massage or deep tissue treatment will bring days of pain and inflammation; expending too much energy will result in days of not having any energy at all or not being able to get out of bed
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Irritability
- Mood swings
- Inability to sleep, or likelihood of waking up and not getting back to sleep
- Increased REM sleep and less deep restorative sleep, waking up feeling as if they have not slept at all
- Night sweats
- Brain fog – 'fibrofog', poor concentration, memory loss

Medical Criteria for diagnosing fibromyalgia

- Severe pain in three to six different areas of the body, or milder pain in seven or more different areas
- Symptoms have stayed at a similar level for at least three months
- No other reason for symptoms
- Diagnosis used to be assessed by applying gentle pressure to certain "tender points". Diagnosis of FMS relied on pain in at least 11 out of the 18 tender point sites when pressed with fingers (not more than 4kg of pressure maximum)



What's going on in fibromyalgia?

- Central nervous system involved. 'Central sensitisation'- Dysfunction of processing and modulation of 'noxious stimuli'.
- Sympathetic nervous system in overdrive
- Stress related.

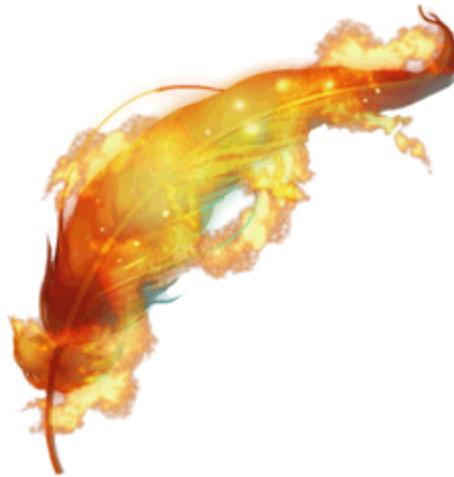
One big wind up – the importance of central sensitisation in FMS and chronic pain

- CS is condition of nervous system associated with chronic pain
- Nervous system goes through process called 'wind up' – in other words it is in a persistent state of high reactivity.
- This means that real and severe pain can exist with no injury or damage to tissues or after the original injury has healed



The touch of a feather.....the feel of a blow torch: allodynia and hyperalgesia

- Central sensitisation has 2 main features: *allodynia and hyperalgesia*
- 'Allodynia' – the stroke of a feather is interpreted by the brain as being seared by a blowtorch. This is when a neutral stimulus is interpreted by the brain as painful
- Hyperalgesia- a normally painful stimulus is interpreted as being much more painful



And theres more...

- CS can lead to heightened sensitivities across all senses: light, sound, smells
- Associated with cognitive deficits ie: poor concentration and poor short term memory
- CS corresponds to increased levels of emotional distress especially anxiety
- CS is associated with 'sick role behaviours'- resting, pain behaviour etc.

Fascia: The missing link

- No definite evidence of muscle pathology in fibromyalgia has been found. However, there is some evidence for dysfunction of the intramuscular connective tissue, or fascia, in fibromyalgia.
- Research by Liptan proposes that inflammation of the fascia is the source of peripheral nociceptive input that leads to central sensitization in fibromyalgia.
- The inflammation of the fascia is similar to that described in conditions such as plantar fasciitis and lateral epicondylitis,
- Inflammation and dysfunction of the fascia may lead to central sensitization in fibromyalgia.
- In FMS the brain is mistakenly triggering the danger or “fight or flight” alarm bells all the time. This leads to chronically tightened muscles. Research suggests the tightness lies not just in the muscles but the fascia which generates inflammation and trigger points



Orthodox treatment

- The main goals of medical treatment are to alleviate pain, increase restorative sleep, and improve physical function.
- A multidisciplinary approach is optimal.
- Medical and research recommendations are usually:
 - Amitriptyline
 - Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT)
 - Strength training
 - Aerobic exercise
 - 2 RCTs (randomised controlled trials) suggest Tai chi can be useful in multidimensional treatment
 - Stretching also shown to be useful

Bodywork

- All aspects of Jing HFMAST protocol useful. Not a 'fix in six!'
- **Heat** –brilliant for reducing pain via CNS modulation. Stones are ace! Avoid cold
- **Fascia** – use gentle MFR rather than direct work. Cross hand stretches, transverse fascial plane releases, gentle arm and leg pulls
- **Muscles**: use trigger point work sparingly until you get to know how the client's system will react
- **Acupressure**; use points to work on emotional system i.e.; CV17
- **Stretching** – yes! Gentle static stretching and hold stretches for longer
- **Teaching**: Self-care and referral important. Remember a multi-disciplinary approach works best. Teach gentle stretches and meditation/ breathing exercises for home care. Referral: Gentle yoga, strength training, meditation, CBT

Treatment yeses!

- Listen to your client, take their word for everything they say. They really do know best. If they say 'don't touch my stomach', DON'T!
- Be extra careful with basic client care. Have plenty of blankets ready, room warmer than usual if necessary, pillows to prop if they want, be prepared to move on swiftly, stop if they want you to, have water ready for them, etc.
- Allow them to change position often if they want. Staying in one position can be painful.
- Expect the tiniest amount of treatment to have a disproportionately enormous effect; don't think you have to pack very much in
- Tell them what you are doing and why and expect their input and comment
- Keep treatments short if necessary, i.e. 20 – 30 minutes pain release at the most, follow with relaxation, sleep massage
- Be very, very gentle, light rather than deep
- Find out each time which depth of weight is best for the client
- Be prepared with short, effective techniques for pain, headaches, sleep
- Use cross-hand stretches and very sensitive 3-dimensional torquing
- Use transverse fascial plane releases anywhere and everywhere
- Don't use skin-rolling, J-stroking or direct techniques unless you are sure the client can handle it
- What for us is felt as discomfort can be extremely painful to an FMS client
- Progress can be very very slow over several treatments, but can give the client relief for a few days; often it doesn't seem as if there has been much progress
- Client can feel worse after a treatment than before; sometimes they feel better a few days afterwards; sometimes there seems to be no improvement, but the client feels that it is doing them good. "I feel this is what I need". Go with that.
- No pain no gain is a big NO NO! Remember the main issue in FMS is central sensitization – an *over-reaction to threats*. Treatment that is too intense may trigger the warning system and make things worse

Research

Benefits of massage-myofascial release therapy on pain, anxiety, quality of sleep, depression, and quality of life in patients with fibromyalgia.

[Castro-Sánchez AM¹](#) et al

- Myofascial release techniques improved pain and quality of life in patients with fibromyalgia.

[Man Ther.](#) 2015 Apr;20(2):257-64. doi: 10.1016/j.math.2014.09.003. Epub 2014 Oct 5.

Effectiveness of different styles of massage therapy in fibromyalgia: a systematic review and meta-analysis.

[Yuan SL¹](#), [Matsutani LA²](#), [Marques AP²](#).

- Overall, most styles of massage therapy consistently improved the quality of life of fibromyalgia patients.

Massage therapy for fibromyalgia: a systematic review and meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials.

[Li YH¹](#), [Wang FY¹](#), [Feng CQ¹](#), [Yang XF¹](#), [Sun YH¹](#).

- Massage therapy with duration ≥ 5 weeks had beneficial immediate effects on improving pain, anxiety, and depression in patients with FM. Massage therapy should be one of the viable complementary and alternative treatments for FM.

[Clin Rehabil.](#) 2011 Sep;25(9):800-13. doi: 10.1177/0269215511399476. Epub 2011 Jun 14.

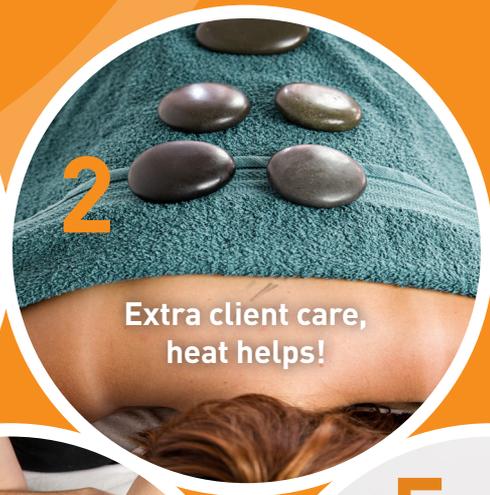
Effects of myofascial release techniques on pain, physical function, and postural stability in patients with fibromyalgia: a randomized controlled trial.

[Castro-Sánchez AM¹](#), [Matarán-Peñarrocha GA](#), [Arroyo-Morales M](#), [Saavedra-Hernández M](#), [Fernández-Sola C](#), [Moreno-Lorenzo C](#).

- The results suggest that myofascial release techniques can be a complementary therapy for pain symptoms, physical function and clinical severity but do not improve postural stability in patients with fibromyalgia syndrome.



Myofascial release techniques for fibromyalgia



Extra client care, heat helps!



MRF cross hand stretches



MFR pelvic transverse fascial plane release



Acupressure point CV 17



Myofascial arm pull



Self-care techniques



TEN TOP REVITALISING ACUPRESSURE POINTS FOR MASSAGE THERAPISTS

www.jingmassage.com



USING ACUPRESSURE POINTS IN MASSAGE

Acupressure points are a wonderful addition to your work. They can be used for the treatment of common musculo-skeletal pain conditions and to help alleviate stress and tension. You can also teach them to clients as a useful self help technique.

THE JING HFMASST APPROACH: A "FIX IN SIX" FOR COMMON PAIN CONDITIONS

At Jing we take a unique approach to the treatment of common musculoskeletal pain conditions. We use a combination of techniques that aims to reduce client pain in 1-6 weekly sessions (usually seeing a result after 3 sessions)

The techniques in the approach are:

H	Hot or cold
F	Fascial techniques
M	Muscles - treat all the muscles around the joint for trigger points
A	Acupressure: Treat relevant acupressure points
S	Stretching
T	Teach relevant self care techniques

TOP TEN REVITALISING ACUPRESSURE POINTS:

● Client prone

SHU POINTS

These are great points for general tonification for chronic conditions.

The back shu points are found 1.5 tsun lateral and level with the spinous processes of each vertebrae (1 tsun = client's thumb width). Each back shu point corresponds to an organ in Chinese medicine. Start at the associated point for the lung (BL 13) which is level with T3 (to find T3 come to the root of the spine of the scapula and draw a line back to the spine. Alternatively count down 3 vertebrae from the prominent C7 which usually sticks out a bit on the back of the neck).

Using supported thumbs work bilaterally coming down one vertebrae at a time to work all the associated points

BLADDER 36 (BL 36) "SUPPORT"

This point is used for low back pain and sciatica.

It is located in the middle of the transverse gluteal fold approximately where the hamstring insertion is found. Use supported fingers to apply pressure into the point towards the head. You can also use a soft elbow to work the point.

SMALL INTESTINE 11 (SI 11) "CELESTIAL GATHERING"

This is a fantastic point for releasing the fascia on the scapula and the whole shoulder girdle. This point is also believed to be helpful for any pain along the small intestine meridian that runs along the back of the arm, elbow, face and jaw.

To treat SI 11 place a supported thumb in the centre of the scapula where you will usually find a small depression. Hold pressure for 3-5 breaths until you feel a release.

GALL BLADDER 21 (GB21) "SHOULDER WELL"

This is a great local point for occipital headache, quickly releasing tight trapezius muscles and neck/shoulder pain. Contraindicated in pregnancy

To treat GB21, in kneeling tai chi stance, find the midpoint of the trapezius muscle (more or less half way between the place where the neck joins the shoulder and the AC joint). You can work the point bilaterally (both sides at once) so with straight arms sink your thumbs into the tissue at this location (which usually feels hard and tender). Your intention is down towards the feet. Hold the point for 3-5 breaths.

GALL BLADDER 20 (GB 20) "GATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS"

● **Benefits:** Relieves headaches and migraines, stiff neck.

● **Location:** In the base of the skull, in the hollow between the 2 vertical neck muscles. With your client prone hook back up into the occiput on either side with your third fingers.

● Client supine

GOVERNING VESSEL 20 (GV 20) "HUNDRED CONVERGENCES"

GV 20 is a powerful point for promoting calmness and bringing clear energy to the head. Traditionally it is believed to help open up the crown chakra for connection to greater spiritual experiences. Great for the beginning or end of a treatment.

● **Location:** Follow the line of the two ear tips upwards.

Where the two lines meet, at the top of the head there is a depression - this is GV20. With the hands cupping the head, hold the point for 3-5 breaths.

CONCEPTION VESSEL 17 (CV 17) "CHEST CENTRE"

● **Location:** On the sternum, level with the fourth intercostal space, between the nipples, a wonderful calming point. Use the third finger to hold the point for 3-5 breaths. It feels nice to have the other hand under the head as you do this.

HEART 8 (HT 8) "LESSER MANSION"

- **Location:** Get your client to make a loose fist. Heart 8 is found where the tip of the little finger rests between the 4th and 5th metacarpal bones. A good point for calming the emotions and you can also teach your client this one as a self-help technique. Hold with your thumb for 3-5 breaths

SPLEEN 6 (SP 6) "THREE YIN JUNCTION"

- **Location:** 3 tsun directly above the tip of the medial malleolus in the depression on the tibia. This point is where the 3 meridians of Kidney, Liver and Spleen intersect and is useful to tonify the body.

The point can be manipulated bilaterally. Measure 3 thumb widths (the same as four fingers) up from the medial malleolus. Press with thumbs into the small depression you will find in the tibia and hold for 3-5 breaths.

KIDNEY 1 (KI 1) "GUSHING SPRING"

- **Location:** On the centre line of the sole of the foot, a third of the way down of the distance from the base of the toes to the heel. This is an excellent general calming point.

The point can be manipulated bilaterally with the thumbs, holding for 3-5 breaths.



*The revolution
will be televised!*

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SHEET 2 Mindfulness

Most of us lead hectic lives and the resulting stress from juggling jobs, family, friends and children can mean we get out of the habit of paying attention to how we feel in our bodies. Research has shown that such stresses exacerbate pain conditions and that the regular practice of simple meditation and mindfulness techniques can help us to reduce pain and feel back in control of our lives. Meditation and mindfulness are very simple to practise and require no equipment, and just 10 minutes a day can make a big difference.

Mindfulness simply means being in the moment, i.e. a human being rather than a human doing! However, our 'monkey minds' are used to thinking 10000 things at once, so, like all skills, mindfulness and meditation need practice. Set aside a regular time every day to practise the simple exercise below and you will find it gets easier and easier to be in the moment. Just 10 minutes is all you need.

Mindfulness of breathing: taking 10 minutes for yourself

- Sit comfortably on a chair with your back straight, feet uncrossed and flat on the floor, your arms resting on your legs or in your lap on top of one another. Spend a moment to take in your surroundings with a soft focus.
- Now gently close your eyes and tune into the inner environment of your body.
- Become aware of the weight of your body, the contact between your body and the chair, and the sensation of the soles of your feet on the floor. Feel the weight of your hands and your arms resting on your legs or lap.
- Take a moment now to notice the sounds around you, both inside and outside the room. You don't need to grab onto or worry about the noises; just let the sounds be.
- Tune into the feeling of the air on your face and body; notice whether you are warm or cool.
- Now bring your attention gently to your breath, noticing where you feel the breath in your body. You don't have to worry about the breath or try and change it, just be aware. You might be able to notice the small movements that you don't usually pay attention to; maybe you feel them in your belly or your chest. There are no rights or wrongs, you are just gently observing. Follow the in breath and the out breath with your full attention, like the waves of the sea ebbing and flowing.
- After the next breath out just notice the slight pause, the stopping and the stillness before the next breath in. Just notice the quality and the rhythm of the pause and let the next breath in come when it wants to, almost like the breath is breathing you. You may find that as you notice the pause it naturally becomes longer.
- You may find it helpful to count the breaths.
- As you feel the rising sensation of the in breath you count 1.
- As you feel the falling sensation of the out breath you count 2 just silently to yourself.
- And you continue counting in that way up to 10: so it's 1 with the rise of the breath and 2 with the fall, 3 with the rise and continuing this way up to the count of 10. When you reach 10 just stop and start again at 1. Just try that 2 or 3 times through.
- Again, it doesn't matter if the mind wanders, it's quite normal, but as soon as you've noticed it has wandered, gently bring it back to the act of counting the breaths: stopping at 10 and starting again at 1.
- When you are ready, just bring your attention back to your body. Notice the physical sensation of your body pressing against the chair and then your feet resting on the floor and your hands and arms resting on your legs. Notice the sounds inside and outside the room and any obvious tastes, smells and sensations, so bringing yourself back to your senses and back to your immediate environment.
- In your own time bring yourself back into the room and open your eyes again.

SHEET 3 Body scan

The following exercise allows you to focus on different parts of your body to help you let go of tension and truly relax.

- Find a comfortable position to sit or lie in. Read through the steps below, and then in your mind go through each part in your own time. Pause after each step; don't race through. Don't worry about getting it exactly right; you just need to get the general idea.
- Start by paying attention to your breath, noticing the in breath and the out breath and how it feels in your body.
- Then gently bring your attention to your feet. Notice how your right foot feels; does it feel light or heavy, warm or cool, tense or relaxed? Can you feel the sensation of the air or your clothing against your skin? Does your right foot feel the same as the left or does it feel different? Just notice, don't judge. Now pay attention to your right foot in the same way.
- Now gently bring your attention to your legs. Notice how your right leg feels. Can you feel the sensation of your leg against the floor? Can you feel the air, the temperature, heaviness or lightness, the texture of your clothes? Do both legs feel the same or does one feel different from the other?
- Now bring your awareness to your hips and buttocks. Feel them resting against the floor. Notice any tightness, heaviness, lightness and sensations of warmth or coolness.
- Now your spine, your low back and your upper back; gently draw your attention to them in the same way, noticing the sensations, just observing.
- Now notice the other parts of your body in the same way: your belly, your chest, your arms, shoulders, neck and head. Observe the sensations in these body parts.
- Now bring your attention to your body as an integrated whole. Observing the breath once more, feel the in breath flowing to all parts of your body, bringing energy, warmth and light to each area. On the out breath feel any pain, tension, stress or negativity flowing out with the breath.
- If you feel any pain or tension in any body areas, just notice the sensation and be aware of the whole of your body at the same time. Don't grab onto the pain or focus on it. Don't try and distract yourself from the pain. Just be aware and spread the sensation out through your whole body. Breathe the pain out on your exhale and draw warmth and light in on the inhale.
- When you are ready to return to the room, start to gently bring yourself back by wiggling a finger or a toe. Then open your eyes and lie or sit quietly for a while, absorbing your experience. Tune into the sight and sounds in the room, any smells, the feeling of your body against the floor, any noises. Tune into your body and notice how you feel and whether this is different from how you felt at the beginning of the session.
- Any time during the day you feel stressed, anxious or out of control, take yourself back in your mind to the sensory experience of how you felt at the end of the session, e.g. the sights, sounds, smells and physical sensations.



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