

Self-Connection Process

Fight-Flight-Freeze to Connection

At the root of conflict, we see the biological “fight-flight-freeze” (FFF) survival reaction, also called the “stress response.” This instinct toward protection and defense originates in the older, deeper parts of our brain. It is accompanied by moralistic thinking, “enemy images,” and emotions such as fear, anxiety, stress, anger, guilt, shame, and depression. Events outside of you stimulate this reaction, yet it is your body that creates it.

The Self-Connection Process (SCP) is a way to center yourself in the inner “mediator mind” – the highest part of us, the “I am” that is awareness, presence, and choice, that is capable of giving empathy, authentic self-expression, and unconditional love. Both science and spiritual traditions have pointed to the benefits of focusing on the breath and bodily experience; and at the core of the Nonviolent Communication (NVC) model is needs. With SCP, you integrate awareness with needs consciousness. With practice you build the capacity to respond effectively, in alignment with your values, in the face of a FFF conflict reaction.

We encourage you to set aside at least 5 minutes a day to practice SCP, and also to practice throughout the day, in as many moments as you can, even when you’re not in a FFF reaction.

Self-Connection Process (SCP)

Breath (Awareness: being in the present moment)

- Focus attention on your breathing, following the in-flow, extending the out-flow.
- Observe your sense perceptions (sight, sound, scent, touch, taste).
- Shift attention from thoughts and “stories” back to breath and sense perception.

Body (*Presence: being with feelings, and accepting what is*)

- Put attention into your body.
- Feel the sensations and animating energy and aliveness.
- Name your sensations, emotions, and FFF reactions, then go back to experiencing.

Needs (*Choice: choosing thoughts, beliefs, and actions to meet needs*)

- From awareness of your thoughts and feelings now, ask yourself, “What are the needs underneath?”
- What needs do you choose to focus on now? What inspires, uplifts, and empowers you?
- Repeat the needs to yourself, feel your body, and experience the needs met within you through your imagination, self-talk, or taking action. [Additional practices: use “I am [needs]”; focus on gratitude and appreciation of needs met]



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