

## Handouts for 2024 PATH Region 3 Conference

### SENSING OUR GROUNDEDNESS

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*2024 PATH Region 3 Conference*

*These handouts accompany  
the PowerPoint slides that are  
also available to you as handouts.*

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## **Why is it important we sense our groundedness?**

- We have shared energy fields with horses and humans.
- The better we sense our balance, the sturdier we can be without necessarily bracing.
- Connecting our body parts gives us respite from our busy minds.

## **NOTE:**

- Paying attention to our bodies can be settling or unsettling.
- If at any point you find that listening or doing the exercises brings up some distress that does not settle easily, please take a break to drink some water or tea, stretch, wiggle, dance, or walk.
- If that's not enough to elicit settling, please make contact with your favorite human or animal friend and spend time in the presence of their calmer state which will help you shift to a more resourced state.
- Doing exercises together with a friend offers personal support.
- Engaged social connection is a survival state that brings settling and pleasant coregulation.

## Sensations

achy airy alive bloated blocked breathless brittle bubbly  
burning buzzy chilled clammy closed cold congested  
constricted contracted cool cozy crampy damp dense  
dizzy dull electrified empty energized expansive faint  
flaccid flexible fluid flushed fluttery frantic frozen full  
furry goosebumpy gurgling hard heavy hot icy intense  
itchy jagged jittery jumbly jumpy knotted light loose  
moist nauseated numb open paralyzed pounding  
pressure prickly puffy pulled pulsing quaking queasy  
quiet quivering radiant ragged raw roiling shaky sharp  
shimmering shivery shuddery silky smooth soft spacious  
spasming spinning sticky still stretchy stringy strong  
suffocated sweaty tender tense thick throbbing tickly  
tight tingling trembly tremulous twitchy vibrating  
warm wobbly zingy

## Emotions

affectionate	fed up	quiet
ambivalent	fretful	sad
angry	frustrated	satisfied
annoyed	furios	scared
anxious	grieving	shocked
assertive	goofy	silly
bold	happy	sorrowful
bored	hesitant	surprised
calm	indifferent	tearful
cautious	lonely	terrified
concerned	love	tentative
confused	loving	thoughtful
content	mad	tired
despair	perky	uncertain
disgust	playful	worried
eager	proud	
excited	puzzled	
exuberant	restless	

## **Exercise: Rocking To Balance**

1. Stand or sit comfortably and feel your weightiness, the way gravity draws your body toward the earth. If sitting, notice if your weight down through your pelvis feels the same on the right side as on the left side. If standing, notice if your weight down through your pelvis to your feet feels the same on your right foot as your left. (Everyone has asymmetries—it's normal.)
2. Start rocking gently from side to side, just a small rocking motion, maybe 2-3 inches in each direction.
3. Slowly decrease the range of your rocking until you find a balanced middle place.
4. Pause and feel what this is like.
5. Slowly lean a little to the right, putting a hand on something for stability if needed.
6. Pause and feel what this is like.
7. Slowly lean a little more to the right until you feel you are at the edge of coming off balance. Pause there, then come back to the middle.
8. Pause in the middle and notice what's happening with your energy, breathing, heart rate, muscle involvement, and sense of contact with the earth/ground.
9. Slowly lean a little to the left, using a hand on something for stability if needed.
10. Pause and feel what this is like.
11. Slowly lean a little more to the left until you feel you are at the edge of coming off balance, then come back to middle.
12. Pause in the middle and notice what's happening with your energy, breathing, heart rate, muscle involvement, and sense of contact with the earth/ground.

### **Where did you:**

- **wobble in either direction?**
- **feel more stable?**
- **tense up more to prevent falling over?**
- **hold your breath?**
- **relax and release your breath?**

## **Exercise: Exhale To Settle**

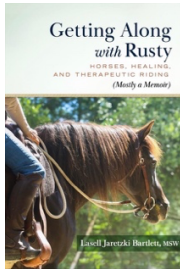
In a recent workshop, a participant shared how she used breathing to self-soothe while raising eight children. I was elated to be reminded of how intentional breathing can support shifting states, and so I include this breathing exercise now. It's one of the easiest ways to shift toward a calmer state—handy for when we want to become more grounded, whether for our own benefit or to help others.

1. Stand or sit comfortably.
2. Bring your attention to how you are breathing, without changing anything. Just notice your inhalations and exhalations.
3. Begin to extend your exhale so that it is longer than your inhale. Counting may help, such as inhaling for a count of four, and exhaling for a count of five or six, or more. Do at least three cycles of exhaling longer than you inhale.
4. Pause and allow your natural, undirected breathing to resume, and notice if you have a new sense of being settled.
5. Repeat 3 with adding a sound to your exhale, a sound to enhance your exhale.
6. Repeat 4.

**What do you notice now?**

**Was this an easy way to downshift?**

## From *Getting Along with Rusty*



**Below are some quotes and adapted quotes from *Getting Along with Rusty: Horses, Healing, and Therapeutic Riding (Mostly a Memoir)***

When there's worry and conflict in my human relationships, I sometimes ask myself, "Who's going to be the adult here? Who will shift into a more mindful state, pause the acting out of upset thoughts and feelings, and allow the other's waves of upset to crest, break, and settle?"

When it comes to relating with a horse, I do not ask who is going to be the adult, me or the horse. The adult with a regulated, grounded nervous system—that has to be me, as much as I would love to feel all those warm fuzzy feelings if I let myself be a needy child, with my horse as the regulator. That would end in disappointment, if not injury. Injury for me. It's our human job—not the horse's—to be calm and present and help the horse join us in this state. (Adapted)

The sequence for assisting nervous system shifts starts with *Me First*. As flight attendants remind us, when we fly with a child and the oxygen masks drop, we must first put on our own and then attend to the child. Same with horses: first look to our own settling and then look to helping the horse. In other words, if I'm wound up, I can't help my horse settle.

What if we can't easily return to a sense of connectedness— accessible in the calm of our parasympathetic state—after an upset? We use management strategies that will shift us toward a calmer state. I can check my breathing. If I'm holding my breath, I start breathing. If I'm breathing in a shallow and rapid manner, I slow it down, with an emphasis on breathing into my lower torso and extending my exhale—even blowing air out slowly for as long as I can. This alone communicates to both my own brain and to people and horses around me: *I am feeling safe enough to breathe slowly and deeply, so you can feel safe, too*. To become more grounded, I can bring my attention to feeling the ground me. These are a couple of easy ways to help our horses settle. Settling myself means they can settle.

Other activities help, such as swaying, hopping, and hugging. My singing while riding Rusty helped us to stay connected and feel safe enough together. There's meditating, creating with art, music, or words, sipping tea, and napping. And soaking in a hot bath, walking in the woods, planting a garden, or pausing in a quiet place free from the concerns of pleasing others, meeting others' needs, or questioning if our hair looks okay and socks match. What might work for

## About Lasell

Lasell Jaretzki Bartlett, MSW (she/her/hers), integrates many decades of experience in the fields of bodymind awareness and meditation, with professional expertise as a Clinical Social Worker and Somatic Experiencing® Practitioner, and as a PATH Intl. Certified Therapeutic Riding Instructor and Equine Specialist in Mental Health and Education.

In private practice, she facilitates trauma resolution from early childhood trauma, falls, medical trauma, and meditation dissociations, helping people develop a sense of safety that can support the best relationships imaginable.

To enhance her professional offerings, Bartlett became a practitioner of [Somatic Experiencing®](#), [Bodywork and Somatic Education™](#), [Brainspotting™](#), [Somatic Resilience and Regulation®](#), and [Transforming Touch®](#). In addition to assisting regional, national, and international Somatic Experiencing® and [Equusoma®](#) trainings, she has presented on trauma healing at conferences for mental health and therapeutic riding professionals.

Her first book, [Getting Along with Rusty: Horses, Healing, and Therapeutic Riding \(Mostly a Memoir\)](#) was published in August 2023. She's been published in [The Natural Horse Magazine](#); Mark Rashid's [A Journey to Softness](#); [What She Wrote: An Anthology of Women's Voices](#); [We Had To Be: An Anthology by Breast Cancer Survivors, Previvors, Thrivers, & their Families](#); [MicroLit Almanac](#); [Osho News](#); [STRIDES Magazine](#); and [Reform Pinktober: Profound Story Sharing Behind the Pink Ribbon](#).

Bartlett lives on the uncharted lands of the [Monacan Indian Nation](#) in rural Virginia with two horses, seven sheep, fourteen goats, twenty-two guineas, two cats, three dogs, and her bestest ever human friend.

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