Body Mapping

We can get so caught up in the stress of life that we don't realise we are in physical discomfort. Tense muscles, and pains in the back, shoulders, or feet, are just some of the ways our bodies communicate their current emotional state. Body Mapping is a good way to release physical tension we might not realise we're experiencing. Body Mapping involves paying attention to parts of the body and bodily sensations in a gradual sequence from feet to head.

By mentally mapping our physical sensations, we bring awareness to every single part of the body, noticing any aches, pains, tension, or general discomfort. The goal is not to relieve the pain completely, but to get to know and learn from it, in order to manage it better.

The most important locations on a map are the places we haven't visited yet

Try a body scan meditation

1. **Get comfortable.** Lying down is preferable, particularly if you're doing a body scan meditation before going to sleep. If that's not possible or relaxing, then sitting is also an option.

2. **Take a few deep breaths.** Let your breathing slow down and start breathing from your belly instead of from your chest, letting your abdomen expand and contract. If you find your shoulders rising and falling, focus more on breathing from your belly, as though a balloon is inflating and deflating in your abdomen.

3. **Bring awareness to your feet.** Now slowly bring your attention down to your feet. Begin observing sensations in your feet. If you notice pain, acknowledge it, along with any accompanying thoughts or emotions, and breathe gently through it.

4. **Breathe into the tension.** If you notice any uncomfortable sensations, focus your attention on them. Breathe into them and note any changes. Visualize the tension leaving your body through your breath and disappearing into the air. Move on when you feel ready.

5. **Scan your entire body.** Continue this practice with each area of your body, from your feet until you reach the top of your head. Notice how you feel, and where you're holding your stress. If there's any tightness, pain, or pressure, continue to breathe into what you're feeling. This can help you release tension in your body now, and be more aware of it in the future.

This exercise is useful to do with the young people you work with as a way of helping them to connect to themselves, and as part of their creative process.