

Self-Connection Practice

FROM FIGHT-FLIGHT-FREEZE TO CONNECTION

At the root of conflict, on the biological level, is the “fight-flight-freeze” threat reaction system in our brain (“reptile brain”), and the need for safety and self-protection. On the anthropological level of human evolution, we have banded together to increase survival and well-being. A “circle of safety” in the tribe/group/relationship creates trust and cooperation, and comes from a feeling of “psychological safety” with each other. A way to create safety when it’s missing is to focus on the intention for connection (unconditional positive regard, authenticity, empathy for self and others).

The skill of **Self-Connection Practice (SCP)** is mindfulness practice, based in OFNR*, that strengthens the capacity for awareness and being able to choose connection, compassion and collaboration. This skill gives the ability to activate the brain’s hard-wired care-giving system in the “mammalian brain.” We can then choose to focus on creating empathic connection within ourselves and with others. Both science and spiritual traditions point to the positive effects to our well being and functioning of empathy, compassion, and mindful attention.

Neuroscience and the science of habit change tell us we can change our brains and our reactions through awareness and consistently choosing new responses (thoughts, words, actions). In this way, we are consciously evolving our brains for ourselves, and humanity. The Self-Connection Process integrates mindfulness with the basic components of ***Compassionate Communication (Nonviolent Communication, NVC)**: Observation, Feeling, Need, Request.

SELF-CONNECTION PRACTICE (SCP)

Breath → Awareness

- Observe the breath, following it in and out, being in the present moment
- Observe the inner conversation of thoughts, words, self-talk, beliefs, images
- Sense perceptions come alive — sight, sound, smell, touch, taste

Body → Presence

- Feel the body, being present with sensations and emotions
- Slow and deepen the breath, relaxing with each out breath (relaxation response)
- Feel the presence of animating energy, aliveness, life force in your body

Need → Choice

- Focus on a few personal core needs. If helpful, use an image that brings peace, happiness, a feeling of fullness of needs met, gratitude
- Expand, open your focus of attention to experience the wholeness, totality of perception
- Bring attention to the space that surrounds, holds, connects everything you perceive