

How to pick a college, friend, or a major

Hi! I'm Ellen Yale, a Master Certified Coach and founder of "The Nest", an online program to help you thrive in college.

Here's the deal.

As a society, we have been training you to lose touch with your body's signals.

You have been trained to tune it out.

Sorry about that.

In kindergarten you are taught to sit in a chair all day, don't go to the bathroom when you need to, wait to be given permission.

No fidgeting.

That's not the natural thing for a five year old to do.

We are taught to be orderly and do what we are told to do.

The mind is king and the body is minion.

Do what your brain says, not what your body says.

Even now, you go to school when you are sick because you don't want to miss anything.

It's too hard to make up all the work.

Your body says stop, but your brain says keep going.

You stay up late studying so you will get a good grade on a test.

Your body says sleep. Your brain says keep going.

And I am here to say stop.

There is wisdom in your body.

Give some power back and listen to your body.

I want to share with you the Body Compass tool.

It was created by one of my teachers... Martha Beck.

It will help you get back in touch with your body's signals.

But even more than that, it will give you information that you can use to any decisions in your life.

Try this out:

Sit in a comfortable chair with your feet on the ground.

If you are lying down that works too... just be sure to get comfortable and don't have anything crossed. Let the blood flow through your body.

I am going to lead you through a body scan.

Close your eyes and take a deep, calming breath.

Now, starting at the soles of your feet, we are going to do a body scan to see what sensations you are feeling right now in your body.

How do your feet feel? Any pain or discomfort?

Move on up to your ankles

And then your calves. Is there any tightness?

Move on up your knees, your thighs, through your hips, your lower torso, up through your midsection,

Feeling all your organs, like your kidneys, liver, stomach, your lungs...

Feel your heart beating.

Up over your shoulders, down your back... check in with your lower back, your spine, your shoulder blades,

Check out your arms, your forearms, your hands, your palms,

Back up your arms, up your neck... check for any tensions... up over the crown of your head, and feel your face...

Your eye sockets, your forehead, your ears, your nose...

Mouth...

Jaw...

What did you feel?

Any aches or pains? Any chronic pains? Anything unusual?

Are you getting stiff from sitting down?

This is your baseline.

If you're anything like me, you probably didn't even realize you were feeling anything, because your mind was getting on with your day.

Now, we're going to do the body scan again.

But this time, I would like to have you imagine the worst day of your life.

More specifically, the worst thing that's ever happened to you.

If you have had a huge trauma, I don't want you to go there and relive it, but think of something really bad... perhaps a bad time in your life, or bad day, and when you have mentally taken yourself back there, we're going to explore how that experience affects your body.

OK, so you are experiencing that painful time.

Start with the soles of your feet, and what I want you to pay attention to is how your body feels... how it reacts to experiencing the worst thing you have experienced... and look for the things that are different from your baseline.

So, check in with your feet and your calves, your knees, your thighs, your hips, your pelvis, feel your belly and your torso,
Your stomach, your lungs, your heart,
Feel your shoulders, your back...
The small of your back, your spine, your upper back,
How about your arms, your hands, your palms,
Back up your arms,
Up your neck, your scalp, your head, your temples, your eyes, nose, mouth, jaw...
What does your mouth taste like?

So, what did you feel that was different from your baseline?
My bad emotions show up in my body as a knot in my stomach, and a clenching in my shoulders. I tense them up a little, like I do when I'm cold.
Sometimes people get headaches from clenching their jaw.
And some people have a bitter taste in their mouth. There are different hormones your body creates in time of stress, and it might taste a little bitter or metallic.

This is all valuable information.

I'd also like you to think of a scale from negative 10 to positive 10, with -10 being the worst you could ever possibly feel and +10 being the best you could ever feel, with 0 being neutral...
how bad was that feeling? How would you rate it? From -10 to +10.

Alright, enough of that bad feeling.
Shake it off.
Shake out your body, to move those feelings through you.

And now, I'd like you to think of the best experience of your life. It can be a single experience, or a wonderful time of your life.
Take a moment to remember the experience as if you were actually immersed in it right now, and we're going to do the body scan one last time.

Alright, you are feeling fabulous.
How do your feet feel, move on up your calves, over your knees, your thighs, your hips, abdomen, up your torso, your stomach, lungs, heart, shoulders, down the back from your lower back all the way up to the top,
Feel your arms, your biceps, your hands, your fingers, your palms,
Then back up past your shoulders, up your neck, over the top of your head, to your forehead, your eyes, ears, nose, throat, mouth and jaw.

And this time, what differences did you feel from the baseline?

A lot of people tell me their body feels lighter when something great is going on. But for you it might be feeling cool, or tingly or spacious or whatever. There is no right or wrong.

And on a scale from -10 to +10, where did this feeling fall?

This scale, from -10 to +10, is where all your feelings from all your experiences lie.

And the feelings you have from your worst experience ever.... Wherever it shows up in your body... those are the feelings you are going to experience whenever it is something that is a “no” for you. It just may not be as intense.

For example:

If your bad experience was a -8 for you, that’s pretty intense. And you may not like to wash dishes, but it’s probably not a -8... it might be more like a -1 or -2, but it will show up in the same parts of your body.

As I mentioned before, for me, during my worst experience my stomach clenched up and my shoulders and neck tense. So when I have to do some cleaning (not my favorite thing to do) I feel it in my stomach and shoulder and neck. It’s not very intense... I might not even notice unless I’m checking in with my body... but my body is having the same reaction to something that’s not “my thing” no matter where it is on the body compass scale.

In my first job out of college, I had some coworkers ask me about my “stress sigh”. I had never noticed it but evidently whenever things got really intense, I would sigh loudly. Recently I noticed I do that same sigh when I walk into the kitchen. I don’t love to cook or clean, and when I do, I am tuned in and notice my stress sigh.

Your body is giving you signals of what is right for you and wrong for you. It’s your job to pay attention, and use that information.

You don’t always want to follow the advice of your body 100% of the time. I don’t like doing my taxes... there’s a lot of sighing going on there... but I choose to do my taxes because I don’t like the consequences. The point is that up until now, you probably haven’t given much weight to your body’s signals, and **your body never lies.**

Your brain will lie to you. Like telling you there are certain colleges you should like because they are more prestigious.

But your body will never lie. It's telling you the real deal.
So, when in doubt, go with what your body is telling you.

So, how do you apply this to picking a college?
Do your due diligence... find out as much information as you can about each college you are considering.
Make a pros and cons list.
Rank your priorities.
Compare financial aid packages and the costs of college.
By all means visit the campus and ask the current students for the inside scoop on what they like and don't like

And after you have used your brain to narrow it down, get really quiet, and imagine yourself going to each college, and feel what your body is telling you.

Do a body scan and rank each school on the scale from -10 to +10.
You will have your answer.

The same technique works when you are picking friends and picking a major.
Gather as much information as you can with your mind, then consult your body compass... it's handy because you have it with you wherever you go...

You may have already used your body compass in picking friends and not even realized it.
You get a funny feeling... like something is off... and you later find out they have been talking about you behind your back.

Start tuning into your body and scan for signals now so when you get ready to use it on big decisions, you will trust it. That way, you are ready for the big decisions when they come.
It takes some practice to listen to the whispers, but it is so worth it.

I want to add one caveat –
There are a few times when it's difficult to tell what your body is saying.
Particularly if you have a phobia.
For example, public speaking is a pretty common fear.
If you are going to give a speech, and you feel like throwing up, you may think, "Well, Ellen said to follow what my body's compass is telling me... throwing up can't be good. I'd better not give this speech."

But here's the real test: what do you feel like AFTER you have given the speech?

If, when you are done with the speech you think, “I rocked that!!!” **That’s** the guidance your body gives as to whether public speaking is the right thing for you.

If you finish the speech and think, “Holy moly, I never want to do THAT again.” Then listen to it.

It’s your body compass reading of the net effect that can steer you best.

So remember, don’t totally disregard what your brain is telling you, but spend some time getting to know what path your body is telling you to choose, and when in doubt, go with your body’s compass.

Your body loves you.
And your body never lies.

From one body to another, thanks for watching.

