Playing with balance (inspired by an idea from Dr. Gunther Schmidt)

Sometimes experiences and encounters upset our balance, especially when they trigger flight, fight, or freeze reflexes in us. That is normal part of our work, not a personal failure. It is a perfectly normal reaction when you are in contact with violence, fear and insecurity. In situations like this, we can easily lose our inner composure and become directed towards the outside — which makes sense when we need to avoid danger, but it does not help much if we lose our sense of balance in our contact with others.

Try this small exercise out with a colleague or friend:
Stand opposite one another. Your colleague should start fidgeting, acting nervous and tense (please don't act too "real", don't leave the situation or fight back, otherwise you won't be able to pay attention to what happens with you. This is deliberately an artificial situation, and it's not about how you act, but about your awareness of what takes place).
Place both hands lightly on the other person's shoulders.
First concentrate only on the other person. Try to hold them or to calm them down, but make sure your attention stays on you. You will notice that you are aware of a lot of what is going on with your colleague, what they are doing, what they look like, but you will also notice that you quickly take on their emotions and that you are unable to be very effective in your own actions.

Now both of should give your bodies a good shake and start all over again. Stand with both feet firmly on the ground, notice your breathing, and simply observe it. Notice how you are standing on the floor, feel the flexibility in your legs. They're not glued to the floor, of course, you can move them. Feel the floor beneath your feet and your breathing — and that they feel good.
Your colleague should do the same as before, and you should place your hands on their shoulders. But this time make sure your concentration stays only on you, while you try to calm the other person. This will probably feel unaccustomed, but you will be able to stay like that for a short while until you notice that the other person is becoming calmer on their own. And you'll notice how much better it is when you can feel yourself standing on the floor and your breathing remains fluid.

When we practice and learn to stabilise ourselves in the here and now through our **stance** (or through contact with a chair and the floor) and we concentrate on our **breathing** and, by doing so take on an **inner supportive and beneficial attitude**, then we not only regulate out own *tenseness*, but we also relieve the other person of theirs and they are able to calm down. You know what it's like in contact with children. When you are nervous and feel a little jumpy, then your child will become jumpy as well and it will be very difficult for them to get to sleep. However, if we sit down next to our child, read them a story, or if we do some handiwork activity with them, then they soon calm down.

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Where does this come from? At least 75 percent of our communication is non-verbal, our bodies are aware of the relaxation or tension in others and that makes us realise whether a situation is good or, for example, if there is a threat of danger. We call this "rabbit-to-rabbit" communication. Invite the people you are in contact with to be aware of how they are standing and how they are breathing, that way everyone can become calmer.

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