



GATEWAY
ZIMBABWE

CIRCLES TO
RE-IMAGINE
THE FUTURE

Session 3:
**Hosting Self:
Inner Work**

A JOURNEY OF RE-IMAGINING AND CO-CREATING THE FUTURE.

Hosting Self: Inner Work

This session will be looking at two very important components for running a successful project. The first is around our inner work - to become more grounded and calm as human beings - and the second is to practice on-going learning and reflection of our work together.

This session can be done in one meeting or it can be done over two meetings. Find what works for you.

EXAMPLE SESSION OUTLINE

Exact timing depends on how many people you have in your session. More people will need more time.

1. Check In **(10 mins)**
2. Gateway team Sharing on Inner Work **(10 mins)**
3. In pairs people sharing their own existing Inner Work practices **(5-10 mins)**
4. Inner Work Practice (choose one of the three suggested ones) **10-20 mins**
5. Reflection in pairs: What was the experience like?
How might I more fully host myself going forward?
6. Introduction to group reflection and learning
7. Group learning conversation
8. Check Out



PART 1: INNER WORK: HOSTING OURSELVES

What do we mean by ‘hosting?’ We all know how to host, how to welcome someone into our home, our space, our work. Hospitality comes naturally. We would never let a visitor leave without food or water or welcome. When we talk of hosting, we talk of welcoming, we talk of being open to all voices, we talk of making people comfortable.

Sometimes though we forget how to make ourselves comfortable. How to look after and welcome ourselves. So when we talk about hosting ourselves we emphasise the need to look after ourselves too, so that we can then welcome and be with others.

Our inner condition determines how we are able to show up with other people. It affects our outlook, our work and our engagements with others. Our ability to find a level of peace and calm and ground within ourselves is in direct relation to our ability to navigate the waves and wind of everyday life.

If we carry our worries and our cares around with us and are unable to be free of them or set them down, we get caught in endless spirals of thinking and worrying, often even lying awake at night. From this place it is not easy to bring our best into the world. From this place it is not easy to be full of creativity and capacity and innovation. In the words of Bill O’Brien:

“the quality of an intervention depends on the interior condition of the intervenor.”

Key questions for us are then:

- How then can we tend to our interior condition?
- How can we develop a capacity to be with what is moving inside us, without getting caught by it?

How and from where can we find ground, peace and calm?

It is not easy and there is no one way. There are many different ways.

We have to find what works for us - and to commit to on-going practice.



Because:

- It is a lifelong journey of cultivating inner peace.
- It is a lifelong practice of learning how to be calm in the storm.
- It is a lifelong journey to befriend ourselves, to spend time with ourselves, and to listen deeply to ourselves; heart and mind.

There are many ways and we each find our own. Prayer is one of them, but in our experience many other practices can support the daily practice of prayer.

EXERCISE 1:

Turn to a neighbour (or in groups of three) share what are your approaches for finding inner peace? What are your ways to host yourself?

Share in the full group.

Different people have different practices.

Some journal; some spend quiet time in nature, others meditate; some sing: others dance.

Do you take time each day - even if just a little - a little bit of time each day to tend to yourself?

In this module we are offering a few different exercises that can support you in hosting yourself.

EXERCISE 2:

As a group try one of these exercises:

Inner Work 1: Meditation

Inner Work 2: Movement Meditation

Inner Work 3: Tree Meditation

Once complete, reflect on how it was for you. As Gateway Fellows and facilitators of this session decide beforehand which of these three you feel comfortable to lead. The others can be tried in another session.



Inner Work 1: Meditation (7-10 minutes)

[\(click here to listen to spoken instruction\)](#)

Meditation or mindfulness practice is a very simple practice of bringing the mind to become aware of what you're experiencing in a given moment without judging or defining it. It is a simple but profound practice that can support us in cultivating acceptance of what is. Acceptance does not mean agreement, but simply accepting what is now. Out of acceptance can arise calm action.

In mindfulness practice we work with our 'monkey mind'. Our minds are made to think - and so they are ever busy jumping from one thing to the next. In mindfulness we train ourselves to constantly bring the mind back to one thing - and to leave the rest.

We often use our breath to support our meditation. Our breath is constant and so it gives the mind something to focus on. Whenever we notice ourselves following a train of thought, we gently bring the mind back to our breathing. Over and over and over again.

The point is not to stop thinking but to cultivate enough awareness of each time we lose ourselves in a thought and to gently bring ourselves back to the constant anchor of the breath. The idea is to allow thoughts, feelings and sensations to come and go, without judgement or the need to do anything with them. Instead of the breath you can focus on the light of a candle, or the sounds you hear around you.

Meditation, or Mindfulness Practice involves a gentle acceptance of whatever comes into your awareness in the moment. The more we practice, the more we connect with an underlying quiet beyond the mental chatter, and we also come to befriend our thoughts and feelings as they come and go.

It may seem like a strange thing to do, but let us try it together.

At the end share with a partner how the experience was for you.



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Inner Work 2: Movement Meditation (10-15 minutes)

Another form of meditation is to become aware of what you are feeling in your body, and to allow yourself to move with it - through your whole body. In the Gateway we call this simple practice Awakening the Dancer. It does not need to look like any particular kind of dance, but it is a movement practice in which we connect inwardly with our moving self - connecting with the part of us that is in movement and flow. Through the practice we can become conscious of emotions, tensions, energy and allow ourselves to move with those, with acceptance.

You can do this in silence but it is easier to do it with music. You can either play a piece of music from a speaker, or let someone play the drums or the hosho, or agree on a simple song and sing it together. Let it be a simple piece of music. A facilitator can read these instructions or give ones that are similar:

- Standing bring your attention inside your body. Take a few deep breaths. Slowly begin to move. As you move, let your attention rest in different parts of the body and become aware of the sensations and movement in that part of the body. Let that body part gently soften into movement.
- Let's begin with your **feet**. Feel your feet on the ground, explore your feet, what movement is wanting to come through your feet right now? Let your feet move, finding their own beat and movement.
- Move up through your **ankles**. Feel the joints of the ankles and allow them to move. Give the dance to your ankles.
- Feel your **lower legs** - find the movement that allows you to feel your lower legs. How do they want to move?
- Let your attention move into your **thighs**. Feel your thighs and let them move.
- Feel your **hips** - explore the movement of your hip joints and your pelvic bowl.
- Keep travelling upward into your **spine**. Let your attention enter your backbone - let yourself feel each vertebra and let



the movement of your spine unfold. It may move side to side, backwards, forwards, down, up - explore and let it unfold.

- Open into your **chest area**, widen your chest, feel your shoulder blades, and your ribcage. Bring awareness and out of it let the movement follow.
- Into the **neck**, and all the way through to the **top of your head** - let your awareness rest in your head for a while, soften your neck, relax your jaws, give your head back to its own movement.
- **Shoulders** - exploring their direction, their musculature, into your **upper arms**, allow yourself to move so you can really feel your upper arms.
- Continue into your **elbows**. Feel them, and let them become free in their own movement.
- Let that move into your **lower arms**, and your **wrists**. Feel the inside of your wrists, let them open through your gentle dance. Continue into your **hands and fingers**. Feel and let move. Feel and let move. It is an inward movement practice - expressing in outward movement.
- Let your attention move through the body and let the movement naturally unfold. Allow each part of your body to express itself. Let your movements be free. Allow yourself to express yourself in your own movements. It does not need to look any particular way. Let it be like a meditation - only this time in movement.
- If parts of your body are stiff - don't try to force them to be another way. Acknowledge it and move with it.
- Towards the end your whole body is now in movement. You can shift between deeper inward listening to your body and more outward expression of your own dance.
- As the drums or music comes to a close take a moment to feel your body as a whole. Take a moment to receive yourself as you are in this moment.

At the end share with a partner how the experience was for you.



Inner Work 3: Tree Meditation (10-20 minutes)

Nature is an incredible support for our inner peace as humans. Nature is like our mother caring for us. If we learn to listen to nature we can connect with her deep wisdom, and we may find that this can support us in times of challenge, or simply in feeling more connected in our everyday life experience.

Assuming you are meeting where there are trees, invite each participant to choose a tree and to spend some quiet time connecting with their tree. If you have pen and paper invite them to draw their tree, and to pay attention to what they can see.

Invite them to imagine the roots, and to consider the relationship between the roots, the trunk and the branches.

- What am I observing/ seeing about the tree?
- What are we learning about the tree and ourselves?
- What am I seeing that is related to me?
- What does the tree tell me about my life?

At the end share with a partner how the experience was for you.

PART TWO: COMMUNITY & PROJECT REFLECTIONS

The second step of this session is to take time to reflect together on what we have been learning in the past month.

We can never foretell the future.

We can plan and we can map.

From time to time it can help to stop and look back at what we intended and seek to understand how it worked or did not work. We can learn so much from this and we can grow as individuals and improve on our project.

In the same way that it is important for us to take time to tend to our individual inner landscape, it is equally important for us to come together and tend to what is emerging and to what we are learning.



If we don't capture the learning we lose it. Something that did not work simply becomes a setback, rather than a deeper opportunity for growth.

As a community project group reflect together on the following questions:

1. In small groups reflect together on what was done this month:
 - What went very well? What inspired and gave energy?
 - What was surprising or unexpected in a good way?
 - What was most challenging? How did we overcome it?
2. What was not done that we thought would be done? Why?
3. What are we discovering about needs that we might not have been aware of before?
4. What can we learn from all of this for the coming month?

It's important to really explore these questions, so that we can learn and grow together!



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IT'S US AND IT'S NOW: WHATEVER THE QUESTION COMMUNITY IS THE ANSWER.