

EXERCISE: YIN COMPASSIONATE GESTURES

The power of a supportive hand on the shoulder, a gentle back rub and a comforting hug are things most of us have been fortunate enough to receive from another but not something many of us practice offering to ourselves. When a child or small animal is hurt, a natural response is to reach out with a soothing touch and a comforting voice. This soothing touch and gentle vocalization taps into our mammalian caregiver response, releasing oxytocin and opiates in both the giver and receiver of the compassion. Even primates experience this hormonal release while grooming. We're hardwired for compassion.

Placing your own hand on your body with the intention of soothing yourself when you're feeling sad, angry, and frustrated or any other unpleasant emotion, taps into the same mammalian caregiver response and your body releases the calming hormones to counteract the cortisol and adrenalin that gets released during stress and Inner Criticism.

In this practice you'll be guided to try on several physical gestures that can be associated with nurturing and supportive presence.

What did it feel like to comfort yourself in this way?

Did any resistance arise? How did you work with it?



EXERCISE: YANG COMPASSION- MISTAKE RITUALS

The intention of this exercise is to ritualize an embodied technique for letting go of a mistake or bringing lightness to moments of failure. Where the Yin Compassionate Gestures were a hand over the heart, the Yang Compassion Mistake Ritual is a gesture like “brushing it off”.

In this exercise you’ll be guided to reflect on a recent mistake you made. After connecting with the thoughts, sensations and emotions that are associated with the mistake, you’ll try on various gestures and techniques to symbolize letting go and returning your attention to the next opportunity.

Examples:

- Flush (making a flushing motion)
- Deep audible exhale (feel a release in the front of the body)
- No Sweat (wiping sweat from the brow)
- Brush It Off (lightly brushing the shoulder)
- Scissor Motion (cutting myself some slack)
- Reset (Pressing the hand between the thumb and index finger and say to yourself: control, alt, delete)
- Let It Go (Clench your fist tight and then release, opening your palm)

Which gesture felt most natural to you?



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What was your experience with this practice?

What emotion, sensations or images arose, if any?

How do you imagine you could integrate this practice in the upcoming week or weeks?

