

DeEscalation and Grounding Skills

For Activists, Revolutionaries and
Everyone!



Created by KC Van Der Zee and Kangs Trevens

Hello there! Thank you for your interest in DeEscalation and Grounding Skills! If you picked up this zine then you may have attended a DeEscalation &/or Grounding Skills workshop. If you haven't come to a workshop and want to - be in touch at kangs@riseup.net so we can let you know about future workshops. We were inspired to make this zine to support people at the workshop to be present to the experience without needing to memorize everything or take notes, yet stands alone as a reference guide for that and more.

We are hoping to offer knowledge of skills that enable folks to stay grounded throughout difficult and emotionally/mentally/physically overwhelming times so that we can continue to fight against fascism, racism, sexism, able-ism and all forms of systemic or identity-based violence sustainably. We also hope to grow community by reducing (or eliminating) the impulse to call a repressive police force to handle escalated situations. Most police trainings spend about 8 hours on deescalation skills and are more apt to use violent and traumatic tactics in order to "resolve" an issue. This adds trauma to the person who was already harmed (and the person who did the harm) and is unnecessary. We hope to offer skills that allow our community to feel confident in stepping into escalated matters and actively bringing the situation down to a place of safety for everyone.

We hope you utilize these skills as much as you need to, with friends, with your community, and share share share! Thank you again. We appreciate you!

This will include:

<h2>DeEscalation</h2>	<h2>Grounding Skills</h2>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- learn Nonviolent Communication tips- identify situations which you interpret as being dangerous or having potential for violence- ensure the safety of the person or persons you think are in danger- deescalate the rise in aggression and/or potential physical violence- offer resources for help with no police involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- become familiar with what grounding skills are and how can they help- learn how to identify triggers- identify bodily measurements of severe discomfort or anxiety once triggered- learn what grounding skill is best to use based on the level of our discomfort/anxiety- offer resources for help when all else fails

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IMPORTANT TERMS

DeEscalation: the act or use of several methods in order to decrease violence (or the chances of violence) in highly activated situations

Grounding: a set of simple strategies to detach from or decrease emotional pain. A part of this is distraction which helps by focusing outward on things that aren't painful rather than inward toward whatever is stressful.

Syn. "centering," "a safe place," "looking outward," "healthy detachment"

Trigger: is an experience that causes someone to recall a previous traumatic memory, although the trigger itself need not be frightening or traumatic and can be indirectly or superficially reminiscent of an earlier traumatic incident.

Trauma: a deeply distressing or disturbing experience.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD):

is not a disease, but rather represents a cluster of bothersome symptoms that normally occurs immediately after a traumatic experience. These symptoms are a direct consequence of ones mind trying to understand what has happened and your body trying to re-establish a sense of safety and predictability. While some people regain a sense of their old selves again after several months, those with PTSD remain locked in their bothersome symptoms.

Stress reactions:

1. Fight: tensing arms and legs, balling up fist(s), tightening of lips
2. Flight: urge to pull back, escape from a room, preoccupation with exits/escapes
3. Freeze: overall tension in the whole body, orienting body posture danger, sometimes erect posture
4. Submission: lowering of eyes, compliance, flaccid musculature, caving in of posture

Zone of Tolerance:

- 1. the zone where we are better able to feel and regulate our feelings, make wise choices, and participate more fully in life.
- 2. the zone between high and low activation. A sense of balance, stability, and safety for ones well-being.

Activation:

- 1. High activation: hyperarousal, hyper-defensive, hypervigilant, emotional reactivity, racing thoughts, intrusive images, obsessive/cyclical cognitive processing
- 2. Low activation: hypoarousal, disabled defensive responses, numbing, collapsed posture/personality, feeling “flat”, foggy cognitive function, depressed, suicidal

*NOTE: Both forms of activation are to be considered heightened activity. Violent situations, whether inflicted on others or oneself, may have the need to be intervened and deescalated.

Self-care: Activities and habits that help to maintain our equilibrium and keep us in the “zone of tolerance.”

Recovery:to return to our balanced state of health, mind, or strength.

Resilience:a recovery warrior/healer capable of knowing what tools work best for them in times of mild or severe stress. Someone who knows themselves, their ailments and their antidotes.

Somatic: relates to the body

Psychosomatic:relating to interactions between mind and the body



Why trauma?

Trauma is included in this zine about grounding and deescalation because when we are impacted by something that takes us into a trauma state (fight, flight or freeze) using grounding skills is helpful to get us back to the present and feel OK again. When we understand that others have experienced trauma we can remain more compassionate in trying to offer support to everyone to help a situation to deescalate.

What is trauma?

Trauma is when something has happened to us that was more intense, overwhelming, or frightening than we could integrate. This is especially true when we are or feel helpless or alone.

Trauma is re-activated or triggered when the past is present. When we experience something right now and our imagined danger or reaction is bigger than the actual threat. Our brain and/or nervous system is reacting as if the danger from the past is what is happening (e.g. a friend raises their voice and we become immobilized because when we were held up at gunpoint years ago the person raised their voice in a way that our system is reminded of. Our body is reacting to the danger of the past event where there was real physical danger for our life).

Neurobiology: (brain/nervous system stuff)

When trauma gets reactivated we leave our pre-frontal cortex (part of the brain we are in when we are present) and go into our Amygdala (part of our brain that stores painful memories and can't tell the past from the present). Some of our reactions are as if we are back in that dangerous situation. This can bring up a lot of shame, pain or anger, especially when we can't make sense of it. It can lead to conflict or disconnect with the people around us.

We all experience trauma differently

Based on who we are, our propensity towards sensitivity and the significance things have to us. (i.e. saying "you're a wuss")

playfully to one friend might land lightly; to another friend who's been assumed to be weaker because of their history of being bullied, or assumptions made about them because of assigned gender, body type or other factors may stir up pain such as shame, anger or despair for that person).

A definition of Trauma from Dr. Gabor Mate, that I really like because it is so normalizing of the human experience is this: "trauma is when we experience something painful and we are alone with it." Who hasn't been alone with something painful?

A story that exemplifies this:

A few years ago I was biking home at night and I was jumped by 3 people just past a highway overpass. My bike, wallet and backpack were taken. I got kicked as they were leaving. I started crying and walked 2 blocks before I ran into two people. They lent me a phone and asked if I had anyone to stay with me that night. It wouldn't have occurred to me, but with their suggestion I reached out to a friend and I was lucky to find he was able to come over.

How I Dealt With It

After that I was skittish about biking in the dark or under overpasses for a few weeks. But upon noticing this I did some healing work with the part of me stuck in that night who got knocked off his bike and was alone and scared. I empathized with the Kangs from a few weeks prior. When he (myself 2 weeks younger) seemed ready, I invited him to come to join me in the present where he was not being thrown off his bike, scared and helpless anymore. Within weeks my anxiety and fear about biking at night dissipated. I was lucky enough to not be alone with this painful incident for long on the night it happened and I "rescued" the part of me that was stuck in the trauma relatively soon, so it hasn't solidified as a trauma for me.

We All Have Trauma

We experience trauma for several reasons. This might happen after a we live through or witness something violent (shooting, stabbing, murder, physical fight, sexual violence, police attacking people) or

live through a natural disaster. There is in Utero trauma (stress we experience when the parent who carried us was stressed, anxious or harmed), before we are born. Attachment trauma develops in our first few years, depending on our relationship with our primary caregiver; especially if they are terrified or terrifying, anxious, depressed or stressed. Hence trauma does not only come from tragic and violent incidents and its not always from a part of our life we can remember.

When we are very little we are quite vulnerable to interactions with the people taking care of us. Their pain, which may come out as anger, anxiety or avoidance, has a big and lasting impact on us. We come into the world having needs and not knowing how to get our needs met without our caregiver (parent or guardian). As babies we need to learn how to care for ourselves from someone-ideally someone who is aware of our needs and their needs. When those people are in their own pain - anxious, angry or unsure what to do with us – it is hard to have a sense our existence in the world is OK, and how to take care of ourselves. This can lead to trauma.

An example of a trauma that has been accepted as normal over the years is to grow up with a parent who gets enraged, furious or who “disciplines” by spanking. This can be hard, confusing and traumatic for us to have gone through when we were young. Confusion and disorder happen to a young persons brain when the person we were told to go to, to feel safe is a physical threat. For example “I’m supposed to go to Dad for protection and care but right now he seems dangerous. I don’t know how to make sense of this!” Our brain can get stuck here struggling to navigate this contradiction. After experiencing this we may grow up with challenges about when it is safe to trust.

Explicit/Implicit Memory

Explicit memory is when we can consciously recall information. Implicit is when something is in our unconscious and we can’t recall it. We are in an implicit memory when we have a painful reaction but can’t relate it to a present time stressor nor understand why we are reacting the way we are.

An example of trauma relating to implicit memory

I was passing a burning building that cops and bystanders were watching. I asked a bystander a question and she didn't know and told me to ask the police. I said "I don't talk to cops if I don't need to". She said in a tone that I didn't like "why not? They are really nice." she moved closer to them and I interpreted her as talking to them about me, making fun of me.

They all started staring at me and one cop said "can I help you?" My brain seemed to shut down. I froze and panicked. I asked "am I doing anything wrong?" He said "I thought you had a question?" and they were all looking at me and I couldn't move or think of what to say. I was feeling ashamed. I got on my bike and left.

It occurred to me that my emotional reaction was reminiscent of being picked on in Junior High or High School: a few kids say something mean to me. They all stare at me while I'm tongue tied and scared, so they say more painful things while I can't respond. (I may have also froze because I am scared of cops and don't trust them and I worry when their attention is on me!) Do you ever freeze or dissociate when you want to respond? Get spacey, feel far away, have a sense you can't hear as well or think as clearly or know what to say? These are neurobiological (brain/body) responses to trauma. In case you ever thought it was, it is not your fault. It's a psychosomatic reaction our system goes through when faced with the remnants of danger from the past.

Another source of trauma are ISMS (or 'phobias')

Racism, sexism, able-ism, size-ism, classism, hetero-sexism, Islamophobia, anti-semitism, xenophobia, transphobia, homophobia, and so on. There are micro- and macro-aggressions that add to the daily stress and trauma of people in identities that have less power in this world. This is a huge topic that I want to acknowledge but will not go into, in the interest of time and trust that I could do this topic justice right now.

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More Grounded Than a Groundhog by KC

I am not a professional in grounding, but I do utilize grounding skills almost every single day. As a person living with PTSD (post traumatic stress disorder) and bipolar disorder, controlling my emotions (and occasionally thoughts) has not only been a challenge but has, in some occasions, not been an option. Living with bipolar disorder in particular, I am chemically and biologically constructed to periodically not have control over my emotions, thoughts, and even energy levels. Why I mention this is to share my experience of having an intrinsic struggle with stability and grounding myself.

When struggling with a mental illness, relating the teachings of “mindfulness” to my mentally ill mind comes as an almost impossible challenge and often makes me feel isolated, frustrated, and depressed - as this is often portrayed as the only path toward self-reflection, self-love, authenticity, and forgiveness.

While some mindfulness practices overlap with grounding skills, there is one key difference to be aware of. Mindfulness as a practice intends for one to be aware of one’s self (inwardly) in the present as it is, whereas grounding is a practice that distracts us from emotional or mental overwhelm by redirecting our focus outwardly in the present moment. The key word here is DISTRACT(ION). After going to a myriad of groups on grounding and coping with trauma/bipolar as well as utilizing these tools, I have noticed a positive change in my emotional intelligence and have grown roots-deep through grounding. Grounding skills have helped me come out of a place where my trauma lives as I cannot live here forever. Grounding is not about getting in tune with these traumatic feelings, but removing myself from them since they are so regularly present. We cannot live in our trauma forever - we will go mad.

During my path to managing my emotions, I came to the conclusion that life is hard for most people. Perhaps not the 13 families that are ruling the world and using people as their pawns to play some sick game of a crossbreed between Settlers of Catan and Call of Duty – but for everyone else systematic oppression, microaggressions, toxic relationships, loss of loved ones, loss of identity within the bureaucracy, capitalist culture, and identity oppression IS REAL. I concluded that life is hard for most people and perhaps folx need an alternative from mindfulness just so they can get through their day: alive, relatively stable in mood, and able to keep on keepin on. We, as humans and especially activists, need to find tools that make us resilient in our fight against fascism, sexism, racism, Islamophobia, transphobia, borders and all identity-based violence! I hope learning these skills will be as liberating to you as they have been for me.

SO...that said...

What are grounding skills and why do we utilize them?

Truth is, many people use grounding skills and don't even know it. Grounding ourselves is essential in maintaining good, or functional, mental health. As defined in the terms in a prior section of this zine, grounding is a set of simple strategies that allow us to detach from emotional pain. Distraction works by focusing outward on the external world, rather than inward toward the self.

While a groundhog may dig deep into the ground to run away from its worries and find its safe space, we may not have that option at all times – therefore we must learn how to be more grounded than a groundhog. (Though we may never be as cute or magically knowledgeable of when Spring is coming...we'll leave those powers to the groundhog.)

When we are overwhelmed with emotional pain, we may need a way detach so that we can gain a sense of control over our feelings and stay safe. We ground when we

struggle with either feeling overwhelming emotions and memories or feeling numb and disassociating a lot more often than we'd like. We ground when we are faced with a trigger, having a flashback, before going on social media/answering texts or calls, having a substance craving, or when our emotional pain is nearing intolerable. Grounding puts a healthy distance between us and these negative feelings. Think of grounding as an anchor to the present and to reality while you're a boat rocking on the waves of life.

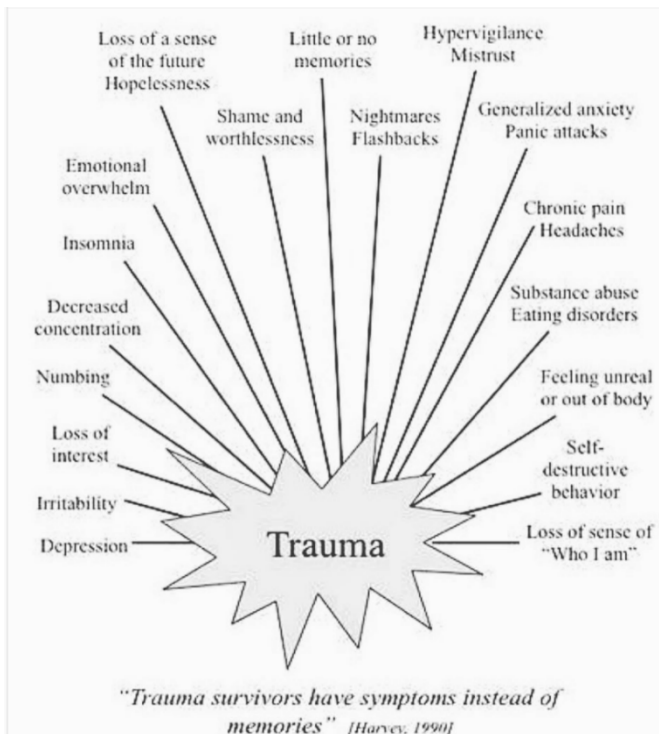
The Basics of the Anchor

I'd like to be clear: some of these guidelines may be helpful while others may not. Be open to try these guidelines, but know that you can choose which ones work for you and leave the ones that don't. There is no pressure to do every grounding skill ever.

- Grounding can be done at any time, any place, anywhere and no one has to know. Yeah, some sneaky fox shizz right there.
- It may be more helpful to keep your eyes open, scan your surroundings, and turn a light on (if applicable) to stay in touch with the present.
- Rate your mood before and after to test whether the grounding skill worked for you, or find your own way of testing. Did your emotional pain go down?
- Reminder: grounding is not where we attempt to get in touch with our emotional pain. We want to distract away from negative feelings, so it may be best to not talk about or journal about our emotional pain. This is not to say that that practice may be helpful at some point, but rather to say that this is not considered grounding and could potentially lead to more emotional pain in the moment we are feeling overwhelmed.
- Stay as neutral as possible. Try not to judge yourself or the distractions around you. (Ex. "The walls are blue; I dislike the walls because it reminds me of depression. Simply say, "The walls are blue.")

- Focus on the present, not the past or future.
- Grounding is not relaxing. Grounding is much more active, focuses on distraction strategies, and is intended to help extreme negative feelings.

There are thousands of grounding techniques and its important to know when it may be best to utilize certain techniques. A good way to determine which technique to use is to be aware of the level of distress we're in. The chart on the next page shows several examples of techniques based on one's distress level. For example, if we are feeling a very high level of distress we may need to engage in a full body and mental encompassing grounding skill to relieve our overwhelm. Below are some experiences that may stem from trauma. Hopefully these help you determine your level of distress.



GROUNDING/DISTRACTING FROM PAIN

Physically and mentally demanding activity

(playing basketball, tennis)

Active external distraction (either mental or physical)

(chewing on ice, reading a paragraph backwards, naming objects)

Passive external distraction

(listening to loud music, getting bodywork, watching a movie)

Awareness of immediate surroundings

(mindfulness of room you are in, naming objects in room)

Awareness of personal boundaries

(being mindful of the temperature on your skin, the distance between you and others in room)

Awareness of extremities

(mindfulness of little pinky, bottom of foot)

Awareness of physical core through guided activity

(mindful awareness of breathing)

Awareness and regulation of physical distress

(mindful awareness of butterflies in stomach)

Awareness and regulation of integrated sense of distress

(mindful and integrated awareness of rapid heart beat, sense of fear and anxiety, and understanding of what triggered it)

REGULATION

DISTRESS

MINDFUL AWARENESS & REGULATION

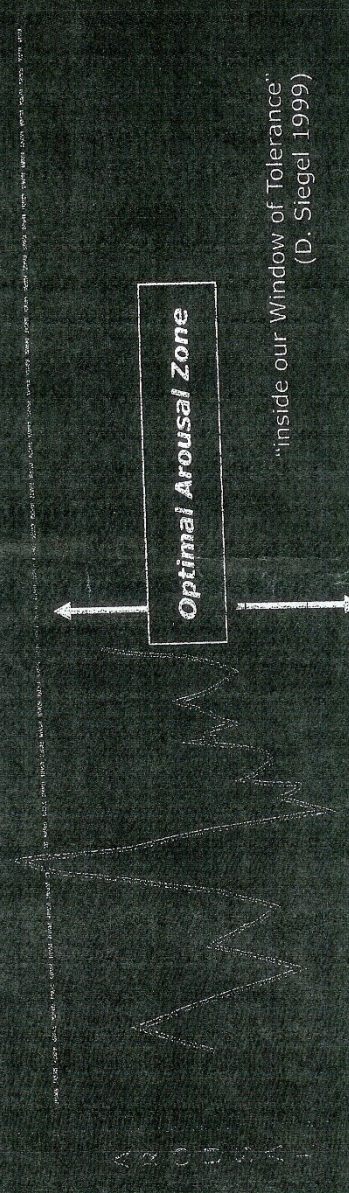
*any of these approaches can be enhanced with a social component

The Modulation Model ©

High Activation

Hypervigilant
Intrusive images
Obsessive/Cyclical Cognitive Processing

Hyperarousal
Hyper-defensive
Emotional reactivity



Optimal Arousal Zone

"inside our Window of Tolerance"
(D. Siegel 1999)

Low Activation

Collapsed
Flat Affective
Cognitively Disabled

Hypoarousal
Disabled defensives responses
Numbing

with Permission of the *Sensorymotor Psychotherapy Institute*, by *Caplan and Minton (2000)*

When we are triggered, it can be difficult to discern at what level we are mentally/emotionally/physically distressed. For some folks, there are certain sensations in the body that may indicate their distress level. It may be helpful to listen to our bodies:

- Tune into the heart beat: is it racing? Pounding? Calm? Hiccupping?
- Palms: are they sweating? Clammy? Normal?
- Facial tension: clenching of the jaw? Lifting of the eyebrows or forehead? Closing the nostrils?
- Arms, legs: are they shaking? Shivering? Can't stop moving? Clenching fists?

There are several ways our bodies may tell us that we are in distress and this may be a good indicator of our distress level...therefore aiding us in knowing which grounding skills would be best to use. Ultimately, it's up to you to decipher what body signals indicate how high or low the stress level is. Be sure to check out the definition of fight, flight, freeze, disassociation, and submission as these are all indicators of high stress reactions.

In stressful situations, we may be triggered and our distress levels amp up so fast that it may be difficult to be aware of our bodies, minds, and spirits making it difficult to focus on grounding. Be patient with yourself. Practice grounding skills BEFORE encountering possible stressful situations/triggers such as dealing with a neo-nazi coworker, going to a protest, being around others eating animals, being in a dominantly white environment, etc. Practice growing your awareness on your body, mind, and spirit during states where you may be feeling calm or have minimal anxiety. This will soon become a familiar process and may become easier to do in unexpected times of distress.

Remember to try not to judge yourself. Becoming more grounded than a groundhog takes time, love, and patience with ourselves. As a person who has used toxic grounding skills in the past, it was hard to make the

switch to more positive options that did not leave me in more pain and shame. Even still, I struggle with making the conscious decision to stop using toxic/harmful coping skills and sometimes I fail. The key is to not give up. Shit happens, there is no such thing as perfect (unless it means you and all life, as you are/as it is, in this moment, alive). When you make a mistake, try not to let that incident discourage you from your growth in positive grounding skills. Keep going. We got this!

In the diagram titled “Modulation Mode,” it lists what emotional, physical, or mental reactions are commonly associated with being hyperactive or hypoactive. In other words, symptoms that are higher in energy are considered hypERactive (racing thoughts, can’t stop talking/moving, impulsive decision making, intrusive thoughts, hypervigilance, body feels like it’s on fire, etc.) and symptoms that are lower in energy are considered hypOactive (depressed mood, foggy-brained, can barely do basic tasks, numb, hard to concentrate, no energy to move, disassociating from one’s body, etc). Feel free to think of more experiences you go through when in these states. Take note of them, as this may help you identify the symptoms whenever they arise.

Many folks associate these symptoms of hypo or hyperactivity with bipolar disorder. In fact, it is not uncommon for people with PTSD to be diagnosed with bipolar (though I can attest that it is possible to have both!) This is because people with PTSD experience similar symptoms to folx with bipo.

Traumatic experiences contribute to our lives in many ways – mood, thought-patterns, appetite, energy level, and more. This is not said to freak anyone out, but to understand that for those of us who think that “time will heal all” or “this too shall pass” – while that may work for some, it doesn’t work for most. Even still for folks who believe time has cured them of their ailing hearts, minds, and bodies – trauma can resurface unexpectedly and

manifest in random behavior that may or may not be all too beneficial both for that person or those around them. We need to be an active part in healing our trauma and we need support from friends, family, and our communities in that process too.

Learning grounding skills may be just the beginning for some of us in the journey of finding a deeper understanding of trauma, emotions, mood disorders, mental illnesses and so forth. Grounding will help keep us in our “zone of tolerance” so that this further exploration won’t be as scary. The diagram shows the “zone of tolerance” which is basically being in an emotional area between hyperactivated and hypoactivated. In this area, we are more able to feel and regulate our feelings, make wise choices, and participate more fully in life. This is the zone we hope the grounding skills we provide helps you drop into. Here, we are more able to handle particularly stressful situations (situations that may need some de-escalation perhaps?) with a clear mind and balanced heart.

OKAY. So now for the fun stuff. Groundhogs, watch out!

Ways Groundhogs Wish They Knew How to Ground

Mental Grounding

- Describe your environment in detail using all of your senses. Ex. “the walls are white, there are five pink chairs, there is a wooden bookshelf against the wall, there is a book titled Fighting Fascism, there is a picture of my dog, there is a smell of green tea and B-O...” Describe objects, sounds, textures, colors, smells, shapes, numbers, and temperature. You can do this anywhere – out loud or not.

- Play a “categories” game with yourself. Try to think of “types of dogs”, “jazz musicians”, “political

heroes”, “places that begin with ‘C’”, “writers”, “songs”, “types of trees”.

- Play a counting game with yourself. Count all the yellow objects. Count all the green. Keep doing this in whatever category you choose. Feel free to add layers of focus by adding them, subtracting them, multiplying them, dividing them.
- Describe an everyday activity in great detail. Ex. Cooking a meal. “First I peel the onions and put the flaky skins in the compost. Then I peel the garlic by smashing the cloves with a knife then removing the flaky skin. Then I chop the onions and garlic into bits. Then I get the frying pan ready by....”
- Use your imagination. Pretend you are gliding away from your pain on roller skates, think of a wall between you and your pain, think of yourself as the flower bursting from a rock bed.
- Say a safety statement. Ex. “My name is _____; I am safe right now. I am in the present, not the past. I am located _____; the date is _____.” It may be helpful to repeat this to yourself a couple times.
- Read something, saying each word to yourself. Or trying reading something backwards. You can read the full word backwards like “srdrawkcab” or read the sentence backwards like “like backwards sentence the read or.” Add layers by spelling the word or spelling it backwards in your head. You can also add layer of counting by counting the letters of each word.
- Use humor. Think of something funny to jolt yourself out of your mood.

- Count to 10 and take a breath for each number. Do this using the alphabet as well. The key here is to do this veryyy s...l...o....w....l....y.
- Repeat a favorite saying to yourself over and over like, “It is our duty to fight for our freedom. It is our duty to win. We must love each other and support each other. We have nothing to lose but our chains.” – Assata Shakur
- Imagine all the people – close your eyes (or keep them open) and imagine that you are in the presence of someone or many people that you know to care for you. If you can, try to imagine details in their clothing, lines in their smiles, their eyes, what they might smell like, etc. If it’s hard to imagine those detail, no sweat – try to focus on feeling their presence, and generating that feeling in your body. Focus on how you remember that this person or those people make you feel.
- Call upon the “Fuck-It-Bucket”! Close your eyes and raise your arms up to pull down the “Fuck-It-Bucket” from the sky. Name what you’d like to throw in it. Say it out loud or in your head and imagine yourself (or actively use your body) to throw it in. Try your best to let go of or not think about whatever you threw in for the rest of the day. You’ll come back to it at another time when you are ready, but for now let it live in the bucket. Push back the “Fuck-It-Bucket” when you’re done. This could be fun to do as a group exercise as well.
- Take a deep breath in and a deep breath out. Try counting to 3 and breathing into your belly. Imagine your belly expanding, or place your hand on your belly to feel it growing with air if that’s comfortable. Maybe hold your breath for two counts, maybe not.

Breath out for a count of three and feel your belly pull in toward your spine. Keep doing this until you feel more stable. Maybe expand your count to 4 or 5 or 6 or higher. Perhaps challenge your breath to see how many counts you can get to. Close your eyes or keep them open, but do your best to focus on your breath. You may also want to try breathing in a phrase such as "I'm okay," and breathing out "so relax." You can use any phrase or pair of phrases that are particularly comforting to you...i.e. "wisdom, compassion" "I love myself, so let go for now."

- Balloon breathing. Imagine holding a giant balloon or ball in your lap. Each time you take a deep breathe in, you imagine that the balloon inflates with air. Feel it expand with warm air. Then as you breathe out, imagine the balloon contracting. You can keep the balloon near you, or far away from you, wherever is clever for you! You can also imagine objects around you expanding and contracting with your breath or....
- Air Head Breathing. (personal fav!) If you are engaged in a conversation where you are unable to excuse yourself despite feeling triggered - breathe and count to 3. While doing this, imagine the head of the person you're speaking with expanding as you breath in. Imagine it getting smaller as you breath out. This keeps you *looking* as if you are engaged, but are actually more focused on your breathing and their head expanding/contracting just so you can get through this negative/triggering conversation.
- "I am present." Say to yourself, either in your head or aloud, "I am safe right now. I am here at (blank) right now. Today is (day of week), it is the

(morning/afternoon/evening) on a (chilly,warm,hot) day. I am (sitting, standing).” You could continue by naming objects in the room and narrating what you are doing or seeing happen around you. “They are walking their dog, she is fixing her bicycle, he is stroking his beard, the dog is smelling some poop...” If you do not particularly feel safe in your body, you could start by saying “Right now my body is having a memory of a time when I was not safe, and I know I am physically safe right now,” and then continue on. Feel free to record yourself in a particularly grounding setting then listen to it as its own grounding tool.

- Think of your favorites. Your favorite color, food, time of day, place, season, animals, etc.
- Think of things you are looking forward to in the near future. Perhaps going on a hike? Spending sometimes with friends? Hosting a grounding skills workshop?
- Picture people you care about. Perhaps imagine them hugging you.
- Remember a safe place and describe it to yourself in great detail. Walk around in it, noticing little doodads on tables, Che Guevara poster on the wall, wood pillars in the middle of the room, a brick wall...

Game/Group Grounding

- Play the I-spy game with yourself. Come up with a challenge for yourself such as “find something green and round.” Then look for something in the environment that meets your challenge! (You can play this with a group of friends if you’re feeling triggered as well! Feel free to keep it covert by

simply suggesting to play or let them know you're triggered and you'd like to play a game or whatever you're most comfortable with.)

- Naming objects. Look around your environment and each take a turn naming an object you see. If you're in a space where there's not much going on - this could get creative reallllll quick!
- Pass the story. As a group you will tell a story. There are several ways to do this - by word, by sentence, or when a facilitator stops someone and moves to the next. The first person will say a word/sentence, then the person next time them will say a word/sentence, and so on until it goes around the circle. These words/sentences should connect and add movement to the story. The other option is where the facilitator decides when to move to the next person. One person will keep telling the story until the facilitator claps or hollers "next!" or whatever, then the story will continue with the next person. (An add-on: The facilitator may also tweak the story by shouting moods like : sad, mad, sassy, etc to control how the tone of the storyteller or the content. They can also state moments of the story such as "climax" or bring it to its "end." This would mean the storyteller would have to get really dramatic in their content for a climax, or ending the story.) KEYTIP: Don't think about it too much - just say whatever comes to mind! Roll with it!

Physical Grounding

- Run cool or warm water over your hands. Focus on the physical sensation.
- Hold ice in your hand or mouth. Focus on the sensations.

- Grab tightly onto your chair, perhaps as hard as you can. Feel your strength.
- Touch various objects around you: pens, keys, your clothing, tables, the walls. Notice textures, colors, materials, weight, temperature, and other details you can experience. Compare the objects you touch: is one colder? Lighter?
- Dig your heels into the floor (literally “grounding” them). Notice the tension centered in your heels, notice your strength. Remind yourself that you are connected to the ground. Focus on feeling the strength of yourself and the strength of the ground beneath you.
- Carry a grounding object in your pocket. This object can be anything from your favorite baseball card, to a comforting rose quartz stone, to a ring, to a flyer from a meaningful protest, to a piece of your blanky-wanky, to a piece of of a shoelace...and so on! Hold/touch this object in your pocket when you are feeling triggered. Perhaps bring it out and play with it in your hands.
- Jump up and down!
- Jump up and down AND move it all around!
- Notice your body: Feel the weight of your body in the chair; wiggling your toes in your socks; noticing your back against the chair. What else do you notice in your body?
- Stretch. Extend your fingers, arms or legs as far as you can; stretch up and out; move your head slowly from side to side, up and down. See if you can notice the tension releasing.

- Walk slowly, noticing each footstep. Perhaps say to yourself or out loud “left , right” with each step. Or use words that comfort you. (Ex. “comfort, acceptance” “peace, anarchy” “love, eternal” “wise, words” “hip, hop”)
- Eat something and describe the flavors in great detail to yourself or to a friend.
- Work out! If you’re feeling amped up with emotional energy, try to transfer this energy into a sweaty practice. Go for a run – perhaps sprint! Go for a speedy walk or a swim! Check in with your energy level before you choose what to do: low, medium, high? Base your activity and its intensity on where your energy level is.
- Self-hugggg. Hold you two arms out in front of you. Cross your right wrist over your left wrist and clasp your hands together. Pull your hands in towards belly. Bring your hands through and up towards your chest. Rest your hands on your chest. Perhaps rest your head on your hands. Feel your self-hug comforting you.
- Play-doh My Emotions. Find some play-doh or some other molding clay, and without thinking about it too much, shape the material into some representation of how you feel. Think of it as tangibly manifesting your feelings in front of you. If you’d prefer, just focus on the sensations of the clay in your hands. Try one, or both ways. The idea is to help you mold your emotions physically, outside of yourself, in hopes that you may become more aware of them. This is especially helpful for folks who struggle to locate their own emotional compass.

Some Things to do to Ground and Self Regulate* By Kangs

Bilateral Stimulation: Tap on opposite sides of your body, alternating left/right. Anywhere is fine. Knees, thighs, head, chest, below collar bones are all places I'll use.

Butterfly Hug: Cross arms. Put middle fingers just below collar bone, alternate tapping with hands.

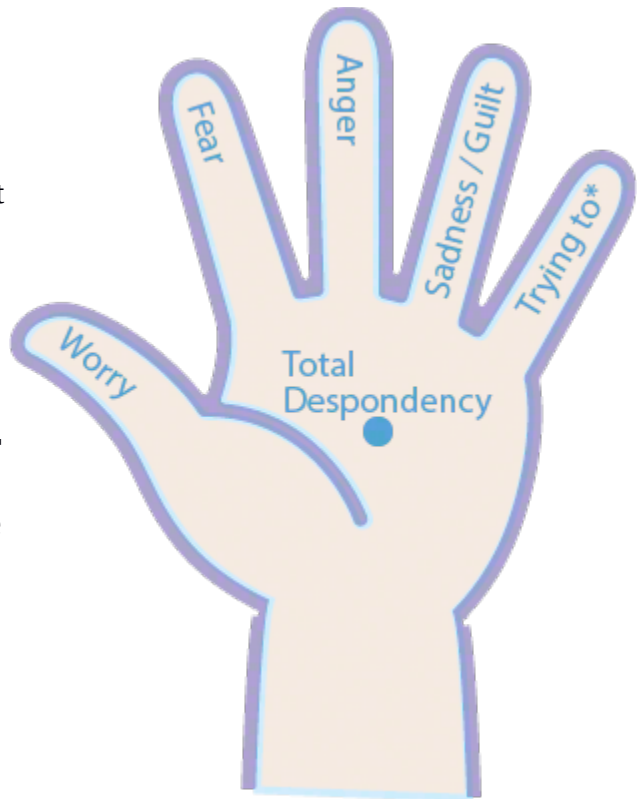
Humming and toning: Helps calm and ground the nervous system. Try to hum for 30-60 seconds. See how you feel. Notice resonating vibrations in your body after you stop. Open your mouth after humming. It can relax the jaw.

Jin Shin Finger holds:

Holding any finger.
Breathe. You might start to feel your pulse in the finger. Each finger corresponds to a different emotion. They are listed in the hand diagram below. Thumb is **anxiety** as well as **worry**; pinky is **trying too hard or nervousness**. Remember by acronym: W/A **FAST**

Somatic Pose for startle response:

This is done by standing with arms stretched down, a bit out from body, palms facing out. Turning the head to one side and leaning head a



bit back. This exposes the jugular, which our body knows we wouldn't do unless we are not under any threat. This convinces the nervous system we are safe and we begin to calm. Lightly bite the tongue. This also helps the body to relax.

Aromatherapy to the max: Pouring some just boiled water into a pot on a flat surface with a drop or 2 of a calming essential oil (Lavender for example) in it. Place a towel over your head over the pot and inhale.

Increase the Love Breathing

On each inhale focus on inhaling love for yourself

On each exhale imagine exhaling love and/or compassion for others

Brain Integrated Breathing

Inhale for one count, hold for one count, exhale for one count (count to self 1-inhale, 2-hold, 3-exhale).

Increase everything by one: count to self 1,2-inhale, 3,4-hold, 5,6-exhale.

Increase everything by one: count to self 1,2,3-inhale, 4,5,6-hold, 7,8,9-exhale.

Increase everything by one: count to self 1,2,3,4-inhale, 5,6,7,8-hold, 9,10,11,12-exhale.

See how far you can get. If you lose track, start over. It can quickly get your mind off something stressful from the shift in focus on the math and breathing, and increase feeling relaxed from the breathing.

To get support to ground:

- Go on Youtube: search yoga, qi gong, acupuncture, meditation
- Add: for stress, for anxiety, for grounding, for worry, or for insomnia
- For insomnia I like a meditation called "Yoga Nidra" done by many people

Recommendations of Kangs favorites on YouTube:

- I like Glenn Harrold's Hypno-therapy meditations. I find his sleep meditation very helpful.
- Sarah Peyton: several 2-3 minute videos offering empathy for various challenges
- Jon Kabat-Zinn's Mindfulness meditations
- Lee Holden's Qi Gong 7 minutes of Magic; 10 and 20 minute morning routine
- Search Qi Gong for trauma or grief for some brief grounding exercises

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Emotional Freedom Technique --founded by Gary Craig; (Kangs' interpretation). A method to use for any issue, stress, or unpleasant feeling.

1. Decide what you want to focus on experiencing differently

Think about the feeling or problem you want relief from.

2. Rank the intensity from 0-10 0 is no charge at all and 10 is the most intense feeling. This helps to have some clarity if things have shifted after running through the process and checking again.

3. Choose a phrase-say the phrase 3 times while tapping on the side of the hand below the pinky finger

The phrase acknowledges the challenging issue or unpleasant feeling and brings in self-love and self-acceptance despite the difficulty. For example, if you are feeling anxious and want that to shift you could say: "Even though I have **this anxiety**, I love and accept myself deeply and completely." --the bold part being the language that changes depending on what you want to change. Or fill in: "Even though I have [issue/feeling], I love and accept myself deeply and completely."

4. Tap through the points. Grasp the wrist and breathe.

a. Tap on specific points on the body while repeating part of the phrase. “Despite this (issue/feeling)” or in the example of anxiety “Despite this **anxiety.**”

The tapping points, in sequence, are as follows:

- top of the head
- inner part of the eyebrow — the beginning of the brow, just above and to the side of the nose.
- side of the eye — on the outside corner of the eyebrow
- under the eye — on the bone under the eye, approximately 1 inch (in) below the pupil
- under the nose — the point between the nose and upper lip
- chin point — halfway between the underside of the lower lip and the bottom of the chin
- collarbone — the point where the breastbone (sternum), just below the throat
- under the arm — at the side of the body, approximately 4 in below the armpit
- on the bottom rib
- fingers- thumb, pointer, middle, pinky side of ring, pinky, outside of hand below pinky

Tap with fingertips and repeat the tap approximately five times on each point. When there is a point on both sides of the body (ie collarbone) you can tap on one side, the other or both.

b. Grasp one wrist with the other hand. Take a deep breathe and say “calm”, “love”, “breathe” or something that resonates for you that you want to bring in.

5. Test the intensity again-on a scale of 0-10 how much is the intensity? Repeat as much as you would like. It can be beneficial with one round or many repetitions!

EFTA An adaptation of the Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT)

By Henry Grayson, Ph.D.

Minor adjustments by Kangs

1. Breathe slowly and deeply into the diaphragm while placing your finger on the lower forehead, above and between the eyebrows. Focus on the problem, trauma, negative emotion or belief you wish to release while breathing slowly and deeply.
2. Allow images, or memories which represent the problem/issue. It might be one or more memories.
3. Notice what emotions or feelings the scenes or memories bring up and where you feel the emotions(s) in your body and bring your focus there.
5. Move your finger onto the inside edge of the eyebrow next to the nose and say: "I now release all fear related to this problem (trauma, belief, or disturbing emotion)." Breathe slowly and deeply after each release.
6. Next, place your fingers on the outside edge of the eyebrow and say: "I now release all anger, hatred, and rage related to this problem" (trauma or issue).
7. Place fingers on the bone under the eye and say: "I now release all anxiety related to this problem.
8. Place fingers underneath the nose and say, "'I now release all embarrassment related to this problem."
9. Place fingers under the bottom lip at the indent and say, "I now release all guilt and shame related to this problem".
10. Place fingers underneath the arm, about 4 inches down from the armpit, and say, "I now release all excessive concern related to this problem."
11. Place fingers of both hands under the rib cage on both sides and say, "I now release all hurt and sadness related to this problem."
12. Place palm of hand on center of chest cavity, and take several deep breaths as you inhale love into your heart and exhale fear through your solar plexus.
13. Place fingers on and below the collarbone bone and breathe.

Brain Gym® PACE

In order to learn and to be able to act for our own good it is important that we be in a Positive, Active, Clear and Energetic state....otherwise attempting to learn, or to do something, can be difficult, maybe even damaging to us. Movement is one of the best ways to reach that state of readiness and PACE is the way we do that in Brain Gym.



Water

Drink a glass of water

improves energy levels, any form of testing, productivity, improved academic performance, concentration and memory, better mental/physical co-ordination

ENERGETIC

E



Brain Buttons

While holding the navel with one hand, rub points just below the collarbone (hollow space between the ribs there) and move eyes from side to side (left to right). Change hands and repeat.

increases clarity for any visual activity (especially reading) or thinking skill, crossing the visual midline, correction of letter and number reversals, keeping one's place on the page, activates both hemispheres of the brain

CLEAR

C



Cross Crawl

Touch hand to opposite knee; alternate moving arm to touch opposite leg/knee. Make sure the arms are swinging and the internal X (from shoulder to opposite hip) in the body is felt. There are many ways of doing cross crawl...sitting, lying down, to music etc. Experiment and have fun!

reading, writing, spelling, improved binocular vision, ease of left to right eye movements, left and right co-ordination of brain and motor skills, improved word recognition, raises our energy levels

ACTIVE

A



Hook Ups

Part One: Cross one ankle over the other. Extend arms in front, cross one wrist over the other. Then interlace fingers and draw hands up towards chest. Or cross hands over chest and place fingers under armpits, thumbs out. Close eyes, place your tongue on the roof of your mouth in the center, behind the front teeth, breathe deeply and relax for about a minute.

Part Two: When ready, uncross legs, place feet firmly on the floor, uncross arms, touch the fingertips of both hands together, keep the tongue on the roof of the mouth and continue to breathe deeply for about a minute.

calms and recenters, defuses stress, establishes a positive orientation, increases attention, relaxation and calmness, clear listening and speaking, ease in meeting challenges like test taking, stabilizes blood pressure-though you may have to use it for a while, use if you find it difficult to sleep, anytime you are feeling depressed...if you are feeling sad or mad, this will help you feel glad.

POSITIVE

P

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This is a hold I learned from my friend and teacher Sarah Peyton, who learned it from constellation facilitator Mark Johnson. Prior origins are unknown but it may stem from work of or similar theory used by Temple Grandin who invented the Squeeze Machine.

When we are stressed, overwhelmed or anxious especially after something intense happens strong pressure on both sides of a person's body just below the top of the shoulders on the bicep, will help the person to come out of fight, flight or freeze. It gives a similar calming experience like swaddling. This hold can be done alone but is more easily done with support of one or two other people. Getting permission to do it to someone will increase the chances that it is welcome and helpful!

Solo Methods

1. When alone, wrap your arms around yourself, as if you are hugging yourself put pressure with your hands on your opposite upper arms/biceps. Breathe.
2. If it's hard to reach both shoulders or put a lot of pressure on yourself put one shoulder against a wall and use one hand to put pressure on the shoulder away from the wall. Can be done covertly and look like you are just leaning against the wall, cool as a cucumber! Breathe.
3. While lying down wrap yourself in a heavy comforter. Hold one end and roll. Shimmy your arms down by your sides. It sounds strange but can be very calming. Breathe.

With a buddy

1. The person receiving the hold (the person who needs grounding or at least the one who's getting it first) stands perpendicular to the hugger. Put one shoulder against the hugger's sternum. The hugger

then puts their hands on the far shoulder and hugs. The huggee can say if they want more or less pressure and can verbally say when they've had enough or make a plan to tap when you've had enough. Breathe.

2. Hugger sits on the floor and makes enough space for the huggee to sit down perpendicular to them. Huggee's legs can go over one of the hugger's legs. Again: Put one shoulder against the hugger's sternum. The hugger then puts their hands on the far shoulder and hugs. The huggee can say if they want more or less pressure and can verbally say when they've had enough or make a plan to tap when you've had enough. Breathe. If hugger needs more back support they can set up against a wall.

3. If the hugger's arm is long enough to reach one of the huggee's shoulder points, hugger puts one of huggee's shoulder's against their torso and puts their other arm around the huggee's shoulder to reach the other point with their hand. Breathe.

Sitting Between Two People Squoosh Method

The person who needs support, calming, or grounding sits between two willing squooshers. The squooshers lean their shoulders against each side on the middle person's shoulder points. Again, the squooshee can say if they want more or less pressure and can verbally say when they've had enough. Breathe. If one of the squooshers becomes uncomfortable, take a break and let another person squoosh or a two person method to give them a break.

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TAPAS Acupressure Technique (T.A.T.) invented in 1993 by Tapas Fleming

Kangs interpretation of

This is a process that can help when feeling bad or worried. I really like using TAT because:

- It gets my mind off of what was bothering me.
- I consistently feel different than I did before doing it.
- Since memorizing it I can do the whole thing in 1-2 minutes which is easier to motivate to do than something longer. Especially when I'm very stressed.

HAND POSITION: The hand position held during the 7 steps. With one hand, place your ring finger and thumb on each side of the bridge of the nose near the corners of your eyes, with the middle finger in the center of the forehead about 1 inch above the brow line. Apply gentle pressure. In between each step take the hand down and breathe a few times before transitioning to the next step. Switch hands if one hand gets tired. The hand position allows you to apply pressure to acupuncture points on the face while following the sequence.

SEQUENCE

1. Place your hand in the position described above. **Put your mind on the problem or issue.** It may be a feeling, a situation or event. Experience it as vividly as you can, in your thoughts, feelings, and physical body. This is can be the most uncomfortable step because of bringing attention onto the issue. If you can, allow yourself to think and feel all of these things for this short time. Remember to breathe. Take the hand down. Take a few breaths.

2. Resume the hand position. **Imagine what life would be like without this problem.** Notice what you feel and any thoughts. Take the hand down. Breathe.

3. Resume the hand position. Say this statement: **“All the origins of this problem are healing now.”** After a few breaths say **“Thank you for healing all the origins of this**

problem.” Breathe and maintain the hand position throughout. Take the hand down. Breathe.

4. Resume the hand position. Say this statement: **“All the areas of my life, mind, and body that are misoriented by this problem are healing now.”** After a few breathes say, **“Thank you for healing all the areas of my life, mind, and body that are misoriented by this problem.”** Take the hand down. Breathe. * Misoriented can be replaced by distressed, bothered or whatever word resonates with you.

5. Resume the hand position. Say this statement: **“All the areas of my life that have gotten something out of holding onto this problem are healing now.”** After a few breathes say, **“Thank you for healing all the areas of my life that have gotten something out of holding onto this problem.”** Take the hand down. Breathe.

6. Resume the hand position. Say this statement: **“I forgive everyone and everything that I have blamed for this problem, including myself.”** Repeat after a few breathes. (You can think of this as releasing the other person/people and letting go of whatever part of them you’ve been holding onto.) Breathe and keep applying pressure with your hand.

7. Resume the hand position. Say this statement: **“I ask forgiveness from everyone and everything that I have hurt by holding on to this problem, including myself.”** Repeat after a few breathes. Breathe throughout, maintaining the hand position. Take the hand down. Breathe.

Notice on a scale on 0-10 how much pain or distress is still there. 0 is none at all, 10 being extreme distress. Repeat the process if you’d like to lower it more, or feel even better.



Nonviolent Communication (NVC) AKA Compassionate Communication By Kangs

NVC is a body of work developed by Dr. Marshall Rosenberg. It is an awareness practice that helps us to be more in touch with what is going on in within ourselves and have a better idea of what motivates others to make the choices they make.

When practiced, NVC can support us to understand and communicate with one another and ourselves in a more compassionate manner. NVC can be used to better know oneself: to accept ourselves, to grow, to heal; to more easily foster connection with others and to help resolve conflict. It can serve as groundwork for healing or for social justice work.

NVC holds the idea that everything that any being does or says is an attempt to meet a need.

Some of the choices (or strategies) - what we do or say - bring about joy and some don't. Some choices we make satisfy the needs we were hoping to meet and other choices don't. When we begin to be aware that we have needs, we increase the likelihood that our needs will be attended to. Feelings are a gateway to our needs. When we notice we are feeling something, if it's pleasant it points to a need or needs that are being attended to. If the feeling is not pleasant it points to what needs are not satisfied in that moment.

Self-connection exercise-open to the lists of feeling and needs words later in this zine.

Close your eyes if its comfortable.

Take 5 long slow deep breathes.

Look through the feelings list and notice what feelings resonate with you in this moment.

Look on the needs list. If you identified unpleasant feelings, what needs on the list are you longing for more of? If you notice pleasant feelings are there needs on this list that are met in this moment?

Notice what its like in your body to notice what you need right now? Does it help you relax?

Is there relief in knowing, met or unmet, and that having needs is part of being alive?

Empathy in NVC

Empathy is a tool that supports connection. In NVC empathy is the act of trying to be present, understanding and imagining what someone else might feel or want. We may express empathy verbally or non verbally with presence, compassion and care.

Empathy in NVC structure is commonly guessing at feelings and needs or a summary of what someone has expressed. Yet empathy can and is many different things for different people. It can be poetry, metaphor, joking, cussing (“holy shit, that’s horrible!”) or silent presence. If you’d like, start to notice what works for you to have a sense of being gotten and see if you can ask for it!

Some thoughts and experiences

I have found NVC to come in handy in pretty much any and every situation in life and since beginning to learn NVC in late 2008 it has transformed my consciousness, way of thinking, feeling and being in the world.

This may sound weird but I no longer consider blame, fault and wrongness a part of my truth. They exist in my initial reactions, since in the 30 plus years I was alive before NVC I was socialized to think of things in terms of good/bad or right/wrong, but I believe, deep in my heart (even when I have trouble accessing it) that needs and what we are longing for is what motivates any being to make the choices that they make, even when I don’t like what they choose to say or do. I no longer am convinced that things that bring up pain for me are steeped in “wrongness”.

This can be a groundbreaking turning point for many people to feel inspired about their life and about learning NVC. “I have needs?” “I’m not just being needy?” “I’m not too sensitive if I feel something unpleasant and can’t just make myself stop feeling it?”

I thought if I could stop my bad feelings then I could let things go and vice versa. That's what people told me I should do. And you know what? It didn't work. And not only that, it's helped me to really dislike getting advice and should-ed!

Hence my first intro class to NVC was life-changing. Having that validation and acknowledgement that my feelings were there because I had unmet needs, helped me to understand that my depression stems from having consistently unmet needs. Feeling depressed is a logical reaction our bodies, brains and nervous systems might have to having many consistently unmet needs.

With NVC, and resonant empathy in my awareness I hope to inspire others through teaching and healing work to be able to heal and live more joyfully. Despite the traumas, pains and struggles.

Needs Inventory:

CONNECTION

acceptance
affection
appreciation
belonging
cooperation
communication
closeness
community
companionship
compassion
consideration
consistency
empathy
inclusion
intimacy
love
mutuality
nurturing
respect/self-respect

CONNECTION

continued
safety
security
stability
support
to know and be known
to see and be seen
to understand and
be understood
trust
warmth

PHYSICAL

WELL-BEING

air
food
movement/exercise
rest/sleep
sexual expression
safety
shelter
touch
water

HONESTY

authenticity
integrity
presence

PLAY

joy
humor

PEACE

beauty
communion
ease
equality
harmony
inspiration
order

AUTONOMY

choice
freedom
independence
space
spontaneity

MEANING

awareness
celebration of
life
challenge
clarity
competence
consciousness
contribution
creativity
discovery
efficacy
effectiveness
growth
hope
learning
mourning
participation
purpose
self-expression
stimulation
to matter
understanding

Feelings when your needs are satisfied

AFFECTIONATE

compassionate
friendly
loving
open hearted
sympathetic
tender
warm

ENGAGED

absorbed
alert
curious
engrossed
enchanted
entranced
fascinated
interested
intrigued
involved
spellbound
stimulated

HOPEFUL

expectant
encouraged
optimistic

CONFIDENT

empowered
open
proud
safe
secure

EXCITED

amazed
animated
ardent
aroused
astonished
dazzled
eager
energetic
enthusiastic
giddy
invigorated
lively
passionate
surprised
vibrant

GRATEFUL

appreciative
moved
thankful
touched

INSPIRED

amazed
awed
wonder

JOYFUL

amused
delighted
glad
happy
jubilant
pleased
tickled

EXHILARATED

blissful
ecstatic
elated
enthralled
exuberant
radiant
rapturous
thrilled

PEACEFUL

calm
clear headed
comfortable
centered
content
equanimous
fulfilled
mellow
quiet
relaxed
relieved
satisfied
serene
still
tranquil
trusting

REFRESHED

enlivened
rejuvenated
renewed
rested
restored
revived

Feelings when your needs are not satisfied

AFRAID

apprehensive
dread
foreboding
frightened
mistrustful
panicked
petrified
scared
suspicious
terrified
wary
worried

ANNOYED

aggravated
dismayed
disgruntled
displeased
exasperated
frustrated
impatient
irritated
irked

ANGRY

enraged
furious
incensed
indignant
irate
livid
outraged
resentful

AVERSION

animosity
appalled
contempt
disgusted
dislike
hate
horrified
hostile
repulsed

CONFUSED

ambivalent
baffled
bewildered
dazed
hesitant
lost
mystified
perplexed
puzzled
torn

DISCONNECTED

alienated
aloof
apathetic
bored
cold
detached
distant
distracted
indifferent
numb
removed
uninterested
withdrawn

DISQUIET

agitated
alarmed
discombobulated
disconcerted
disturbed
perturbed
rattled
restless
shocked
startled
surprised
troubled
turbulent
turmoil
uncomfortable
uneasy
unnerved
unsettled
upset

EMBARRASSED TENSE

ashamed
chagrined
flustered
guilty
mortified
self-conscious

FATIGUE

beat
burnt out
depleted
exhausted
lethargic
listless
sleepy
tired
weary
worn out

PAIN

agony
anguished
bereaved
devastated
grief
heartbroken
hurt
lonely
miserable
regretful
remorseful

SAD

depressed
dejected
despair
despondent
disappointed
discouraged
disheartened
forlorn
gloomy
heavy hearted
hopeless
melancholy
unhappy
wretched

anxious
cranky
distressed
distraught
edgy
fidgety

frazzled
irritable
jittery
nervous
overwhelmed
restless
stressed out

VULNERABLE

fragile
guarded
helpless
insecure
leery
reserved
sensitive
shaky

YEARNING

envious
jealous
longing
nostalgic
pining
wistful

*This section is not comprehensive in anyway but hopefully it offers a bit of help in thinking about deescalation, interventions and when to choose to get involved.

A reason I care about deescalating situations is that I care about harm and suffering anyone and everyone in the world experiences. I want human and non-humans to be safe from harm. I want a world where we are accountable to our community (friends, relatives, neighbors and strangers; the world is the community I care about) without using authority or hierarchy and without people getting hurt. Still I'm the only one who can take care of me and can choose what I'm up for. You are the only one who can determine what you are up for. There are times when I have the internal resources to do something and times when I don't. You may or may not have heard the metaphor "you need to put the oxygen mask on yourself first". So not only will we not be of use to ourselves if we try to offer support when we aren't resourced but we most likely won't be of help to the people we want to help.

When I have the juice to help out with a conflict or deescalation, most tools I use come from Nonviolent Communication (see the Nonviolent Communication and Resources on pg. 34). When I do help a situation to deescalate I don't want to pick a side; ideally I want to be on everyone's side. (This is definitely more challenging when people are expressing prejudices that I strongly disagree with, that are steeped in oppressive ideology).

With People I Don't Know:

It's a tricky thing when we don't know people; it's harder to know if our help will be welcome. One thing I ask myself first if I see a situation with strangers I'm interpreting as being in distress is "how am I right now? Do I have the spoons to offer support? Do I feel up to managing how I might feel if I get a variety of 'no/mind your own business' responses?"

Methods to begin to intervene:

Address both people

- “are you all okay?”
- “can you folks use some help?”

A fan favorite: distraction. Intervene as though you are totally unaware there is a conflict taking place and walk up as the person in need of help.

- “I think I’m really lost, can you give me directions?”
- “Excuse me, do you have the time?”
- “I’m looking for my friend/relative/basketball coach who was supposed to meet me around here and I’m worried s/he/they already left.”

What will most connect to the other person? Anything about them. Many of us enjoy when people are interested in us.

- “Cool shoes!”
- “Where did you get your shirt?”
- “Is there a restaurant you like around here?”
- “Where are you from?”

Improvise. Get creative. A great time to pull out skills from that improv class you took all those years ago!

If I receive a response that lands as hostile. I may choose to watch from a bit farther away; people are less likely to act violently if there is a witness. I may choose to leave (again how much energy do I have?)

If there is openness I try to engage. This is when I’ll ideally start to empathize.

Tense Situations (probably the main reason we’d intervene)

If it’s between two people and it’s apparent that there is anger there is a good chance the person I’m interpreting as angry wants respect, so I might say “I imagine you really want to be respected?” I have been nervous before, when there is a tense

situation and asked someone angry “are you feeling angry?” and it pissed the person off more. Someone who’s pissed and doesn’t know me does not want their anger identified, at least till trust has been established.

Once there is some connection or trust:

Empathy

- *“are you frustrated? Do you want respect”*
- *“I imagine you really want to be able to trust your partner? How painful!”*

Often this will be easier if its people I know, or am acquainted with, as it’s easier to be trusted.

I’m wrapping up Deescalation with two stories.

A few stories with the creativity skill:

1. A few months ago, January 2017, I was at the Martin Luther King demonstration in Oakland. There was a religious based ceremony going on that I’d gone to see. A person approached the ceremony and looked excited and began to talk loudly, saying things I was experiencing as not linear. He began to stand in the middle of the crowd and stick up his middle fingers. People around him looked distressed and distracted from the ceremony. I was worried someone might go off on him and it would escalate. I wanted everyone to feel and be safe including this person. I tried to get closer so I could talk to him. I was nervous not knowing how he’d respond. He was now closer to the ceremony and as I got closer it was hard to hear the ceremony which I imagine was similar for people nearby. He was saying some stuff, if I recall correctly, about the middle east and raising his middle fingers above his head. When I was a few feet away; I bit the bullet and addressed him saying “hey man, how you doing?” He started to direct his talk at me. So I said “I’m Kangs what’s your name?” He responded with his name and more hard to follow stuff. I said “It’s hard to hear you let’s go over there”. We walked a away from the

ceremony and I kept asking him questions and kept him engaged. He told me stuff, a lot of which I didn't enjoy, but I was resourced enough to go with it. He received attention he seemed to appreciate and the tension in the crowd seemed to dissipate so people could focus on the ceremony.

2. Here is a story I really enjoy I heard from an NVC trainer about a person who had broken into a house. The person who lived there woke up; when the intruder came into their bedroom she said "do you know what time it is?" The person looked at their watch and said "2am". The person who lived there responded "there is a guest room down the hall. You can go sleep there and leave in the morning. It's late so I'm going back to sleep". The "intruder" went to the guest room. Slept there and left in the morning.

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Other Notes on DeEscalation by KC

When we choose to utilize our de-escalation skills, it may be helpful to be hyper aware of oneself.

As Kangs mentioned, check in with yourself prior to engaging.

It may also be helpful to **KNOW YOUR TRIGGERS.**

This is easier said than done. Learning triggers takes time and emotional work. Knowing your triggers will help you in determining whether you will be able to adequately engage whatever hostile situation is going on. If we are not in control of ourselves when we are triggered, we may be putting ourselves and others in a more dangerous situation. So, if there is someone shouting bigoted misogynoir and that is one of your triggers, it may be best to sit this one out or find help (de-escalation buddies assemble!!!)

Prior to engaging...

GROUND.

Remember to breathe. Before deescalating a situation, do as many grounding skills as you need to. We want to enter any hostile situation with a clear head and balanced heart so that we can better think on our feet and maintain a solid emotional baseline for folks who are experiencing high stress. When we set an example of being calm, those around us may have an easier time attuning their emotional level to ours.

BE AWARE.

Assess the situation and the surrounding as quickly as possible. What are the signs that someone is in distress to you? Think of safety for yourself and those involved. Where are exits/doors? Are there people nearby? Do you have to approach closer in order to be heard? Can you remain at a distance? Is there anything in the area that could be used as a weapon against you? Can you get away safely? It's important to be aware of these things just in case the situation

becomes more sour. Taking note of your surroundings is incredibly important.

When engaging...

CONSENT.

It is very important to ask for consent from both persons before engaging. There are some situations where our involvement, though we have good intentions, is entirely unwelcome and may make the situation worse. If we are told to “fuck off,” respectfully leave. We also want folks who are distressed feel a sense of control over their surroundings and by asking, we give them a choice to allow our presence or not.

BODY LANGUAGE.

- Always show your hands! Do not keep your hands behind your back or in your pockets. People may assume you're hiding something from them such as a weapon and they may become more hostile toward you. Show your hands at your sides, ideally palms facing forward. If you have crutches, keeping your hands on your crutches is fine. If you're in a wheelchair, perhaps have your palms face up in your lap. The main point is to have your hands visible!
- Try not to point at anyone.
- Keep a calm face. It may not be the best to smile while someone is in distress. This may make them feel more invalidated.

TOOLS

O Non-violent communication (see pg.37)

O Saying No - you always have the right to say no.

O Broken record - repeat the same statement like, “Stop talking to her, stop talking to her, stop talking to her...” until the person stops the behavior or leaves.

O Name the behavior - address the specific behavior of the person that is offensive. Such as, “You are yelling.” Avoid assumptions about their behavior or

using sarcasm to address it. This gives the person an opportunity to correct their behavior.

O Use “I” statements - these enable you to state your feelings without judgment such as “I feel uncomfortable hearing that term.” Be sure to refrain from using “I” statement like “I feel like you hurt me.” “You hurt me” is a judgement. “I feel hurt” is a more accurate “I” statement.

O Get to “we” or “teaming” - foster a sense of unity with the person in hopes to help avoid their anger getting directed towards you. “We are respectful to women and women of color.”

O Interrupt the situation. (see pg.44)

O Step it down - match the person’s vocal intensity at first and then gradually lower your voice.

O Speak really quietly so that the person needs to lower their voice in order to hear you.

After engaging...

- Ground
- Selfcare
- Practice deescalating with friends

SELF CARE: Here are just some small suggestions. Add more!

Physical	Psychological	Spiritual	Emotional	Work
-Exercising -Bathing -Walking -Cooking	-Therapy -Journaling -Self-reflection -Saying “no” (staying true to boundaries)	-read inspirational texts -prayer -meditate -connect with nature	-listening to music -love yourself -laugh -cry	-take breaks -go on a walk -check in with supervisor -set limits -one task at a time

RESOURCES:

By Kangs

My Services and Projects:

I am available to work with people.

- One on one counseling with lots of empathy, resonance and humility. to work through depression, anxiety, process trauma or any other issue. I have space in my practice, and can work with people out of state or country.
- Constellation work
- Mediation services to help folks hear each other and connect or resolve challenges. Have a supported conversation.
- Workshops or one on one learning: Nonviolent Communication, Grounding, Deescalation Self-care and/or Transgender Sensitivity trainings

Please be in touch if you are interested in any of my offerings.

Write me at kangsymclovin@gmail.com or go to

www.Kangsempathiccounseling.weebly.com for more info.

Resource List

- Regular NVC classes in the bay area www.BayNVC.org
- East Bay based mediation and restorative justice group SEEDS <http://www.seedscrc.org>
- NVC based Mediation skills and Mediation based take on Nonviolent Communication <http://www.mediateyourlife.com/>
- Restorative Circles with Dominic Barter <http://www.restorativecircles.org>
- Nonviolent communication and social justice retreat; <http://nlsj.learnnvc.org/>

Resources by KC

For questions, comments, or concerns – feel free to email me at:

KC.vanderzee@gmail.com

A good link for bystander intervention:

- <https://killerfemme.com/2016/12/24/bystander-intervention/>

More info on DeEscalation:

- <http://safeandproud.org/sites/default/files/resources/De-Escalation%20Skills.pdf>
- <http://www.creative-interventions.org/tools/toolkit/>

Other safety tips:

- <http://caeny.org/resources/safety-tips/>
- <http://safeandproud.org>

Thank you for reading our zine on DeEscalation and Grounding Skills! We hope you find this information useful. Cheers, groundhogs!

