



BODY INVENTORY

To exit your pain cycle, you need information about it. A good place to begin is with an inventory of your body. It is important to pay attention to what hurts. It is also important to pay attention to what *doesn't* hurt.

When you first wake up, take an inventory of your entire body. Work your way from the bottoms your feet to the top of your head. Begin with your toes, then your feet, then the ankles, the lower legs, and on up.

Pay attention to all the sensations of that body part. Is there pain? Tension? Is it relaxed? Sometimes it helps to wiggle the body part a little bit to get a better idea of how it's feeling.

Especially note tension in your muscles, as it can lead to otherwise unexplained pain.

Remember to notice. It is important to take a body inventory whenever you are in pain. It is also important to inventory whenever you try something different. If you begin a new routine, or change the way you do a certain task, pay attention to any differences it makes in your body.

Inventory your entire body. Even if you only feel pain in one area, still inventory from head to toe. The pain you first notice may be covering up other important body information.

Notice how muscles feel over time. Is the stomach generally tight or cramped? Are your hands or jaw clenched? Are muscles sore, and if so, which ones?

Pay attention to your breathing. Is your breath shallow or deep? Does it hurt to breathe? Place one hand on your belly and the other on your chest. Watch the hands rise and fall with each breath. Note when the breath is full and when it is forgotten.



An ongoing inventory helps you become aware of your body's pain signals. With this awareness you can learn to control specific body sensations by paying attention to other body sensations.

If you are in chronic pain, keep detailed records. Write down the specific things you notice during your inventory. Observe without judgment; just note what your body tells you, and watch for any patterns that emerge.

It can be helpful to use different colored pens or pencils while recording your inventory. For example, use separate colors for noting sensations that are constant and those that change, and different colors for different types of changes. This will make it easier to pick out patterns.

After it has become easier to notice your body sensations, focus on the thoughts that come with the sensations. Separate the sensations from the thoughts, ideas, and emotions that accompany them. The emotions are especially important, as they can be very powerful in forming the story you have about your pain.

Many of us spend so much time in an anxious or exhausted state that we don't remember what it feels like to be balanced and calm. This is why it is so important to note non-painful as well as painful sensations. You can regulate attention between the two so that all your attention doesn't become focused on the negative sensations.

As you continue working with your inventory, you will discover that attention to your body changes how you experience it. You will notice that the intensity, location, or quality of a sensation can change – that pain itself can change.

By listening to the body, mind, and emotions, you can recognize pain signals before they become suffering.