

# Improving Your Body Awareness (Interoception)

## Objective

To improve your ability to sense and understand the internal state of your body.

## What to Know

Interoception refers to the ability to sense and understand the internal state of your body, including noticing physical sensations such as hunger, thirst, heart rate, muscle tension, and emotions. It is the awareness of what is happening inside your body at any given moment.

Interoception plays an important role in self-awareness and emotional regulation. It helps you recognize and respond to bodily cues, which are often linked to emotions. For example, noticing a rapid heartbeat can signal anxiety. Improving interoceptive awareness can lead to better self-regulation, helping you manage stress, anxiety, and other emotional challenges. This skill is essential for children, teens, and adults alike, as it fosters a deeper understanding of oneself and one's needs. Here are several exercises with instructions to help improve interoception.

**1. Mindful Eating** increases awareness of hunger and fullness cues, as well as the sensory experience of eating.

- Choose a meal or snack to eat mindfully. Start by observing the colors, textures, and smells of the food.
- Take small bites, chew slowly, and notice the flavors and textures in your mouth.
- Pay attention to your body's hunger signals before, during, and after eating. Notice when you start to feel full and satisfied.
- Reflect on the experience and how it is different from regular eating habits.

**2. Breath Awareness** enhances your ability to notice and regulate your breath, which is closely linked to emotional states.

- Sit or lie down in a comfortable position.
- Close your eyes and place one hand on your chest and the other on your abdomen.
- Focus on your breathing, noticing how your chest and abdomen rise and fall with each breath.
- Take deep, slow breaths, expanding your abdomen more than your chest.
- Count each breath, trying to increase the length of your exhalation.
- After a few minutes, notice how your body feels and any changes in your emotional state.

**3. Temperature Awareness** improves sensitivity to temperature changes and how they affect your body.

- Fill two bowls: one with warm water and one with cold water.

- Place your hands in the cold water for a minute, then transfer them to the warm water.
- Focus on the sensations in your hands and how your body reacts to the temperature change.
- Reflect on how these temperature sensations might relate to emotions or bodily states, such as feeling "warm and comfortable" or "cold and tense."

**4. Emotion and Sensation Journaling** can help you connect bodily sensations with emotions through regular reflection.

- Set aside a few minutes each day to write in a journal.
- Start by describing any physical sensations you are experiencing (e.g., tightness in your shoulders, butterflies in your stomach).
- Then, write about any emotions you are feeling and consider how these might be connected to the sensations.
- Reflect on patterns over time, such as certain sensations accompanying specific emotions.

**5. Progressive Muscle Relaxation** increases awareness of muscle tension and relaxation.

- Sit or lie down in a comfortable position.
- Starting with your feet, tense the muscles as tightly as you can for a few seconds, then release and relax them completely.
- Move up your body, tensing and then relaxing different muscle groups (calves, thighs, abdomen, chest, arms, shoulders, neck, and face).
- Focus on the difference in sensation between tension and relaxation.
- After completing the exercise, take a moment to notice how your body feels overall.

**6. Heartbeat Awareness** improves awareness of heart rate and its variations.

- Find a quiet place to sit or lie down comfortably.
- Place two fingers on your neck or wrist to feel your pulse.
- Close your eyes and focus on the rhythm of your heartbeat.
- Try to synchronize your breathing with your heartbeats, noticing any changes in the rate or intensity.
- Reflect on how different thoughts or emotions might influence your heart rate.

**7. Mindful Walking** improves your awareness of bodily movements and sensations while walking.

- Choose a quiet, safe place to walk slowly.
- As you walk, focus on the sensations in your feet as they touch the ground, the movement of your legs, and the rhythm of your breathing.
- Pay attention to how your body feels as you move—balance, muscle engagement, and any physical sensations.



Date	How you feel before the exercise	What did you do?	How do you feel after practicing the exercise?	Comments

Were there common sensations you experienced when practicing the exercises? Explain.

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Were there any emotions associated with these sensations? Explain.

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How did focusing on your internal state make you feel?

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Which of the exercises you practiced was your favorite? Least favorite? Why?

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How can you use this awareness to improve your daily life? Be specific.

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### **Reflections on This Exercise**

Did anything surprise you about this activity? If so, describe.

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How helpful was this exercise? \_\_\_\_\_  
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?

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