Sponge Breath

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N° of pax 1-10

indoors

bodywork

30-40 mins

PURPOSE

REBALANCES NATURAL BREATHING

- deepens awareness of breath patterns
- develops a Mind-Body awareness
- enlivens vitality

MATERIALS

- mats, cushions, blankets

PREPARATION

The facilitator must be aware that this activity can bring up an emotional response, so if a participant doesn't feel comfortable at any point he/she should pause, witness the others instead and try again later.

INTRO

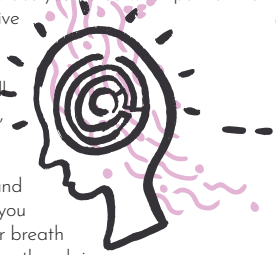
This is a body work activity to rebalance natural breathing or what the Arc Process call the "sponge breath pattern": the lungs can be imagined as a huge sea sponge filled with water - while exhaling, imagine squeezing the lungs like a sponge, this supports the breath to release while engaging the muscles in the lungs.

STEPS

The facilitator guides through participants with the following steps:

1. (10 min) Lie down on your back in a comfortable position using cushions and/or mats. Take a few minutes to settle, stretch out or move if you need to, then come to a resting position. Bring your attention to your breath, notice your inhale and your exhale. Where do you feel the breath in your body? What part of the breath are you noticing - emphasizing? - The Inhale or the Exhale? What do you notice about each part of the breath?

2. Working with the Sponge Breath (15 min): • (5 min) Take your hands on a journey discovering your rib cage, from top to bottom, front to back. Adapt your position to allow your hands to feel as much of your ribs as you can by rolling slightly to each side to feel the back area. Once you have felt this landscape, notice how you feel. • (5 min) You have a reflex to support you to inhale, however the exhale has no reflex. At the beginning of the exercise you noted what part of the breath you gave most attention to. Often, we strive on the inhale and collapse on the exhale.



3. This next set of activities supports the reintegration of the original reflex or what we call "sponge breath" pattern: • Inhale normally then, to exhale, lightly press your tongue on the roof of your mouth just behind your front teeth. As you exhale slowly make a "TSSS" sound. The ideal sound is a long-sustained sound, exhaling as much as you can, slowly, until you feel you cannot empty your breath any more • At this point totally relax. Let the breath rush in through your open mouth and be aware of the movement of your ribcage as you do so, have the hands on your ribs to experience where the breath is flowing as you inhale. • Repeat the long exhale a maximum of 3 times then return to normal breath rhythm.

4. The facilitator gathers the participants in a circle to share and reflect on the experience of the activity in a small or a large group.

REFLECTION

- What did you notice when you did each part of the activity?
- What resources did you get from this exercise?
- How do you think this activity can contribute to resilience building?

COMMENTS

The best way to practice this is little and often, do not do more than 3 deep "TSSS" exhales at a time, always fully relaxing on the inhale to allow for the intake of a new breath, noticing as you breathe how you are engaging and any changes in the breath pattern.