

Some Simple Practices

To Enhance Your Coaching Presence

Sit in a Centered and Supportive Posture

Our posture has a big influence on the quality of our presence. This practice provides wonderful support for the other practices included here.

Sit in an upright posture by doing the following:

- Place both feet flat on the floor with your toes pointing straight forward.
- Position your hips slightly forward on whatever you are sitting on so that your back is free from the furniture.
- Position your body so that your knees are over your feet.
- Try to sit so that your thighs are parallel to the ground, or sloping slightly downward from hip to knee.
- Adjust your pelvis so that you are sitting on your sitz bones.
- Align your shoulders over your hips.
- Align your head to be balanced comfortably over the center of your shoulders.
- Tuck your chin slightly toward your chest so that you gently elongate the back of your neck, and envision a helium balloon gently lifting your head from the crown.

Attend to Direct Sensations

*Simple as it sounds, that is the very difficulty almost every person faces as he tries to connect with his body. He won't really **feel** his legs, stomach, or shoulders, but, out of habit, he **thinks** about his legs, stomach, and shoulders. He pictures them to himself and thus avoids giving feeling-attention to them directly. [emphasis added]*

Ken Wilber

- Depending on where we are in our development and integration, we have varying degrees of access to the direct sensations of our body. While the idea of paying attention to direct sensations in our body may seem simple, or even trite, the reality of it will often surprise us.
- In this practice, we explore paying attention to and describing sensations as directly as we can – and we focus on body (felt) sensations.
- It is important to use gentle, curious attention. When guiding our attention to a specific location in our body, we attempt to use a gaze that is like looking over our left shoulder at a deer so as not to scare it.

- Some useful categories for describing direct body (felt) sensations include:
 - **Pressure** (e.g., “I feel constricted”; “I feel a heavy weight pressing in on my chest”; “I feel light and open”; etc.)
 - **Vibration** (e.g., “I feel a tingling sensation in my fingers”; “I feel buzzing in my right big toe”; “I feel like an electrical current is moving up the back of my legs”; etc.)
 - **Temperature** (e.g., “I feel a burning sensation behind my right eye”; “It feels cold around my heart”; etc.)
 - **Texture** (e.g., “It feels like my lower abdomen is a wet ball of clay”; “The inside of my left shin near the bone feels rough and grainy like sandpaper”; etc.)
 - **Size** (e.g., “I feel a constriction about the size of a football in my chest and it is getting bigger”; etc.)
 - **Color** (e.g., “I am feeling a sensation around my liver that feels blue”; “The space behind my eyes feels white”; etc.)
- In this context, I’m making a distinction between emotion and sensation. In the common use of the term ‘feeling’ in our culture, we often associate certain sensations with specific emotions. And, I think it can be very supportive to distinguish between them. In this practice we want to notice and describe the sensations as best we can without immediately attributing an emotion to them.
- Also, most of us will typically also involuntarily experience what we sense to be pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral (as pleasure, pain, or indifference). Even as we are experiencing the associated pleasure, pain, or indifference, we want to try and focus our attention on the sensations as directly as possible and describe them using the six categories listed above.

Three-Stage Breath

The Three-Stage Breath is used to open and flex the abdomen and the rib cage (upper, lower, front, and back). This practice can be very effective at helping someone release tension that is being held in the trunk of the body, which when the tension is released may also result in a calming of the mind and a sense of more mental clarity.

- Exhale as fully as you can.
- Take a full inhale through your nose in three stages.
 - During the first stage inhale to expand your abdomen (lower stage).
 - Pause briefly while holding your breath. Then inhale to expand the bottom of your rib cage (middle stage).
 - Pause briefly while holding your breath. Then inhale to expand the back of your chest (lifting the shoulder blades away from the front of your chest).
 - Pause briefly while holding your breath and feeling the expansion.
- Exhale fully through your mouth, forming an “O” with your lips as if you were blowing out a candle on a table in front of you. This completes one repetition.

Repeat 3, 5, or 7 times.

Scalp Massage

This practice can evoke relaxation throughout the entire body, and result in a sensation of openness and space above the head and crown. It also helps us to remember the importance of touch and conscious contact for our bodies.

Sit in a supportive and upright position. It can be helpful to take three, three-stage breaths before starting.

Place the pads of your fingertips on your scalp and bring your awareness to the sensations within your finger tips and on your scalp. Rub and massage your scalp energetically with your fingertips in a way that feels supportive. Work your way across all portions of your scalp. Pause and observe the sensations in your scalp and throughout your body. Repeat as desired. For a slight variation, you can use the edges of your fingernails to lightly stimulate the scalp.

Face Massage

Many of us in our culture hold tremendous tension in our face, and especially in our jaw. This practice can help us release the various masks that we feel we must wear and allow us to be more authentically present to what is arising in this moment. It also often evokes and supports relaxation in the entire body, especially in our neck and shoulders, and sometimes hips.

- Place the pads of your fingertips on your skin near the top of your face, just below the hairline.
- Begin massaging your skin in circular motions, consciously sensing into your skin with an intention of massaging all the way through to your skull.
- Mindfully move your massaging motion across the entirety of the open portions of skin on your face.
- Then, gently and firmly massage your eyebrows between your thumbs and forefingers, starting at the center and slowly working outward. Repeat as is supportive.
- Use your fingertips from your middle fingers on each hand to gently and supportively massage the area around your eyes, and then gently across your eyelids.
- Gently and firmly massage your nose, starting from the top.
- Using your thumb and forefinger, massage your upper and lower lips and chin – gently pinching and pulling to release.
- Massage the entire external portions of your ears, starting at the top and working around the entire surface.
- Use your thumbs and forefingers to massage the entire outline of your jaw on both sides.
- Turn your hands, palms upwards, and gently place your fingertips behind your head at the base of your skull. Place the pads of your thumbs on the muscles beneath your cheek bones and using the support of your fingertips behind your head, press into the muscle beneath your cheekbones and consciously pull your thumbs back along the cheek bone, transitioning to the muscle of the jaw, and down the neck on both sides, following the chord-like muscle on the

sides of the neck. After each trace take a deep inhale and full exhale. Do not repeat more than three times, especially when starting this practice as these muscles can become quite sore.

Sense Your Feet and Connect with Ground

These two practices can help us distribute our awareness within and throughout our body. The first practice (Sense Your Feet) can be done by itself, or as part of the Connect with Ground practice. These practices can also help us feel more of sense of connection, resourcefulness, and belonging.

Sense Your Feet

- Place part (20 – 40 %) of our attention on the bottom of our feet
- Notice and describe sensations in the bottoms of our feet

Connect with Ground

- Take a long, smooth inhale through your nose and imagine that you can draw energy from the earth through the bottoms of your feet, up the back of your legs, up your back, to the top of your shoulders, and over the crown of your head. Notice the sensations in your body as you feel the energy moving up this path and filling the body.
- After completing the inhale, exhale slowly and fully through your mouth. Exhale through an opening in your mouth as if you were trying to blow out a candle on a table in front of you. As you exhale, imagine that any excess energy, discomfort, or agitation that is present within you drains down through your entire body. The energy flows through the bottom of your feet and enters the earth.
- Do this several times. If you do not feel a strong connection with the ground when you finish, you can stand comfortably and lift your toes on both feet, imagining that as you do so, the arches of your feet act like suction cups and adhere to the ground. Release your toes and let your feet relax. Notice the sensations.

Yogic Yawn

This practice can induce significant release of tension held deep in the throat, neck, head and chest.

- Sit in a supportive upright position.
- Visualize yourself needing to yawn while being in a situation where you would like to do it “politely”.
- Once the yawn starts, invite the yawn to advance as deeply as possible into the back of your throat.
- Hold the inhale briefly, then release with abandon.
- Allowing vocal sounds to emerge during the exhale can be supportive.

I Would Love to Hear from You

If you have questions or comments about any of these practices, please feel free to contact me at kkirby@evotoco.com.

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