Practicing Presence
CONNECTING WITH YOUR BODYMIND FOR DEEPER DIALOGUE
WITH SELF + OTHER

WHAT IT IS
Presence is embodied awareness: feeling connected to your sensory, mental, and emotional experience in the moment.

• Facilitates daily self-regulation + healing.
• Enables deep listening + connection.
• Builds stamina for necessary discomfort.

HOW TO DO IT
Presence is a habit or a practice: something that must be cultivated (rather than switched on/off). Take time to “practice presence” so that it becomes more natural, habitual, and consistent for you.

Use the exercises below to access or activate presence...

• daily, to learn presence as a consistent habit (pick 1 exercise per day to repeat at intervals)
• before dialogue to ground yourself + focus on your purpose/intention for engaging
• during dialogue to pause in moments of cognitive or emotional challenge before responding
• after dialogue to return to yourself + help process or heal from what you’ve experienced

WHY WE DO IT

FIND GRAVITY
Pause and focus: Where in your body do you feel the pull of gravity most strongly? Where do you feel sensations of weight or heaviness?

In dialogue: Provides ballast + balance through the stimulation or agitation of conversation.

CENTERLINE
Focus on your spine. Rock forward + back, side to side. Rotate your torso several degrees without moving your lower body. Feel your body’s axis.

In dialogue: Brings a sense of inner strength + clarity when you feel unsettled or vulnerable.

BREATHING
Tune into the steady rhythm of your own breathing as you would waves on a beach. Listen to your breath + feel your chest rise and fall.

In dialogue: Soothes defensiveness, irritation, anger, and reactivity/hyperactivity.

5-4-3-2-1
Focus on each sense in turn. Name 5 things you see, 4 things you feel, 3 things you hear, 2 things you smell, 1 thing you taste in your environment.

In dialogue: Calms anxiety. Cultivates the ability to listen + speak with purpose + focus.

CHANNEL ENERGY INTO AN OBJECT
Pick up a stone or other small object. Handle it. Notice how it feels, how it does + doesn’t change in response to your touch. Imagine your energy being drawn out of your body + into the object.

In dialogue: Draws distractions + nervous energy out so that you can listen + speak intentionally.

FULL BODY SCAN
Beginning with your feet and moving upward, focus on each part of your body in turn. Observe sensations. Notice where you are holding tension or pain. Breathe + release or make peace with it.

In dialogue: Helps identify the nature + physical location of emotions, so you can attend to them.

Much of the above content is adapted from Chapter 2 of Say What You Mean by Oren Jay Sofer (2018). Graphic created by Dr. Sarah Ropp, 2022.