10 Practices to Empower Your Presence

Being in service to self and others in any capacity begins with being present, grounded and centered. These qualities are cornerstones of wholeness and mindfulness.

These simple practices are ones I have collected over many years and they have been of great support to me both personally and professionally. I want to share them with you, my fellow leaders, educators, healers, facilitators, and coaches – so that you may support yourself others to benefit from them as well. Enjoy!

In light ~ Kim
1...Body Scan

Mentally scanning the body is a way to become more aware, present and comfortable in your physical body. The practice requires you to divert your thoughts away from mental chatter, and focus your awareness on one area of your physical body at a time.

Lie on your back on your bed, couch or floor. Place a pillow or rolled towel under your knees if your lower back requires support. Position your arms and hands comfortably at your sides. Mentally move your awareness from one area to the next, really allowing yourself to feel deeply into each part of your body.

Begin with your feet and move upwards. Notice sensations, temperature, tightness, lightness etc. Once you have made a strong connection with your feet, move your attention upwards...shifting all your focus from your feet to the lower legs, then knees, thighs, and so on.

Allow yourself to breathe evenly throughout the scanning process. Don't judge any of the feelings and sensations you notice; simply be aware of them and continue to breathe. If you come upon any areas of discomfort, tension, heaviness etc, take a few additional breaths there and just allow that area to relax a little more with each exhale.

Move your attention through your torso, up to your neck, then to your shoulders, down your arms, to your hands and fingertips. Continue your energy scan back up your arms returning your attention once again to your neck and finishing up with your focus on face, jaw, ears, nose, eyes and scalp.

“The secret of health for both mind and body is not to mourn for the past, nor to worry about the future, but to live the present moment wisely and earnestly.” ~ Gautama Buddha

2...Conscious Breathing Exercise

1. Take a deep breath in (counting 1-2-3-4 slowly)
2. Pause at the top of the breath (counting 1-2-3-4 slowly)
3. Release the breath (counting 1-2-3-4 slowly)
4. Pause at the bottom of the breath (counting 1-2-3-4 slowly)
5. Repeat for 5-10 minutes
3...Focusing Meditation

1. Choose something upon which to focus. It could be a candle, a crystal, a flower, an image, a flower or simply your breath.

2. Begin your period of concentration by focusing all of your attention on that one thing.

3. When you get distracted or find your mind wandering, simply return to that one thing. Do this very gently and without judgment. Just come back to the thing upon which you have chosen to focus.

4. Continue this process as long as you wish, perhaps practicing for 10-15 minutes each day.

“Yesterday is gone. Tomorrow has not yet come. We have only today. Let us begin.” ~ Mother Teresa

4...Centering and Grounding Energy Visualization

1. Close your eyes and take a moment to visualize all of the many thoughts, energies, to do lists, plans, people and activities currently on your mind. Imagine that you can see cords, or lines extending out from your body connecting to all of these people and things.

2. Now breathe gently, and with every inhale visualize all these lines being pulled back inside you, allowing only what is yours to come back to you, leaving what doesn’t belong to you and what no longer serves you, outside. With each inhale imagine all of these lines eventually coming back to you like you’re a magnet attracting back to you what was yours to begin with.

3. When you have pulled in all the lines continue to breathe, and with each exhale, now imagine roots growing out from the bottom of your feet and connecting down, down, down into the earth. Each exhale takes your roots deeper into the earth until your roots reach the core of the earth and wrap around it, anchoring there.

4. Continue to breath, and on the inhale, draw earth energy up from the core of the earth, through your roots, and into your body. You can visualize this as a color or just feel the energy filling you up. Allow it to fill up and refresh and energize your whole body...your whole self. With each inhale continue to draw earth energy up and allow it to fill and energize you.

5. When you feel satiated, gently release your “roots” from around the core of the earth. Thank the earth for her energy, and slowly draw your roots back up and into you.

“Flow with whatever may happen, and let your mind be free: Stay centered by accepting whatever you are doing. This is the ultimate.” ~ Zhuangzi
Heart Breathing Technique

1. Focus your attention on your chest and especially the area around your heart. You may wish to put your hands on this area to help hold your attention there as you do this exercise.

2. Breathe in and out with full relaxed breaths, imagining that your breath is flowing in and out directly through your heart area as you inhale and exhale. Continue breathing in this way, with full breaths and a steady relaxed pace.

3. As you continue to breathe in and out from the heart, maintaining your focus on the chest area around your heart, activate a positive feeling or emotion. It may help to think of something you are grateful for, someone you love, or a place that elicits a feeling of peace in you, for example. Any thought that generates a positive, heart-based feeling in you will be fine.

4. Continue to breathe in and out, with your focus on the heart, feeling this positive emotion for as long as you wish.

“God is a circle whose center is everywhere and circumference nowhere.”

~ Voltaire

“Bija” Mantra: LAM

In Tibetan tradition, there are seven Bija mantras associated with the seven chakras. The one for the root chakra, which supports us to be “grounded” and present in the world here and now, is LAM (rhymes with Tom). Chanting LAM can help you ground and reconnect to earth energies simply by chanting it.

1. In a quiet place sit cross legged or in a chair with your feet flat on the ground.

2. Place your palms down on the tops of your knees or thighs.

3. Start chanting LAM, letting the sound extend for as long as feels right. Allow yourself to feel where the vibration of this sound resonates in you as you chant. Play with the sound, making it louder, softer, higher, lower etc., until you find what feels best.

4. Repeat this mantra ten to fifty times, or more, perhaps up to 10 minutes.

“Feelings come and go like clouds in a windy sky. Conscious breathing is my anchor.”

~ Thích Nhất Hạnh
7...Physically Connect with Nature

One of the best ways to quickly get present and grounded is to physically connect with nature.

- Walking barefoot on the earth
- Sit on the ground (grass, beach or any other natural earth surface) Gardening, indoors or out (Consider a mini “Zen garden” for indoor purposes)
- Connect with trees or other plants (indoors or out) – visually admire, gently touch, smell and perhaps listen to the sound the plant makes as the breeze rustles it
- Hold a natural river stone or crystal, sensing it's weight, texture, and energy

“He who controls the past controls the future. He who controls the present controls the past.” ~ George Orwell

8...Hui Yin Contraction Exercise

The Hui Yin corresponds to the physical plane of existence, and is the main link with the Earth Chi energy coming up through the feet. The Hui Yin is located between the genitals and the anus; the part of the body called the perineum. In Taoism, when this part of the body is strong, the organs remain firm and healthy; when it is weak the organs lose cohesiveness and Chi energy drains away.

1. Stand up with your feet shoulder width apart. Slightly bend your knees. Tilt your pelvis so your spine is in a neutral position.
2. Balance your weight evenly over the soles of your feet. Gently sink your weight downward.
3. Inhale and contract the muscles of the perineum.
4. Exhale and relax the muscles of the perineum.
5. Repeat for a few minutes.

“Always say “yes” to the present moment. What could be more futile, more insane, than to create inner resistance to what already is? What could be more insane than to oppose life itself, which is now and always now? Surrender to what is. Say “yes” to life — and see how life suddenly starts working for you rather than against you.” ~ Eckhart Tolle
9...Chakra Grounding and Clearing Exercise

1. Stand relaxed and comfortable, with your feet shoulder width apart. Close your eyes.
2. Breathe in deeply and when you breathe out, let your shoulders hang loose and relaxed. Repeat this two or three times, each time releasing any tension in the body as you breathe out.
3. Now put your attention on your feet. As you breathe in, imagine you are taking in Earth energy through your left foot...up your left leg and into the Root (First) Chakra. As you breathe out imagine the Earth energy flowing down your right leg, through your right foot back into the Earth.
4. You might visualize this energy as a white light, or perhaps the color of the chakra you are focusing on in the moment. After 2-3 minutes, you may wish to end the exercise here, or continue on to the other chakras.
5. If you continue, let the Earth energy flow into the left foot and leg as you breathe in (now all the way up to the Sacral (Second) Chakra). As you breathe out imagine the Earth energy flowing back down to your right leg, through your right foot back into the Earth.
6. Continue this process with all seven chakras, from the Root (First) up to the Crown (Seventh) and use your breath to flow and circulate Earth energy through each chakra for 2-3 minutes.
7. Consider completing the exercise with a blessing of gratitude to the Earth, to your higher powers and to yourself for taking the time to become more present.

“Life is available only in the present moment.” ~ Thích Nhất Hạnh

10...The 5 Senses Exercise

This exercise helps you to be in your body and center in the present moment by literally “coming back to your senses”. This is a simple and quick exercise that you can do anytime you find yourself getting “carried away” with thoughts and emotions.

1. Take relaxed rhythmic breaths...in 2, 3, 4...out 2, 3, 4...
2. Put all of your attention on your eyes, and your sense of sight. Look around the place you are at the moment and for a few breaths, take an inventory of the things your eyes register, noticing the visual quality (color, shape size etc) of these things.
3. Put all of your attention on your ears and listen. For a few breaths, take an inventory of the things you can hear, noticing the quality of each sound you become aware of.
4. Put all of your attention on your nose and sense of smell. For a few breaths, notice the smells that you register, giving 100% attention to them.
5. Put all of your attention on your mouth and sense of taste. Again, for a few breaths simply notice and observe what tastes you are experiencing (even if you are not eating anything).
6. Now put all of your attention on your skin and sense of touch. For a few breaths notice what is in contact with you, or choose something to touch or hold and observe this.

“None but ourselves can free our minds.” ~ Bob Marley