Centering is one of the simplest and most common forms of contemplative practice. The “center” refers to a relaxed yet focused state of mind. Centering practice is especially helpful in the midst of strong emotional states such as excitement or anxiety, and enables you to feel stable and prepared before a potentially stressful event.

Before you start any Unbridled Conversation centre yourself. Here are some of my favourite techniques for centering

1) **Focus on Your Breathing**

Concentrate on breathing deeply, using your diaphragm to draw air all the way down into your lungs.
If you’re not familiar with deep breathing:

Lie on the floor, or somewhere comfortable but supported. Place one hand on your stomach, and take a deep breath in through your nose. Use the air you breathe in to push against your hand. Your chest and shoulders shouldn't move – only your stomach. Exhale slowly and deliberately through your mouth. Spend a while completely focusing on your breathing

Mindfully release the tension in your body. Continue to breathe slowly and deeply, while scanning your body for feelings of tension. Start with your toes and work your way up your body, paying attention to each group of muscles as you go. Relax any muscles that feel tense by clenching them and then releasing them

2) Find Your Centre

Locate your "physical centre of gravity" which, in Centering, is visualized as being about two inches below your navel. Become familiar with where your centre is, and remember what it feels like – you’ll probably find that you feel grounded and stabilized by focusing your mind on this part of your body.

When you begin to feel stressed, turn your attention to your centre to remind yourself that you have balance and control. Once you’ve found it, breathe in and out deeply at least five times. Continue to concentrate on your centre and feel the sensation of being stabilized and on the ground.

3) Redirect Your Energy

Finally, channel your energy into achieving the outcome you desire.

Imagine all of the energy in your body flowing into your centre. I like picturing this energy as a glowing ball, Visualize putting all of your negative thoughts into the balloon and then releasing it. As you inhale, say "I let..." and as you exhale, say "...go."

You can also picture your energy as a ball and imagine throwing it far into the distance. Let go of everything that is causing you to feel stressed. Imagine your centre filled with calm.

On your next inhalation, think about what you want to achieve, and focus on thinking positively
Ultimately, anything that helps you feel tranquil and aware can become your centering practice.

**Other Common Centering Methods:**

- Count numbers, such as counting down from 10 to dissipate anger
- Repeat a word or phrase, such as a prayer or affirmation
- Smile and relaxing your body
- Go for a walk; get out into a different environment
- Stretch
- Close your eyes and breathe deeply
- Concentrate on breathing, such as breathing out for a count of 8 and in for a count of 4
- Count your breaths
- Doodle or write
- Carry or place near yourself a visual reminder to stay centered, such as a quote or image
- Use sound to bring yourself back to your centre. Periodically ring a bell, chime, or other gentle reminder.

Persistence is an important aspect of centering practice. Purposefully centering yourself many times throughout the day, even when you are not feeling particularly emotional or in need of centering, will help to deepen your practice.