

# Staying Centered A Virtual Breather For People Supporting Survivors

CHARITY HOPE: Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you for joining our session on staying centered, a virtual breather for people supporting victims and survivors. My name is Charity Hope. I'm with the Center on Victimization and Safety at the Vera Institute of Justice and the National Resource Center for Reaching Victims. We have just a few quick logistical items to go over before we get started today.

Participants are in listen-only mode, which means we should not be able to hear you, but you should be able to hear us. If we all want to take a collective moment to turn on our captioning, if you'd like to do so, then go to the bottom of your screen to the closed caption icon on the bottom of your resume Zoom room. There's a little CC in a box. To the right of that box is an arrow.

If you select that arrow, you can either select Show Subtitle or View Full Transcript. This will turn your captioning on. 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 the presenter speaking, if you're having any difficulties with the captioning, or you can't see the interpreter, or any problems at all please, message us in the chat pod at the bottom of your screen.

This is the best way to communicate with me or my natural resource center colleagues who are providing technical support today. I also want you to just take a quick look and make sure you know where the Q&A pod is, which is also looking at the bottom of your Zoom room. We'll be using that later when we open up for a few questions at the end of the session.

One quick note about your view in Zoom-- pardon me-- if you have joined the session via a web browser, you will only be able to view the American Sign Language interpreter. You may not be able to see our presenter today. Also, you will have limited captioning options. If you have joined via the Zoom app, you will be able to view all of the panelists as well as the ASL interpreter, and have a few more captioning options.

We will be recording today's session. A link to the recording will be made available on our national resource center website, which is [reachingvictims.org](https://reachingvictims.org). We'll check that out everyone so you have that handy. And you can also access links to previous sessions there also. If you want to do this on a daily basis or see our previous sessions, you're more than welcome to do so by going to [reachingvictims.org](https://reachingvictims.org).

So we know that people across the country are mobilizing quickly to ensure that services for survivors of crime continue during the COVID-19 crisis. Confronting this new set of challenges and a rapidly changing and uncertain times can be extraordinarily

stressful. It's critical that we in the crime victims field integrate strategies to manage stress and anxiety in our day-to-day practice.

And we are so lucky to have Zoe Flowers with us today-- an advocate, a healer, a writer, a poet, and a filmmaker. And I'm sure I could go on and list a million other things. But Zoe is here today to guide us through a number of activities to help us stay grounded and manage stress and anxiety. With that, I'm going to turn this over to Zoe.

ZOE FLOWERS: Thank you, Charity. Hi, everyone. So for folks who are joining for the first time, welcome. For folks that have been with us for a couple of weeks, welcome back. So I just want to invite you all to get comfortable wherever you are. I needed a little extra support today, so I have my comfy scarf. I have my sage. I lit a white candle.

I have some of my cards by me. So if you do have some things with you-- get some water, whatever it is you need so that you can be fully present for this next thing. And I will be opening it up for questions-- for a few questions after we're finished, so if you have any questions about maybe things that you can bring into your space to make you feel a little bit more comfy, a little bit more supported in this time, I'm totally open to sharing that.

I also had to do a little steam and eucalyptus this morning just to keep my lungs and everything moisturized and refreshed. So again, I needed a little bit of support today as well. So I just wanted to share that with you, that healers need to-- we need support too. We need to do our work as well. So I am going to stop talking and turn on some calming music, and just invite you all to get comfortable, get relaxed.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

Just get ready for this conversation that we're going to have. Wherever we are, get comfortable, taking a deep breath in through your nose, relaxing it out through the mouth. Taking another deep breath in-- and on the exhalation, let yourself sink further into whatever you're sitting on.

Taking another deep breath in, exhaling out, stretching your feet out a little more-- maybe sitting up a little further in your chair, letting your shoulders drop-- palms resting either at your side or on top of your thighs-- palms up to receive if you need some energetic support, palms down if you feel like you need to be grounded in this moment.

Lowering the top lid on those at the bottom lid, allowing the solders to drop even more-- allowing the feet to sink further into the earth-- maybe spreading the toes, if that's possible for you, just to make more connection to the ground-- spreading the toes,

lifting the heels up, pressing them back down again into the ground.

If the palms are facing upward, maybe just stretching the palms out wherever they are just so you can feel that tension-- and release. Stretching the palms out-- and release-- stretching the palms out-- and release. If the palms are face down, see if you can press down whatever resource hands are resting on, pressing the center of the palms down-- spreading the fingers out and pressing the palms down, really getting grounded.

Don't increase any tension in your arms. The action is in the center of your palms. Shoulders remain relaxed, elbows relaxed, forearm relaxed-- the only pressure should be in the center of your palms. Now relax that pressure in the center of your palms as well. Allow your head to just fold forward a little bit.

Allow your head to fall forward even more, slowly, with intention. Allow the chin to come as close to chest as possible, slowly, with intention. seeing where you feel any resistance. Do you feel resistance in the lower back, in the middle of the back, the back of the neck?

Where are you feeling that resistance? Maybe you're not feeling any. Continue down until your chin actually gets us close to your chest as possible-- shoulders remaining relaxed. Staying in this position-- for those of you that have your palms up, this is a good

time for you now to put your palms down-- palms down, chin lowering to chest.

Giving a bow of gratitude to yourself for showing up again another day-- maybe taking a deep breath in here, relaxing it out, inhaling-- and as you inhale, slowly, slowly, slowly raising the head, raising the head with as much intention as possible.

Palms stay down. Shoulders stay relaxed. Head slowly rises back to center. Slowly turning your head to the left-- remaining here for a moment, turning your head back to center-- slowly turning your head to the right. Turning your head back to center-- this time, inhaling as you turn your head to the left slowly.

Exhale as you turn your head back to center. Inhale, turning your head to the right. Exhale, turning your head back to center. One more time-- inhale, turning your head to the left. Exhale, turning your head back to center. Last time-- left side-- inhale-- right side-- excuse me-- right side-- inhale, turning your head to the right. Exhale, turning your head back to center.

Maybe wiggling the toes, wiggling the fingers, planting them back firmly, rolling the shoulders back-- rolling the shoulders back as much as you can so that your heart is open-- palms staying down, chest open, chin raised a bit, bringing your shoulders back so you're almost arching your back as much as your body will

allow you to do-- maybe bringing your head down a little bit, chin to chest.

Bringing the shoulders back-- heart open-- rolling the shoulders forward-- chin down to chest-- bringing the shoulders back-- heart open-- bringing the chin back down to chest-- bringing the shoulders forward. Incorporating the breath here, inhale-- shoulders back, heart open. Exhale-- shoulders forward, chin to chest.

Inhale-- shoulders back, heart open. Inhale-- sorry-- exhale-- shoulders forward, chin to chest. Let's do that one more time. Inhale-- shoulders back, chest open. Exhale-- shoulders forward, chin to chest. Breathing normally, just coming back up to seated-- shoulders at your side. You might be warming up a little bit like me. That just warmed me up just a touch.

Because so many of us carry weight in the back of our shoulders, we're going to do a couple of head stretches-- taking the right hand, folding it over left ear, gently guiding the right ear down just over the right shoulder. Left ear rises back up to center-- right ear gently resting over right shoulder, left ear bringing you back up to center.

Left palm stays grounded wherever you have it. Last time-- right ear falls down over right shoulder, left ear raising towards the Sun back to center-- right arm back over to the right side-- palm

down. Left hand over right ear-- you may see that one side is looser than the other. One side allows more flexibility.

Mine happens to be the left, so you may find that you can bring your hand down further over your right ear. It's totally fine. Left ear comes down over left shoulder. Right ear raises up towards the center. Left ear falls down over left shoulder. Right ear raises back up to center. Left ear-- last time-- falls over left shoulder, right ear rising towards the sunshine.

Left hand back down by the side-- this time, we are going to incorporate the breath. Right hand over right ear-- inhale-- right ear over right shoulder, bringing the left shoulder down away from the left ear-- so just giving yourself a gentle stretch. Exhale. Bring the head back to center. Inhale-- right ear over right shoulder-- left shoulder away from a left ear. Exhale, bringing head back to center.

Last time-- inhale-- right ear over right shoulder. See if you can pull that left shoulder away from the left ear a little bit more, maybe feeling the stretch right on the left side of the neck. Exhale, bringing your head back to center. Maybe needing to shake out the hand a little bit, maybe needing to roll the shoulders a little bit-- left hand over right ear.

Inhale-- left ear over left shoulder. Right ear pulls away from right shoulder. Exhale, bringing the head back to center. Left ear



comes back down on the inhalation over the left shoulder. Right ear pulls away from the right shoulder. Exhale-- head back to center. Last time-- left ear falls over left shoulder. Right ear pulls away from right shoulder. Exhale back to center, rolling the shoulders forward and back, forward and back.

Just taking a moment to do just a quick scan of the body, paying attention to the breath-- maybe taking a deep breath in through the nose, and on the inhalation, see, sense, or imagine a beautiful white light entering the left and right nostril. Exhale any energy, any worries, any concerns. Inhale beautiful white light through the left and right nostrils.

Exhale any worries or concerns. Inhale-- white light enters the left and right nostril. Exhale any worries or concerns. Doing an internal body scan starting at the top of the head-- maybe the head is pulsing a bit. Maybe it's moving in a circular motion. Maybe it's perfectly still.

Letting the breathing slow down, letting the mental chatter quiet-- so no judgment-- letting the eyebrows relax, letting the bones of the face relax, letting the jaw slack, letting the tongue be loose in the mouth, letting the muscles of the throat relax, letting the heart relax-- the muscles of the heart, the muscles of the chest.

Internal organs relax. Stomach relaxes. Pelvic bones relax. Thigh bones relax-- knees, shins, feet, toes. Toes are relaxed. Feet

become loose. Wrists relax-- fingers, forearms, shoulders, shoulder blades, spine, tailbone-- quieting the inner body.

Silence, silence, silence, silence-- see, sense, or imagine the beautiful white light at the top of your crown. And I say see, sense, or imagine because this might be your first time doing something like this, so I just ask you to use your imagination. See, sense, or imagine a white light at the top of the head helping you to relax, swallowing up your thoughts, cares, concerns, giving yourself permission to release them into the white light.

White light moving down to the throat-- circular motion-- gathering any conversations that you had that disrupted your peace, gathering any conversations-- anything that you said that you wish you had said or things that you wish you had said. Release. Give yourself permission to release them into that white light.

White light moves down to the heart, chest, lungs, gathering any tightness, any inflammation. Give yourself permission to release. You do not have to carry it all. You do not have to carry it all. Taking a deep breath into that, if that is difficult for you to imagine-- white light travels down to the stomach, soothing the stomach muscles, soothing any digestive issues, any tightness-- down to the pelvic region, giving yourself permission to release any discomfort, any blocked creativity.

See, sense, or imagine that it's all being absorbed by the white light. See, sense, or imagine now that light traveling down through the legs, through the soles of the feet, through the ground, through the dirt, through the earth, down to the center of the Earth, where it is transmuted and transformed into something that you can use. See all concerns traveling down to the center of the Earth being absorbed by Mother Earth.

Giving yourself permission to release any thoughts any concerns that do not belong to you, that are not serving you-- see, sense, or imagine those things floating out of your mind, heart, arms, leg, feet. See, sense, or imagine a new level of lightness. Give yourself permission to create a new way of being, to experience a level of peace.

See, sense, or imagine a lightning literally taking the weight of the world off of your shoulders and allowing it to fall down through the ground to the center of the Earth-- at least for a moment. You can pick it up again if you need it. But at least, for now, allow yourself to be light, to be grounded.

If your mind starts to wonder, or question, or resist, turn the attention to your breath. If there are areas in the stomach, in the chest, and the back that are tight, see, sense, or imagine self-soothing it, sending it white light, sending it love. Or just send it some space. Give yourself some space.

Maybe you need to expand. Maybe you need to see, sense, or imagine that you're growing wider, lighter-- paying attention to the breath, always coming back to the breath.

Now draw your attention back through your toes, maybe wiggling them a bit, wiggling the fingers, maybe making a fist and releasing-- making a fist and releasing, making a fist and releasing-- taking the palms, rubbing them together until you feel a level of heat-- maybe going a little faster.

And when you feel that level of heat, you want to just place your hands at the top of your head-- another way to just ground yourself. And then taking your hands and letting them rest on your own shoulders, bringing your hands out in front of you, taking the right hand and gently tapping the arm from the top to the end of your fingertips going, back to the shoulder, bringing your hand down your arm down to the fingertips, coming back-- right hand lightly beating the left hand all the way down to the fingertips.

Shaking the hands out a bit-- right arm extended-- left hand lightly beats the left shoulder-- hand, arm, all the way down to the fingertips-- again, all the way down to fingertips-- shoulder to fingertips-- shaking out the hands a bit. Now gently just tapping the top of our head-- usually I do it with two fingers, but we're going to use four.

We're going to use all four fingers today to just tap the top of our head. And then this time, we're going to tap our temples-- not touching our faces. Tapping our throats, again, using all four fingers-- maybe making a sound like I am-- tapping the heart, tapping the belly button-- four fingers tapping the left wrist, four fingers tapping the right wrist, four fingers tapping each shoulder.

Extending the hands out again, giving yourself a hug-- taking a deep breath in, exhaling out, seeing if you can hug yourself just a little deeper, if that's possible for you. If it is not, that is OK. Maybe you can just hug your wrists, your elbows. Maybe you can just hug your wrists. But if you can reach all the way around, go ahead and do that, just thanking yourself again for showing up.

Turning your head to the left as you are still embracing yourself-- seeing if you could turn your head a bit more-- bringing your head back to center. Right side-- seeing if you can bring your head over a little bit more-- bringing your head back to center, unlocking your hands, and just stretching them out a bit, taking a collective breath in.

And this time, we're going to raise our hands above our heads as far as you can go. If you can only go to the ears, that's fine. If you can go all the way up, that is fine too. Modifications are absolutely welcome. So taking a deep breath in together-- hands over head-- exhale down together. Another deep breath in together-- hands over head-- exhale down.

Last time-- hands overhead-- deep breath in-- exhale down-- bringing the hands back down to the side-- up or down-- totally up to you. Doing a quick scan of the body just seeing if you feel any different than when we started-- maybe doing a little extra heart work today-- taking the hand, taking your palm, rubbing it in a clockwise position over what we call the heart chakra.

Taking the two fingers and just tapping that heart a bit-- we just need a little bit of heart support today. Wringing our hands out, bringing the hand back down, taking a final breath in together, exhaling out, opening the eyes-- and totally open to answering questions.

Wow, we've got a lot of folks on here today. 325 people-- amazing. Thank yourself for showing up, for taking the time. You're welcome-- my pleasure. Hey, Alabama.

CHARITY HOPE: Yeah, I think we have just a few minutes for-- to take a couple of questions, if anyone has them for Zoe. You can enter your question into the Q&A pod located at the bottom of your Zoom room.

ZOE FLOWERS: Hey, Elizabeth. I feel like I know you.

CHARITY HOPE: Seeing lots of thank yous in the chat.

ZOE FLOWERS: Y'all are so welcome. You're so, so welcome. Hey, Seattle. Now I'm just going to do shout outs to states.

CHARITY HOPE: South Carolina-- I saw Guam on earlier.

ZOE FLOWERS: You did?

CHARITY HOPE: Yes, Guam is here.

ZOE FLOWERS: My folks from Guam-- I did a training there several years ago.

CHARITY HOPE: OK, before we lose it, Zoe, so we've got one question in the chat pod, which has already gone by because of the chats. But it said, how do we get our brains to stop, um, right now.

ZOE FLOWERS: So I would say-- and I am an overthinker as well-- and so just keying into that breath, and also-- I'll share this with you-- sometimes I feel unsafe. I have an internal-- just as a survivor and just life-- I have this feeling of unsafeness. And I noticed it about three years ago. I was like, man, I'm just walking through the world just feeling unsafe for no reason.

There's reasons, but what I had to do is just stop myself, and just key into the breath, and just say, nothing's happening right now-- literally taking things moment to moment, second to second. Nothing is happening right now-- and just doing the body scan, and just trying to figure out, where are you feeling this?

Are you feeling it in your heart? Are you feeling it in your throat? Are you tense? Are you tight? Just really doing that body scan, bringing that awareness back into your body in that moment is a really good way to stop that overthinking-- not stop you overthinking, because some of us just overthink. So again, it's just moment to moment to moment having that awareness.

CHARITY HOPE: Thanks. So I think we also have a couple questions in the Q&A pod. Someone wanted to know what the significance of the tapping was.

ZOE FLOWERS: Folks always want to know that. I love it. So it is a healing modality that folks use for all different things. I've gone to workshops where people actually use tapping with trauma survivors. And so people use tapping to recenter the brain, to reorient the central nervous system.

I use it in this way to bring you back to the body-- again, to bring that awareness back to the body, because you don't want to do a meditation and take people somewhere, and then just leave them there-- especially folks with trauma histories. We can just dissociate in any moment, and so we want-- that's why it's so easy in a way for survivors and things like that to get into meditation sometimes, or folks like myself, who can check out.

So you want to come back into the body. You always want to be aware, because I used to just meditate, and then I would stand



up, and I'd be dizzy. So you always just want to make sure you're in the body, drinking your water, staying hydrated. So that's why I do the tapping.

CHARITY HOPE: Thank you. Someone else wants to know tips on separating work from home, now that a lot of folks are now working remotely and no longer have that natural separation going off to work, leaving your house. Many of us are just going from the living room to our offices. So how do you keep that separation, Zoe?

ZOE FLOWERS: Just boundaries, boundaries, boundaries-- I leave my ringer off. Even before this happened, I leave my ringer off, because I just can't take it. I can't take all that noise, all that-- I just can't take it. So creating transition rituals-- which I talk about a lot-- creating a time where you're going to do the work-- I do things like I light a candle.

I pull a card. I do things where it's like, this is my time. This is my spiritual time. This is my spiritual practice. And I closed the door, and that's just it. But it takes time. It takes work, but you really have to be selfish with your time. One of my coaches said, the only thing we own in this world is our time, and so you have to prioritize it.

CHARITY HOPE: Yeah. I think, for folks that are lucky enough to have a separate office space, it's a little easier. I'm in my office

now. I can close my doors. And I try never to drag my laptop around the house with me. I try to leave it here in my office, so when I'm done for work at the end of the day, I leave my laptop in here, I close my doors, and then that's a physical boundary for me.

What else do we have in the Q&A pod? I think we have time for maybe one more quick question. I'm just looking here. I think we missed one over in the chat, Zoe. I'm going to try to find that really quickly. Someone had asked if you had a recommendation for a short, brief grounding exercise that folks could do as part of their work with their teams or their staff every day.

ZOE FLOWERS: Oh, I love that. I don't think I have time to share that now, but you can definitely email me. I will put it in the chat, and so you can email me [info@iamzoefflowers.com](mailto:info@iamzoefflowers.com), and I'm happy to walk anyone through that. But you be very, very careful. You don't want to get too intense with folks, because these practices look like something we can just pick up and take away, but you really want to make sure that you're centered before you try to go out and center other people.

So you want to make sure that you have your practices down, because the thing about it is you need know-- the reason why I mix it up is because everybody can't just sit and be silent. Sometimes people sit and then the mind just goes, so they need a guided meditation. Other people need a silent meditation. So

you have to be able to mix and match things so that you're not activating people, and then they're crying.

I had that happen at a conference years and years ago when I first started the work. I started doing all of my stuff, and folks just started crying. And luckily, I had a more experienced healer with me, so we could split the room and take care of people. So you want to be careful when you're opening people up.

CHARITY HOPE: I know we've gotten a lot of questions too about, are these sessions offered regularly? This is, I think, the third session that we've offered.

ZOE FLOWERS: Yeah.

CHARITY HOPE: If Zoe's available, we'll also try to do one next week. We need to look at our schedule, but for anyone wanting to know the latest information on any of the sessions that the National Resource Center for Reaching Victims is hosting, you can go to [reachingvictims.org](http://reachingvictims.org). Be sure to sign up for a mailing list, and you can also check the events calendar and find recordings there.

So with that, I would love to say a huge thanks for Zoe. Thank you, again, for giving everyone this much needed moment-- this 45 minutes for us all to come together and have this moment of meditation. So thank you, Zoe.

ZOE FLOWERS: Yes. And I just put in the chat-- just want to let folks know that, if you check me out on Facebook, we just did a virtual free healing retreat this past weekend. We had over 700 people attend, and we're going to do an encore--

CHARITY HOPE: Wow.

ZOE FLOWERS: I know-- we're going to do encore, me and all my healer friends. We're getting lots of information and strategies, and I'm doing breathing. And we're going to do an encore, I think, in a couple of weeks, so if you friend me on Facebook, you'll find the information about that.

CHARITY HOPE: Oh, perfect.

ZOE FLOWERS: Yeah.

CHARITY HOPE: So check out Zoe Flowers on Facebook.

ZOE FLOWERS: Yes. Thank you, Charity.

CHARITY HOPE: Thank you, Zoe.

ZOE FLOWERS: [INAUDIBLE]