

## Centering Exercise

(adapted from Generation Five's 3-day training)

This is a basic centering practice. You may have other practices that support you in being present and returning to center.

Set your things aside and find a comfortable place to stand.

With the centering exercise... we are **practicing being present, open and connected** so that we have more choice about how we choose to respond to and engage with experiences and others.

- a. Find a comfortable place to stand with your legs hip distance apart and your arms at your sides. You may want to shift from side to side or shake your arms and legs to settle into a comfortable place.
- b. You can do this exercise with your eyes open or shut—whichever you are more comfortable with.
- c. Begin by bringing your focus to **your body and sensations**. What are you feeling? Like **temperatures** (more cold or more warm), **pressure** (where do you feel tense or relaxed) and **movement** (you may feel your heart beating or your stomach gurgling). Just **let your focus move away from thinking to feeling**. Notice whatever is happening inside of your right now. You may also feel numb or have places inside of you that are blank. This is fine too.
- d. Second, notice **your emotions**. In the moment how are you feeling emotionally? Do you feel sad, happy, content, angry, guilty, grateful, scared? **Notice how you are right now.**
- e. To practice becoming more present with yourself in this moment, **bring your attention down to your abdomen**. You can place your hand there if it helps you feel it more. This is the center of gravity for our body, we also can think of this as the center of what is meaningful to you. Go ahead and take a few deep breathes into your center.
- f. We are going to use 3 different directions to help us feel ourselves more fully: length, width and depth.
- g. First, starting from center in your belly, feel your length. Let yourself fill in down to the ground and up to the sky. Feel your whole length. In centering we can think of **length as self respect or dignity and the ability see dignity in others**. To find length it can help to **feel your spine, the length of your legs. Feel your feet and the ground and see if you can extend down into the earth. Imagine the top of your head reaching up to the sky.** Take a few breathes into your length.



- h. Next, once again from down in your abdomen, fill into your width or from side to side. Feel your sensations and fill out from shoulder to shoulder, hip to hip, feel the outsides of both arms. We can think of **width as relationship and connect**, or the place we reach out to others and receive them reaching toward us. Also, width has us take up space. So fill in and take up the space of you... Take a few breaths into your width. Now extend your width to those around you.
- i. Now the last direction; depth. Feel yourself from back to front. Can you find your low back, the space between your shoulder blades or the back of your legs? Then find breath and heartbeat. Fill into the clothes resting on your belly. We can think of **depth as where we find what is deepest to us, what is meaningful to us, our purpose and beliefs, our guts and our hearts**. How much depth do you feel? Do you feel thinner or thicker? Take a few breaths and feel the depth of yourself. Feel how your shirt touches your back, and feel those that came before you. Feel your chest and extend forward to the vision you are moving toward.
- j. Now bring your attention to feeling all of you, your length, width and depth. Notice how you are feeling in your sensations. Where do you feel more present, where less? How are you feeling emotionally?

Learning points:

- a. Feeling ourselves helps us feel and therefore be more respectful of and effective with others.
- b. Feeling our width can help us take up appropriate space as well as feel and respect the limits and space of others.

Through centering purposefully we can practice staying connected to what most matters to us, build our resilience, and help calm and re-center ourselves when we are tweaked or under pressure.