

ADHD and Self-Trust: Connecting with Your Body

Understanding Embodiment

"Embodiment is a way to heal the mind-body divide we experience within ourselves and, more systemically, within Western cultures. To do so we need to understand the self as a body."

Our body and our personhood are so intimately connected that they can never be separated. We are not just a mind, or brain, carried around by a meat-puppet of flesh and bones.

Embodiment is a kind of re-remembering of who we really are because what we picked up along the way was disembodiment. But disembodiment is not how we come into the world. It can be unlearned, while embodiment, our birthright, can be remembered.

So embodiment is a coming home, a remembering of our wholeness, and a reunion with the fullness of ourselves."

— Hillary L. McBride

Why Connection With Your Body May Be Lost

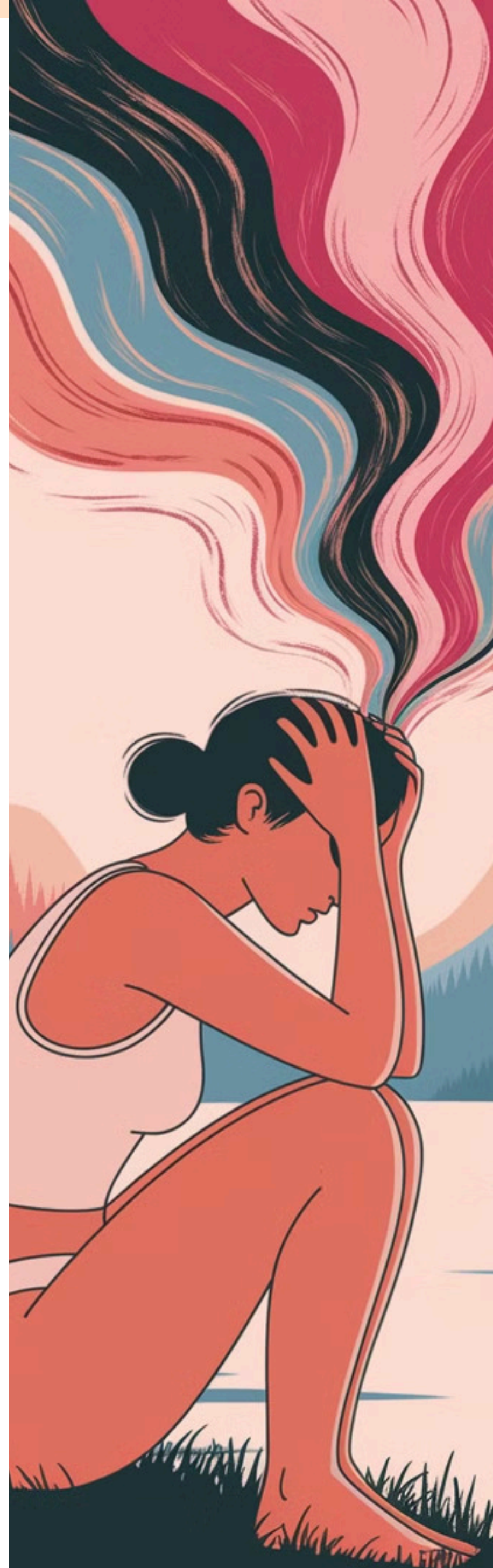
Many women, especially those with ADHD, experience disembodiment, or a disconnection from their bodies. Several factors contribute to this:

Cultural and Social Pressures

Objectification – Women are often treated as objects, valued for how they appear rather than how they feel. This constant societal scrutiny can lead to detachment from their bodies and intuition.

Gender Norms – Societal expectations encourage women to suppress bodily autonomy and prioritize external validation over internal awareness.

Childhood Conditioning – From a young age, children may be discouraged from expressing their bodily autonomy and instincts, reinforcing detachment from bodily awareness.





Trauma and Stress

Physical, Sexual, or Emotional Trauma – Women who have experienced abuse may disconnect from their bodies as a survival mechanism. ADHD women are at a higher risk of experiencing trauma and developing PTSD.

Masking and Emotional Suppression – Hiding natural behaviors, suppressing emotions, and enduring constant criticism can teach ADHD women to ignore their bodily signals.

Harsh Criticism, Shame, Sensory Overload, and Emotional Dysregulation – These factors can contribute to a growing sense of disembodiment.



Society and the Body: Disembodiment as Oppression

Societal practices restrict individuals' ability to fully experience and understand their bodily sensations and wisdom, which can be a vital part of their identity and well-being.

Let's look at a few:

Cultural Disconnection

The suppression of native languages and traditions causes a loss of embodied experiences that are deeply rooted in cultural expressions, disconnecting people from a rich heritage that resides in bodily wisdom.

Gender Norms

Societal norms that objectify women often foster a sense of body alienation.

Children and Development

From a young age, children may be discouraged from expressing their bodily autonomy and instincts.

Educational Systems

Traditional education tends to favor intellectual growth over bodily awareness. The reduction of physical education programs and the discouragement of kinesthetic learning styles fosters a disconnect between the mind and the body, depriving students of the opportunity to integrate bodily experiences into their learning process.

Work Environments

Numerous workplaces expect employees to ignore physical needs for the sake of productivity. This expectation fosters a workforce that is detached from their bodily signals and needs, promoting a culture where individuals are forced to neglect their bodily cues, leading to a disembodied existence characterized by chronic stress and disconnection.



Autistic and ADHD People

Autistic and Adhd women often experience a unique relationship with their bodies, with heightened sensitivities and perceptions.



Yet they are taught to mask these traits, punished for stimming, and rewarded for staying still, forcing them to disconnect from their natural bodily experiences and suppressing their authentic selves.

Trauma and The Body

Big T and Little t Traumas

Big T Trauma

Big T Trauma refers to **severe, life-altering** events that are typically **catastrophic** in nature. These events often involve **threats to life, physical safety, or serious harm**.

What Defines Big T Trauma

Commonly associated with **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)** because they overwhelm the nervous system, creating intense fear, helplessness, or horror. PTSD symptoms might include **flashbacks, hypervigilance, emotional numbness, and intrusive thoughts** related to the traumatic event.

Examples of Big T Trauma

- Natural disasters (earthquakes, floods, hurricanes)
- Physical or sexual assault
- Severe accidents
- Combat or war
- Life-threatening illnesses
- Sudden and violent loss of a loved one



Little t Trauma

Little t Trauma refers to **persistent, distressing experiences** that may not meet the criteria for PTSD but still have **a profound and lasting impact** on mental health. These experiences often involve **chronic stress, invalidation, or emotional wounds** rather than physical danger.

Social and Emotional Traumas

- **Bullying** (social rejection, teasing, cyberbullying)
- **Emotional neglect or abuse** (dismissal of emotions, constant criticism)
- **Masking and chronic social rejection** (especially relevant for neurodivergent individuals)

Performance and Health Stressors

- **Academic or workplace stress** (constant failures, unrealistic expectations)
- **Chronic medical conditions**

Systemic and Environmental Challenges

- **Financial instability or job loss**
- **Microaggressions and discrimination**

Even though these experiences might not always lead to PTSD, they can cause **chronic anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and difficulty with emotional regulation**. They may also contribute to **complex trauma (C-PTSD)** if experienced repeatedly over time, particularly in childhood.

Neurodivergence and Little t Trauma

Many neurodivergent individuals, particularly ADHD and autistic people, experience **chronic microtraumas** due to systemic invalidation, rejection, and the pressure to conform. Some experts argue that **the cumulative effect of these "smaller" traumas can be just as damaging as Big T Trauma over time.**

This includes:

Masking

Constantly suppressing natural traits to fit neurotypical expectations

Othering

Feeling fundamentally different and excluded from the dominant social norms

Criticism and invalidation

Being repeatedly told they are "too much," "not trying hard enough," or "lazy"

Social rejection and bullying

Increased likelihood of being misunderstood, excluded, or ostracized

These experiences can lead to **hypervigilance, difficulty trusting others, low self-worth, and burnout**, all of which resemble trauma responses.

Some researchers propose that neurodivergent individuals might have **higher rates of C-PTSD**, even if they haven't experienced traditional Big T Traumas.

Takeaway

While traditional trauma models focus on PTSD caused by Big T Trauma, it's crucial to recognize the **chronic, compounding effects of Little t Trauma, especially in neurodivergent people.**

The mental health field is gradually acknowledging that **neurodivergence itself can be a risk factor for experiencing lifelong microtraumas**, leading to profound emotional and psychological effects.

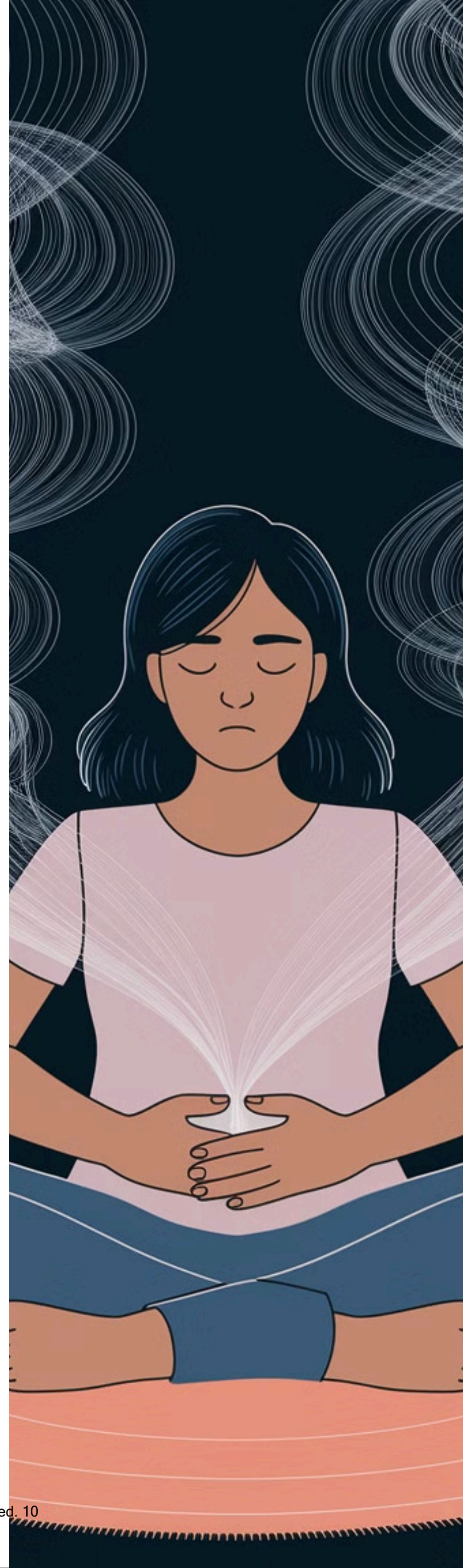
Trauma and Women with ADHD

Relationship to Women with ADHD

- Women with ADHD might be particularly vulnerable to both **Big T** and **Little t** traumas.
- ADHD-related emotional dysregulation can make trauma effects more intense.

Trauma and the Body

- Trauma is often **stored in the body**, manifesting as **tension, chronic pain, and digestive issues**.
- Masking and chronic stress further complicate this, creating a cycle of distress.
- Becoming more embodied can help **heal these cycles**.



Chronic Stress and the Body

What is Stress?

Stress is a natural response meant to help us deal with challenges. However, prolonged stress can break down the body and harm mental well-being.

Chronic Stress and Its Impact

- Chronic stress occurs when the stress response is **constantly activated** without sufficient recovery.
- It can lead to **cardiovascular issues, weakened immunity, sleep disturbances, anxiety, depression, burnout, and impaired decision-making.**

Reflection

What comes to mind when you hear this?

The Nervous System

Sympathetic Nervous System

The sympathetic nervous system plays a crucial role in preparing us to either confront or escape from threats. It is designed to be active only briefly, engaging in short bursts during intense situations—such as hunting or evading danger.

Parasympathetic Nervous System

After such events, the parasympathetic nervous system takes over, helping the body return to a state of rest and recovery.

Modern Imbalance

In today's world, the balance between these two systems can become disrupted, causing prolonged activation of the sympathetic nervous system without enough recovery time. This can lead to neurodivergent burnout, a state of extreme exhaustion.

This underscores the importance of prioritizing trust and connection with your body over productivity. Nurturing your nervous system through rest and recovery is essential for well-being, rather than just focusing on output and efficiency.

Productivity and The Body

ADHD WOMEN are often pushed to work harder and seek productivity tools, often at the expense of their physical health.

Many coaching and therapy models reinforce this, overlooking the fact that physical well-being and body connection are essential for neurodivergent people.

For neurodivergent women, connecting with the body isn't just a practice—it's a necessity.

Benefits of Embodiment

Here are a few things becoming more embodied can help with:

- 1 Making BETTER decisions**
- 2 Tuning in to emotional wisdom**
- 3 Developing trust in yourself**
- 4 Gaining information about your environment**
- 5 Healing shame**
- 6 Becoming more authentic**
- 7 Discerning safety**
- 8 Staying out of Burnout**

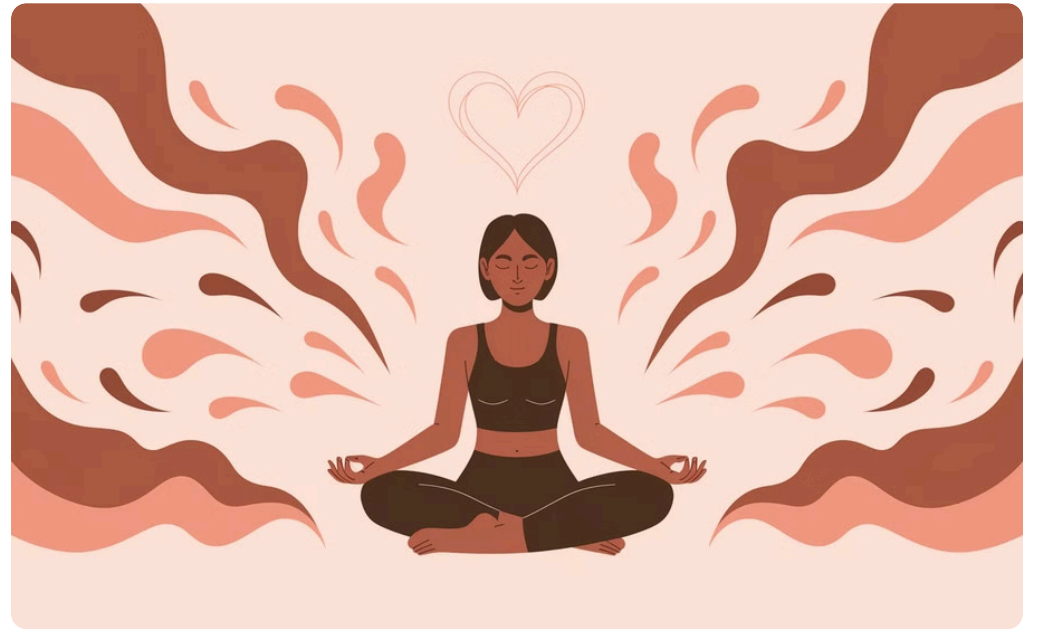
Developing Self Trust

Reconnecting with your body enables you to monitor stress signals and access your innate guidance system for more informed decisions.



Recognizing Stress Signals

Reconnecting with your body helps you notice stress signals early, so you can take action to care for yourself.



Utilizing Your Body's Guidance System

Your body holds valuable emotional cues, acting as an internal guide to help you make informed decisions. Learning to recognize and understand these signals is essential.

Basic Exercises to Build Embodiment

These simple practices can help you reconnect with your body and develop greater embodiment:

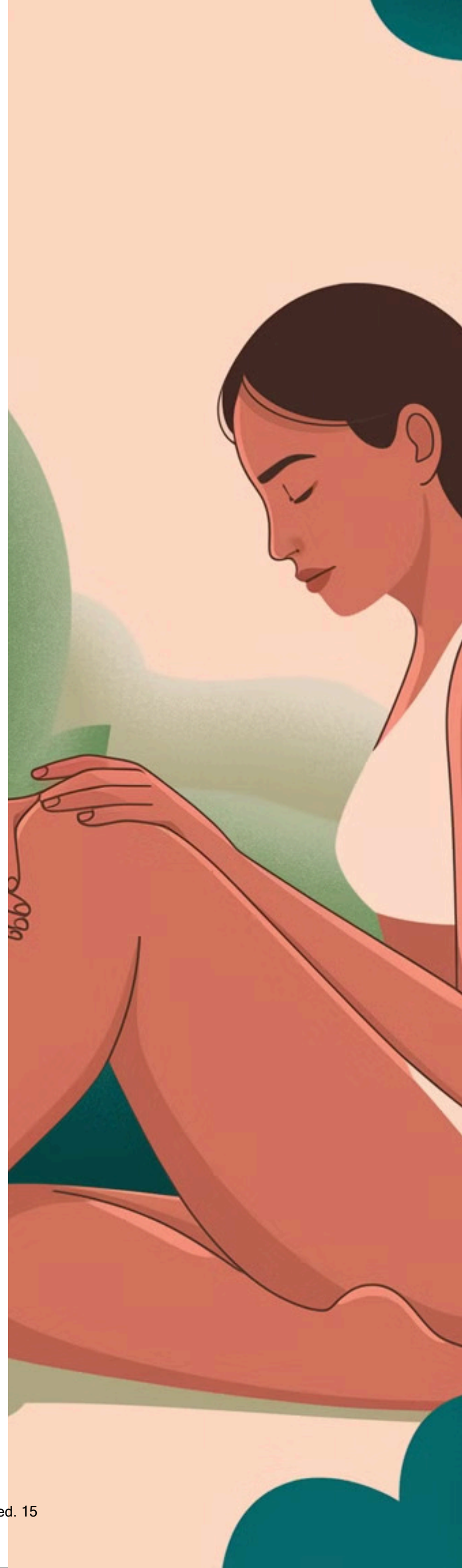
1 Breath Awareness

set a timer or remind yourself in some way to take **five to ten slow breaths** throughout the day. Focus on the **exhale** to release tension.

2 Body Scan

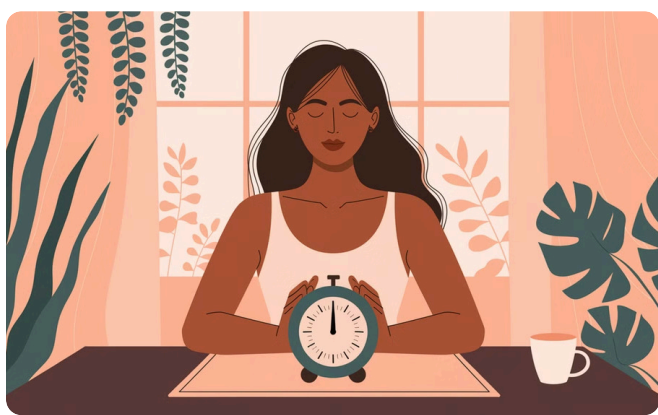
Find a **quiet space** and sit or lie down comfortably. Close your eyes and **scan your body from head to toe**. Notice **any tension or discomfort**. Breathe into tense areas and **imagine releasing tension** with each exhale.

In the course there is a video for a body scan or you can find videos on the internet and find one that feels good for you.



3. Timer Check-Ins

Set aside **1–3 check-ins per day** to reconnect with your body and address its needs.



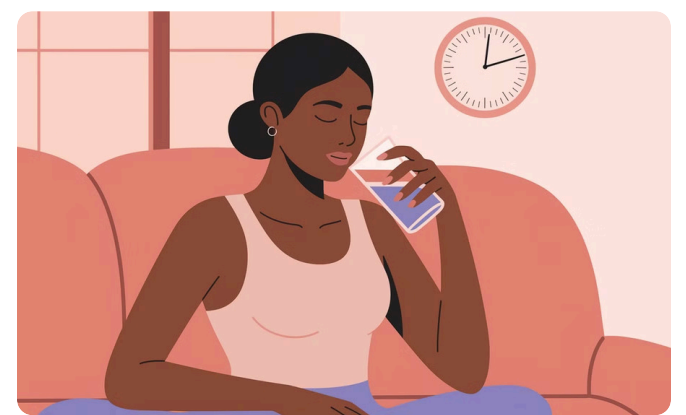
Body Sensations

Ask yourself: "What sensations am I feeling in my body right now?" Notice areas of tension, comfort, or energy.



Movement Needs

Check if you need to stretch or change positions. Your body often needs movement after periods of stillness.

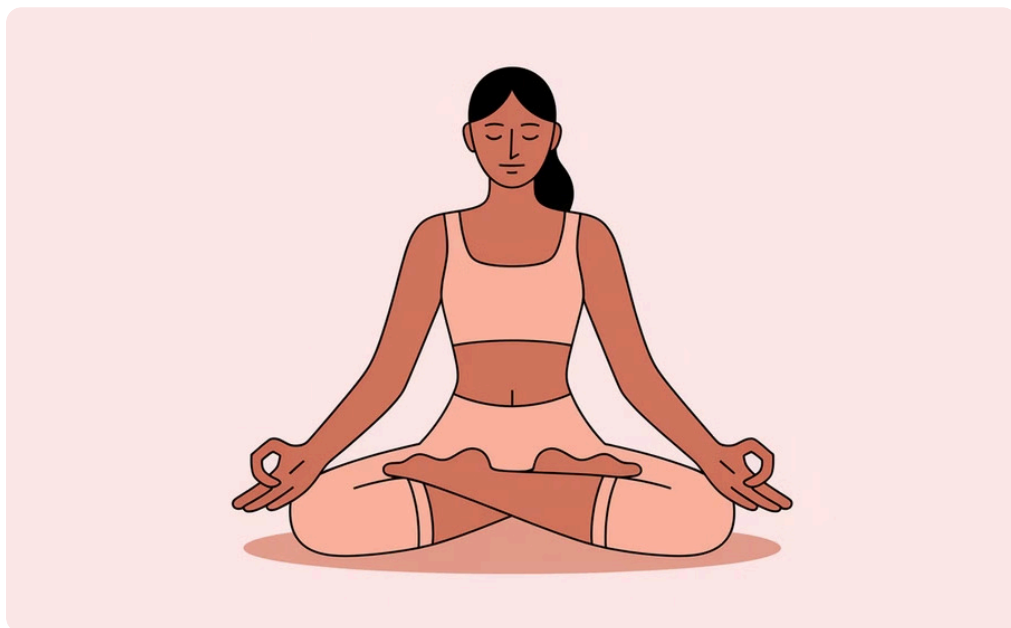


Body Needs

Ask: "What does my body need right now?" It might be water, food, rest, or movement - listen carefully.

Body Dialoguing Activities

These exercises help you establish communication with your body and develop greater awareness of physical sensations.



Dialoguing With Your Body

Focus on a specific **tense or uncomfortable area**. Imagine that body part has a **voice**. Ask: **"What do you need?"** Allow your body to respond through **gentle movement or adjustments**.



Checking In With Sensations

Ask yourself: What does it feel like to be in my body right now? Can I feel all parts of my body, or are some areas numb? Are there sensations I don't want to feel?

Body Dialogue Worksheet

Dialoguing With Your Body: A Self-Guided Worksheet

Introduction:

Your body holds wisdom. When you experience tension or discomfort, it's often your body's way of communicating something important. This exercise will help you build a deeper connection with your body by listening to its messages and responding with care.

Step 1: Identify the Area of Discomfort

Take a moment to scan your body. Where do you feel tension, discomfort, or unease? Circle or describe the area below:

Body Part:

Sensation (tightness, ache, numbness, tingling, etc.):

Possible Triggers (stress, posture, emotions, activity, etc.):

Step 2: Give Your Body a Voice

Imagine this part of your body could speak. What would it say? Let the words flow without judgment.

Example: "I feel heavy and tired. I need rest."

Write your body's message below:

Step 3: Ask Your Body What It Needs

Now, gently ask: *"What do you need?"*

Listen for an answer—this may come as a thought, an image, a movement, or an impulse to adjust your posture.

Examples: "I need a deep breath." "I need to stretch." "I need warmth."

Response from Your Body:

Step 4: Respond with Gentle Movement or Adjustments

Honor your body's request by making small, intentional movements.

- Stretch the area gently.
- Change your posture.
- Place a hand over the area for warmth and comfort.
- Take a deep breath and direct your awareness there.
- Engage in self-massage or gentle tapping.
- Rest if needed.

Describe the movement or adjustment you tried:

How does your body feel after responding?

Step 5: Reflect on the Experience

Take a moment to reflect on what this exercise revealed about your body's needs.

1. What surprised you about your body's response?

1. How did it feel to engage in this dialogue?

1. What is one small way you can check in with your body more often?

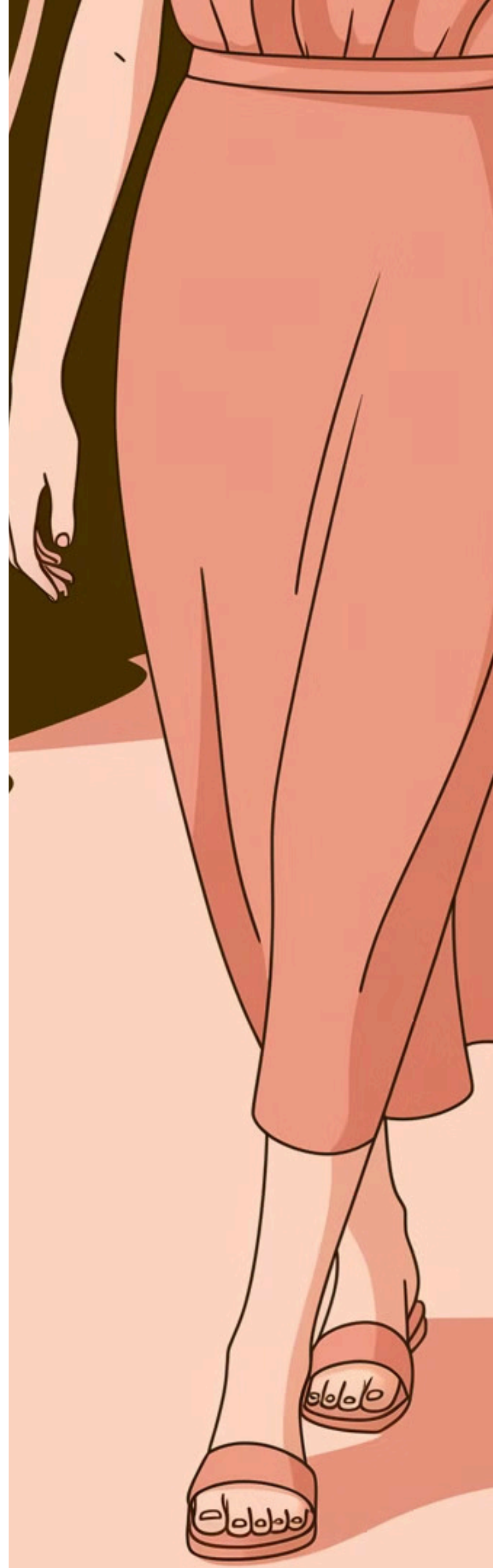
Closing Thought:

Your body is always speaking to you—it just takes practice to listen. By incorporating this exercise into your routine, you can develop a stronger connection with your body, reduce stress, and improve overall well-being.

Commitment: Set an intention to check in with your body at least once a day. How will you remind yourself? (e.g., set a phone reminder, tie it to a daily habit, journal about it.)

Walking Meditation

- Find a **quiet outdoor space**.
- Take a **leisurely walk**, focusing on each step.
- Notice the **rhythm of your breath**.
- Let go of distractions and **tune into the present moment**.



Yes and No Practices with Your Body: Boundaries and Embodiment

Establishing healthy boundaries is essential for protecting your well-being and staying true to yourself. However, consistently saying *yes* can lead to neglecting your own needs, while saying *no* may feel difficult—especially if you've been conditioned to prioritize others' wants over your own.

Learning to recognize your body's signals can help you tune into what feels right for you, making it easier to set boundaries and honor your true desires.

Yes and no are powerful tools for this, but they can be challenging to use effectively. Strengthening your ability to listen to and trust your body's cues can deepen your confidence in making decisions that align with your values and needs.

In our group, we'll explore these concepts through videos and hands-on practice, helping you develop the skills to say *yes* and *no* with clarity and self-trust.





Final Thoughts

Reconnecting with your body fosters:



Self-trust



Emotional clarity



Resilience

Through **embodiment practices**, you can break cycles of stress, heal from trauma, and navigate life with confidence.