

April 29 - Staying Centered A Virtual Breather For People Supporting Survivors

JACKI CHERNICOFF: All right. Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you for joining our session "Staying Centered-- a Virtual Breather for People Supporting Survivors." My name is Jackie Chernicoff. I'm with the Center on Victimization and Safety at the VERA Institute of Justice and the National Resource Center for Reaching Victims.

I know this is not the first session for some of you, but whether it's your first or your sixth, I just have a few logistical items to go over before I turn it over to Zoe. Just want to remind everyone that you are in listen and view only mode, which means we should not be able to hear you, but you should be able to hear us or you should be able to see the American Sign Language interpreter.

If you would like to turn the captioning on, please go to the Closed Captioning symbol at the bottom of your screen and select the Arrow to the right of that icon. You can either select Show Subtitle or View Full Transcript. Once you do so, you will see the words I am speaking appearing below my video or to the right of your Zoom window.

If you cannot hear Zoe speaking, if you are having any difficulties with the captioning, or interpreters, or any other technical

difficulties during the session, please enter a message in the Chat pod at the bottom of your screen. This is the best way to communicate with me or my National Resource Center for Reaching Victims colleagues who are providing technical support throughout the virtual session today.

We're not going to use the Q&A pod. We're only going to be using the Chat pod. When Zoe opens it up for questions near the end, if you're using the Chat pod at all to communicate, please select the option to Respond to All the Panelists and Attendees. This is the only way that everyone can view what you're sharing. So some folks have shared already in the chat and that's only gone to the panelists, which means those of us on the back end are the only people that can view that.

So let's go ahead and test that. If everyone wants to continue to tell us where you're joining from today, go ahead and check All Panelists and Attendees from the dropdown in your chat and put in where you're joining us from today. It looks like we have someone all the way from Italy. Am I seeing that correctly? What? That's exciting. Hope you're staying well in Italy.

OK. Good. Yes. All Panelists and Attendees. Fantastic. Some people are still sneaking in there to Only Sending to the Panelist, which means that Zoe can see it and I can see it, but not everybody else joining us today. So just a quick reminder, All Panelists and Attendees.

Quick note about that Chat pod. You cannot save the chat nor can you click on any links or resources. You won't be able to copy and paste in any way from the Chat pod. So this is just a security measure in place. But as hosts, we're able to save that chat. So if people share things, we'll be able to go ahead and pull those out after the session and get them up on the reachingvictims.org website for everyone to have access to.

So we are recording this session. And then a link to the recording, along with any resources, and the transcript from the session will be made available on our National Resource Center for Reaching Victims website, www.reachingvictims.org. You can also find links to all of Zoe's previous sessions on there. So sadly, this is the end of our series of Zoe's virtual breathers for now. So please make sure you visit reachingvictims.org to see all of her wonderful sessions.

A couple last things-- a quick note about your view and functionality in Zoom. If you joined via a web browser, you may have more limited options for your view than if you joined via the Zoom app.

And finally, we're creating a multilingual space today. As you can see, we have American Sign Language interpreting happening as well as spoken language interpreting happening behind the scenes as well. Friendly reminder to just always remember to

state your name before you speak so that helps the interpreters identify and connect who's speaking.

So during these last six weeks it's been-- I think-- now, seven weeks, it's really been so critical that we in the Crime Victims field integrate strategies to manage stress and anxiety in our day-to-day practice. And we have been so fortunate to have Zoe Flowers as an advocate, a healer, writer, poet, filmmaker, lead us in the series of virtual breathers since this crisis began.

Zoe's going to guide us through a number of activities to help us stay grounded and manage our stress and anxiety. And again, all of these are recorded on our website. So thank you so much, Zoe, for all of these sessions. And just please, I think the floor is yours.

ZOE FLOWERS: Thank you all. Yeah, six weeks. Wow. It's been really great. I've been really blessed and thankful to be able to bring some sense of calmness to folks during this time. And so let's just get into it.

[RESTFUL MUSIC PLAYING]

Wherever you are, I'm going to just invite you, as always, to allow yourself to get settled, to relax in. If you're sitting in a chair, go ahead and let your feet touch the ground if they're able to do that. If you're laying down, just let yourself get settled in

the bed laying flat. If you're on the floor, that's fine, too.
Wherever you are just, let the full weight of your body sink in.

Letting your shoulders drop down by your sides. Palms up to receive. Palms down to ground. Just letting yourself be still.

Let the top lid fold over the lower lid. Turning the gaze inward, inward, inward. Paying attention to the quality of your breath. Just noticing at this point is the breath coming in and out smooth? Is it flowing smooth? Or is the breath choppy? Are you noticing that it's coming in one nostril stronger than the other?

Keeping the gaze inward. Just noticing right now. Maybe the shoulders want to drop a little bit more like mine just did. Sometimes we don't even notice that we're holding our breath, or holding our shoulders, or holding our neck. So now, we're going to, with intention, allow your breath to slow down. Allow your heartbeat to slow down. Allow everything to slow down.

Turning our attention to the top of the head. Allow the space between your ears to just relax. Allow the throat, the muscles of the throat, to relax. Allow the shoulders to relax. Allow the chest to relax. Allow the organs, the internal organs, to relax. And you can literally just think to yourself, "Internal organs relax. It's OK to relax."

Let the pelvic bones relax. Let the thighs relax. Knees, shins, ankles, feet, everything is relaxed. The body is heavy. Let the body be heavy, heavy, heavy. The breath has slowed down. The pulse is slowed down.

If you have a hard time relaxing, you can internally look at the tip of your nose. So you might have to cross your eyes a little bit. And sometimes that helps with overthinking, because you need to give your brain something to do. The mind needs something to do. So look at the tip of your nose. So we'll give you a few seconds to make that adjustment if you need to.

Keeping the breath low and slow. Maybe you're sinking a little bit more into the chair. Maybe the head falls forward a little bit or from side to side. Whatever the body wants to do, it's perfect.

Bringing the attention, now, back to the top of the head, also known as the crown. You want to see, sense, or imagine that there is a beautiful white light radiating at the top of the head. Beautiful light of the universe. And this light is filled with secure energy.

And you allow that light to travel down through the top of the head, almost in a spiral, a clockwise spiral. And that light comes down over the area in between the eyebrows that we call the third eye. And as that light slowly encircles that third eye area, you allow yourself to gently release any images from the past,

anything that's blocking your insight, anything that might be preventing you from seeing your path, your path through all of this, anything that's causing confusion.

You can even allow confusion itself to be released into that light, at least for this moment. You can simply say, "Confusion, I'm releasing you in this moment." You can think that to yourself.

Anything that's blocking you or keeping you stagnant, keeping you in fear, you can just release that for this moment into the light. Just see, sense, or imagine that the light is absorbing all of those things. Giving you a moment to allow that to happen.

Now see, sense, or imagine that that light is traveling down through the head taking any confusion with it, traveling down into the throat. See, sense or imagine any conversations that were unsettling, that rocked you, that made you fearful. See, sense, or imagine those things, those people, those issues being released into that white light. It's almost like those things are being absorbed right into that spiral.

And, again, you can say, "Conversation, I'm going to release you. You are not serving my highest good and my greatest joy." And if there is resistance around that, that's OK, too. On some level, you're ready to release or you wouldn't be on this call today.

Now see, sense, or imagine that that light travels down through the top of the shoulders, top of the chest, middle of the back resting at the heart. See, sense, or imagine that that light is almost washing your heart gently. And as it washes your heart, it is purifying.

Now would be a good time to release any heartbreak old, new, or current. Anything that this situation has revisited upon your heart, go ahead and release that into the light. You don't need to carry that anymore.

If you find this challenging, you can take your left hand and just place it over your heart. Sometimes it's hard to release things that we've carried for a long time. But you are safe and secure in this moment to release anything that no longer serves you. It is safe to release. If the tears are flowing, let them flow. And when you're ready, let that arm drop back down to the side.

See, sense, or imagine now that light, still white, still pristine, looking still crisp and clean like snow, travels down to the internal organs, what we call the solar plexus chakra, the solar plexus. Now would be a good time to release any thought patterns, any people that have been tugging on your energy, any thing that's been tugging on your energy, any ideas about how you feel you should be showing up right now. Let all of that be released. You don't need that anymore.

You are showing up exactly the way you need to show up in this moment. You don't need to do anything else. You are enough. So just go ahead and release any thoughts of not being enough into that light.

You might be feeling different sensations throughout your body. That is to be expected. Just observe.

White light now travels down to the pelvic bones. Now, would be a good time to release any leftover emotional relationship disappointments, anything blocking your ability to be creative, anything blocking your ability to feel joy. See, sense, or imagine that being absorbed in the light.

Traveling down now to the tailbone, the area we call the root chakra. And here you can release any thoughts, any ideas, any images or pictures that are interrupting your ability to feel like you have a right to be here, to be on the planet at this time, any conversations, any beliefs, any thoughts. Anything holding you down, anything weighing you down go ahead and release that into the white light.

Now, that white light travels carrying all the things that you no longer need, all the things that you no longer want. It travels down through your legs, down through the knees, down through the calves, down through the soles of your feet. And you can will it so. You can say, "I release you. I release all the things." Down

through the floor, down through the ground, through the earth's crust to the very center of the planet where it is absorbed. And you can say, "I am allowing the earth to absorb all that I no longer need." Let it go.

And as that white light is absorbed, and as all those things that you never needed anyway, are absorbed, maybe they are transmuted and transformed into a beautiful purple, a beautiful purple light. And that purple light is filled with whatever you need right now from Mother Earth. Maybe you need more energy. Maybe you need more spaciousness. Maybe you need more peace and quiet.

Whatever it is, see, sense, or imagine that coming up now, up through the earth's crust, up through the floor, up through the ground, up through the soles of your feet. From the tip of your toes to the back of your heels to your ankles, traveling up to the kneecaps, the thighs, filled with what you actually need. What is it that you actually want? What is it that you actually need?

Breathing that in up through the organs, up into the heart, the throat, the arms, the face, the top of the head. And you can say, "I'm allowing what I need to come into my life at this moment." You can think that. You can make that new agreement.

Maybe there's a sense of lightness now. Maybe the feet are lighter, maybe the calves are lighter, the knees, the thighs, the

chest, the fingertips, the head. Maybe the breath is smoother now.

Now, would be a good time to take a silent, deep breath through the nose exhaling through the mouth. Feeling even lighter now, feeling more spaciousness in the body. Maybe the chest is lighter, the neck is lighter, the throat is lighter. Taking another deep breath in through the nose. Exhaling through the mouth.

Now, would be a good time to wiggle the toes, to make a fist with the hands, and release them slowly. Slowly bringing your attention back to the room. What does the room look like with the eyes closed? What are the noises of the home? Are there outside noises? Are there cars? Are there birds chirping? What are the smells of your home? Letting those come back into your awareness.

What is the quality of your breath? Again, checking in. Is it smooth yet? Maybe bringing your awareness to what day it is, what city you're in, what street you live on. Bringing your awareness back to the present moment.

If you're laying down, now is a good time to sit up. Eyes still closed. We're going to lift the shoulders up to our ear lobes and drop them. Bringing our shoulders up to our ear lobes again, drop them. Bringing them up to our ear lobes one more time, drop them.

Leaning back in our chairs, slowly allowing the eyes to open. Taking the two fingers and just tapping the temples lightly to bring our awareness back. Maybe opening and closing the jaw.

Taking another deep breath in. Exhaling out the mouth. Lifting the arms up. Bringing the right arm down. Bringing the right arm up. Bringing the left arm down. Bringing the left arm up. Again, right arm down. Right arm up. Left arm down. Left arm up. Now doing intervals-- right, left, right, left, right, left. Last time-- right, left.

Bringing the arms forward. Giving yourself an embrace. Maybe making it tighter. Being here for a moment. Just holding yourself. Now we're, going to turn our head, our chin over the left shoulder. Turning it back to center. Right side, chin over right shoulder. Bringing it back to center. Left side, chin over left shoulder. Bringing it back to center. Right side, chin over right shoulder. Bringing it back to center.

And however, your arms were, you want to do the opposite for your embrace. Maybe you can go deeper on one side than the other. Left side, chin over left shoulder. Dropping the arms down if you can. Bringing the head back to center. Right side, chin over right shoulder. Bringing it back to center.

Now, this time see if you can go a little further over the left shoulder. Bringing it back to center. Over the right shoulder, see if you can go a little deeper. Bringing it back to center.

Unlocking the hands. Rolling the shoulders back in a full circle. Then we're going to roll the shoulders forward. You might feel it heating up like mine.

And then we're going to take our left ear. We're going to go over our left shoulder letting the palms reach down towards the floor. Head back to center. Right ear over right shoulder. Palms reaching down back to center. Again, left ear over left shoulder. Palms reaching down. Back to center. Last time, right ear over right shoulder. Back to center.

And we're going to take our left hand. We're going to cross it over. And just bring our right side over to pull it in a little further. Bringing the left arm back down by the side. Right arm comes over. Not pulling. Back down to side.

Then the last thing we're going to do is just shake out our wrists. Right side, 5 times. So 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. Left side 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. Both hands 5 times 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

And let's just take three collective breaths together. So I need to just roll back a little bit. So we're going to take our hands up

overhead. Inhale in. Exhale down. Inhale in. Exhale down. Last time inhale in. Exhale down.

Bringing the hands to the chest, to the heart. Bringing the chin down to the chest. In a bow of gratitude, bowing down to yourself, deep bow for showing up anyway. Bowing to your own beauty, to your own brilliance. Letting the hands drop back down to the side.

Thank you for showing up. We've got about five minutes. So if you have any questions, you can hook them in the Chat and thank you. And thank you to the interpreters. Thank you.

And again, if you have any questions, you can email me at info@-
- I almost spelled my name wrong. Oh, that's such a good question. So I took a lot of meditation classes. I've been studying meditation now since I want to say 2000 or so. And so I also attended a lot of meditation classes when I lived in Atlanta. And so I've just been developing and developing and developing over the years. My Reiki master also teaches Tai chi so I've just learned a lot of different modalities for the past 20 years or so.

Can you repeat? Oh, someone asked me how did I learn how to do meditation. Sorry about that.

So Patricia, you missed the series, but you haven't missed it because of they are on the VERA website. So you can go back

and watch them. And folks have been asking me for resources after these sessions. And so I'm definitely putting resources together. So those will be available. I'm also going to be putting a course together of meditation and things like that. So I'll be rolling those out soon as well.

I know, Wednesdays have been my favorite, too. It's been so good to know that I have a place to be on Wednesdays. It's been really, really good.

Any suggestions on how to turn your brain off? Yeah, go visit the VERA website and download my meditations or email me directly.

JACKI CHERNICOFF: Yeah, this is Jacki. It's reachingvictims.org. So it's the National Resource Center for Reaching Victims website, reachingvictims.org. You can also contact Zoe by going to her website at IamZoeFlowers.com

ZOE FLOWERS: And you can find me on IG. That's probably the best place to find me right now or on Facebook, which they're all I Am Zoe Flowers. Because at the start of this, I was doing a lot of meditations on Instagram. And then I just kind of got overwhelmed with all of the meditations and things so I needed to take a little bit of a break. But I will be going back to Instagram. So I'll be present there and also on Facebook.

So I am easy to find. And I also teach meditation. So if you want healing and coaching with me, you can reach out to me as well, because I'm doing a lot of that now.

JACKI CHERNICOFF: This is Jacki. Thanks so much, Zoe. We are been so grateful for all of your time with us. It's been such a welcome space for people to share and hold together. As we're closing, as people log off today, automatically an evaluation will pop up after you leave the session. If you want, just take a couple of moments to share your thoughts with us. This really helps us to continue to meet your needs.

And again, if you have any questions, you can email reachingvictims@VERA.org, or [Iamzoefflowers](https://www.facebook.com/Iamzoefflowers), or you can go to [reachingvictims.org](https://www.reachingvictims.org) websites and find links to contact Zoe or the National Resource Center for Reaching Victims there.

ZOE FLOWERS: Yes.

JACKI CHERNICOFF: Thank you, everyone.

ZOE FLOWERS: Thanks, everyone.