

Anapanasati

'Body' is a good translation of the Pali 'Kaya' as it covers the same range of meanings: literally the physical body; figuratively a complete collection (eg a body of work) or the shape and coherence of the whole (eg a body of water).

Physical Body

The complete collection of physical experience rather than as the idea or concept of body.

From idea to experience:

Experience is varied, diverse, changing, with a sense of coherence and wholeness

The idea or concept is single and static.

We take the concept 'body' as a pointer to the experience, moving to a direct experience of physical sensations which tend to phase in and out of awareness, perhaps rippling around the body, with some areas of neutrality or unawareness

Breath Body

The complete experience of the breath in the sense of the whole collection of physical and sound experience of the body breathing, with its sense of overall shape and coherence

Mental Body

The complete experience of the mind and mental states, including

- Consciousness, awareness, attention, mindfulness
- Energies, volitions, emotions including hindrances (the veil of klesas)
- Thoughts including views, particularly of our experience, eg concepts of 'body', 'breath', 'mind', 'meditator', 'hindrance', 'factor of concentration' (the veil of views)

The body is a field of awareness – the mind permeates and surrounds it. We sit within a sphere of awareness. Mind as pervading the physical body rather than existing in some abstract space.

Posture

- There are objective qualities to our physical posture that support our practice: particularly
 1. Stability / Groundedness
 2. Balance
 3. Poise / Lift
 4. Openness
- One can
 1. check these qualities are physically in place – eg one is not leaning over
 2. get a sense of the quality in one's physical experience - eg a sense of physical balance
 3. find the parallel quality of mind – eg a sense of mental equilibrium

Stage 3: mindful of the whole body I breath in/out

This is equivalent to the 3rd stage of the usual 4 stage mindfulness of breathing. There is breadth and focus, but the focus is itself broad: the focus is the experience of the body breathing: broad because encompassing the whole breath-body, but clear: in-focus, and toned: not slack – a balanced effort.

In the sutta, the focus is ‘kaya-sankharam’ the formations (sankharam) that condition the body (kaya). The suggestion is that the breath-body conditions the physical body.

The physical body is pervaded by and energised by the breath-body. We are aware of the physical body, of the breath-body, and of the relation between them, noting

1. the direct sensations we do experience in the whole physical body, whether or not directly connected with the breath – eg an ache in the knees or a tingling in the palms
2. the quality of the experience eg tension / relaxation; discomfort / comfort

Returning from distraction to experience

- Recognising the feeling quality of our thoughts enables us to return to our body: the container of our feelings and emotions: a return to a quality of embodiment
- Recognising the volitional quality of our thoughts: interest / fascination or resistance to engaging with discomfort
 - We need to meet and acknowledge discomfort: resistance is not dreadful and can be acknowledged
 - There is a deeper source of well-being back home with our body and embodied feelings. One coming back, resistance may melt away in awareness

A complete meditation

- Stage 3 can be a complete meditation in itself, progressing through a body scan and establishing posture to a broad integrative awareness rooted in the overall experience of the body breathing
- It can work well when generally distracted: the definite sequence of the body scan is easy to stay with and the emphasis on physical experience is grounding.

Stage 4: calming the body I breath in/out

- Confident of having established a stable and balanced posture we can relax in to it rather than slump out of it
- Confident of having established the practice we can relax in to it

Coming home

- Calming is a fruit of our practice of returning from distraction to experience, and from concepts to the direct experience they point to
- These are returns to embodied experience, which is calming
- We turn towards our experience, relaxing in to it, leaning in to its sharp point:
 - Turn towards resistance, prepared to be with that with kindness
 - When distracted, turn towards the volition behind the distraction, and to the feeling behind that, experiencing that feeling in the body
 - A practice of kindly awareness, not a forceful rejection of hindrance and insistence on focus