Breath/Body Work for Window of Tolerance

# For Hyper-Arousal (**exhalation** focused breath practice)

## Skip Breathing (As taught by Rinpoche Noah Rasheta):

* Count 2 as you breathe in deeply
* Count 2 as you hold the breath in
* Count 10 as you release the breath out
* Count 2 as you hold the breath out

Repeat until body calms (3-10 rounds)

## Straw Breathing (As taught by Dr Arielle Schwartz):

* Take a gentle but deep inhalation.
* Imagine having a straw in your mouth and purse your lips to exhale very slowly until your lungs are 80 percent empty. Then,
* close mouth and slowly exhale the last 20 percent through your nose.
* Engage muscles of abdomen and diaphragm to expel all of your air.
* Allow the inhalation to come naturally, and take 3 regular breaths.
* Repeat the exercise 2 or 3 more times.

## Relaxing Sigh:

* Breathe in deeply through the nose
* Breathe out slowly through the mouth (sigh if that feels good)
* You can also use the word “deep” as you breathe in and “slow” as you breathe out

Repeat as many times as needed—3+

# For Hypo-Arousal (**inhalation** focused breath practice)

## Puff Breathing:

* Take a slow, deep inhalation
* Hold breath in for 10 counts
* Take 20 (or more if you build up to it) quick puffs of air in and out using the belly
* Hold breath out for 10 counts
* Take 3 or more easy breaths
* Repeat 2 more times

## Square Breathing:

* Breathe in for 6 or more counts
* Hold for 4 counts
* Breathe out for 4 counts
* Hold for 4 counts

Repeat as many times as needed

# To Grow Window of Tolerance

## Wim Hof:

* 30-50 “belly, chest, head, let it go” breaths in a row (filling the lungs completely)
* Hold breath OUT as long as you can
* Take a deep breath in –hold for 15 seconds

Repeat entire sequence 2-4 more times (takes about 15 min.)

# Regular Formal Practice Options (maintaining window)

## Ocean Visualization:

Notice the breath like waves in the ocean

* The -in breath- is waves retracting out to sea
* The -out breath- is waves crashing onto shore (or vice versa)
* Continue to return attention to the breath if it wanders

## “Breathing In, Breathing Out:”

Simply say the words mentally “breathing in” on the in breath and “breathing out” on the out breath.

## Loving Kindness Breathing:

* As you notice an in breath say mentally “in for me”
* As you notice an out breath say mentally “out for you”

## 100 Breaths:

* Sit placing your hands on your thighs or on a desk
* As you notice one breath press one finger (starting with your left pinky) into the thigh or desk
* Continue with each finger—one breath one finger at a time
* Repeat 10 times to equal 100 breaths (try not to count the breath, but stay focused on sensations of the breath)
* Typically takes less than 10 minutes

## Sun Breathing:

* Sit with hands on lap or desk
* Raise hands and forearms (from the elbow) on the inhale
* Lower hands back to the lap on the exhale

## Self-Connection Breathing Visualization:

* As you breathe in—picture breath coming IN laterally (in to the chest)
  + Breathe in self-love
* As you breathe out –picture the breath going UP vertically (out of the crown)
  + Breathe out love for Higher-Power/God/The Universe
* As you breathe in –picture the breath coming DOWN (through the crown)
  + Take in love from your Higher-Power/God/The Universe
* As you breathe out—picture the breath going OUT (from the chest)
  + Breathe out love for others/all

Repeat several times (always using self-love as starting point)

# Restorative Yoga Poses

## Chest Opener

* Take a rolled towel or blanket, yoga blocks lined up lengthwise, or your Zafu and place it so that it rests under your shoulder blades when you lie down, face up on top of it
* Open up your chest (be sure your neck is supported) and bring your arms to a T shape
* Let your body breathe and rest in this restorative pose
* Follow up with Puff Breathing or gentle movement such as a walk or stretching

## Psoas Stretch with an Inversion

* Do the same thing as above with the support under your hips and head lower than the hips (be sure your body weight rests on the shoulders not the neck or head)
* Take a few breaths with palms down on blocks (or other support) and feel into the lower back/psoas area
* Hold one knee into the chest and release the Psoas
* Let your other leg rest stretched out and stretch the Psoas on that side
* Take several minutes here if possible
* Then switch sides

## Basic Exercise (to align C1/C2 after prolonged fight/flight)

* Lie down comfortably face-up (you can also sit up if you have practiced this before)
* Interlace your hands behind your head, resting your bottom pointer finger on the base of your skull
* With your head staying in the center, bring your eyes all the way to one side of the eye socket and hold there for 10 breaths
* Let your eyes return to the center and rest for 3 breaths (its normal to feel a little dizzy and nauseous)
* Repeat on the other side

Notice how the neck feels following this exercise

## Half Salamander

* Begin in table-top yoga pose (on all fours—hands placed directly under shoulder and knees below hips)
* Explore how it feels to bring your right ear toward your right shoulder without turning your head. Bring your eyes to look toward the right shoulder
* Take 4 or 5 breaths and then bring your head back to center and your eyes back forward
* Repeat on the left side
* Once again hold this shape for about 4 or 5 breaths and then switch sides.

## Both the Basic Exercise and Half Salamander are from Stanley Rosenberg’s book: *Accessing the Healing Power of the Polyvagal Nerve*