

## LEARNING EXCHANGE PROTOCOL

### Rhythms of Joy & Justice: Respiration

*Note: All protocols have multiple origins. The strength of a protocol is in the ability of facilitators or planners to adjust/revise for use in your context. <http://www.nsrffharmony.org/free-resources/protocols/a-z> is a good source of multiple protocols for school, district, community and organizational use.*

*Emotion many be blocked by a body already hardened by habit into a certain set of actions and reactions* Augusto Boal<sup>1</sup>

*The starting point of organizing the program content of education or political action must be the present, existential, concrete situation, reflecting the aspirations of the people.*

Pablo Freire

*The goal of the exercises is a better awareness of the body and its mechanisms, its atrophies, and hypertrophies, its capacities for recuperation, restructuring, re-harmonization. Each exercise is a physical reflection of the self... At the same time, the games/exercises deal with the expressivity of the body as emitter and receiver of messages. They are a dialogue as well as they are a unity of physical and the psychic (thought).* Augusto Boal

Norms for Engagement

- No one is impelled to do anything s/he does not wish to do
- Allow yourself to be challenged, but take risks that are appropriate for you.
- There are no mistakes

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<sup>1</sup> Boal, Augusto. (1992). *Games for actors and non-actors*. New York, Routledge.

## Listening to Our Inner Rhythms: The Rhythm of Respiration

The power of respiration – breathing in and out deeply – is an essential mark of the life force – of oxygenating our blood and keeping us alive. Yet, typically, the respiration default mechanism is shallow breathing (especially in times of stress or anxiety), not the deep breathing that literally gets fresh air into the depths of the lungs.

To be in sync with one's own pulse and with others, it is useful to stop, breathe, remember, and respire in a way that helps each person to stay present, even, and ready. As one is poised and in the moment with each [deep] breath, one is better able to cope with the vicissitudes of daily life that somehow compel us to be anxious. As a group feels the collective breath and letting go, each person in collaboration with others is better able to absorb the positive energy of the group and be fully present for self and others.

As you participate in the breathing exercises, constructed to remind us of moments of when we can experience equanimity that we want to capture and transfer to other contexts, note what feels comfortable or uncomfortable, normal or odd, easy or not so easy.

### Set ONE: Three Levels of Breath

1. Lying on one's back or standing up straight. Place hands on **abdomen**/tummy, and fully expel the air in the lungs (count of 8)
2. Breathe in slowly filling the thorax/bottom of rib cage as full as it will go (count of 4).
3. Breathe out (count of 8)
4. Repeat 4-5 times
5. Repeat the 1-3 sequence 4-5 times with thoracic cage.
6. Then repeat 1-3 sequence with hands on shoulders or up in the air, filling upper part of lungs.

Reflect with partner: When did you settle into the process? What was easy or not so easy? What were you thinking or feeling during exercise?

### SET TWO: The Balance of Breathing In and Out

Breathe in again only through right nostril and out through left. May have to pinch one side of nose to get the gist of it.

### SET THREE: Explosive Action

Hold your nose, pinching the nostrils and closing the mouth, making maximum effort to expel the air but keeping nose pinched and mouth closed. When you cannot take it, expel through mouth.

Reflect: What did it feel like? What did it remind you of in your work?

Breathe in as much air as possible and expel it violently, all in one go, through the mouth. The air expulsion may produce a sound like a small explosion or a cry of aggression. Next do it through the nose.

Reflect with a partner: How does this exercise embody how you feel at times?  
When and how could you imagine using this in your work?

Breathe in as slowly as possible, then breathe out, vocalizing a sound that exemplifies JOY or \_\_\_\_, trying to make the sound audible for maximum length of time.

Reflect with a partner: What were your actions/reactions in this full set?  
What feelings or memories might you attach to each?

