

Racial Justice & Healing

Soothing & Calming Practices

Soothing and Calming Practices: As you go into these practices remember that some may be soothing to you whereas others, not so much. Take note of what works for you and remember there is no right or wrong. Trust what your body is telling you. These practices are called practices versus exercises to bring your attention to the need to work these tools into your daily routine. By repeated practice you are helping the brain rewire, laying new neural pathways making these tools easier to access in high stress moments. Approaching these practices with a level of curiosity helps set the framework for starting something new. Enjoy this time connecting in with your nervous system as you learn new ways to soothe.

1. **Humming-** Sound is knowing to heal and alter one's mood. Humming is an easy and powerful way to help calm the system. The vibrations made by humming stimulate the vagus nerve sending signals to the body that all is okay.

*Start by focusing your attention on 3 rounds of breath, feeling the belly rise behind the naval on the inhale and fall on the exhale. Once centered, begin to hum a nice and steady tone on the exhale.

Variations: Try varying your pitch while you hum or hum a favorite tune.

2. **Slow Rocking-** The movement of rocking is one of our earliest forms of soothing carried out in utero and then in our caregiver's arms. The back and forth movement releases endorphins in the brain that signal the body to relax, sleep and reduce pain and agitation.

*Rocking can be done while standing or sitting in a chair moving side to side shifting one's weight from one foot to the other. **Variations:** Sit in a rocking chair and try the front to back motion. Did one direction feel more soothing than the other?

3. **Ground & Breathe-** Grounding focuses your attention to the physical body and the healing energy of Mother Earth. This can be both centering and healing as you look to connect in with the universal energy of Christ to restore. Deep belly breathing brings the body back into regulation as it sends calming signals to the brain to relax.

*Bring your attention to the souls of your feet and your connection to Mother Earth. Invite the healing connection of Christ's creation in Mother Earth to your awareness and felt sense. Allow yourself to open to Her many cycles of death and rebirth that we see in the seasons. Allow your mind's eye to focus on the felt sensation of the souls of your feet as they are in contact with Mother Earth. Each time the mind wonders gently, bring your attention back to the sensation at the souls of the feet. Rest here for a moment. Now begin your deep belly breathing by placing your hands on the lower abdomen. Allow the natural rhythm of the breath to move the hands up on the inhale and down on the exhale. As you end your grounding and breath practice, give thanks to Mother Earth for her restorative energy. **Variations:** Walk outside barefoot to get direct contact with the earth. Another powerful grounding source are animals. You can choose to connect directly with a furry friend or in your mind's eye by envisioning being with one of your sacred animal spirits. It's important when connecting with an animal we are respectful and aware of the energy we are bringing to them. Pause before connecting with your animal, and ask them permission to connect. Go off their body language to know if they are open to connecting at the time you are. It may require you to discharge some energy first before connecting with your pet.

4. **Sucking-** The suckling response releases oxytocin in the brain that creates a state of balance and wellbeing as it reduces the body's stress. This one may sound a bit strange but stay with me. I find it's a discrete and easy way to calm when confronted with a high-stress moment. And I promise I'm not going to tell you to start sucking your thumb!

*Place your tongue on the roof of the mouth on the ridge right behind the top teeth. Slightly rub the tongue back and forth on the roof of the mouth with a bit of suction, similar to sucking on a piece of hard candy. The lower jaw will move back and forth a bit when you do this, which is good for releasing tension held in the jaw as well.

5. **Thumb & Pointer Finger Rub-**The tips of the thumb and pointer finger have energetic lines known as meridians in Traditional Chinese Medicine. The meridians at these locations correspond with the lungs and large intestine. These organs are energetically responsible for releasing grief and sadness in the body. If any of you were blanket babies, can you remember rubbing your blanket, especially those satin edges....soothing right!! Another example of the soothing effect of rubbing is seen in the use of "worry stones". The act of rubbing a smooth stone with the thumb releases endorphins to reduce stress.

*Place the tips of the thumb and index finger together and gently begin to rub the thumb in a circular motion on the index finger. **Variations:** Look into getting a worry stone to carry with you. Also try rubbing in different directions; clockwise and then counterclockwise. Was one direction more soothing than the other?

6. **Wrist Hold-** The inner wrist has an acupuncture point that is associated with the pericardium organ. Energetically this organ is responsible for protecting the heart and connecting us to Universal energy and each other. When we are in a state of fear this energy pathway in the body can become compromised affecting our ability to remain open, loving, and compassionate.

Place the center of the palm of the right hand over the bottom side of the left wrist. When adjusting the right hand on the left wrist you will want the palm to land in the center of the wrist with the outer pinky edge of the palm hand landing at the crease of the left wrist. The reason for this placement is because there is a grounding energy point known as the laogong point located in the center of the hand that is being placed over a specific acupuncture point (pericardium 6) on the left forearm that helps to regulate the heart and calm the spirit. **Variations:** position hands so that you can hold both wrist points at the same time.

Resources:

Resmaa Menakem, *My grandmother's hands* (Central Recovery Press, Las Vegas, 2017) pg. 141-146

Anne Gerber, Divine Roots Healing Calming Resources

Daniel Siegel, *The whole-brain child* (Delacorte Press New York, 2011)

Daniel Siegel. (2017, August 9). Dr. dan's siegel's hand model of the brain [Video]. YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f-m2YcdMdFw>