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ROOTS OF PEACE



E+ TRAINING COURSE – BOOKLET

Harvest from E+ Poland training about NVC and conflict resolution, 26th May – 2nd June 2025



WELCOME

Toolkit Introduction

This toolkit is a **result of the training course Roots of Peace**, which focused on resolving conflict through Nonviolent Communication (NVC) and somatic education.

It brings together **tools and practices** designed to support **inner clarity**, **emotional awareness**, and **embodied presence** when facing internal or interpersonal conflicts.

“Roots of Peace” what is this?

“We can only reach peace by understanding our needs and the needs of others.” — Marshall B. Rosenberg

Conflict is a natural part of human relationships—whether among youth, communities, or teams. **How we approach** and resolve conflicts **shapes the health of our connections** and the strength of our communities. The Roots of Peace project is grounded in the understanding that **cultivating peace** begins within—**through our attitudes, beliefs, and emotional awareness.**

This project uniquely combines two powerful approaches: **Nonviolent Communication** (NVC) and **somatic education**. NVC provides a clear framework for understanding and expressing needs and feelings, promoting empathy and compassionate dialogue. Somatic education brings awareness to the body’s role in emotional regulation and communication, helping participants recognize physical sensations linked to stress, fear, or anger.



By integrating these approaches, Roots of Peace teaches how to embrace conflicts not only with our minds but also through embodied awareness. This means learning to listen to our bodily signals, regulate our nervous system responses, and respond with presence and compassion rather than reactivity.

This **toolkit is a practical resource** tailored for youth workers, educators, and community leaders engaged in peacebuilding and youth empowerment. It offers concrete exercises, knowledge, and reflection prompts to help participants shift their approach to conflict—seeing it as an opportunity for connection and strengthening relationships.

“Over the course of several decades, I’ve used Nonviolent Communication (NVC) to resolve conflicts around the world. I’ve worked with unhappy couples, families, employees and employers, and even ethnic groups at war with each other. My experience has shown that it’s possible to resolve nearly any conflict in a way that satisfies everyone involved.

All it takes is patience, a genuine willingness to establish human connection, a commitment to follow NVC principles through to resolution, and trust in the process.”

— Marshall B. Rosenberg

I. EXERCISES FOR INNER CONFLICTS



Emotion and Sensation Mapping

Purpose: To to develop somatic and emotional awareness, especially in relation to conflict or challenging decisions.

List of feelings and needs



HOW TO DO IT

- **Think** about a current conflict or difficult decision you're facing.
- **Sit** quietly and focus on the emotions that arise when you reflect on this situation.
- **Notice** where in your body you feel these emotions most strongly. For example, tightness in the chest, a knot in the stomach, or heaviness in the shoulders.
- **Draw** a simple body outline on paper and mark these areas with colors or symbols representing the emotions or sensations.
- **Reflect** on what these bodily signals might be communicating about your needs.

Hand-on-Heart Self-Compassion Ritual

Purpose: To create emotional safety and self-soothing.

HOW TO DO IT

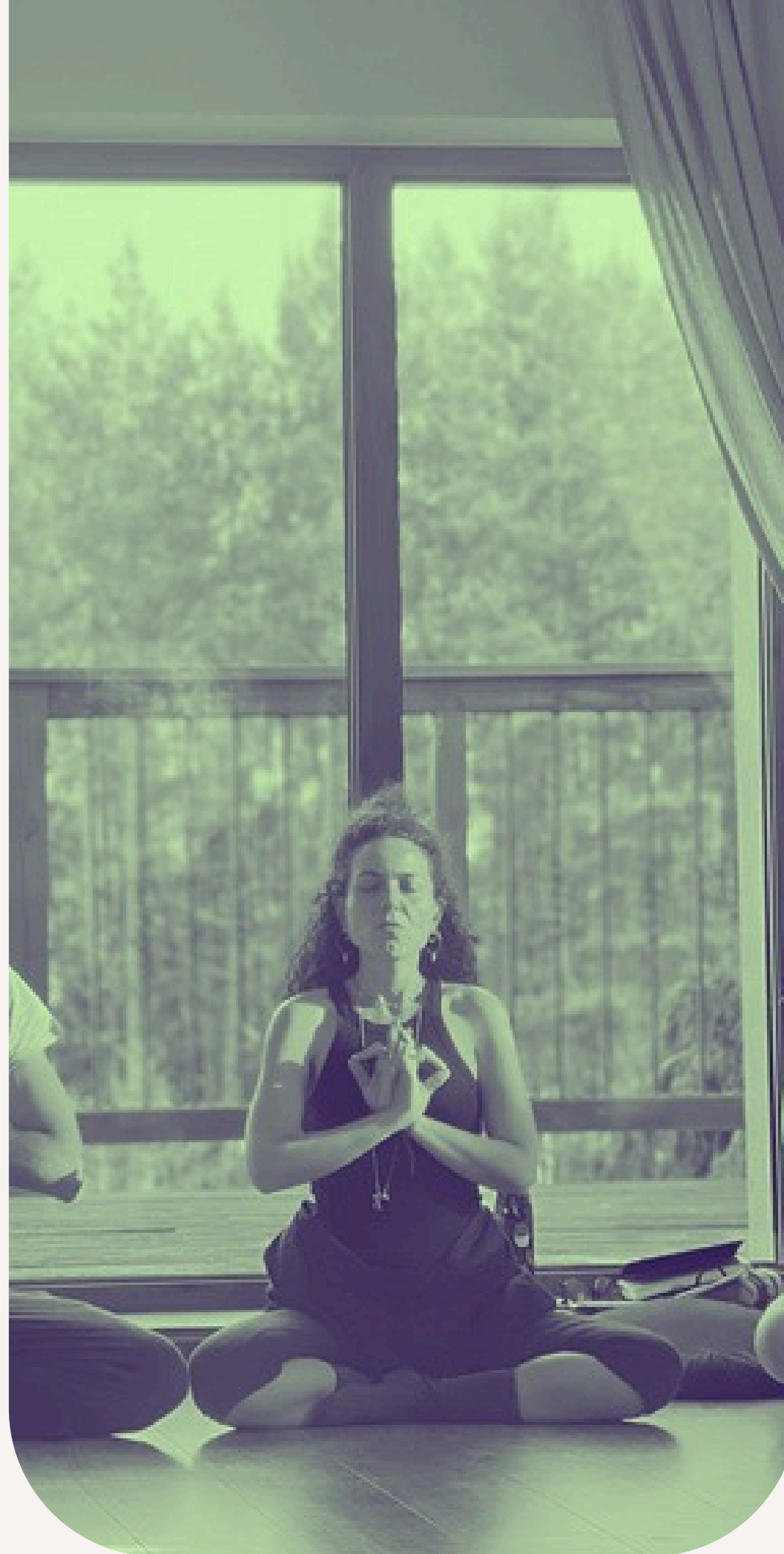
- Place one **hand on your heart** and the other on your belly.
- **Breathe** slowly and gently.
- **Say** to yourself:
 - *"I'm here for you."*
 - *"It's okay to feel this."*
 - *"All parts of me are welcome."*

Let the warmth of your hands and breath calm your body.



Inner Dialogue with the Body

Purpose: To build a compassionate connection between mind and body.

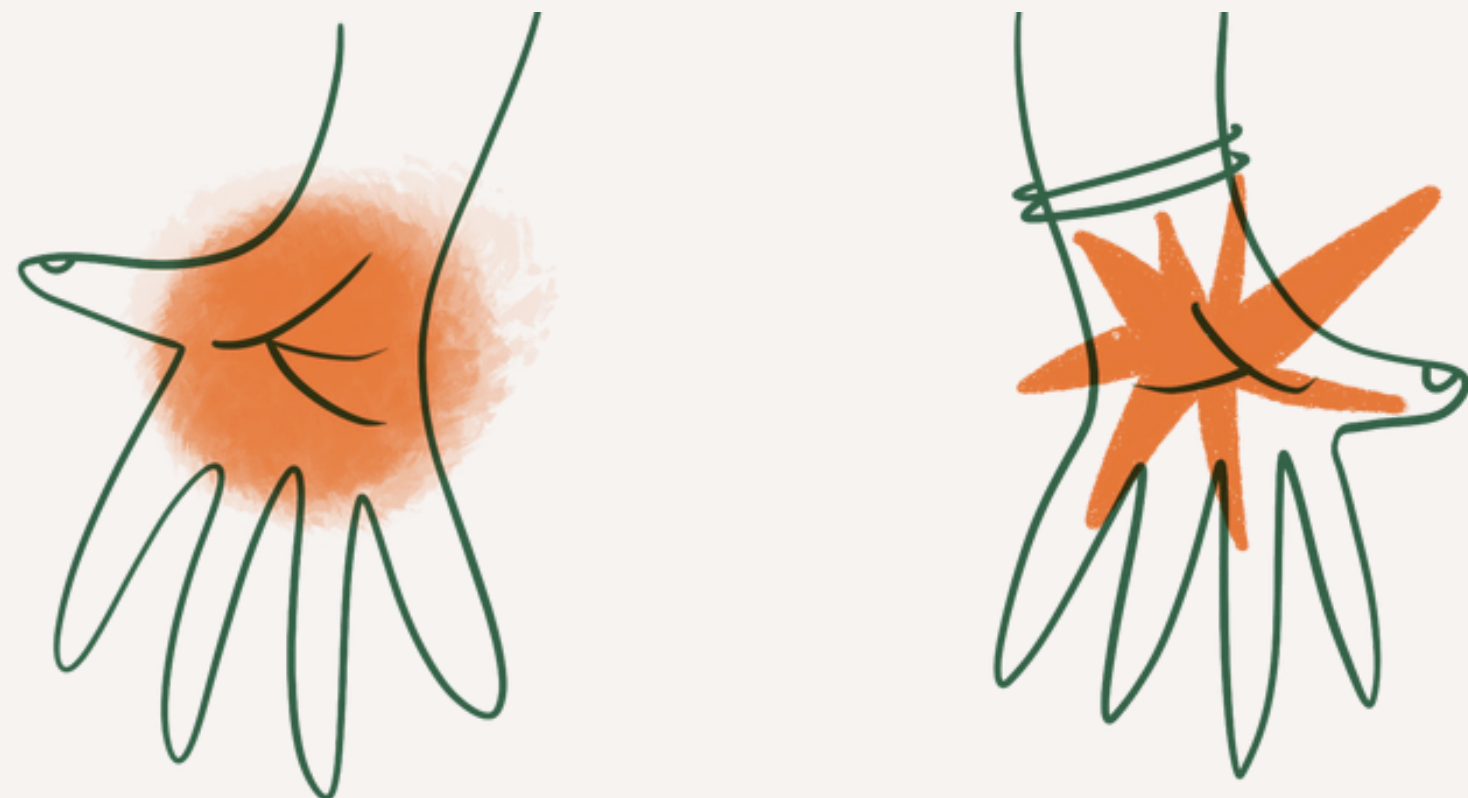


HOW TO DO IT

- Find a **quiet place** to sit comfortably.
- **Bring to mind** a conflicting decision or situation.
- Place one hand gently over the part of your body where you feel tension or discomfort.
- Silently or aloud, **ask** that part of your body what it needs or wants you to understand.
- **Listen** patiently for any impressions, sensations, or words that come up.
- **Respond** with kindness, acknowledging the body's wisdom and offering reassurance or support.

Embodied Visualization for Integration

Purpose: To foster integration of conflicting needs and promote inner harmony.



HOW TO DO IT

- **Sit** quietly with eyes closed and breathe deeply.
- **Visualise** the two conflicting needs or choices as two hands held out before you, palms up.
- **Imagine** each hand holding the energy of one need—notice their qualities, colors, textures, or feelings.
- Bring **awareness** to how each need feels in your body—where you sense it, how it moves, how it expresses itself.
- Allow both hands and needs to **coexist** peacefully, noticing if they begin to blend, balance, or transform into a new whole.
- **Rest** in this embodied awareness, feeling the integration and peace that emerges.

Inspired by Robert Goznales

Transforming Enemy Images

A guided process for inner clarity and connection.

(Adapted from Ike Lasater's "Mediate Your Life")

WHAT IS AN ENEMY IMAGE?

An enemy image is a story, label, or judgment we hold about someone that disconnects us from our capacity for empathy. It distances us from their humanity — and often, from our own. These images often include blame, assumptions, and resentment, which block authentic communication and connection.

3-PHASE PROCESS

1. Empathy for Yourself

This phase supports your connection with yourself by helping you translate judgments into feelings and unmet needs.

2. Empathy for the Other Person

This step isn't about excusing or justifying what happened — it's about making space to see the other person's inner experience so you can reconnect with your own center and clarity.

3. Emergence of New Possibilities

Once you're in touch with both your own and the other person's needs, new strategies, insights, or requests may naturally arise.

Let's take a look at all the phases



1

Empathy for yourself

This phase supports your connection with yourself by helping you translate judgments into feelings and unmet needs.

A) OBSERVATIONS & STORIES

Think of a person toward whom you hold an enemy image. Write down:

- What happened? (observable facts)
- What judgments or thoughts do you have about the person?
- What stories or beliefs are you creating about them or the situation?

Tip: Keep separating facts (what you saw or heard) from your interpretations (e.g., “He doesn’t care,” “She always ignores me”).

B) FEELINGS & NEEDS

Tune into your body and emotions while thinking about the person or event. **Ask yourself:**

- How am I feeling right now? (Avoid “pseudo-feelings” like “abandoned” or “disrespected.” Focus on core feelings like sadness, anger, fear, confusion, longing, etc.)
- What needs of mine are not being met in this situation? (e.g., respect, clarity, inclusion, cooperation, appreciation)

Write down:

- My feelings:
- My needs:

Pause here. Notice if anything shifts in your body — perhaps a softening, release, or greater clarity.



2

Empathy for the other person

This step is about making space to see the other person's inner experience so you can reconnect with your own center and clarity.

IMAGINE THEIR INNER WORLD

Ask yourself:

- What might the other person be feeling?
- What might they be needing that led them to act this way?

Write down:

- Their possible thoughts: _____
- Their possible feelings: _____
- Their possible needs: _____

Note: You don't need to be "right."
This is for your own shift, not their confirmation.



3

Emergence of New Possibilities

Once you're in touch with both your own and the other person's needs, new strategies, insights, or requests may naturally arise.

A) REFLECTION & INSIGHT

- What am I seeing differently now?
- Has any new understanding, softness, or possibility emerged?

B) DOABLE REQUEST

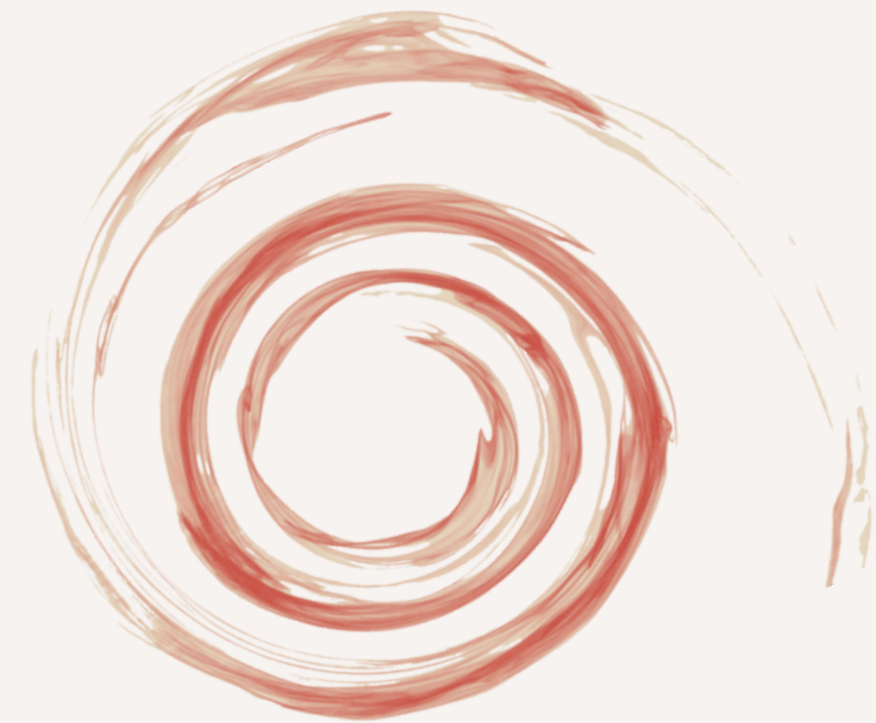
- What do I want to say or do next — in a way that honors both my needs and the other person's?
- What is one small, concrete step I can take?

Write down:

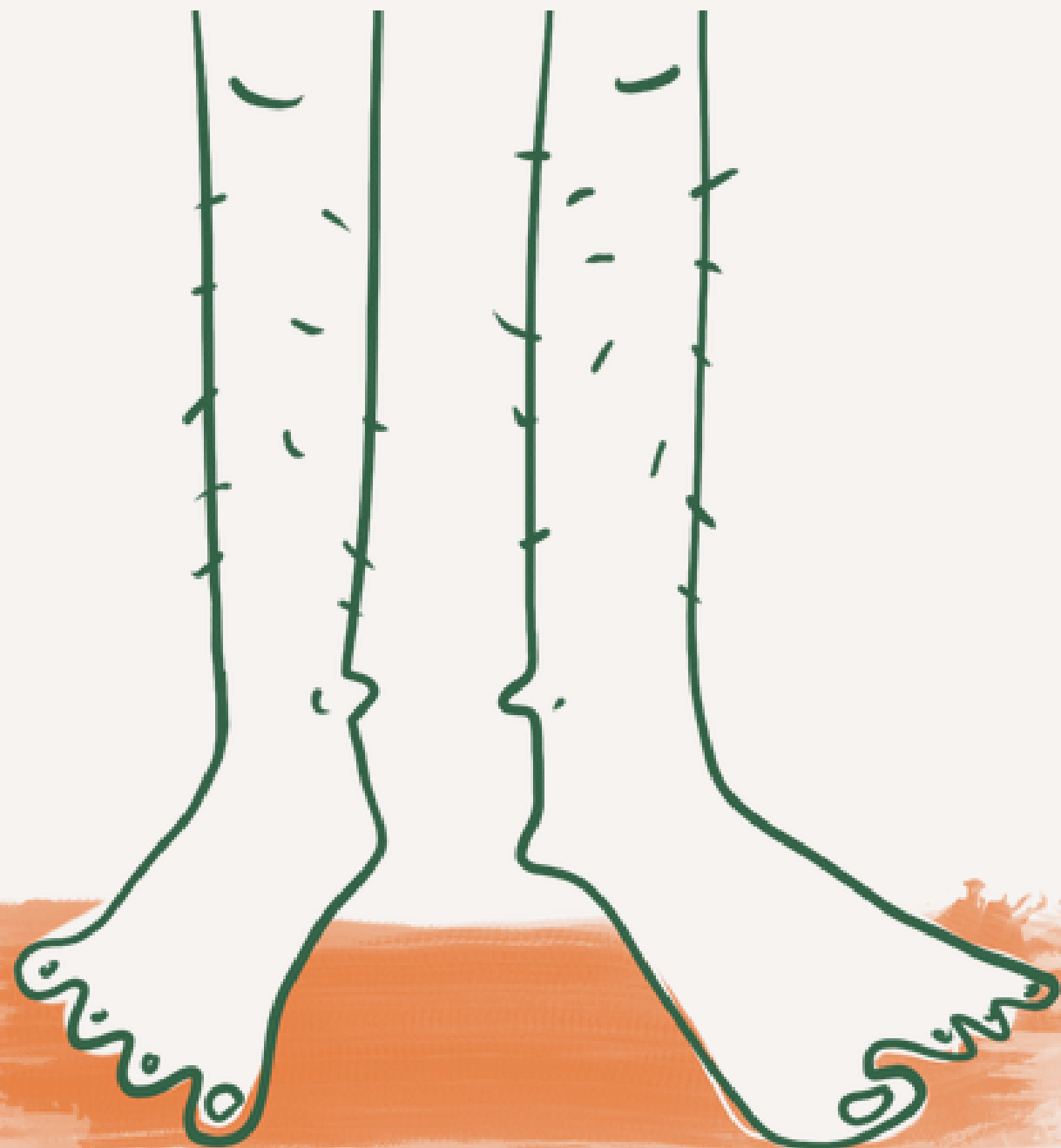
- What do I want to say or do next — in a way that honors both my needs and the other person's?
- What is one small, concrete step I can take?



II. CENTERING TECHNIQUES



Centering Practice



WHAT

A quick centering technique to bring yourself into a state of calm, presence, and inner alignment.

HOW

1. Feel your **feet** on the ground — notice the contact and support beneath you.
2. Soften your **belly** — let your abdomen relax naturally as you exhale.
3. Take a gentle **sigh** — breathe in, then exhale with a soft, audible sigh.
4. **Think** of someone or something that makes you smile — let a natural smile emerge.

WHY

Centering activates your parasympathetic nervous system, helping you shift from stress to presence. It supports emotional regulation, clarity, and a sense of safety—especially useful before challenging conversations or transitions.

[illegible]

A somatic centering technique using body awareness and peripheral vision to calm the nervous system and restore presence.

1. Feel your **feet** grounded — notice the contact with the floor.
2. Soften your **belly** — allow a gentle exhale and let go of tension.
3. Expand your **peripheral vision** — look softly ahead and allow your awareness to widen to the edges of your visual field (sides, top, and bottom) without moving your eyes.
4. **Think** of something or someone that brings you a sense of warmth or joy.
5. Take a gentle **sigh** — exhale slowly with sound.

Expanding peripheral vision tells your brain you're not under threat, shifting you from fight-or-flight into a more regulated, connected state. Combined with grounding and softening, it supports emotional safety, awareness, and effective communication.

A man with a beard and long hair, wearing a light green t-shirt, is shown in profile with his arms raised high, palms facing forward. He appears to be in a balancing or yoga pose. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with trees and foliage. The image has a soft green tint.

Balancing the Body

A Centering Practice

WHAT

A simple practice to balance your posture and nervous system by aligning your body and calming your mind.

HOW

1. Stand or sit upright, with **feet hip-width apart**.
2. **Feel** your weight evenly distributed between left and right, front and back.
 - a. *Gently shift your weight side to side, then front to back, to find center.*
3. **Unlock** your knees and soften your belly.
4. **Lengthen** through your spine, imagining a string gently pulling the crown of your head upward.
5. **Expand** your peripheral vision and take a slow breath.

WHY

Balancing your body physically helps the brain perceive safety and stability, which supports emotional regulation. It activates your vestibular (balance) system, calming fight-flight responses and improving focus, presence, and communication.



Body Settling Breath

WHAT

Slow, intentional breathing connected to physical sensation.

HOW

Place a hand on your belly or chest. Breathe in slowly through the nose for 4 counts, hold briefly, and exhale through the mouth for 6 counts.

WHY

This calms the nervous system and centers attention inward, enhancing emotional regulation.

WHAT

Becoming aware of your personal space and creating energetic boundaries.

HOW

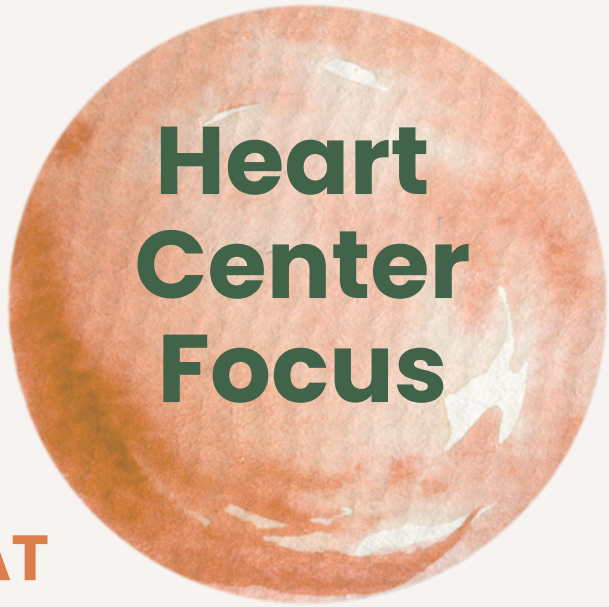
Imagine a soft bubble around your body. This bubble can expand or contract as you feel safe or vulnerable.

WHY

Helps you maintain emotional safety and presence, especially when facing conflict or uncomfortable emotions.



Spatial Awareness & Boundary Setting



Heart Center Focus

WHAT

Bringing mindful attention to the area around the heart.

HOW

Place your hand on your chest and breathe gently into that area. Visualize warmth or light growing in your heart space.

WHY

Encourages self-compassion, emotional balance, and connection to empathy—crucial for transforming enemy images.

WHAT

Small, intentional movements to release physical and emotional holding.

HOW

Gentle stretches, head nods, shoulder rolls, or soft shaking.

WHY

Helps to discharge stress and supports presence in the body during emotional work.

Micro-Movements For Releasing Tension



Orienting Through The Senses



WHAT

Using your five senses to ground in the present moment.

HOW

Pause and name:

- 3 things you see
- 2 things you hear
- 1 thing you can feel (touch, temperature, body contact)

WHY

Redirects focus from inner turmoil or rumination to external safety cues, calming the nervous system.

WHAT

Bringing attention to body weight and balance.

HOW

While standing, shift your weight slowly from one foot to the other. Feel the ground's support through your soles.

WHY

Supports proprioceptive awareness, grounding the body when feeling anxious or dissociated.

Weight Shifting For Grounding





Shake It Out

Release Practice

PURPOSE

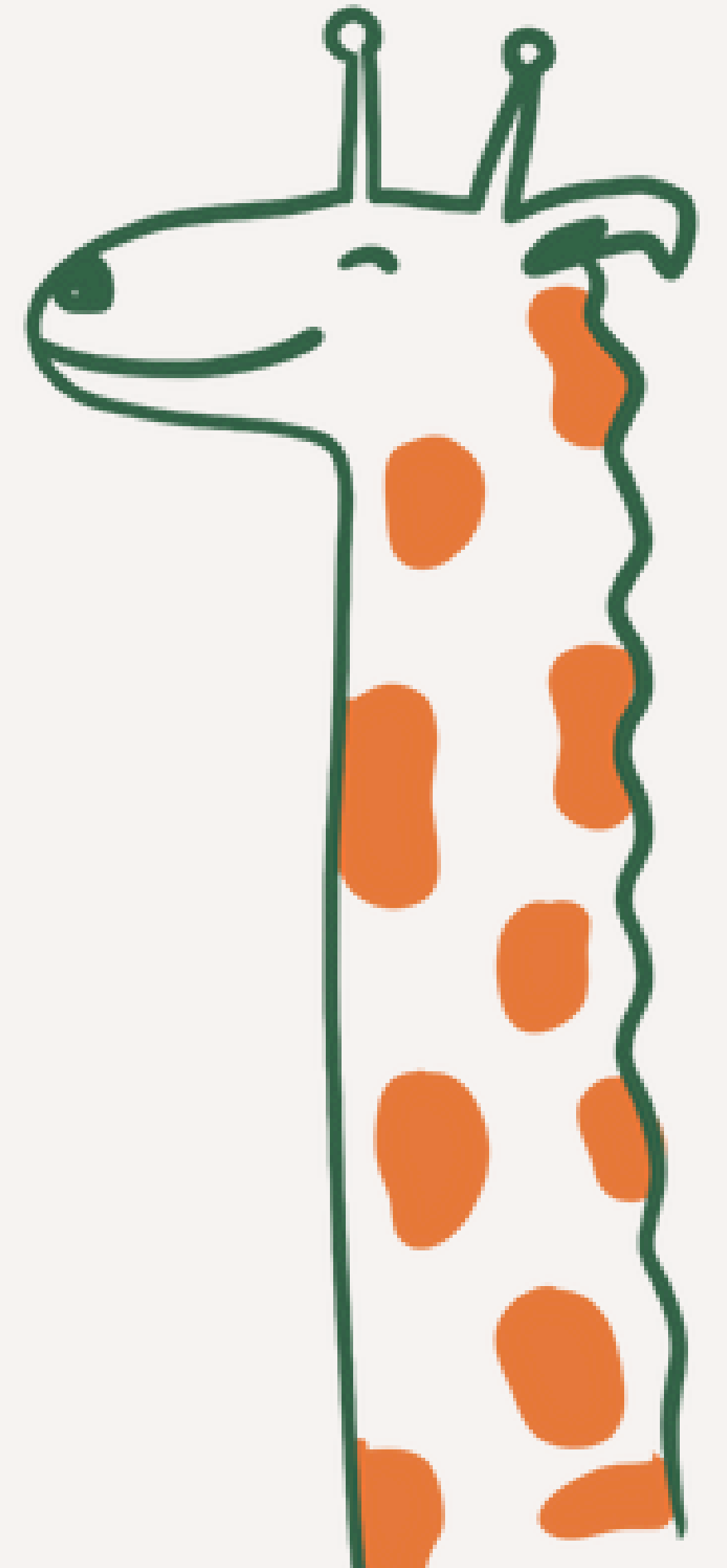
To release physical tension or emotional residue after intense empathy work.

HOW TO DO IT

- **Invite** participants to stand up and gently shake out their hands, arms, shoulders, legs.
- Add some music if appropriate.
- End with stillness and a breath, letting the body integrate.

III. TOOLBOX FOR WORKING WITH CONFLICT

**BASED ON "HELPING HAND, MEDIATION WITH
NONVIOLENT COMMUNICATION"
(LIV LARSSON)**



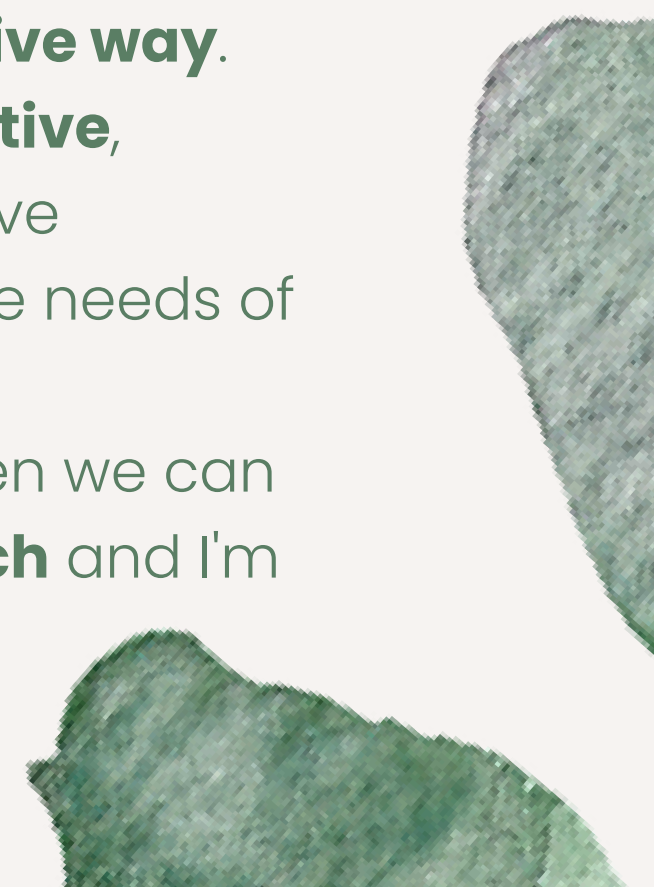


Different approaches to conflict

CULTURE OF DOMINANCE

- Conflict is a **negative and undesirable** phenomenon.
- We must take every step to **avoid them**.
- They are a signal that someone has made a **mistake**.
- They are **caused by** destructive and problematic people, which is why we need effective control tools, both formal and informal.
- Order and harmony will come about when we **defeat the opposing side**. This often requires the use of violence, punishment, or other forms of coercion.

PARTNERSHIP CULTURE

- Conflicts are a **natural part of life**.
 - They occur where life flows, where people have aspirations and protect their boundaries.
 - They can be **resolved in a constructive way**.
 - They **can be enriching and constructive**, enabling the discovery of new, creative collaborative strategies that meet the needs of all.
 - They bring the **greatest benefits** when we can solve them using a **win-win approach** and I'm OK, You're OK.
- 

Compare the Two Worlds

Purpose: to raise awareness among young people or groups about the difference between a culture of domination and a culture of compassion. The goal is to encourage personal and collective change by comparing two different ways of thinking and inspiring more conscious, humane interactions.

HOW TO DO IT

1. **Draw** two columns on a poster: Culture of Dominance and Culture of Compassion (NVC).
2. As a group, **fill** in how each culture might:
 - Handle disagreement in a team
 - Respond to mistakes
 - Treat someone who is angry or disruptive
3. **Reflect:** Where do we see dominance culture in our lives? What would it mean to shift toward compassion?



1. LISTEN AND TRANSLATE

When someone is upset, translate their words into:

- **Observations** (facts, not interpretations)
- **Feelings** (emotions, not thoughts)
- **Needs** (underlying values, not strategies)

Example:

"You seem angry because you want to start the project sooner. Did I get that right?"

2. HELP PARTIES REFLECT

Paraphrase what was said using observations, feelings, and needs instead of judgments or demands.

Example:

"Can you repeat what Kate said was important to her?"

"Even if you disagree, can you acknowledge that respect matters to her?"

3. INTERRUPT WHEN NEEDED

Pause the conversation if:

- Things are escalating or becoming unclear
- Someone interrupts or threatens to leave
- Connection is breaking down

Example:

"Let's stop for a moment and take a breath. How about a short break to calm down?"

NVC Mediator approach

6. FOLLOW THE FLOW

Be aware of where the conversation is and what needs have come up. **Ask** for clarification and encourage deeper sharing to build connection.

Example:

"Can you tell me more about that?"

"I'd like to understand how this connects to what you said earlier."

5. SELF-EMPATHY

When feeling strong emotions or judgments, pause and **focus on your own needs** instead of blame or criticism.

4. EMPATHIC FIRST AID

If someone resists hearing others, **offer empathy** by guessing their feelings/needs or assuring they'll be heard. Use gentle questions, not diagnoses.

Example:

"I want to hear everyone. I'm guessing you want to be sure your voice will be heard too. Is that right?"

IV. SIMPLE SOMATIC PRACTICES

FOR VAGUS NERVE STIMULATION & NERVOUS SYSTEM REGULATION

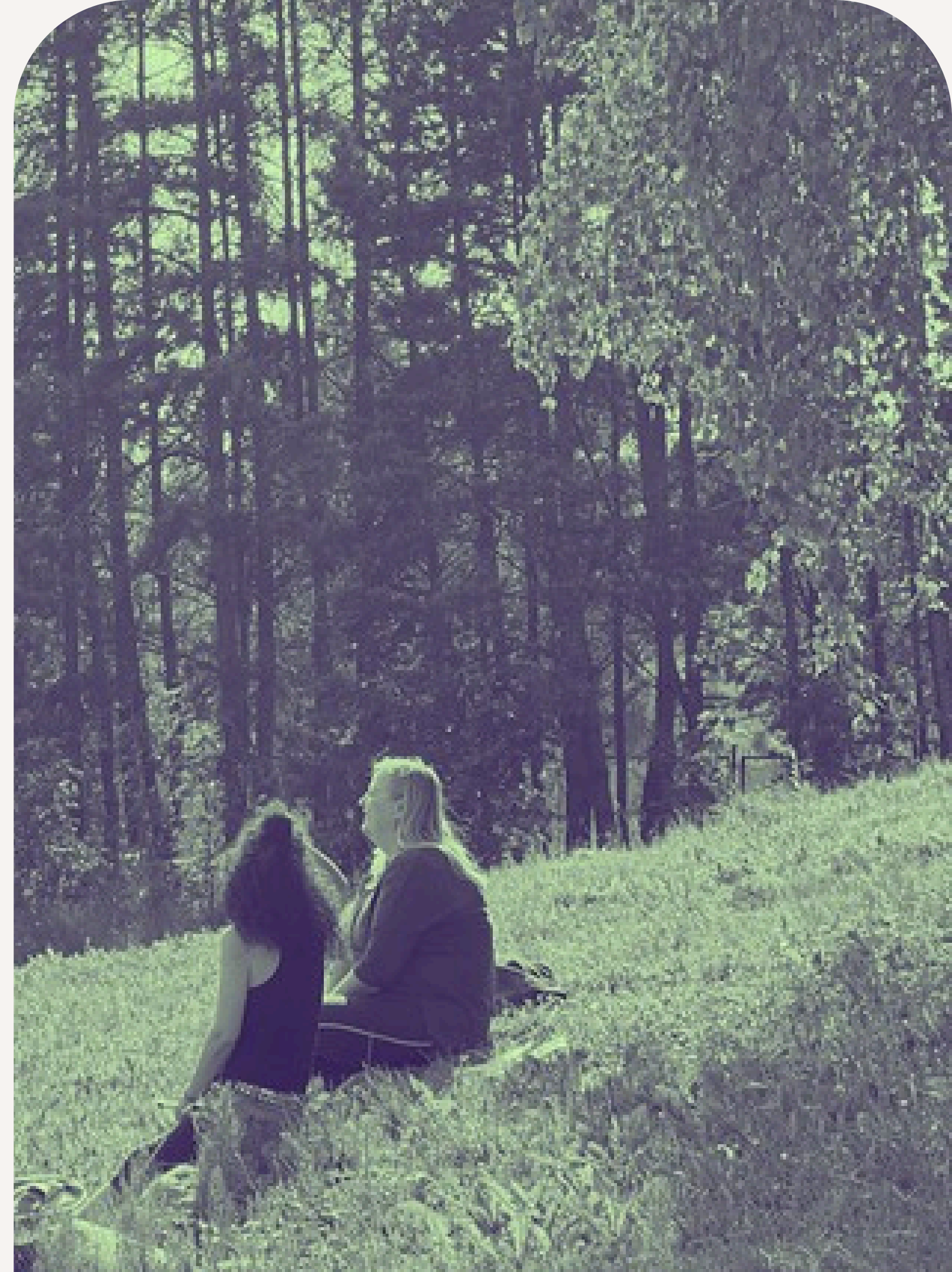


Orienting to Safety

Purpose: Ground yourself, calm your nervous system, and restore a sense of safety.

HOW TO DO IT

1. Find a comfortable, quiet spot and feel your **feet grounded**.
2. **Notice** your breath gently—no need to change it.
3. Slowly let your **eyes** scan left to right, noticing without searching.
4. **Rest** your gaze on something neutral or pleasant (a tree, color, pattern).
5. **Check** in with your body: Do you feel calmer or more grounded?
6. **Stay** with whatever feels safe or soothing.



Simple Neurological Breathing

Purpose: Stimulates lung stretch receptors → Signals brain to slow heart rate → Promotes calm.

HOW TO DO IT

- Inhale through your **nose** for a count of **4**
- **Hold** for **2 seconds**
- Exhale through your **mouth** for a count of **6**
- **Hold** again for **2 seconds**
- Repeat for 1–2 minutes or as needed.



Deep Diaphragmatic Breathing

Purpose: Activates the vagus nerve, improves heart rate variability (HRV), and reduces anxiety.

HOW TO DO IT

- Inhale slowly through your **nose** for a count of **4**, letting your belly expand.
- Exhale gently through your **mouth** for a count of **6–8**, fully releasing the breath.
- Focus on the rise and fall of your abdomen.
- Repeat for 5–10 minutes.

Tip: Make your exhale longer, this let your brain to receive impulse to relax and regulate through vagus nerve.



Humming or Chanting

Purpose: Vocal cord vibrations stimulate the vagus nerve via the larynx, promoting calm.

HOW TO DO IT

- Take a deep **breath in**.
- **Exhale** with a gentle hum, like savoring a delicious taste.
- Try simple **mantras** such as “OM,” “AUM,” or “VOOO.”
- Continue for a few minutes, noticing the soothing vibrations
- You can also try with vawels aeiou...



Rooting Into the Ground

Purpose: Grounds your energy and helps you feel present and calm when feeling scattered or “in your head.”

HOW TO DO IT

- Sit or stand with both **feet flat** on the floor.
- Press gently through your **heels**.
- Imagine **roots** growing deep into the earth.
- Silently say to yourself: *“I am here. The ground is holding me”*.
- Optional: Sway gently side to side or softly bounce your knees.





Gargling

Purpose: Engages throat muscles innervated by the vagus nerve.

HOW TO DO IT

- Gargle with water for **30–60 seconds**
- Repeat **1–2 times a day**

Note: Gargle until your eyes water — a sign of vagus stimulation.

Simple Ear Massage

Purpose: Stimulates vagus nerve endings in the outer ear.

HOW TO DO IT

- Wash your hands
- Sit or lie down comfortably
- Use thumb and finger to gently massage:
 - **Tragus** (little bump in front of ear canal)
 - **Concha** (bowl of the outer ear)
 - Gently **pull ear** up/down/out
- Breathe slowly and deeply



Great for anxiety, winding down, or preparing for sleep.

Extra: Video material that can help you find right spot
<https://youtu.be/LnV3Q2xlb1U?si=Af9GJtikAfDqUtGN>

CLOSURE

PARTICIPANTS ABOUT THE PROJECT

“The one that seemed most powerful to me was the **enemy image process** – this process really lets me go out of my own vision, my own perspective and see the situation from different angles, opening the eyes and the heart to the other person and possible solutions.”

“As you work on a level of empathy, intuition and attentiveness, there is a lot that comes up in your body that is related to yourself and/or others, and **working with your body** through movement or dance is a way to work through that.”

“Through tools like Nonviolent Communication and embodied awareness, I can help young people better **understand and express** their **emotions**, resolve conflicts peacefully, and develop deeper empathy — both for themselves and others.”

Reading & Resources

NONVIOLENT COMMUNICATION & INNER CONFLICT

- **Liv Larsson** – “A Helping Hand: Mediation with Nonviolent Communication”. *This book offers practical guidance on using NVC principles in mediation settings, providing tools for resolving conflicts effectively.*
- **Marshall B. Rosenberg** – “Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life”. *The foundational text of NVC, exploring how to communicate with empathy and clarity.*
- **Robert Gonzales** – “Living Compassion: A Dialogues Approach to Inner Freedom”. *Focuses on inner transformation and healing through NVC and presence-centered awareness.*





Reading & Resources

SOMATIC EDUCATION & EMBODIMENT

- **Peter Levine** – “Waking the Tiger: Healing Trauma”. *Introduces somatic experiencing—a body-oriented approach to healing trauma.*
- **Deb Dana** – “The Polyvagal Theory in Therapy”. *A gentle introduction to how the nervous system shapes our responses and how we can regulate it through embodied awareness.*
- **Steven Porges** – “The Polyvagal Theory: Neurophysiological Foundations of Emotions, Attachment, Communication, and Self-Regulation”. *Explores the science behind the Polyvagal Theory, detailing how neural pathways shape our emotional experiences, social engagement, and self-regulation.*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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We express our deep gratitude to all participants who co-created this project.

Your presence, openness, and contributions were the heart of Roots of Peace.

If you'd like to get in touch with us, feel free to reach out:

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