



Transformative Practices for Centering

Scott Jeffrey (2019; <https://scottjeffrey.com/center-yourself/>)

Breathe Like It Matters: Conscious Breathing

- When you're out of Center, one thing is certain: you're not breathing properly. When your mind is racing, your breath is coarse.
- *Variation #1*: Observe your breathing. Don't try to change anything; simply observe the involuntary process of breathing. Let the mind follow the body, not vice versa.
- *Variation #2*: Take deep, slow, rhythmic, quiet, breaths from your belly.
- If this creates tension, breathe from your chest a few times first before focusing on your belly.
- Just 3 or 4 breaths can help bring you closer to the Center.

Zhan Zhuang: Stand Like a Tree

- This is one of the most effective ways of centering yourself. Stand like a tree with your feet shoulders width apart and your spine straight.
- Imagine a cord extending from the crown of your head into the sky.
- There are numerous variations of this practice:
- *Variation #1*: Place both of your hands over your navel. While your head is "floating" above your body, allow the rest of your body to relax and sink down.
- *Variation #2*: Imagine that you're a tree. Your head, arms, hands, and fingers are the branches. Your legs and torso form the trunk. And your feet sprout roots far down beneath the ground. Feel how heavy your feet get as they take root.
- For these practices, stand with your eyes closed for a minute or two.

Feel Your Feet: Shift Your Awareness

- When you're out of Center, you're often over-thinking. Too much energy is swirling in your head.
- Put both feet firmly on the ground. Place your full awareness on the bottom of your feet.
- This helps draw the excessive energy down into your body.
- Pay attention to any sensations in your feet. This practice often works within 30 seconds.

Belly Bliss: Attention on Your Navel

- In Tai Chi, the center of your body is the *lower dantien*, about two inches below your navel.
- Place your awareness in this area and breathe naturally.
- Sometimes it's helpful to put one or both hands over your navel as you breathe.
- Combine this with conscious breathing practice (above) for greater benefit.
- You'll probably notice the effects within 30 seconds to 1 minute.

Heart Centering: Attention on Your Heart

- Your heart is working all day and night for you and you likely give it little attention.
- Place your awareness on your heart region as you breathe naturally.
- Smile inwardly at your heart. Acknowledge your heart on the inhale, saying, "I see you."
- Then express gratitude to your heart on the exhale, saying, "Thank you." Repeat this five times.





Establish a Plumb Line: Attention on Your Third Eye

- To construct a vertical wall or a door jam without using a level, carpenters must first establish a plumb line.
- A plumb line is a straight vertical line. There's a plumb line in the body too.
- In an upright seated position, gaze with both eyes at the tip of your nose.
- As you do this, place your awareness on your "third eye" region in the center of your forehead, about an inch above your brow.
- This practice may take a little trial and error, but you'll know when you get it.
- Once you do, you can establish a plumb line quickly whenever you need it.

Call Forth the Observer: Attention Above the Crown

- When there's chaos on the surface, sometimes you need to seek higher ground.
- When you are out of Center, place your awareness about six inches above the crown of your head.
- Take the position of an observer, or Inner Magician, and watch your thoughts, feelings, and sensations.
- This is a powerful practice. It can instantly provide space between your Self (host) and whatever drama might be happening in your ego (guests).
- Maintain this observer perspective for as long as it's comfortable for you.

Find Stillness in Movement: Mindful Walking

- Sometimes standing or sitting still makes your internal chaos worse. In these cases, mindful walking can serve you.
- Walk as slowly as you can, staying fully present with every step. Keep your breathing slow and steady.
- Try to sync your breathing with each step. For example, a two-count for each stride.
- Try this for a minute or two. If it feels good, do it for longer. If possible, walk in nature to further assist the centering process.

Capture What Troubles You: Journaling

- To use journaling to help you find the center, write about your current challenges: problems, fears, upsets, insecurities, and indignations.
- Dump it in your journal. Express your emotions and it might let it go, allowing you to center yourself.
- Sometimes you can be more centered in a matter of minutes. Other times, you may need to journal for longer.

Grounding Exercise: Hold Your Crown

- When you're off center, place one hand directly over the crown of your head. It will help ground you more quickly.
- Try this in combination with any of the above methods. Keep your hand there until you are more grounded, usually one minute or less.

