

Title of the Workshop:

Re-Centering Mental Health in Times of Social Collapse and Multiple Crises

- Duration: 7 hours
- Offline (it can be adapted to online but we made the experience that this topic benefits greatly of having an offline space)
- When (fill in as host): _____
- Where (fill in as host): _____
- How many participants (fill in as host): _____ (we suggest a max. of 20 people + one additional trainer / awareness person who can support emotionally)

Invitation text



This workshop invites us to explore mental health not as an isolated personal issue, but as something deeply shaped by collective trauma, systemic collapse, and the grief of living in a world marked by violence, genocide, and ecological destruction.

In this workshop, we will collectively practice foundational exercises like nervous system care, and relational skills such as deep listening and witnessing. We believe that these skills are helpful in times of crisis and to grasp oppression and its impacts – helpful for you as individual or for co-regulating with friends, comrades and in community.

All bodies, backgrounds, and levels of experience are welcome who want to collectively reflect & practice.

If you are experiencing an acute crisis right now, we encourage you to reach out for professional help instead.

This workshop is inspired and conceptualized by Collective Care Berlin & Educat Kollektiv and was developed as part of “Skills4Crisis” project.



WORKSHOP: Re-Centering Mental Health in Times of Social Collapse and Multiple Crises

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Starting time (change this depending on your actual starting time)	Duration	Topic & goal of this part	Proposals for Method & content inspiration	Materials needed
e.g. 9.15	45 min before start	Preparation: create a welcoming atmosphere	<p>Make the space comfortable.</p> <p>Offer a variety of sitting options, also on the floor. Place fidget toys, scents, etc. Put calm music. Provide snacks and water.</p> <p>If you have, bring additional educational material and books. You can order the project handbook so people can have a look at it or take it.</p>	Cushions, yoga mats, carpets flipchart with the title of the workshop Stimming & fidget toys Snacks & Drinks Lemons Chewing gums Stuffed toys for cuddling Hot water bottle Strong scents (e.g. tiger balm) Books
10.00	5 min.	Welcoming participants	Say hi to participants and wait until everyone is ready to start	
10.05	10 min.		<p>Read out the Welcome Meditation or show video</p> <p>Read out the text and invite people to listen, stretch, make themselves comfortable, arrive...</p> <p>Name the Source: Our Songs, our Medicine, Curators' introduction by Alessandra Pomarico, Esther Poppe, Yayra Sumah, Maya V. El Zanaty</p> <p>Or show the Youtube Video: https://youtu.be/SP88ciXrfX4?feature=shared&t=525 (from min. 8:45)</p>	See attachment 1 If you show the video: projector

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10.15	10 min.	Anchoring	<p>Introduce things you brought & choose an anchor</p> <p>Introduce all the things you brought and invite participants to explore and get to know them. Ask participants to choose an anchor for themselves. It can also be something that they brought and have in the bag.</p> <p>Imagine that we are a boat. Sometimes, when we dive into emotional topics, we feel like floating away. An anchor then is something to come back to, to touch & feel – to look at when you start to have a feeling of losing the connection to the “here and now”.</p> <p>People can also change the anchor throughout the day and test different ones but should always be aware, which one is their current anchor object.</p> <p><i>Find background information on anchors, trauma & dissociation:</i> https://www.dis-sos.com/anchors/</p>	Object (see materials for preparation)
10.25	15 min.	Intro & Flow	<p>Introduce yourself and the Flow of the workshop</p> <p>Inform participants about yourself, the space and purpose of this workshop.</p> <p>We appreciate you giving credit to us in the following way: “This workshop is inspired and conceptualized by Collective Care Berlin with support of Educat Kollektiv and was developed as part of “Skills4Crisis” project.”</p> <p>Present the Flow (time schedule) of the workshop</p>	<p>Info material on what you do</p> <p>if you have it: our project handbook</p> <p>Flipchart with flow: see attachment 2 (Make sure to adjust if you change the plan)</p>
10.40	10 min.	Brave Space	<p>Poem: Brave Space by Beth Strano</p> <p>Read the poem:</p> <p>There is no such thing as a “safe space” — We exist in the real world.</p>	Optional: write the poem on a flipchart

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			<p>We all carry scars and have caused wounds. This space seeks to turn down the volume of the world outside, and amplify voices that have to fight to be heard elsewhere, This space will not be perfect. It will not always be what we wish it to be But It will be our space together, and we will work on it side by side.</p> <p>Source: Poem by Beth Strano, https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/untitled-poem-beth-strano</p>	
10.50	15 min.	Ground Rules	<p>Introduce ground rules:</p> <p>Present the ground rules or guiding principles for the workshop that are important for you to hold the space. You can take this from our collection (see attachment 3) or choose your own or even collect together with participants.</p>	See attachment 3
11.05	10 min.	Learning deeper not more	<p>Impulse: "Depth Education" (from <i>Hospicing Modernity</i>)</p> <p>Introduce participants to the concept of Depth Education from Hospicing Modernity, a book written by Vanessa Machado de Oliveira that inspired us to do this project.</p> <p>Depth Education means moving away from mastery or control-based learning toward curiosity, reflection, and emotional depth.</p> <p>We are here not just to learn more, but to learn deeper and relate wider - Like onions, we allow ourselves to peel back layers, even when it's uncomfortable. This process can activate both pain and insight, helping us hold space for complexity and develop capacity to imagine otherwise.</p>	

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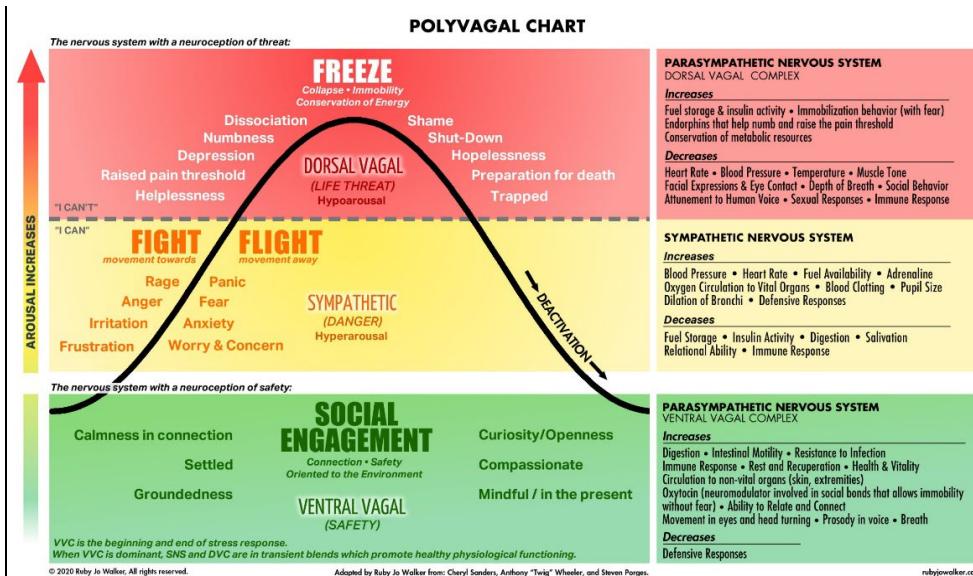
11.15 – 11.30 / 15 min. BREAK

11.30	20 min.	INTRO: Polyvagal Theory	<p>Introducing Polyvagal Theory: What happens with our Nervous System in Times of Social Collapse and Multiple Crises?</p> <p>Our automatic Nervous system shifts between different states according to if we feel safe or not - affecting emotions, behavior, and social interaction</p> <p>Polyvagal Theory, proposed by Stephen Porges, describes how the autonomic nervous system regulates safety, stress, and social behavior— it remains a helpful model and theoretical framework, but it's not fully empirically proven.</p> <p>Understanding these states supports self-regulation, emotional resilience, and healthy social connection.</p> <p>The vagus nerve pathways influence how we feel and react and makes us shift between 3 states:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• ventral vagal: social engagement / safe• sympathetic: fight/flight• dorsal vagal: freeze/shutdown	Optional: Flipchart or Power Point with content
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(Source: rubyjowalker.com, adapted by Ruby Jo Walker from Cheryl Sanders, Anthony "Twig" Wheeler and Steven Porges)

Neuroception is the subconscious detection of safety or threat, which shifts us between these physiological states. We react according to external factors (e.g. imminent threats), but also in reaction to what we expect from previous experiences (e.g. trauma) or by mirroring others (e.g. someone is agitated, we get agitated, too).

This means, we may have impact on our own and other people's feelings and can support others and ourselves feel calm and safe in moments of crisis like panic attacks, anxieties or moments in which people are triggered.

Find more infos for example here:

<https://www.traumatherapistinstitute.com/blog/Polyvagal-Techniques-for-Nervous-System-Regulation>

<https://www.somatopia.com/blog/polyvagal-theory-simplified>

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11.50	20 min.	EXERCISES: Grounding & Nervous System Care	<p>Intro: To support the nervous system to get back to safe mode, there are some basic exercises that can calm us or others. It is useful to have these in your Mental Health Toolbox in Times of Crisis. We are gonna practice some of those now.</p> <p><u>First Exercise: Breathing</u></p> <p>Invite participants to do a breathing exercise together, e.g. box breathing. For this, imagine a square. You go up: Breath in for 5 seconds. To the side: Hold for 5 seconds. Go down: Breath out for 5 seconds. Go back to start: Hold for 5 seconds.</p> <p><i>Find a video to guide you through this exercise here:</i> https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tEmt1Znux58</p> <p><u>Second Exercise: 5 – 4 – 3 – 2 – 1 things</u></p> <p>Ask participants to:</p> <p>Notice 5 things that you can see. Notice 4 things that you can touch. Notice 3 things that you can hear Notice 2 things that you can smell Notice 1 emotion you can feel.</p> <p>You can encourage them to approach the objects you brought, e.g. to smell.</p> <p><i>Find the video-guided and illustrated exercise here:</i> https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=30VMIEmA114</p> <p><i>In German you can find it here:</i> https://www.actitude.de/magazin/die-5-4-3-2-1-methode-eine-achtsamkeitsuebung</p> <p><u>Third exercise: Counting corners & Orienting in the room</u></p>	
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			<p>Ask participants to actively orient themselves in the room and visually explore it. They can start by counting the corners of the room. Then slowly go with your gaze from left to right and back.</p>	
12.10	20 min.	Reflection	<p>Reflection round:</p> <p>Collect some impressions from the group on "how does it feel to do these exercises". Probably, this will be new and a challenge for some but part of daily routine and nothing new for others.</p> <p>Share thoughts on motivation to do these exercise</p> <p>This could be something like this (add your own examples that relate to the lived experience of the group you are working with):</p> <p>These are exercises that can help us when our nervous system is activated, in fight or flight mode or freeze.</p> <p>This activation is not a bad thing per se. It's our nervous system trying to protect us. But sometimes, it doesn't serve us in that moment (e.g. when we get called out for harmful behavior) or it feels overwhelming and we don't know how to get out.</p> <p>Usually, the reasons for us being in that state, mean that it's also not the fitting environment to stay in that activated or freeze mode, e.g. having an anxiety attack in the middle of a protest when fast decisions need to be made.</p> <p>That's why it's important to know some techniques to guide ourselves and others through this and practice in a calm environment like this, so we can do it, when shit hits the fan, too.</p>	
12.35	30 min.	YOUR MOTIVATION	<p>Walk on your motivation and thoughts so far</p> <p>Take a walk in pairs of 3 people and exchange on:</p>	Emergency number for psychological support

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none">- what's your motivation to be here and / or- if they want to add a thought on why they feel it is important to re-center Mental Health in Times of Social Collapse and Multiple Crises and / or- whatever other thoughts came up so far <p><i>Note: Welcome every group back and shortly check-in with them. If someone has sharing personal topics and experiences that raise strong emotions like sadness or despair, make sure that they can and want to proceed. There may be cases where another environment would be more fitting, e.g. taking a walk, calling a friend. If you have an awareness team or you are a team of two, clarify if that person wants to be accompanied. Also have an emergency contact number for psychological support at hand.</i></p> <p>Thank everyone for sharing!</p>	
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13.00 – 14.00 / 1 hour LUNCH BREAK

14.00	20 min.	CONNECTING: You will not be alone	<p>Exercise: "Milling Practice"</p> <p>Intro: When it comes to experiencing crisis, quite often, people withdraw from social contact and want to be alone. They may refuse help and support offers, e.g. because they are embarrassed, which may result in them actually ending up alone. Therefore, we want to practice to connect and give each other the feeling of community and certainty: you are not alone and don't have to do this alone. This may be unusual and uncomfortable but we invite you to give it a try and go through this discomfort together – and maybe find connection where you didn't expect it.</p> <p><i>Find the method here: https://workthatreconnects.org/resources/the-milling-revised/</i></p> <p>Give credit: revised by <u>Molly Brown</u> in 2017, incorporating ideas from a version by <u>Kaia Sviens</u>. Originally from chapter 7 of <u>Coming Back to Life</u> by <u>Joanna Macy</u> and <u>Molly Brown</u>; second edition, published 2014</p>	Print the exercise for you to read out
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14.20	10 min.	IMPULSE: "Inflamed"	<p>"Inflamed: Deep Medicine and the Anatomy of Injustice" by Raj Patel & Rupa Marya</p> <p>Give an Impulse of thought from the book "Inflamed" by Raj Patel & Rupa Marya. They give us this powerful image:</p> <p>Our bodies living in harmful environment with colonialism, capitalism, white supremacy, patriarchy, burnout culture, etc. Our bodies, systems, planets, communities are inflamed.</p> <p>Our bodies may be affected differently and some of us are suffering more than others. But even if it doesn't affect us directly, as empathetic human beings, we all suffer that this is happening to our friends, family, communities or even strangers when reading the news, ... As such, our bodies have to deal with an inflammation with open wounds, also psychologically.</p> <p>The "modern medicine" many of us may know is not treating this well (quick fixes, pills, blaming, isolation...). So we cannot properly heal this inflammation.</p> <p>The authors suggest that the "deep medicine" that can help lies in other paths, e.g. collective care, understanding and addressing roots causes and systems, somatics, ...</p> <p><i>You can find the book here: https://dokumen.pub/inflamed-deep-medicine-and-the-anatomy-of-injustice-9780374602529.html</i></p>	See attachment 4
14.30	20 min.	Co-Regulation & Trust	<p>Exercise in pairs</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Go outside and ask people to find a partner to do this exercise with and explain the exercise (5 min.)2) One person gets a blindfold (or closes their eyes). Then, the other person slowly guides them to something that they want to show them (a leaf, a tree, grass, bench). (5 min.)3) Then change (5 min.)4) Discuss the two of you, how you felt during the exercise (5 min.)	Blindfolds

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14.50 – 15.10 / 20 min. BREAK				
15.10	50 min.	AUTHENTIC MOVEMENT with witnessing	<p>Authentic movement – How does this inflammation move your body?</p> <p>Intro: Therefore, with this image in mind, we want to listen to our bodies and what they have to tell us about this inflammation. Allow your body to respond to what you've seen and heard.</p> <p><u>How does this inflammation move your body? What needs to speak, or be released, or rest?</u></p> <p>You think about the question, observe your body – which impulses come up, you can follow and explore and express them. Then observe and feel again and see where to go from there.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Explain and answer questions & fears. Make sure people can choose if they want to do it and find alternatives that work for them if they don't feel able to do this. (5 min.)2) Pairs find each other and a space, e.g. other rooms, outside... (5 min.)3) One of you moves in the way that your body tells you to. The other one witnesses without judgement. (7 min.)4) Witness reflection: 'I have seen...' (3 min.)5) Then change. (7 min + 3 min).6) Discuss together: how was it to be seen/witnessed? (10 min.)7) All together: share 1 insight from your exchange on: how was it to be seen/witnessed? (10 min.) <p><i>Find more infos on the practice of Authentic Movement here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Authentic_Movement</i></p>	Optional: put the steps on a flipchart for more clarity

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16.00	30 min.	Collective Mental Health Care	Open space: Examples & Practices of collective Mental Health care Invite participants to take 30 minutes to reflect or exchange on examples & practices of Collective Mental Health Care. This can be done in the way that your body and mind tells you to: e.g. by taking a walk with someone and talk about it, by drawing, by journaling, by making a mind map, by meditating, whatever feels right for you in this moment.	Pens, colors, papers, ...
16.30	30 min.	CLOSING ROUND	Journaling & final poem Invite participants to take 10 minutes to write down answers to these questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What did I learn?• What do I want to remember?• What does my body tell me now? Then they read it again and collect 10 words or parts of sentences or whole sentences. You assign a number from 0 to 9 to each of those words. You then write down your phone number in a line from up to down. Then you put the word that fits this number next to it. Then everyone reads out their poem. Thank everyone for their time and energy and for sharing and trusting. Say goodbye.	Paper and pens

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Attachment 1: Welcome Reading

Our Songs, our Medicine - Curators' introduction

By Alessandra Pomarico, Esther Poppe, Yayra Sumah, Maya V. El Zanaty.

Find it on: <https://youtu.be/SP88ciXrfX4?feature=shared&t=525>

TAKE A MOMENT RIGHT NOW TO ALLOW YOURSELF TO FULLY ARRIVE
ALLOW THE DUST SETTLE IN YOUR MIND
BRING ATTENTION TO YOUR BODY, TO YOUR BREATH IN THIS PRESENT MOMENT
YOU HAVE ARRIVED?
WELCOME!
YOU ARE WELCOME HERE.
YOUR CULTURE IS WELCOME
YOUR SOCIAL ORIGIN IS WELCOME
YOUR TRADITIONS, YOUR SKIN COLOR, RACE, GENDER, EDUCATION, LANGUAGE, ACCENT, SYTLE AND
ALL OF THE COMPLEXITIES THAT MAKE UP YOUR CULTURAL IDENTITY ARE WELCOME HERE
WE WELCOME ALL THE WAYS YOUR SEXUALITIY HAS AND IS UNFOLDING
WE WELCOME ALL THE WAYS YOUR GENDER HAS AND IS UNFOLDING
WE WELCOME YOU IN YOUR IGNORANCE
WE WELCOME YOU IN YOUR PRIVILEGE
WE WELCOME YOU IN YOUR GRIEF
WE WELCOME YOU IN YOUR GUILT AND IN YOUR SHAME
YOU ARE WELCOME HERE
WE WELCOME YOUR WOUNDS AND YOUR SCARS
WE WELCOME YOUR PERSONAL AND COLLECTIVE TRAUMA
AND THE PHYSICAL AND PSYCHIC DISEASES YOU SUFFER IN YOUR PRESENT
AND ALSO THE SPECTRAL PAIN YOU CARRY ACROSS GENERATIONS
WE WELCOME YOU AT WHATEVER LEVEL OF PHYSICAL AND
MENTAL WELLNESS ARE YOU CURRENTLY FUNCTIONING
WE WELCOME YOUR INTROVERSION AND YOUR EXTROVERSION
WE WELCOME ALL THE EXPERIENCES THAT LED YOU TO THIS MOMENT
THANK YOU FOR SURVIVING
WE WELCOME YOU AT WHATEVER LEVEL YOU'RE CURRENTLY DECOLONIZING
WE WELCOME YOU IN WHATEVER MOMENT YOU ARE IN DIVESTING FROM SYSTEMIC PATRIARCHY,
WHITE SUPREMACY, ABLEISM AND ALL OTHER FORMS OF INTERSECTING FORMS OF OPPRESSION.
WE WELCOME YOU AS YOU UNLEARN INTERNALIZED ANTI-BLACKNESS AND CULTURAL NORMS,
CONSUMERIST ADDICTIONS AND EXPLOITATIVE HABITS THAT NO LONGER SERVE THE HEALTH OF
OUR INTERCONNECTED COMMUNITIES AND ECOSYSTEMS.
WE WELCOME THE PARTS OF YOURSELF THAT YOU ARE STILL FIGURING OUT.
HAVE YOU ARRIVED?
WELCOME, YOU ARE WELCOME HERE

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Attachment 2: Flow of the workshop

10.00	15 min.	WELCOME: You're welcome here Anchoring, flow, brave Space, Ground Rules, Learning deeper
11.15	15 min.	Break
11.30	60 min.	INTRO & EXERCISES: Nervous System Care in Times of Social Collapse and Multiple Crises
12.30	30 min.	WALK: Your motivation & thoughts
13.00	60 min.	Lunch Break
14.00	20 min.	CONNECTING: You will not be alone
14.20	10 min.	IMPULSE: "Inflamed: Deep Medicine and the Anatomy of Injustice" by Raj Patel & Rupa Marya
14.30	20 min.	EXERCISE: Co-Regulation & Trust
14.50	20 min.	Break
15.10	50 min.	EXERCISE: Authentic Movement & witnessing: How does the inflammation move your body?
16.00	30 min.	COLLECTION: Collective Mental Health Care Practices & Examples
16.30	30 min.	CLOSING ROUND

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Attachement 3:



Flipchart created by Collective Care Berlin

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Attachment 4: „Inflamed“ Flipchart Example



Flipchart created by Collective Care Berlin