

Strategies of the H.E.A.R.T. for Racial Justice Group Mentoring Course

3 B'S OF BEING PRESENT WITH FEELINGS -

WORKSHEET

These tools are for those who find themselves choked up, flooded with emotion, or unable to speak because conflict is so uncomfortable. The goal is to use one or more of these techniques so you can ground yourself in love or your values--and have your response come from this place of strength. How you respond in the moment, whether it is simply to listen, to make eye contact, to ask a question, or to offer additional input, will be “right” if it comes from your authentic self.

These tools take practice. *I recommend that you use them frequently in conversations that are mildly stressful so that you build up muscle memory and gain confidence.*

BREATHE

Practice taking **deep belly breaths**--in through the nose and out through the nose. Focus on your breath *before* answering. This will stimulate your parasympathetic nervous system. This nervous system promotes calm, relaxation, and clarity. It will allow you to hear the other(s) and to check in with your Inner Guidance on how to respond.

BODY

When in crisis or stress, we often mentally leave our bodies. We go into fight-or-flight mode, in which blood rushes to our muscles--and *away* from the parts of our brains that control rational thought, creative problem-solving, and wise restraint. But even as the body is revving up, we are losing awareness of it. If you are someone who blanks, who literally cannot think of a single

thing to say because you feel so overwhelmed by the other person's confidence, aggression, or support from others, then this technique will be very helpful.

Prior the conflict, identify a part of your body that feels strong and hopeful.

To help you find that body part: consider what feels good to you now; what others have said is a strong or beautiful part of you; or do some stretching for 10 minutes and then scan your body to see what feels good. I've been told most of my life that I have "good hands" and that is where I feel a lot of energy and connection to my deep, wise self. Alternatively, I focus on my feet, because that helps me to feel the strength of Mother Earth. When you consciously attend to a body part that feels good, you are subtly reassuring yourself that *you are good and capable*. **As you speak, focus on that body part.** Sometimes I look at my hands. Sometimes I press the base of my big toe into the ground. Find a way to activate *your* body strength.

BELIEF

Many of us have a persistent belief that debilitates us during Big Feelings.

Thoughts like:

"I'm so stupid."

"It's never good enough."

"They hate me."

"I'm all alone and nobody cares."

"I'm such a loser."

"Nobody listens to me."

"I suck."

What is particularly dangerous about these beliefs is that we may project them onto another person. For example, instead of acknowledging that you are judging yourself, you may project that the other person is judging you--and then react as though that's true. But this leads to disempowerment; you have allowed the other person to define *who you are*.

Persistent beliefs like these are often in the background and being activated when we are under racial stress. I do not recommend that you try to argue yourself out of a

judgment. Instead, I suggest that you get to know the kinds of things you are saying to yourself when you are stressed. **Write them out below and offer yourself compassion for living with these judgments in your head space.**

Second, **come up with a new belief or mantra.** You may choose something that calls on the divine such as “make me an instrument of your peace” or “Thy will, Lord” or “help me to be of service” or something else that gets you out of the ego’s grip. **Write down 2 options here:**

- 1.
- 2.

Try out your short belief in conversations and settings such as the supermarket check-out or the daycare pick up. I find that it’s important to do the breathing and body focus before using this technique because the mind that is not grounded and calm can make any tool a weapon against yourself.