

# Staying Centered: A Virtual Breather for People Supporting Survivors

JACKI CHERNICOFF: All right. Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you for joining our session today, "Staying Centered-- A Virtual Breather for People Supporting Survivors."

It's wonderful to see so many people back today. Some of you are new joining us. Some of you have joined us before. Welcome, everyone. And thank you so much for your patience as we ensured access for all.

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.

Right, so for those of you that have been with us, you know we just have a few quick logistical items to go over before we begin today so everyone can use the Zoom room effectively.

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. And 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 the presenter speaking or if you're having any difficulties with the captioning or interpreters or any other technical difficulties during this 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.

Just a few more things. We're not going to 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, we probably won't have much time. But we'll try to make some space for questions.

If you're using the chat pod to communicate with others today, please select the option to respond to all panelists and attendees. This is an option in your dropdown when you chat, "All Panelists and Attendees." This is the only way that everyone can view what you are sharing.

Right, so if you want to go ahead and test that, you can go to the chat pod now. Select "All Panelists and Attendees." Say hello to

us. Let us know where you're joining from. Great. Welcome, everyone.

Another quick note about the chat pod while you're typing away, you are not going to be able to save the chat, nor will you be able to copy and paste any resources that are shared into the chat. This is a security measure. But as host, we're able to save the resources. And following the session, if there's anything shared, we will get those out of the chat and post them for you.

I see as some folks still in the chat just hitting to "All Panelists," which is amazing because that means we can see what you're writing. But it means your friends on this session are not able to see. So just another reminder, "All Panelists and Attendees" is what you want to put in there so everyone knows where you're joining us from.

So speaking of recording, we're going to be recording today's session. A link to the recording along with any resources shared during this session will be made available on our National Resource Center website-- [www.reachingvictims.org](http://www.reachingvictims.org). You can also find links to previous sessions on the NRC website.

Just one quick note about your view and functionality in Zoom, if you've joined this session via web browser, you may have more limited options than if you joined via the Zoom app.

And finally, we're creating a multilingual space today. As you can see, we have an American Sign Language interpreter, as well as spoken languages interpreting happening behind the scenes, as well.

So I just want to, again, sort of welcome everyone. This is a time that is unprecedented. And in our crime victims field, it's really important that we take time to manage stress and anxiety in our day-to-day practice.

And in this session, we are joined by Zoe Flowers-- advocate, healer, writer, poet, and filmmaker. Zoe's going to guide us through a number of activities to really help us continue to stay grounded and manage our stress and anxiety. So, thank you, Zoe, for joining us. The floor is yours.

ZOE FLOWERS: Thank you. I was having so much fun giving shout-outs to the states.

[LAUGHTER]

OK. All right, everyone. Thank you so much for joining us again if you're a return visitor. And if you are a first-timer, welcome, welcome, welcome. So, as Jacki said, I'm Zoe Flowers. And we're going to just get into it. So hopefully you've had time to settle in to wherever you are. Oh, Virgin Islands in the house. See, now I can't stop. [LAUGHS] OK. Now I can't stop. OK, so we're going to

get into the meditation. And hopefully if we have some time at the end, I'll be able to take some of your questions.

So I'm going to turn these chimes back on. And I'm going to actually put this link from YouTube in the chat. I've been listening to Tibetan chimes quite a bit. I listen to them anyway. But during this time, I've been listening to them quite a bit. And so that is the first offering to you all. It really helps to bring a sense of peace. It's really good to also like, clear the energy and change the energy in whatever room you're in. And so, yeah. So we're going to just get into it. I'm going to turn it down low, though, so that it's not too high for the interpreters for me talking.

[CHIMES RINGING SOFTLY]

Yeah. And so it's actually a nice mix of Tibetan singing bowls and the crystal bowls that you're hearing. And so they're very, very nice, as I said, to bring a sense of peace.

And so my glasses are off. So if you put things in the chat, I will not be able to read them. I'll put them back on when we're done.

[EXHALES DEEPLY] So let's just start, as we always do, with a few collective breaths together. And when we breathe, let's just take our left hand, and let's just put it in the center of our chest to ground ourselves. We are in a season, actually, of grounding-- Taurus season, for all of you Taurus earth sign folks.

And so we're not jabbing our heart area. But we are just kind of applying a little bit of pressure, a little bit of pressure. Grounding ourselves. And with our right hand, we're going to let that just be face up. Up is to receive. Down is to ground. So we're starting in a place of receptivity. Sometimes it's so challenging for those of us in the helping profession to receive.

Left hand in the center of your chest. That might cause you to lean back a little bit more into whatever you're sitting on. You want to be as firm as possible. Back flat. Seat firmly in whatever you're sitting on. Feet firmly planted in the ground, on the ground.

And see if just that act of actively grounding yourself, what does that feel like? Maybe let the tailbone sink a little further into the chair or the floor or whatever you're sitting on. Send the tailbone down so that you are grounded. Square the shoulders back. Taking a deep breath in-- [INHALES]

--exhaling out. [EXHALES]

And now let that left hand drop down by the left leg, both palms up. You should feel like you're almost in a perfect square. Eyes closed at this time.

If your mind begins to wander, as it often does, you can send your gaze to the tip of your nose. So even though your eyes are

closed, you can send your gaze to the tip of your nose. If it's hard for you to kind of go cross-eyed and do that, sometimes it's easier if you take one of your index fingers and just gently tap the tip of your nose. I don't know why, but sometimes it makes it easier to keep your attention on the tip of your nose when you do that.

Bringing the neck back a little bit, straightening the spine, dropping the shoulders, palms up. Paying attention now to the quality of your breath. Are you holding your breath right now? If you are, now might be a good time to breathe. Take a deep breath in through the nose.

[INHALES]

Exhale the breath out through the mouth.

[EXHALES]

Take a deep breath in through the nose. And as you inhale, the shoulders raise just a little bit. Exhale, the shoulders drop a little bit. Tailbone stays firmly planted.

Taking another deep breath in through the nose, shoulders raise. Exhale it out, shoulders drop. The gaze is still turned inward towards the tip of the nose.

If your shoulders are slightly raised as mine are, go ahead and just let them drop with intention. Just bring the shoulders down, almost into like a slouch now. Let the neck relax. That might mean the head wobbles a bit. Let the belly relax. Let those internal organs relax.

Turning your attention now to the heart, the internal gaze is downward in the direction of the heart. So now we're moving down from the tip of the nose, down to the heart.

Paying attention to the quality of the breath now, is it slower? What about the heart rate? Is the heart beating fast or slow? Now would be a good time to tell the heart to slow down. Tell the pulse to slow down.

Everything is slowing down. What is the quality of the breath? Is it cool going in as you inhale? Is it warm? Is the breath shallow, or is it choppy? Do you feel your body pulsating or rocking now that it's had a chance to slow down? Doing a body scan.

Starting at the top of the head, the tippy-top of the head-- what we call the "crown"-- see, sense, or imagine a beautiful yellow light swirling around the top of the head. It's almost like a spiral-- starts in the middle of your head and spreads out. And that spiral travels down over your eyes. Beautiful yellow light. Like a beautiful sun-shiny day. Beautiful yellow light.

Travels down over the nose, over the mouth, over the ears, encircling you. Over the throat, engulfing the shoulders, traveling down the back body and the front body, over the bellybutton, over the hips, over the thighs, over the knees, over the calves, ankles, encircling your feet. See, sense, or imagine that this beautiful yellow light is like your own, personal cocoon-- a warm cocoon.

And that cocoon travels down through your floor, down through the earth, down to the very center of the earth. And maybe there's something you need down that the earth can provide for you. Perhaps you need more peace and quiet. Perhaps you need more spaciousness. Perhaps you need a little time to yourself or a lot of time to yourself.

See, sense, or imagine that yellow light spiraling at the center--  
[AUDIO OUT]

JACKI CHERNICOFF: Hello, all. This is Jacki. It looks like we lost Zoe. So we're just waiting for her to reconnect.

[CHIMES RINGING SOFTLY]

ZOE FLOWERS: She's back.

JACKI CHERNICOFF: She's back. OK, no more of my voice now.  
[CHUCKLES]

ZOE FLOWERS: OK, OK, OK. So we are back. And wherever you are, take a deep breath in through your nose. Relax it out through the mouth. Another deep breath in through the nose. Relax it out through the mouth.

And I'm going to ask you to see, sense, or imagine that that yellow spiral that we had traveling from the top of our head to the center of the earth is put back in place. And so how do we do that? We start at the crown, closing the eyes, relaxing the shoulders.

And we let that yellow light travel down over the eyes, down over the shoulders, down over the heart, down over the hips, down over the feet, down to the center of the earth. Keeping the breathing slow, telling the heart to slow down.

See, sense, or imagine that whatever it is that you want to call in, or that you've already called in-- whether it's more peace, whether it's more love, whether it's more spaciousness, whether it's more humor-- see, sense, or imagine that that thing is present at the center of the earth.

Putting whatever color you want to that thing, see, sense, or imagine it traveling upward. So if it's more peace, imagine that peace traveling upward. If it's more quiet, imagine that quiet traveling upward, up through the earth, up through the floor, up through the soles of the feet, through the ankles, filling the

calves, traveling up to thighs, into the heart, up through the throat to the top of the head.

See, sense, or imagine being completely filled with that thing that you need and that you desire. Taking a slow, intentional breath in, exhaling it out. [EXHALES]

Settling, settling, settling, settling. And when you're ready, you want to bring your attention to the soles of your feet. And so maybe you just wiggle your toes a little bit. Maybe you wiggle the fingers.

Bringing your attention back to the sounds of the room, the smells of your home. Having awareness of your breath again. Thinking about what day it is. Knowing that you can return to this feeling at any moment.

And so when you're ready, I'm going to invite you to slowly open your eyes. And we're going to take our left ear, and we're going to let it drop over our left shoulder, giving us some space on the right side of the neck. Letting the right shoulder drop down, away from the ear.

Bringing the head back to center, taking the right ear, letting it drop over the right shoulder. Letting the left shoulder drop away from the left ear. Bringing it back to center.

This time, taking a deep breath in as we bring the left ear over the left shoulder. Deep breath in, left ear over left shoulder. Exhale out. Head back to center. Deep breath in, right ear over right shoulder. Exhale. Head back to center. Last time, left ear over left shoulder on the inhale. Exhale. Head back to center. Last time on the right side. Inhale, right ear over right shoulder. Exhale, bringing it back to center.

Now taking the head in a full circular motion, counterclockwise. Bringing the head back to center. Exhale, bringing the head counter-clockwise. Bringing the head back to center.

Now we're going to take our shoulders, and we're going to bring our shoulders up to our ears, right. So we're going to raise our ears all the way up and drop them. Raise our shoulders all the way up to our ears and drop them. Raise our shoulders all the way up to our ears and drop them.

Taking a collective deep breath in-- [INHALES]

--exhaling out. [EXHALES]

Putting our arms out in front of us. Stretching our arms out. Giving ourselves an embrace. Bringing it in tighter if that is possible. Turning our head over our left shoulder. Bringing it back to center. Turning our head over our right shoulder. Bringing it back to center. Bringing our arms down by the side.

And if you're still-- so many of us carry tension in the back of our neck-- and so you can take your right hand, put it over your left ear, and bring your head down a little further over the right side. Bringing it back to center. Left hand over the right ear, bringing the head over to the left. This side is very tight for me. And then bringing it back to center.

And then you can take both hands, hook them around the back of the head, elbows together, bringing the elbow down to the heart, stretching out the top of the spine, and bringing it back to center.

Giving yourself a deep bow of gratitude, hands in prayer position. Giving yourself some gratitude, as we always do, for showing up anyway, for doing the work anyway. Deep breath in. Exhale out. Thanking yourself for showing up, for hanging out, for hanging on the line, for sticking with it every single day. And when you're ready, let your hands drop down by your side. [SIGHS HAPPILY]

And so that is what we have for today. If folks want to put some questions in the chat just quickly, I want to make sure that we have time for that. If there's any specific questions that you have, we'll be back next Wednesday.

JACKI CHERNICOFF: This is Jacki. Thanks so much, Zoe. We are at time. And I want to be mindful of everyone's time. But if folks have questions, they can also connect with you directly. They can

find your contact details on the [reachingvictims.org](http://reachingvictims.org) website. Or, Zoe, you can put your email maybe in the chat quickly.

ZOE FLOWERS: Yup.

JACKI CHERNICOFF: All of the recordings from the sessions are at [reachingvictims.org](http://reachingvictims.org). And we will have another live session next Wednesday.

ZOE FLOWERS: Yes, we will be back next week.

JACKI CHERNICOFF: Yes. And if you want to connect with Zoe directly, it's [info@iamzoeflowers.com](mailto:info@iamzoeflowers.com)-- [info@iamzoeflowers.com](mailto:info@iamzoeflowers.com).

ZOE FLOWERS: And it's also "iamzoeflowers" on Facebook and Instagram. So you can feel free to reach out to me.

JACKI CHERNICOFF: Yeah.

ZOE FLOWERS: There are some questions about how folks can sign up for next week. I'm sure there'll be an email that goes out by the Vera team.

JACKI CHERNICOFF: [Reachingvictims.org](http://Reachingvictims.org) website, into the Events section, you will find a link to registration there.

ZOE FLOWERS: And I'll see y'all next week.

JACKI CHERNICOFF: OK. Thank you.

ZOE FLOWERS: Thank you all so much.