

# Self & Community Care

IN THE CONTEXT OF TRAUMA,  
VIOLENCE AND ACTIVISM

bloom x  Wellnest

## HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

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This resource can be used as a reference guide to help support your endurance with a curated list of materials, tools and practices created by Bloom and Wellnest.



**This guide is designed to support folks in caring for themselves and their communities, in the context of collective and vicarious trauma, violence, advocacy work, and activism.**

As therapy practices committed to collective healing, open access education and collaboration driven by community need, we at Bloom & Wellnest are offering these resources collaboratively to both of our communities. Curated with care, we hope you find them useful and supportive to your needs ❤️

For questions about this zine, you can email:  
[info@wellnest.ca](mailto:info@wellnest.ca) **and/or**  
[hello@bloompsychologyto.com](mailto:hello@bloompsychologyto.com)



Writing: Meghan Watson, M. A., Linda Mensah, MSW, RSW and Zainib Abdullah, MSW, RSW,  
Research: Meghan Watson, M. A., Linda Mensah, MSW, RSW and Zainib Abdullah, MSW, RSW,  
Design Team: Meghan Watson, M. A., Linda Mensah, MSW, RSW and Zainib Abdullah, MSW, RSW, Kailey Hong

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# a note to the reader:

While this post is meant to be a **free valuable source of information** and learning, the strategies and suggestions contained within are general in nature. They are not a replacement for mental health care or any form of health care treatment.

If you are struggling with your mental health relative to the topics discussed within this zine, please refer to these [additional crisis resources](#) (Link)

## topics covered:

- Mindful Grounding, Somatic & Regulating Tools.
- Social Activism, Care Practices & Social Connection.
- Managing Self & Community Care.
- Practical Prep & Safe Activism.
- Nurturing Integrity in Times of Crisis.





# Mindfulness & Grounding in Response to Trauma

Effective self and community care begins with getting familiar with your trauma responses. Trauma in our body can present in multiple ways, including feeling out of control, irritability, hyper-vigilance, lashing out, fatigue, brain fog, hopelessness, disconnection and much more. If you notice your body responding in any of the following ways after activating or stressful situations or imagery, try the grounding exercise below.

## Signs of hyper-arousal

Feeling out of control, irritability/  
lashing out, easily startled,  
feeling easily distracted, etc.

## Signs of hypo-arousal

Lethargy/fatigue, mental fog,  
hopelessness, disinterest,  
feeling disconnected, etc.

## GROUNDING EXERCISE

- **Step 1:** Pause what you're doing.
- **Step 2:** Look towards the sky or horizon so that your eyes and head are tilted slightly upwards and allow your eyes to wander across the cloud and/or tops of buildings and trees.
- **Step 3:** With your mouth closed, take a deep breath into your belly while counting to four. Hold for a count of four. Deeply exhale from your belly for a count of four. Hold for a count of four. Repeat this step at least three times.



## Reflection

*What do you notice in your body when exposed to traumatic, stressful or activating situations and images? Do you notice any changes internally after completing the previous exercise?*

*What grounding activities help you when you're on the go or have limited resources? Take time to consider what truly works for you, allowing yourself to be creative about how you show up in your mind and body.*

# Somatic Care Practices

Somatic practices are interventions that help facilitate connections between and within the mind, the body, behaviours and spiritual experiences to help us heal and resource ourselves.

## HOW DO I PRACTICE SOMATIC RELEASE & GROUNDING?

### Shake-It-Off

- Animals often shake themselves to release the surplus energy generated by stress. Allowing the body to experience trembling caused by a stressful event can help your system to calm.

### Orienting Practice

- Orienting is noticing ourselves and the external environment at the same time through the mindful practice of literally orienting ourselves to space by rotating the head from right to left and vice versa. ([Link: IG](#))

### Bilateral Stimulation Music - headphones needed 🧐

- Bilateral music helps with trauma by calming the nervous system and reducing anxiety. It aids in processing traumatic memories and enhances mindfulness. This music also supports brain rewiring and improves emotional regulation. ([Link: Youtube](#))

### Humming Practice, Bhramari Guided Practice

- Brahmari pranayama calms and soothes the nerves, especially those around the ears, brain and forehead. ([Link: Youtube](#))

### Earthing practice

- Earthing, or grounding, helps with trauma by reducing stress, improving mood, and promoting better sleep. It stabilizes the body's natural rhythms, balances the nervous system, and promotes healing.
  - Walk barefoot in the grass, sand or dirt
  - Lie down in the grass or sand
  - Touch water, whether it's going into a clear lake, or simply taking a bath
  - Garden - get your hands in the soil



# Somatic Practice Reflection

*What changes physically when you imagine embodying your most grounded self, your most supported self--what happens to your breathing, activation, posture, tension, facial expression? How does your body feel?*

## More Somatic Resources

[Printable \(5x7\) Grounding Toolkit and Resource Card](#) (Link)

[Body Tapping Practice](#) (Link: Youtube)

## Mini Somatic Practice

1. Think of an experience among family, friends, or community when you felt a sense of belonging and connectedness.
2. Who was there, and what was happening, when you felt seen and connected? Stay with the details of the experience.
3. What do you notice as you stay with this memory? What are the sensations in your body? Do your shoulders drop, does your jaws relax, do you feel the warmth of a supportive community?
4. Where do you hold that sense of safety and belonging in your body?
5. Come back to this sense of being held, connected, and cared for in your body throughout the day!



# Social Care in Conflict

A Working Definition of Social Care: Attempts to strengthen and protect interpersonal bonds during conflict by collectively practicing tools that encourage mutual trust, transparency, open communication, and accountability.

## A few intentional relational tools for effective social care during conflict:

### Setting boundaries

Be clear, kind, transparent about your capacity, and offer alternatives where possible. ie “no, thank you. i’m drained today.” or, “thanks for thinking of me but i don’t feel comfortable doing that task. Is it okay if I do this one instead?” etc.

### A little respect goes a long way

Before you talk over someone or share in group settings, it can be helpful to check in with yourself around how others identities and/or perspectives might influence their reception of your comments or suggestions.

### Stay curious

If you need to confront or address someone or their behaviour, use I statements and assume positive intent until otherwise noted. Approach the conversation from a place of curiosity and prioritize seeking clarity over assertions of “being right.”

## Reflection

*What makes the biggest difference to you when it comes to communication during conflict? What might get in the way of being accountable to openness, curiosity and mutual respect? Are there any exceptions to this that would be meaningful to you?*

## More Resources

[Sustainable Activism and Self Care \(Link\)](#)

[Tracking your Nervous System Chart \(Link\)](#)





# Social Connection

Exploring your connection to others and yourself is a powerful tool to tap into during experiences of traumatic stress, and when engaging in values based advocacy and activism. It's important to focus this exploration on building supportive social connections, and experimenting with hobbies, activities and tools that help you better connect to yourself and those around you.

## EXAMPLES

Dancing, singing with others, spending time with friends, co-working, collective art and design making (colouring, collage, painting, drawing), creating community mood or vision boards, photography, writing letters, journaling your feelings, playing team sports, community card/board games, sharing memes and relatable videos, attending community events, venting/processing etc.

### DOING A RELATIONAL CHECK IN:

A relational check in is one way to nurture social connection with folks in your community, and engage actively with each other in the moment. **See below for a quick guide:**

#### 1. How are you feeling right now (really)?

- e.g. "I'm feeling a bit tired today"

#### 2. How might that show up for you here in the moment?

- (Add your own context. E.g. how might that show up for you while we're having coffee together?)
  - "I might yawn a lot and close my eyes at times"

#### 3. Is there anything I need to know about you to best support and understand you right now?

- "When i'm tired, I'm quieter than normal. It doesn't mean anything about our relationship unless i mention something specific. Thanks for checking in"

#### << QUESTIONS TO ASK

## Reflection

Can you imagine doing any of the above social connection activities with others? What does social connection look like for you when you're overwhelmed? Does it help to feel heard and seen by others? Who are those people in your life?

## More Resources

[Psychological First Aid Manual \(Link\)](#)

- [\(pg. 6 & 7\) guide to supporting folks actively on the ground](#)

[Abolitionist Pocket Zine \(Link\)](#)

[Let this Radicalize You: A Workbook \(Link\)](#)

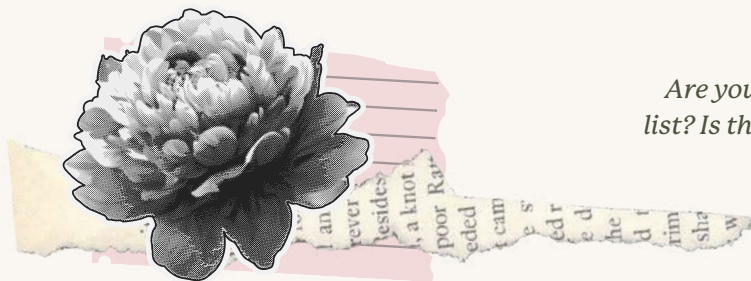


# Caring for Self, Practical Prep & Safe Activism

Attending to your mental health and your community during periods of activism, necessitates some **practical considerations** for staying safe and healthy.

## REMINDERS TO NOTE

- Wear a face covering if you want to protect your identity.
- Know your protest route (including all potential exit points), and the location of protest marshalls and /or medics
- Consider bringing plenty of water and snacks, as well as period care and a travel first aid kit.
- Find a friend or group to march and travel to and from the march with. If you're comfortable sharing your location with them temporarily, do so before you get to the event.
- Set-up your phone with password protection instead of fingerprint or facial recognition to ward against phone searches.
- Have a list of important numbers physically written down incase of low or dead phone battery.
- If approached or detained by law enforcement, you do not have to respond to their questions about your personal identity (name, phone number, address). However, feel free to ask "am I free to leave?" or "am I under arrest" and "why?"
- Be aware that active resistance to detainment may escalate conflict.
- Be mindful that others may have reasons for anonymity that you aren't aware of. Ask before calling out for folks by their full names or otherwise exposing their identity.



## Reflection

*Are you familiar with any of the above mentioned items on the list? Is there anything new to you? What might make it easier or harder to try these for you or your community?*

## More Resources

[Protest Rights Guide \(Link\)](#) [Guide for Youth Protesters \(Link: IG Post\)](#)  
[Digital Security Guide \(Link: IG Post\)](#) [Managing Protest Anxiety \(Link: IG Post\)](#)

# Nurturing Integrity in Times of Crisis

It's normal to reflect on the alignment of your values and actions during experiences of social and community activism. Meaningful advocacy often means having difficult conversations, which can create tension and conflict.

It is also natural to have reactions to traumatic, violent or devastating news and images. Compassion fatigue, desensitization to tragedy, and numbing to grief can all wear down on our integrity, as well as our confidence and belief in our values. To avoid falling prey to all or nothing thinking, get unstuck during periods of confusion, and maintain integrity in times of crisis, it is important to develop a practice of self reflection that works for you.

## integrity (noun)

in·teg·ri·ty / in-'te-grə-tē

the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles that you refuse to change.

## TIPS FOR NURTURING PERSONAL INTEGRITY

- You don't have to be an expert to be an activist. You can participate in meaningful advocacy without relying on academic or "traditional" expertise. Commit to learning more about social issues when you identify a knowledge gap without personal judgment and excess pressure.
- You don't have to experience equal or similar injustices to be a "good" activist or to "deserve" rest and care.
- Not all activism and advocacy has to look the same. Empower yourself to explore and experiment with advocacy that works best for your community and is sustainable for your life.
- You're allowed to take time off as an activist and you're allowed to rest. Doing so is important for warding off burn-out, maintaining your mental health, and contributing to a sustainable movement. It's a marathon, not a race.
- There are ways to pace and be consistent with activism efforts, while also continuing to make efforts toward community goals. Support yourself and those around you to resource appropriately for the journey. Monitor your overwhelm and stress, tune into your body's needs and take breaks as necessary.

# Questions to help nurture your personal integrity:

- How do your personal values inform your activism? Do you feel clear on what those values are?
- How does participating in community action and social movement align with your existing values and personal beliefs?
- What role does social media play in your advocacy efforts? How do you engage with online activism and IRL activism (if able)?
- Is there anyone you hope will see your activism? Who or Why? How much is your activism influenced by being seen by this person or group?
- What boundaries and limits (if any) exist in your activism efforts? How do you express and assert these boundaries in alignment with your stated values and beliefs?
- How do your opinions change (or not) when speaking to different groups of people? What do you notice when sharing your beliefs with others about social issues you care about?
- If you do notice yourself wavering in your beliefs or feeling disconnected from your values, how might you align your message more consistently?



## Reflection

*Which points or questions listed here do you find the most confronting and/or challenging to engage with and why?*

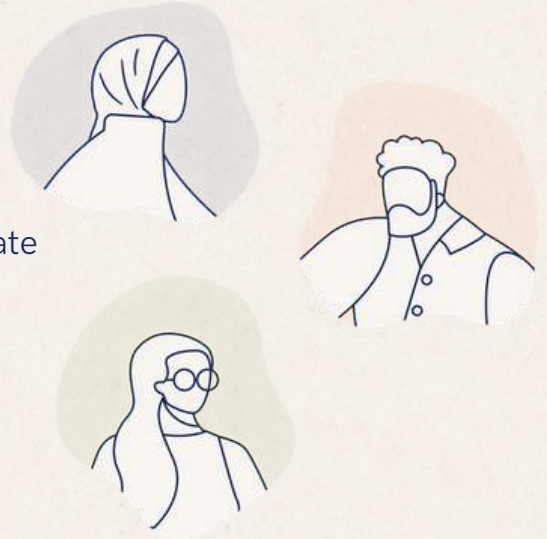
*What do you feel most confident about when it comes to aligning your actions and your values in your day-to-day life? What do you want to work on the most?*

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### CONTACT US

- 📍 [TKARONTO, ONTARIO](#) (IN PERSON + ONLINE)
- 🌐 [WWW.BLOOMPSYCHOLOGYTO.COM](http://WWW.BLOOMPSYCHOLOGYTO.COM)
- ✉️ [HELLO@BLOOMPSYCHOLOGYTO.COM](mailto:HELLO@BLOOMPSYCHOLOGYTO.COM)
- 📷 [@BLOOM\\_PSYCHOLOGY](https://www.instagram.com/BLOOM_PSYCHOLOGY)

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