

Staying Centered A Virtual Breather For People Supporting Survivors

CHARITY: And times in where it is the afternoon. Thank you for joining our National Resource Center for Reaching Victims staying centered session today. My name is Charity Hope with the Center for Victimization and Safety at the Vera Institute of Justice and the National Resource Center for Reaching Victims. I have just a few brief logistical items to go over before we get started.

Participants are in listen only mode, which means you should be able to hear us, but we are not able to hear you. If you would like to turn on your captioning, let's all go ahead and take just a second to do that by going to the bottom of your Zoom screen. There's going to be a closed caption box that has CC on the front of it.

To the right of that closed caption box, there is a little arrow or caret. If you select that arrow to the right of your closed caption box, you can choose either show subtitles or you can view the full transcript. Once you do so, you will see the words I am speaking appearing below my video or the interpreter's video right now, or to the right of your Zoom room.

If you cannot hear the presenter speaking, if you're having any difficulties with the captioning or you can't see the American Sign Language interpreter, or you're having any other technical

difficulties, please enter a message in the chat pod at the bottom of your screen. Please direct any technology related questions to Angelina Ortiz this is the best way to communicate with me or my National Resource inner colleagues who are providing technical support today, by using that chat box.

You'll also see a Q&A box. We may use that later, but for now please direct any questions to us via the chat box. One quick note about your view and Zoom right now. If you've joined this session via a web browser, you will only be able to view the American Sign Language interpreter. If you've joined via the Zoom app, meaning you've logged into Zoom and then clicked on this link. You'll be able to view the presenter as well as the ASL interpreter.

We will be recording today's session. A link to the recording will be made available on our National Resource Center website at reachingvictims.org. Again, that's reachingvictims.org. With that, I'm happy to do a very quick introduction to my wonderful colleague, Zoe Flowers. Zoe leads the National Resource Center's work to promote healing services for survivors from historically marginalized communities. She's a seasoned domestic violence advocate, author and filmmaker, and a healer. And that's why she's joined us today. Take it away, Zoe.

ZOE: Sure, sure, sure, thank you. So thank you to everyone that's joined. And we are going to get right into it. Folks seem to be enjoying the music, so I'm going to put that on, and just give

us an opportunity to just settle down and just do some breathing together. And then I will do some stretching, but there are modifications. So if you just want to stay in one place and just focus on your breathing, you can do that. If you want to do the stretches that I'm going to do, you can do those as well. We're only doing what our bodies allow us to do and everything is an offering. So if there's any movement that you do not feel comfortable doing, just know just sitting firmly grounded and just breathing will be part of the work as well.

So we are centering doing this being seated, just to be clear. But if you want to do the movements, you can. All right. So turn this down a little bit. So wherever you are, I just invite you to get settled. If you're sitting on a chair, let yourself sink in. If you're sitting on a couch, just scoot back a little bit so that your back is supported. And then sink in. If you're sitting on a bed like me and my makeshift studio at my mom's house, just let yourself settle in. Just get in a way that you are comfortable.

And as always, we have palms up if we feel that we want to receive. If we're just needing a little bit more nurturing and loving care. And palms down if we feel like we need to be grounded in this moment. Rolling the shoulders back, and even I'm sitting back a little bit. Letting the shoulders drop as my shoulders are dropping. Lowering the top lid over the bottom lid. Allowing yourself to just settle down.

Starting at the crown of the head. Just doing a little scan. Just observing the thoughts. Are you prone to overthinking? If so, just give yourself the message that it's OK to just slow down the thinking. Slow down the thought process for a bit. Just be centered in the here and now and what's happening. Bringing the attention down to the throat. Allowing the bones of the throat to relax. And if you find yourself leaning forward like me, just lean back a bit. Letting the shoulders relax.

Maybe that means dropping the hands from the thighs, to the sides of you. Letting the chest relax. That might mean that your shoulders fold forward a little bit in this state of relaxation. Letting the internal organs relax. Letting the pelvic muscles relax. Letting the thighs relax. Everything is always so tight. Let those internal muscles of the thighs relax. Letting the joints relax. Letting your shins relax. Ankles, heel, sole, toes.

Paying attention to the breath. Is the breath smooth? Is the breath choppy? What is the quality of the air entering into your nostrils? Is it cool? Is it warm? Observing how the air is entering the nostrils. Breathing slowly and collectively together, we are a collective. Mindfully now, slowly inhaling. Exhaling through the mouth. Inhaling, maybe the shoulders raise a bit. Exhaling, the shoulders drop a bit. Inhaling. Exhaling. Inhaling with the shoulders raising a bit. Exhaling with the shoulders dropping a

bit. Inhaling, slowly turning your head to the left on the inhalation.

Exhaling, bringing the head back to center. Rolling the shoulders back to keep yourself straight. Inhaling, turning your head to the right. Exhaling, bringing yourself back to center slowly. Inhaling, bringing your head over the left shoulder. Exhaling, bringing your head back to center. Inhaling, bringing your head over the right shoulder. Exhaling, bringing yourself back to center.

Taking the two hands and intertwining them. And just let them rest over the heart. You don't have to touch the heart. Hands interlock in front of shoulders. Inhaling, bringing the head down to the chest. Exhaling, back up to center. Arms still interlocked over heart. Inhale, head back between shoulder blades. Exhale, back to center. And the two palms are facing upwards. The hands are interlocked and the palms are facing forward. Bringing the head back to center, letting the eyes just hover over the thumbs.

Exhale, back to center. Inhale, head back between shoulder blades, possibly feeling the stretch in the back of the shoulders and the back of the arms. Exhale, back to center. Hands in prayer position. Bringing the palms in prayer position to the heart. Inhale, allowing the head to fall down. Chin to chest, not touching the hand. Starting off this conversation with self by giving yourself gratitude for showing up here today. For being present in this moment.

Inhaling and exhaling smoothly. Celebrating yourself in this moment. Celebrating your personal genius. Celebrating doing all the things that you may not have wanted to have done.

Celebrating the way that you show up. Celebrating the way that you help. Celebrating the way that you advocate. Celebrating yourself in this moment. How ever you're showing up is perfect.

Inhale, bringing head back to center and bringing the palms back down. Up to receive, down to ground, up to you. Inhaling, bringing the hands above the head. Reaching as high as you can. Exhale, bringing the hands down. Either up or down. Again, seated doing nothing but breathing is OK, is welcomed, is warranted. Raising the hands above the head is actually the modification. Bringing hands up above head again. Exhaling, bringing the arms back down. Face up or face down, up to you.

Last time inhaling, bringing the hands up above the head. Exhaling down, hands up to receive. Palms down to ground. Rolling the shoulders forward slowly. Rolling the shoulders back slowly. Rolling the shoulders forward slowly. Rolling the shoulders back slowly. Rolling the shoulders in a full circle going forward. Now rolling the shoulders backwards.

Coming back to our stationary position. Bringing our palms together. Rubbing our palms together until we feel a sensation of want. And when you're ready, take those hands and just see for a moment, first, if you can feel the energy going from the right

palm to the left palm. It might feel like a throbbing sensation. See, sense, or imagine that there is a ball in between your palms. If you don't feel it, you may just need to rub your palms together again, like so.

And then bring your palms a little bit apart and see if you can feel the energy going between the left and the right. Taking the palms and placing them over the ears. Letting your palms hover as close to the ears as possible without touching them. Letting the fingers graze the hair. So the fingers are on the side of the hand. Calming the left and right hemispheres of the brain, the head.

Now taking the hands and putting them cupping behind your head. So putting our hands like so. And we're just going to cup the left and the right side of the head. This might mean that you need to lean into your palms a bit. Paying attention to your breathing. Now we're going to take the right hand, and we're going to place it on the top of the head. And we're going to take the left hand. We're going to turn it sideways and we're going to place it on the bottom of the head.

Supporting ourselves. See, sense, or imagine a beautiful golden light emanating from the palms. Engulfing the face. Clockwise position. Taking the hands, right over left, placing over the heart. See, sense, or imagine the golden light coming from the palms of your hands. Filling up your entire body. Golden light from top to bottom. Top of the head, golden. Throat, golden. Chest, golden.

Arms, fingers, stomach, golden. Top of the body awash in gold and light. See, sense, or imagine that golden light moving swiftly through the organs, up and down the back. Through the muscles, cleansing. In between the ears, behind the eyes. Down to the legs, down to the feet.

Hands drop down to the side. Up or down, up to you. Bottom of the feet to the top of the head, awash in golden light. And each time you inhale, the light gets brighter. Each time you exhale, the light gets wider and expands. Golden light expanding out of the top of the head. Up through the ceiling, into the sky.

Spreading out like the roots of a tree. Gathering all that you need from universal energy. All the knowing, all the love. Anything you're seeking is seeking you. See, sense, or imagine that that gold light only mixes with the good things, the best of everything. And the golden light comes swirling back down. Down through the sky, all the good things. Down through the crown of your head. All the good things flooding your head. Flooding your throat. Flooding the organs. Flooding the legs, flooding the feet, all the good things.

Settling around the heart. Cleansing it. Golden light traveling down, now. Down through the legs, down through the feet, down through the floor, down through the dirt. Down to the center of the earth. Golden light, again, spreading like the leaves of the trees around the center of the earth. Gathering all of the root

knowledge, all of the goodness Mother Nature has to offer, all of the wisdom All of the wisdom of Mother Earth.

Mixing with that golden light and traveling up, up, up, now. Back up through the earth, up through the cement, up through the floor. In through the feet. Up through the shins, thighs, stomach, chest, legs, head. Mixing and mixing and mixing and then traveling back down to the heart. Settle. Taking a deep breath in. Breathing out. Allowing all the good things to mix in with the cells. Reprogramming all that needs to be reprogrammed.

Changing the focus. Breathing in slowly. Exhaling out. Letting the breathing slow down. Letting the shoulders drop even more. Letting everything expand and be loose. If the mind starts to wander, just return to the breath. Staying with the breath. Maybe in this moment, giving our throats some support by just cupping our throat in between the left and right palm.

Maybe sending some beautiful pink light to the throat. See, sense, or imagine a beautiful pink light supporting my throat. Letting the hands drop back down the sides of the body. Allowing ourself to come back from wherever we traveled. Flexing the feet, wiggling the toes. Wiggling the fingertips. Making a fist and relaxing the palms. Making a fist, and releasing it. Making a fist and releasing it. Maybe swallowing a bit. So maybe taking three swallows together.

Just to bring activity back to the throat. Maybe rolling our shoulders intermittently. Left shoulder, right shoulder. Left shoulder, right shoulder. Left shoulder, right shoulder. Maybe allowing ourselves to let the top part of our body, just the left side, just lean over a little bit in our chair. So leaning to the left if that's possible. Bringing yourself back to center. Leaning to the right. Bringing yourself back to center. Putting the palms face down, now with intention on the knees. And turning the top part of our body slowly to the left.

Slowly bringing ourselves back to center. Now turning the top part of our body to the left. Or to the right, excuse me. Slowly coming back to center. Turning our body one more time to the left. Slowly coming back to center. Turning our body slowly to the right. Coming back to center. Wherever you are, allowing yourself to lean forward. Maybe putting the shoulders back as you lean forward. Coming back to center. Allowing yourself to lean back a bit. Coming back to center.

Taking a deep breath in. Relaxing it out with sound. Another deep breath in. Relaxing it out with sound. Another deep breath in. Relaxing out with sound. Bringing the hands back. Prayer position to the heart. Chin down towards the chest. Bowing in gratitude one more time to yourself for showing up however you showed up. For participating however you participated. Bringing your

head back to center. Eyes open. Palms out to the front. Taking the first finger and the ring finger. Tapping the top of the head.

Tapping the third eye, but with our imagination because we're not touching our faces. So we're just tapping the space in front of the head. Doing the same, taking the fingers and just pretend tapping under our nose. Under the chin. Now actually touching the throat. Tapping the left side shoulder. Tapping the right side. Wringing our hands out. Tapping the left wrist. Tapping the right wrist. And wringing our hands out.

And that's it, that's our virtual afternoon breather.

CHARITY: Zoe, do you want to open it up to take a few questions?

ZOE: Of course. Let's do it.

CHARITY: All right. If anyone has any questions for Zoe, you can use your Q&A pod located at the bottom of your Zoom room to send those questions along to Zoe. Zoe, we are getting lots of thanks, thank you's to you over in our chat pod. Folks are [INAUDIBLE] realize how much stress they've been holding on to.

ZOE: Yeah, we're handling a lot. We're carrying a lot. And also if you all want to tell me what you all are doing to stay centered during this time. Not sure if you have any handouts or guides to the different parts that you guided us on. I do not, but I will

create that. And then just some of the other things that I've been doing. I don't know what y'all have been doing just to keep the breath-- keeping my nose moist.

Oh you've been doing walks? And workouts, OK. OK, so the tapping. So I like to do the tapping. So you can look up tapping. We do it as a reset sometimes. So there's a lot of other things that go along with tapping. You can actually use tapping to work with trauma. A lot of people do it to work with trauma. I just do a short amended version. I do it because when we go deep into meditation, I always want to make sure that I'm bringing you back to the body and bringing you fully into the body. And so just that contact with the different energy points in the body, I like to use that to stimulate it to make sure that you're brought back.

So sending energy to the crown chakra, to what we call the third eye. To the space under our nose, chin, and then the throat chakra. Those are things that I do as a pick me up, also, in the middle of the afternoon, if energy is dropping down. I do those points and it brings the energy up.

Victim advocate at a rape crisis center, hot baths help some. Absolutely. So, for folks who can. I know that there are some folks that aren't obviously supposed to eat salt or even do salt baths. But if salt is something that you can do, definitely bathing with Himalayan sea salt if you have it at the house. If you don't,

just sea salt. Regular sea salt, Epsom salt baths, those are very relaxing. Very detoxifying to the body.

Do you have tips for helping others calm others we may interact with as they start to panic the unknown timelines, especially health care workers. Yeah. So I really would not offer anything other than breathing techniques. Because the goal really is for us to have these things down pat first before we try to do them with other people. And so I would just say just having folks do breathing techniques to calm them down. I really wouldn't recommend anything else.

Because even though it seems like super easy what I did, it takes years and years of practice to develop the medicine that was already within. So we really want to shore up our own internal medicine so that we can share it with others without depleting ourselves. As advocates, we want to jump in and we want to do something right away. But it's really important that we have these practices down pat before we take them out into the world. But I would say just standard slow breathing. Taking them up to 10, bringing them down to 10. I wouldn't recommend anything more than that.

And also, essential oils. I always talk about lavender to calm you down. Lavender on the bottoms of the feet, lavender is on the ears. But again, just making sure that you don't have allergies to these essential oils. Making sure that you have access to as pure

essential oils as you can get. Because you don't want to be referring oils to people and then they're breaking out, and then they're calling you.

CHARITY: Zoe, we also have a question about how do folks get a hold of you, if you have a website. And they wanted to know more about your music.

ZOE: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, that music. The album is called The Most Relaxing New Age Music in the Universe, quite a title. And it came out around 2005. And there was not just one person. So some of the music I was playing was from Hideo Shimazu. And there's one person called Takedake and John Kaiser Neptune. But it's all on that album, the most relaxing new music.

And how folks can get a hold of me. You can find me on Instagram. Since this whole thing has happened, I started doing meditations on Instagram at 11:11 at night, Eastern Standard Time. And sometimes, 11:11 in the morning. So I'm on Instagram. My Instagram is iamzoeflowers, very easy. That is also on Facebook, iamzoeflowers on Facebook. My website is soul requirements, S-O-U-L, requirements dot com. I mean, dot org. Or I'm changing my website now, so you can also just type in info@iamzoeflowers.com and you should find me. Can you please write the name of the album in the chat. Yeah, hang on. Let me just copy it.

CHARITY: And Zoe, while you're doing that, there was a question also in the Q&A pod about using Zoom with clients safely and securely. This is coming from a private non-profit who cannot afford much. So I can maybe weigh in on this one. So Zoom does have a HIPAA compliant version that has end-to-end encryption available. You could reach out to Zoom for more information about that version of their platform. However, just one word of caution that it may not meet VOCA, VAWA, or FVPSA. V-O-C-A, V-A-W-A, F-V-P-S-A, to help out the interpreters there. May not meet those requirements depending upon your funding stream.

So they do have a HIPAA compliant version, but they may not have a version that matches what your funding requires. We would strongly suggest connecting with our friends and colleagues over at NNEDV. That's the National Network to End Domestic Violence, nnedv.org, we'll also put that in the chat. If you have questions about platforms that do meet those confidentiality requirements provided by many, many funding sources. So you can reach out to them for more information on that subject.

ZOE: And also, I want to let you all know that my colleagues and I are doing a virtual healing retreat-- it is free-- this Friday, March 27. The registration and the flyer is on my Facebook and on my Instagram. And so we're going to be talking about how we're healing in this time, some of the things that are happening.

And it is healers from coast to coast. And it's a people of color led healing justice retreat. And so that is on Friday. So you can get more information from us on Friday, as well. No, it's free. Any other questions for me?

Some home remedies I can share. I'm not sure if I shared them last week, but just old school steam remedies on the stove. Just getting a pot of water, boiling it. And I've added eucalyptus essential oil and some ginger oil. And just steaming it like we used to when we were kids. Putting the towel over my head and just letting the steam come in. Just to keep the nasal passages moisturized. I've been doing that every day. And then I take the pot and I just bring it through the house, just to move the stagnant energy in the home as well.

So those are just some of the things I'm doing. Of course I'm drinking elderberry everything. Elderberry black syrup, just making concoctions for me and my mom. Again, just to keep us flushed. And taking oregano oil every day. So those are some of the things I'm doing. And backing off of social media. Not overinundating ourselves with that. And consciously shutting down every night, and sending all of the energy that I've taken in the daytime through the computer, through the phone, whatever. Sending that all back out to the universe. So those are things that I've been doing.

CHARITY: All right. Huge thanks again to Zoe, I just wanted to remind everyone of some of the websites we just named. To get in touch with Zoe you can go to iamzoefflowers.com. You can also find her on Instagram and Facebook and YouTube. If you do a quick Google of Zoe, you'll connect with her.

A couple of other websites that were mentioned, I want to make sure they don't get lost in the shuffle. We mentioned the National Networks to End Domestic Violence website for some great tech resources, particularly as a lot of advocates have gone remote. That website is nnedv.org, specifically their safety net program.

Also, you can find Zoe's previous meditation that we did last week as well as this week's-- as soon as we can get it up-- on reachingvictims.org. And again, that is reachingvictims.org. With that, we are going to conclude today. And we hope everyone is well, everyone is safe. And that we continue to center the needs of victims and survivors during the COVID-19 pandemic. So we are sending out great energy to everyone. And if you need to get in touch with us, you can reach us via reachingvictims.org. Take care.

ZOE: Bye, everyone.

CHARITY: Thanks, Zoe.

ZOE: All right.

CHARITY: Thank you, thank you, thank you.

ZOE: Good stuff.