



## DEVELOPING BODY AWARENESS

*Steve Randall*

**K**um Nye is a body of structured Tibetan meditation practices using physical movements to relax physical and mental tensions, transform negative emotional energies, and balance the mind, body, and breath while expanding awareness. These practices were originated by the Buddha to relieve the daily fatigue of his followers as well as to provide a basis for their further spiritual development. The following Kum Nye walking exercise is a useful structure within which one can produce a more harmonious and healthful integration of body and mind.

Set aside about fifteen minutes, and find a quiet place where you can walk at least ten feet. There should be a somewhat hard surface to walk on, so that it's not difficult to balance on one foot. It's best to do the walking barefoot.

Before starting the walk, just stand with your eyes closed. Take time to carefully check your experience and answer the following questions: Is your mind occupied with thoughts? What is your emotional state? Are you feeling peaceful, restless, tired? What are the qualities of your breathing? Which body parts are you most aware of—head, shoulders, back, legs? Which parts are outside your awareness?

Now begin the walk. With your eyes looking at the floor ahead, torso erect, and arms at your side, slowly and gently lift one foot about six inches and set it down, toes first, just a few inches ahead of where it was. Relax as much as possible. Pay special attention to your throat and stomach when your foot is off the floor. Allow your breathing to be soft, gentle, shallow, and very slow, and breathe equally through your nose and slightly-opened mouth. Continue stepping in this manner, steadily slowing it down so that eventually one step takes *at least* one minute.

Let your thoughts drop off, and stay with the physical experience. Subtly balance your slow, shallow breathing with your body awareness, and

balance the awareness of the different parts of your body. Drop any sense of striving that you may have, and relax as deeply as possible.

When you have finished walking, simply stand with your eyes closed, check your experience, and once again answer the questions given above. How is your experience different now? Most likely your awareness will be expanded and lightened; there might be less tension in your body, and not so much chatter in your mind. You may feel calm, peaceful, and open. These positive feelings may be extended throughout your daily activities by continuing the awareness and breathing used in this exercise.

In this exercise, as well as other Kum Nye exercises, there are three levels at which the exercise may be experienced, corresponding with levels of relaxation. The first level comprises the experience of what might be called surface or shallow feelings and sensations. These feelings may be described as tingling; warm, flowing sensations; painful sensations; or sensations of relaxation or of energy flowing in the body. They are experienced as being located in a specific part of the body. Moreover, the practitioner is aware of himself experiencing these feelings as the exercise proceeds.

In the second level of experience, the practitioner is involved with what might be called deeper feelings. Here the feelings may be characterized as strong or dense, having a holding quality constituting a blockage to energy flow. There is a sense of a "self" doing the exercise and feeling the sensations, though the self may be experienced as being less solid. There is still a split between the experience and the experiencer.

However, the third level of experience involves no such split. There is a melting, open-ended quality, which is not experienced as being within the body. It is as if the practitioner has become the experience. There is no longer anyone outside watching.

Thus, the Kum Nye exercise provides the structure through which several different levels of experience emerge. What is necessary for the practitioner to bring to the exercise is confidence, perseverance, sensitivity, and openness. This combination can produce a transformation of experience that can extend throughout one's entire life.



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