



EXERCISE: A Time for Calm

Reading about trauma and working on recognizing and releasing its lasting effects can be quite a tumultuous experience. Any time you begin to feel overwhelmed, or if you notice trembling that begins to feel too much, pause and return to your grounding exercises. You now have more capacity to face fear than you did during the trauma that was so understandably fear-inducing. Anytime you're feeling unsettled, use the following exercise to help you find some calmness. Keep it in your repertoire of calming and healing skills.

1. Rub your hands together, using friction to create warmth in your hands.
2. Place your hands on your heart.
3. Feel the warmth and the slight pressure of your touch.
4. Imagine you're breathing in and out of your heart where your hands are.
5. Invoke a sense of calm, compassion, or love; feel your breath moving that quality through your whole heart and chest area. If you cannot immediately generate that feeling, use your imagination to help evoke it.
6. Practice this breath of calm, compassion, or love for a few minutes.
7. Notice any changes you experience.
8. Write about your experience in this exercise, using the language of sensation and emotion.

This exercise is a wonderful way to bring yourself a sense of calm and safety. Research shows that the heart, like the brain, has its own network of neural cells that communicate directly with your brain. Your caring intent and warm touch swiftly activate the release of oxytocin—the brain hormone that brings feelings of safety, trust, bonding, and calm.

Read more in 'The Body Awareness Workbook for Trauma' by Dr Julie Brown Yau