

## Role-play of eCPR by Sam Ahrens and Dan Fisher, in Singapore

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I really like how this role-play worked out. I think it illustrates the way that when the supporter gets into the present moment, and simulates the movement a person is making, it becomes possible to help both the supporter and the person in distress to find the words that help them describe their distressing feeling, which begins the empowerment process. You will see Sam, as the person in distress express her distress by putting her hands in front of her and pushing out. I imitate the gesture and in my body I experience the feeling of self-protection, of pushing something away from myself. I felt fearful of being intruded upon. I then found words for the feeling and said that I felt she did not want me to intrude into her space without an invitation. Then I joked that I might need an engraved invitation, and she and I laughed together. That helped us form a good connection.

We also find that she holds her breath when anxious. I coach her in breathing and she feels empowered.

Near the end I thanked her for inviting me into her space and showing me how to do so.

And, she gets teary with gratitude saying she usually feels of little use. This is revitalizing for her.

**Transcript:** In this transcript of an eCPR role-play I comment on the progress towards each of the components of eCPR in **red**.

**(intro)**

Sam: We are always doing it (**eCPR**) in the present moment, the challenges of being present, and open and genuine in the present moment are always there. For me in my first experience of emotional CPR... somehow I connected with the idea that you let everything go and find your way to be with someone, totally open and open heart, tender heart, awake body and open mind, not having an agenda or questions but just being there and when I do that I can connect with someone and from that empowerment emerges and revitalization emerges, it is a natural process. For me eCPR is like unlearning rather than learning, unlearning all the ways that we get in our way, all the ways that we get between our self and another person.

Dan: Intrinsically this is a way of being, a way of being escapes words, as soon as you try to pin it down and explain in words you lose a certain amount of it. We are trying to learn the best way to be.

**2:54 begin the role-play:**

**[Sam is holding herself, hand to head and sighing]**

Dan: So how have you been?

Sam: Hi, you probably don't want to be around me today.

Dan: I would like to just be here with you, but I am not sure of the best way to be here.

Sam: That is my problem; I don't know how to be here. It's not working for me. I cannot do it.

Dan: Can't do it.

Sam: Not working

Dan: Must be a hard feeling to feel you can't do it  
 Sam: I sure gave it a try, I am worn out, I just can't do it  
 Dan: Can't do it  
 Sam: Tired of explaining it to people, I don't know why I can't do it, I just know it isn't; I am worn out, worn out, I just can't do it, I am tired of explaining to people why I can't do it, I just know its not working  
 [ at 5:22 Sam puts her right arm and hand up in front of herself and pushes out]  
 there is just this



SAM



DAN

Dan: This [and he pushes air with his right hand]  
 Sam: Just this, things come completely to a stop



SAM

[she puts both hands in front of her]  
 Dan: What does it mean?  
 Sam: It means that I can feel this wall, but I can't explain the wall and that is why it is so hard just to be around, be around [Sam puts hands up next to her head]



SAM

Dan: Be?

Sam: You see that is what happens [as she pulls her chair away from Dan, and turns her hands to push out against him]



Sam: I can't, I don't want to, its just a wall

Dan: [leaning to the side away from Sam, head tilted away, and right hand pushing air towards her]



Dan: Do you feel it here between us?

Sam: I did when we started talking about it

Dan: I can relate somewhat, my experience may have some similarity, there are times when I feel overwhelmed and just want to put up a wall [Dan gestures with his hands as if pushing against a wall in front of him] Sam points out that she "overwhelms herself," but in response to interacting she can control what she does to herself in a new way more than what others are doing to her, it is what she does to herself she finds the most difficult



Sam: It is more than people, it is everything, I am overwhelmed by myself, overwhelmed by being in a room, overwhelmed by people

[7:08 gesturing with her hands to show the feeling, hands to side of her head leaning down]  
Dan notices that Sam is holding her breath, and he realizes this by noticing his own sigh. He first felt Sam's hesitation in breathing in the pattern of his own breathing, and then communicates that observation to Sam, to help her become more self-aware of her breathing.]

Dan: Breath for a moment [Dan lets out a sigh] I am feeling a need to breathe

Sam: Not good at that

Dan: Not good at breathing?

Sam: No I forgot that

Dan: Sometimes that is all there is, breathing

Sam: [relaxes her position, breathes out and laughs] This is an important point of connection through identification with her through breathing together? through laughing?]

Dan: [Dan laughs with her] That's all there is, breathing

Sam: Well that would simplify things

[Sam may be saying that just focusing on breathing simplifies things by helping her let go of her self-critical thoughts]

Dan: You don't have to think about anything else

Sam: [leans back and moves her hair away from her face] You know I think I get dizzy because I don't breathe [she takes a deep breath] I just realized that when you said that I felt a little less dizzy [takes another deep breath]

Dan: Help me to be here with you when you breathe, and I just want to be here beside you

Sam: Here

Dan:[gesturing down with his hands] here, here I can't be right there because you are there[ gestures to where she is sitting, then between them] but here together

Sam: That's good because I have met a lot of space invaders in my time [leans way and puts hands up as if to ward Dan off] Right in my space [but quickly drops her guard when he says]

Dan: I don't want to be a space invader

Sam: Sometimes if they are that far away [points to where I am] or behind a desk, question, question, question, and then this is what happens, just yesterday the person kept asking questions and every time I answered they said no that's not what I meant. Then I was glad I had a wall. They are for people like you just go away.

Dan: That's a frightening feeling maybe scary feeling, invading, I have had some of those feelings [head down no gestures] sometimes I had the feeling I have to hold my breath because it wasn't safe to breathe, even to take in air seemed threatening [sits up straight, gesturing as if pulling air in with hands] so I would hold my breath and tell myself that was the only safe thing to do

Sam: [laughs and says] assume the crash position [leans forward putting hands to both sides of her head to illustrate the position, while still laughing]

Dan: [gesturing with hands out in front of him again] maybe if we can experience that together it wouldn't be so scary? [Dan holds position of hands down, head tilted away from Sam]

Sam: That isn't the way it happens, you are just in it by yourself, there are all these people, but even if they are trying to help.

Dan: I would like to be there with you in the way that you would like me to be there, I don't want to be imposing

Sam: Boy if I knew what that way was?

Dan: You could invite me in [Sam smiles], I need an invitation [Dan laughs] an engraved invitation [Sam and Dan both laugh] I would accept with pleasure an invitation [Connecting has progressed well at this point, far enough perhaps to lead to empowering]

10:34 Sam: An invitation [Sam breathes out] that breathing seems to help, I realize how much I hold my breath

Dan: We could just breathe together a little [again the theme of breathing, raised earlier, but now Dan wonders if they can breathe together]

Sam: [leans back and faces Dan smiling] would you be my breathing coach? [Breathing deeply, at this point Sam is demonstrating an empowered voice as she is inviting Dan in to be her coach]

Dan: Breathing lessons, not a bad idea

Sam: I have a degree, I have a job but that breathing stuff [laughs, gesturing ahead] I just fog out on how it works

Dan: Its very natural, its one of the first things we do on arrival on this earth

Sam: Sometimes I feel like I leave earth because it hasn't been my best spot

Dan: I know that feeling, should we just breathe together?

Sam: Sometimes it seems like it needs to be that simple

[We breathe together]

12:38

Dan: It gives me strength to be here with you [my revitalization which seems to help Sam to experience her revitalization] I appreciate you

Sam: How could that be?

Dan: your willingness

Sam: How could you get strength from someone who doesn't know how to breathe?[laughs gently, leans her head forward and down]

Dan: Because of your willingness to allow me to breathe with you, gives me strength, gives me purpose, makes me feel I have a reason for being here too

Sam: [gasps in, puts hand to her face and begins to cry, Sam is experiencing revitalization] I think most of the time I feel like such a loser, such a burden, not fitting in so the idea that I would give anybody purpose is pretty new [it revitalizes her to feel that she can give purpose to Dan]

Dan: you do, your willingness to allow me in

Sam: It is not like I have had a lot of offers, where people actually asked to be invited, people don't ask, well they do but in a way that I get that wall feeling, you know about walls

Dan: Yes I know about walls

Sam: Well maybe that is why you know how to ask

Dan: I tried to ask in a way that I would want to be asked, the way I would have tried to ask



Sam: You just gave me a little heart to go on [puts her hand on her heart, Sam is poignantly expressing her increased sense of vitality and sense of renewed life]

Dan: You gave me a little heart to go on

### **Reflecting on the Role-play:**

\*\*\* This role-play highlights what I would call a cycle of revitalization, through breathing. The breathing opens new **Connections** with oneself; there is empowering because it awakens the body and expands one's heart=**emPowering**; then your mind opens and the whole process is **Revitalization**

### **Cycle of Revitalization through Connecting with one's Breath:**

1. **Freer breathing** leads to
2. **Awakening the body** leading to
3. **Tender heart:** Expanding and softening of the heart,
4. **Opening of one's mind** leading to 1-3

In Eastern philosophies, such as Zen Buddhism, connecting with one's breath is a central element of reaching higher states of consciousness. However, in certain mental states, during severe distress, it is very hard to sit and meditate. There just isn't enough sense of self-present to guide oneself back to breathing when thoughts become too distracted. It is precisely during those periods, I believe that eCPR is the most beneficial. Just having the presence of another person to remind one that there is breathing to return to and that one is capable of doing so can make all the difference. The idea of breathing together at times of distress may work for some people, though others have told me they really don't want to think about their breathing when they are distressed. That just makes them more distressed. So, as is always the case in eCPR, watch for the person's response. You may just start by exaggerating your own sighing, if you notice that they are sighing. If that does captivate their attention, in some other way call attention to your breathing and see if that resonates with them. You may just take a few deep breaths.