



# The Holds - Tools for Calming and Wellbeing

**Overview:** This practice consists of several simple energy holds that may be done on oneself or another person for anxiety, emotional or physical pain, strong emotions such as anger, fear, and insomnia, and for deep relaxation. Through the energy of our hands we have the power to bring harmony and healing to body, mind and heart. This is useful for introducing heart-mind-body as a critical part of movement building, by creating space for this type of practice during each day of a workshop but also to respond to any deep feelings/outside influence that is affecting the dynamic in the space.

**Purpose:** To share a technique for managing our individual emotions as well as emotions/dynamics that surface in our work with groups as facilitators. In our feminist movement building work, there is often deep sadness/pain that is motivating our activism, this can be useful but we need to be careful to ensure that participants feel contained in the workshop space (safe space). The exercises serve to “ground” participants, making them more present to the workshop and feel relaxed/safe.

**Time:** 50 minutes, 10 minutes for the demonstration, 20 minutes for each set of partners

**Materials and Space Needed:**

- Large enough space for participants to pair off with one of them sitting on a chair and the other being able to move freely around them.
- Essential oil or fresh herbs that have relaxing/energising fragrances (optional) e.g. lavender, lemongrass.

**Credit:** Adapted from the CAPACITAR Emergency Response Toolkit,  
[www.capacitar.org/kits/engcapemergkit.doc](http://www.capacitar.org/kits/engcapemergkit.doc)





### Process:

1. The facilitator will demonstrate this practice in front of the whole group.
2. She will then invite participants who would like to try it to get into pairs, find a chair and a space in which to work.
3. The facilitator will then guide you through the steps.
4. The facilitator will ask – how did it feel to receive/give the head holds before swopping to within the pair.

*Facilitator Notes: Explain to the group that this is a practice that can be used on oneself or on another person, hold in mind and heart a deep sense of peace, light and spaciousness. The holds can be done for several minutes each, accompanied by deep abdominal breathing to promote greater release. The touch is very light and if someone fears touch because of pain or their history of abuse, the holds may be done working slightly off the body. Always ask permission when you do any practice involving touch of another person. You can also do this hold several inches off the body respectful of the person's boundaries.*

It is useful to demonstrate to the group first and then guide them through applying the practice encouraging them to take deep breathes throughout.

**Step 1.** First ask your partner if you have permission to touch them, and if you are using oil, if it is okay if you use the oil on them.

### **Step 2. Halo Hold**

Stand behind your partner and hold your hands an inch away from their ears. This is a way of greeting the person's body before starting the practice. Tell the participants to take a few deep breathes together, in through the nose and out through the mouth. After a couple of breathes, ask them to move solely to the next position.

### **Step 3. Head Hold**

One hand lightly holds the head high on the forehead; the other hand holds the base of the skull. The energy of the hands connects with parts of the brain related to memories and emotions. Instruct the participants to keep doing deep breathes.

### **Step 4. Shoulder Hold**

The hands rest lightly on the shoulders, the place in the body related to anxiety, excess baggage or the burdens of life.



### **Step 5. Heart Hold**

One hand rests across sternum high on chest. The other hand touches upper back behind the heart. The heart area often holds emotional pain, wounds of the past, grief and resentment.

Breathe deeply and imagine the heart pain draining down into the earth. You can also do this hold several inches off the body respectful of the person's boundaries.

### **Step 6. Feet Hold**

The tops of the feet may also be held to ground the person. Move around to the front of the body and kneel down in front of the receiver.

Tips:

- Strong smelling oils can affect people with sensitive chests so make sure you ask permission and open some windows.
- As you get more familiar with the techniques, it is nice to start threading through an imaginary – for each step, ask the giver of the practice to hold the receiver in their hearts – thank them for their contribution to this workshop/to activism; acknowledge whatever they might be struggling with and give them good wishes for the future.