

Staying Centered: A Virtual Breather for People Supporting Survivors

JACKI CHERNICOFF: Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you for joining our session and staying centered. A virtual breather for people supporting survivors. My name is Jacki Chernicoff. 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 begin today. Participants 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 shows 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 can not hear the presenters 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 will not be using the Q&A pod today. We will be chatting with one another, via the chat pod, when we open up the discussion for questions at the end. If you are using the chat pod to communicate with others today, please select the option to respond to all panelists and attendees. It's a drop down option to send to all panelists and attendees. This is the only way that everyone can view what you are sharing.

So I want to go ahead and actually test that, because I see some chats coming in that are only to the panelists, which means that only those of us working on the back end could see that. So if you all want to select all panelists and attendees, say hello, tell us where you're joining us from today. I'd love to see those start to come in.

Great. Fantastic. We've got lots of folks joining us from all across the country. Yeah, I'm seeing some only going to all panelists. So again, just a gentle reminder-- all panelists and attendees, otherwise everyone can't see what you're sharing. Yeah, still some only all panelists. We'll keep practicing that.

So just another quick note about the chat pod-- you can not save the chat, nor will you be able to copy and paste any resources that are shared in it. This is just a security measure we have in

place. But as host, I want to assure you that we are able to save the resources. And following this session, should anything be shared, we will get those out of the chat and we will post them on the reachingvictims.org website, along with a recording from this session.

So speaking of recording, as I just mentioned, we are recording today's session. So a link to that recording, any resources that folks share with us will be made available on the National Resource Center for Reaching Victims website, www.reachingvictims.org. You can also find links to previous sessions on the website, as well.

One quick note about your view, I saw someone mention this in the chat pod-- you have different functionality if you join the session via the web browser, than if you have more limited functionality if you join via the web browser, than in different auctions, than if you joined via the Zoom app. So it's possible that you may only be able to view the American Sign Language interpreter. The other work around could be that you select gallery view, instead of speaker view. Gallery view will allow you to see everybody on video at the moment.

And finally, I just want to share that we're creating a multilingual space today. As you can see, we have an American Sign Language interpreting happening, as well as spoken language interpreting happening behind the scenes, as well.

So I just want to say that during this really unprecedented and challenging time it's really critical that we in the Crime Victims field integrate strategies to manage stress and anxiety into our day to day practice. I'm just really grateful that Zoe is giving us more of her time. We are joined by Zoe, who's an advocate, and a healer, writer, poet, and filmmaker. She's going to guide us through a number of activities to help us stay grounded and manage our stress and anxiety. So I just want to pass the floor over to you Zoe, thank you.

ZOE FLOWERS: Thank you so much, Jacki. And thank you to all the interpreters, and thanks to everybody that's hopped on, again. And for folks that have been hanging out with me now for these past several weeks, thank you for returning. And for folks that are new, welcome.

And so we're going to just dive right in. As Jackie said, we're going to do a couple of different things. We'll do a guided meditation, and then we'll come out of it by doing just a few hand exercises and stretches, just to bring you back to the present moment. And then I'd love to hear any questions, or anything like, that you all have in the chat. So let's go ahead and get started.

So wherever you are, allow yourself to settle in more. I don't know if you've been able to see me shifting, just shifting to make sure you're comfortable. You want to make sure your back is

supported, and maybe just doing some of the things I'm doing, maybe stretching your shores, so just opening your mouth as wide as you can.

We'll do that one more time, just to loosen up the jawbone, maybe from side to side, maybe rolling the shoulders a bit. Just want to settle into your body and just let your body know, I'm here, we're here, we made it, another day. So maybe just bringing your arms back and forth a bit, and then just shake your hands a bit and settle in. And I'm going to take my glasses off, which means I will not be able to read anything in the chat.

So the first thing we're going to do is we're going to lower our top lid over our bottom lid. So you want to make sure that you're in a safe, secure place that you can do that, hopefully not driving or anything like that. You can have your palms up if you need to receive, or down if you need to ground.

So if you feel like your cup is a little empty today and you just want to receive all of this good energy that's coming down, you can do that. Or if you're feeling a little flighty and you feel like you need to be grounded, then just put your hands down by your sides, letting your elbows graze your hips. So elbows down, palms down, shoulders back, eyes closed, and you can even turn your gaze inward. So when we say turn your gaze inward, we're really saying, turn your attention away from the outside world

and what's happening in the outside world and just do what we call a scan on what's happening with you.

So you can actually do a visual scan of your body with your eyes closed. So how do we do that? We see, sense, or imagine the tip of our toes with our eyes closed. We see, sense, or imagine the heels of our feet. And if you're very sensitive, you might feel a little tingling or energy in the parts of the body that I discuss. If not, this is a practice that you can actually do to calm yourself down.

So you want to see, sense, or imagine the heels of your feet. And the way that you can feel that tingling or you can feel that sensation is you can tell yourself to send all the energy or all the blood to your heel so that you're actually feeling your pulse, so that the heels of your feet actually begin to pulsate. We can tell our body these things. And again, it's just really good, if you're stressed out, to just close your eyes and say, OK, I want to feel the pulsing in the bottom of my feet. It takes practice. So if you can't do it right now, it's no big deal. But if you can, great.

Now we're moving up to our ankle, putting all of our energy, all of our thoughts on our ankles, maybe even saying an internal thank you and bow of gratitude to our ankles, to our feet. Moving up now to the calves, saying thank you to the calves. And even if there are parts of our bodies that don't work as they used to or

they're not working at all, we still want to give thanks and praise to the energy of those parts of our bodies.

So however we're showing up, we want to give thanks and praise, thanks to our knees, sending all of that energy to your knees, eyes closed, back supported, bringing the energy up to our thighs, saying thank you to our thighs, bringing the energy up to our hip bones, saying thank you to our hip bones, again, maybe feeling a pulse there. Bringing the energy, turning our attention to our bellies, saying thank you to our bellies, thank you to our internal organs, maybe letting the belly flop a bit. We're always sucking our bellies, and maybe we can just let our bellies be.

Bringing the energy up now to the chest. Might find that your feet turn in as well. The more you get relaxed, the more you get loose, you might find that your feet turn inwards, totally fine. We are in the chest, giving thanks to our lungs, our heart, our muscles. Bringing the energy to our right shoulder, doing a beautiful internal scan. What's that right shoulder doing? How's that right shoulder doing?

Giving thanks for our arms. Sending all of our energy now to our arms maybe feeling that pulse in the arm, and now the wrists, and the palms, and the tips of the finger, doing a scan. How are you doing?

See, sense, or imagine the energy from your right finger jumping over to the tips of your left finger. Sometimes we do a white light jump. So it's almost like envisioning a white light traveling from the tips of your right finger to the tips of your left finger.

Feeling the energy, doing the scan through the fingers, through the palms of the hand. Wrists. Arms. Back up to that left shoulder. Shoulder blades. The neck, doing a scan of the neck.

Doing a scan of the back. How is that spine doing? Maybe doing a little bit of a shift and pulling the right arm out of it, pulling the left arm out a bit, and really letting your back spread out against whatever you're sitting on. Giving thanks for the muscles of the back. So many of us carry tension in our back and in the back of our necks.

Maybe taking a deep breath into the space in the back. So taking a deep breath in. Exhaling it out. Taking another deep breath in. Exhaling it out. One more deep breath in. Exhaling it out. That last exhalation, you might find that you sink a little bit further into whatever you're sitting on-- totally fine.

So now we're moving on from the scan of the neck up into the jaws, scanning the back of the head, maybe feeling a surge of energy. Scanning the front of the face-- eyes, nose, mouth, jaws. See, sense, or imagine that this part of the body is now engulfed in a beautiful yellow light. Bright, bright yellow sun, yellow, the

whole head totally encircled by yellow light. Allowing the eyes to relax. Allowing the nose to relax. Allowing the jaw to relax. Yellow light traveling down through the throat, letting the muscles of the throat relax.

Traveling down your shoulders and arms, tips of your fingers-- yellow, yellow, yellow light. Letting the fingertips relax, the palms, the wrists, the shoulder blades-- everything relaxed. Letting the chest relax. Letting the internal organs relax. Letting the back relax. Expanding.

Maybe feeling a sense of lightness at this point. If not, that's why I say see, sense, or imagine. Imagine what a sense of lightness would feel like. Yellow light traveling down through the belly, through the hips, through the thighs, down to the knees, down the legs, down your ankles through the soles of the feet to the tips of the toes.

Allowing yourself to take a deep breath in. Exhaling out any concerns or worries. Taking another deep breath in, letting the air fill your lungs. Exhaling out any concerns or worries. Taking another deep breath in, letting the air fill your throat, the top of your head. Exhaling it out. Taking another deep breath in, letting the air travel to the top of the head. And exhale out.

Breathing normal now. Not deep breaths, but intentional breaths. As you breathe, consider the quality of the breath. Is the breath

coming in shallow still? Or is the breath a little smoother than it was before? Is the air cool as it comes into your nostrils or is it warm?

If you're finding yourself wandering with your eyes closed, you can turn your gaze to the tip of your nose. Now, it might help you to take your index finger and just put it on the tip of your nose with your eyes closed and just send your energy to the tip of your nose, and then drop your hand down back by your side.

Sometimes the brain needs something to focus on. So turn that focus to the tip of your nose, maintaining the breath. Don't forget to breathe. Any time you start to get a distracted, you just go back to the tip of the nose.

Breathing slowly. Allow the breath to slow now. Allow the breath to slow down. In fact, you can tell yourself silently without speaking, breath slow down. Allow the heart to slow down.

If the mind wanders, turn your attention back to the tip of your nose. If you're doing just fine, tell yourself to slow down even more, to where you're almost still. Maybe your hands are getting heavy. Maybe your shoulders are getting heavy. Maybe your head is getting heavy. Letting yourself know it is safe to slow down. This is your time.

Maybe the low back is getting heavy, sinking further into the chair or the bed or the floor or the couch. Sinking so deep into

that couch, chair. The thighs are heavy. The knees are heavy. The shins are heavy. The ankles are heavy. The feet are heavy.

Allow yourself to receive quiet, peace, restoration. See, sense, or imagine that every one of your cells is at rest. In fact, maybe silently think, every one of my cells is at rest in this moment. Everything is slow, and everything is at rest. Heartbeat's slow, pulse slow, body heavy.

See, sense, or imagine anything that you're ready to release just traveling downward. Any thoughts, any feelings, any emotions-- see, sense, or imagine it just washes from the tip of your head to the tip of your toes down through the floor. It's almost like gravity is just pulling it down, pulling it down. Now is a good time to release. Any thoughts, any worries-- see, sense, or imagine them just traveling down from the top of your head down through the heart, down through the soles of the feet into the floor through the ground, through the Earth's crust to the center of the Earth, where they are transformed into something you can use.

And if it's several things, that is all good. Now is a good time to release. Release, release, release. And when you're ready, see, sense, or imagine whatever was transformed. Maybe you need energy. Maybe you need a new way of thinking about things. Maybe you need a change of perception. Maybe you need a greater sense of hope. Maybe you need your hope rejuvenated.

Whatever it is, put a color to it and see sense, or imagine that that thing-- whatever it is that you're calling in-- is traveling up now, up through the center of the Earth, up through the Earth's crust, through the ground, through your floor, through the soles of your feet, through the knees, through the hips, through the front and back of the body up through the heart, up to the crown of your head.

Whatever it is that you are calling on, see, sense, or imagine that it is already here. You are already feeling that way-- more energy, more rejuvenation, a renewed sense of hope is yours. You only need to ask. See, sense or imagine that thing flooding every part of your being.

And when you're ready, you want to bring your attention back into this space, knowing that you can access this feeling at any moment. And so the first thing we're going to do is take three intentional slow breaths. So breathing in slowly, exhaling slowly.

Maybe the heartbeat is beating a little bit faster. Maybe that already started. But let's tell ourselves, heart, beat a little faster. Taking another deep breath in, exhaling it out. Wiggling the toes, flexing the fingers, bringing our attention back into our space.

Maybe moving the ankles in a circle clockwise. Moving the ankles in a circle counterclockwise. Maybe putting our feet on the floor, putting our toes on the ground, and lifting our heels and putting

them back down on the ground, pressing heels into the floor and lifting our toes. One more time-- toes to the ground, heels up. Heels to the ground, toes up.

Bringing our head back up to center if it dropped at all. Flexing the fingers. Dropping the hands back to the side. Eyes still closed, turning our head to the left over the left shoulder. Bringing our head back to center. Turning our head to the right over the right shoulder. Bringing our head back to center.

Taking the left hand, putting it over the head so that it's touching the right ear, and gently pulling our head down, left ear over left shoulder. Bringing our head back to center. One more time. Left ear over left shoulder. Bringing our head back to center. One more time, left ear over left shoulder. Bringing our head back to center.

Taking our right hand, putting it over our head, letting it rest over the left ear. Bringing the right ear over the right shoulder, maybe feeling a stretch like I am in the back of the neck. Bringing the head back to center. Again, right ear over right shoulder. Bringing the head back to center. One more time, right ear over right shoulder. Bringing it back to center.

Turning to the left again, turning our chin to the left shoulder. Maybe you can go a little deeper, a little farther this time. Bringing the head back to center. Bringing the chin over the right

shoulder. Maybe you could go a little bit farther this time.
Bringing our head back to center.

And then we're going to do the same thing we did before, left hand over right ear. This time we are going to inhale. So inhale, bringing the left ear over the left shoulder. Exhale, bringing the head back to center. Inhale, left ear over left shoulder. Exhale, head back to center. Inhale, left ear, left shoulder. Exhale, back to center.

Right hand over left ear. Inhale, bringing right ear over right shoulder. Bringing it back to center on the exhale. Inhale, right ear over right shoulder. Exhale, bringing the head back to center.

Last time. Inhale, right ear over right shoulder. Exhale, back to center. You can open your eyes. Taking the left arm and bringing it forward, bending it, and just bringing it over the right side and bringing it back down by your side.

Right arm forward, crosses over the left side of the body. You can secure your left hand over your right elbow. Do that twist again. You might find one side easier than the other. Bringing it back to the center. Bringing your arms down.

Now we're going to take our shoulders and we're going to bring our shoulders up to our earlobes, OK? So we're going to lift and drop. Lift the shoulders and drop. Lift the shoulders and drop.

And then just moving the head from side to side. And if you want to go around in a circle, you can do that as well. My neck is seriously tight today. OK.

All right, so now we're going to shake it out a bit like we did last week, for those of you all that are joining again. So first, we're going to take the right hand and we're going to shake it five times. You can watch me first, right? So we're going to shake it five times. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, right? Left side, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. And then we're going to do 1, 2, 3, 4. 1, 2, 3, 4. And then back to the right side, 1, 2. Left side, 1, 2.

So I'll do it one more time so you can see. Right side first. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. Left side-- 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. Right side, we're going to count four-- 1, 2, 3, 4. Left side, 1, 2, 3, 4. Right side, 1, 2. Left side, 1, 2. OK, so let's do it together.

All right, so right side first. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. Left side, 1, 2, 3, 4. 5. Right side, 1, 2, 3, 4. Left side, 1, 2, 3, 4. Right side, 1, 2. Left side, 1, 2. OK?

So let's just do a little tapping also like we always do. So we're going to take our two fingers and we're going to tap at the top of the head, if I could get to the top of my head. OK, so we're going to take our two fingers and we're going to just tap. And because we can't touch our faces, even though I've touched my face several times on this, we're going to go right to our throat.

We'll tap my throat. And then we're going to go to the heart. And so we'll tap our heart. And then we're going to tap our left wrist. And we're going to tap our right wrist.

And we're going to do it one more time. Top of the head, and then down to the throat. And then to the heart. Left wrist. Right wrist. And then shake it out.

And then just do a couple a bit more collective breaths together. So taking a deep breath in, exhaling through the mouth. Two more breaths in through the nose. So deep breath in, exhaling through the mouth. Last time. Deep breath in through the nose. Exhale through the mouth.

And just do a quick body scan, eyes open or closed-- totally up to you-- just to see where your body is feeling different, if your body is feeling lighter. Doing a little check-in.

JACKI CHERNICOFF: This is Jacki. Thank you so much, Zoe. We are forever grateful for your time. It's really just what so many of us are needing right now. You're getting a lot of love and gratitude in the chat. Some folks have had to pop off.

I know we did offer to answer any questions. We had one question come in. We're right at time, but we had one question come in just asking you to explain what the tapping does.

ZOE FLOWERS: Yeah, so people use tapping for a lot of different reasons. Some people use it as an actual healing mechanism to calm the central nervous system. You can use tapping for all different things. I just use it to bring us back into the body, just to give us that feeling of being back. Because after going into a meditation, I always just like for folks to be back, right? Back into their bodies, back into a place of presence. And so I use it for that.

If we went through the whole flow of it, it's also to bring people's energy up. So I do that in workshops and things like that. If you feel your energy dropping off in the middle of the day and things like that, you can do the series to bring your energy back.

JACKI CHERNICOFF: This is Jacki. Thank you, Zoe. I just want to be mindful of everyone's time today. We do have two more sessions scheduled for April, next Wednesday and the following Wednesday. So there'll be more opportunities to share space with Zoe. And all of the recordings from her virtual breathers are on reachingvictims.org. You can find some contact information for her there as well. Thank you, Zoe. I hope everyone continues to stay well and have a wonderful rest of your day.

ZOE FLOWERS: Bye, y'all.