

Grounding and Centering Practice

BACKGROUND

Like a plant needs sun, water and earth to grow, humans (and higher level mammals) also have a psychophysiological need for “3 nutrients” in order to thrive:

- ◇ Safety (physical and psychological)
- ◇ Connection (we are inherently social beings)
- ◇ Dignity/Respect (being valued by our tribe).

If we do not feel secure in those nutrients, the neural networks that take care of our self-preservation and threat detection activate and generate a stress response, ranging from mild anxiety to patterns of fight, flight or freeze.

This Grounding and Centering practice can last anywhere from a few minutes to a few seconds, depending on where you are. The Centering practice reaffirms our three nutrients and stimulates coherence in our neural systems that calms and focuses us.

The PRACTICE

I'm inviting you to stand, or you can sit if that is more convenient. Do what your body allows as you follow these suggestions.

First notice your feet on the ground. In a word, notice your background mood and make a note of that in your mind. What's your baseline or starting point?

Begin with **GROUNDING in our feet**. In shoes, socks, or bare feet. Press your big toes into the ground. Feel the balls of your feet on the ground. Feel the weight in your heels on the ground.

We will **CENTER in our LENGTH**. Stand (or sit) straight with neck aligned over shoulders, legs straight but knees soft not locked. (Feet on the ground, legs bent, if seated) Focus your mind on rising up in your length just a bit higher without stretching. Wiggle up your spine to put just a tiny bit more space between your vertebrae. Centering in Length signifies your DIGNITY.

Next we **CENTER in our WIDTH**. Shift your focus to the sides of your feet, the outside of your knees, the width of your hips. Roll your shoulders back and feel the width they take up. Breathe deeply and feel the expansion of your rib cage. With arms at our sides, sparkle your fingers, shifting the air that connects you to the closest living thing, perhaps a partner or colleague in the

next room, perhaps your cat or the dog sleeping at your feet, perhaps the rosebush or tree growing outside the window. Centering in Width embodies our Connection to others.

CENTER in our DEPTH. Bring attention to the spine that provides structure and strength. Imagine you are leaning against a large oak tree. Rest your spine against it. The oak tree supports; your spine can relax for a few seconds. Bring your attention inside to allow some rest in your internal organs, your lungs, your heart, your stomach, intestines, each cell processing nutrients, eliminating waste. Resting against the tree evokes SAFETY, our 3rd nutrient.

Finally we **CENTER on WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU.** Put your left thumb on your navel with the left hand held below it on the lower belly. This is the center of your body. You may also place your right hand on your heart if it feels comfortable. Bring your attention to your internal sense of what is truly important. This could be a value or felt sense of purpose or intention. What is important...in this moment, in this day, or in your life. Say it out loud phrased in a commitment statement: "I am a commitment to..." Say this several times and notice the felt sense of it. What sensations do you feel? Warm? Cool? Tingly?

Some examples:

- *I am a commitment to my health.*
- *I am a commitment to caring for myself so I can care for my family.*
- *I am a commitment to grace under pressure.*
- *I am a commitment to strength in my body and in my will.*
- *I am a commitment to curiosity and creativity.*

WHY THIS HELPS US GET BACK TO OUR "A GAME"

Getting clear on what is most important offers a framework for choice in a world filled with expectations, obligations, and distractions. It engages the intelligence of our body as well as the cognitive intelligence in our brain.

Do this practice 5 times a day. The 'practice' is to get your body attuned to centering as a way to bring consciousness and coherence to your response during incoherent stressful situations. To have this accessible to you in stress, you must have the 'muscle' built up when you are at peace.