



*Heart, Mind and Body
Wellness Guide:
Pachoto*

Bringing Healing to the Whole Person



peperid
africa
Break a norm!

About Katswe Sistahood

Founded in 2007, Katswe brings together young dynamic women from diverse backgrounds in Zimbabwe, Africa, and the diaspora. We envision a world where women have the power, skill and agency to effect meaningful change.

'We seek to create safe spaces for learning, sharing and consciousness-raising that catalyse women's collective power to act.'

Introducing “Pachoto” meetings “the pillar of our movement building work”.

The Pachoto meetings are at the heart of everything that Katswe does. They began as study circles in a few urban townships and became so popular that they have expanded to become a formal series of meetings for women only.

Pachoto! ‘By the fireside’

Women gather ‘pachoto’- ‘by the fireside’ on a daily basis as they perform their traditional gender role of cooking in the home. The fireside is a place of warmth, as women chat away, gossip, laugh, share recipes and secrets.



Similarly, Katswe Sistahood Pachoto meetings are designed to be a safe place for young women to share, exchange, offload, learn and unwind. The space has been used as an entry point for creating sustained dialogue on issues that relate to women's bodies, sexual health and rights, reproductive health and rights, general wellness issues, gender based violence and for celebrating ourselves, our diversities, our victories...and creating strategies for action in taking full charge of our own lives; bodies, spirits; sexualities- our entire beings!

Where are Pachoto meetings held? At local community centres, halls and meeting places.

When are Pachoto meetings held? Every week each group meets for 1 hour on a Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday or Friday. That means at least 50 meetings held every year and 50 opportunities to learn, share and mobilise on issues of sexual and reproductive health and womens rights.

Who attends Pachoto? All and any local women aged between 15 and 35 can attend. To be a member you must attend meetings regularly and sign in at each meeting. Meetings regularly attract anything from 20 to 60 participants of various ages and social status.

When we asked our Pachoto members what the space means for them, they said:

'it is a space to unwind', 'we get to laugh and dance', 'Pachoto we forget about our troubles and get to focus on what is going right- for a change!'

'we breath, we dream, we share, we offload, we get advice, we give advice, we sing and dance and laugh',

'we get to show off our skills', 'it's the space for healing'

Why develop a Heart-Mind-Body Wellness 'Pachoto' guide?

Many women who are part of the Pachoto community encounter multiple challenges on a daily basis, in both the private and public sphere; or may be living with unresolved issues from past traumatic events or experiences. This builds up stress and affects their health and wellbeing.

Over the years, we have found it important to focus on the total wellbeing of an individual. As facilitators and participants go through different sessions as part of our organising & movement building agenda, certain emotions may be triggered i.e. feelings of hopelessness, pain, joy or anger.



It is our intention that the discussions Pachoto should give us practical tools to mobilise for social justice and facilitate development of strategic actions that contribute to our wellbeing in the long term.

While our ultimate goal is the bigger picture, sustaining our activists for their wellbeing in the present is a priority. This Heart-Mind-Body guide introduces some key tactics for use by Pachoto process facilitators and individuals.

According to the World Health Organisation:

Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity

HMB work is grounded in seven pillars:

- (i) Recognizing who I am: explores women's social conditions and the manner in which we shape our perception of ourselves as women and as activists.
- (ii) Recognizing the violence that we face: from traditional forms of gender-based violence to forms of structural violence such as lack of water, healthcare, electricity etc, or violence that occurs in spaces that are considered non-violent, such as the organizations that we are part of.
- (iii) Recognising power in numbers: explores the basic tenants of movement building beginning with how a collective analysis from our lived experience can lead to the consolidating of a critical mass and collective organising for change.
- (iv) Recognizing and addressing lack of self-care: examines the ways in which the lack of self-care translates into self-inflicted violence in the lives of women activists.
- (v) Optimizing our vital strengths: focuses on healing and self-care as vital elements for empowerment, emphasizing the importance of taking care of our minds, bodies and spirits and seeking a holistic sense of well-being.
- (vi) Increasing self-defence: explores resources to combat the physical, legal, and psychological dimensions of violence in our lives
- vii) Identifying and building "resources": identifies existing and potential resources to draw from in different spheres of our lives, or in situations of crises

Section 1

Introducing the Six Best Doctors

Purpose

The body is a brilliant, complex system of muscles, nerves, blood, organs, cells etc. Any system has inputs and outputs and the body system runs on three energy inputs and the resulting output when correctly functioning is a self-regulating, self-healing body in health and wellness.

The quality of the inputs determines the output of health and wellness the body is able to produce over time. The body is the foundational platform for a human being because it is the vehicle housing the mind and soul. When the body is ill the mind finds it difficult to function properly.

When the body is in health and wellness it can align with the other systems in the being. It is pivotal because it is the part of the manifesting system enabling spirit and thought to manifest into physicality (*Shamillah Willson - Power Up Module - 2013*).

Throughout our processes and programmes, our Pachoto facilitators will encourage members to think about health a state of wellbeing, and uphold some basic principles to healthy living which are:





THE SIX BEST DOCTORS

- **DIET** – i.e. promoting a **PLANT BASED** diet “Grains, fruits, nuts, and vegetables, in proper combination, contain all the elements of nutrition; and when properly prepared, they constitute the diet that best promotes both physical and mental strength. *Education, 1903: Ellen G. White*
- **EXERCISE** – i.e. encouraging individuals to **INCREASE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**
- **FLUID INTAKE** – i.e. increase clean water intake- **NATURES BEST**
- **NATURAL SUNLIGHT** – i.e. encourage increased **OUTDOOR EXPOSURE**
- **ADEQUATE AIR** – i.e. think seriously about good ventilation at all times & encouraging nature walks (in the woods). This guide also provides in the coming sections- techniques for **BETTER BREATHING**
- **ADEQUATE REST** –i.e. **IMPROVED REST / SLEEP**

**"The best six doctors anywhere
And no one can deny it
Are sunshine, water, rest, and air
Exercise and diet.
These six will gladly you attend
If only you are willing
Your mind they'll ease
Your will they'll mend
And charge you not a shilling."**

*Nursery rhyme quoted by Wayne Fields,
What the River Knows, 1990"*

Process

Exercise

Over the next week become AWARE of EVERYTHING you are putting into your mouth. As you raise any item of food or drink to your lips ask yourself this question.

Is this the best thing to be fuelling my body with right now?

Section 2

Drumming Therapy

'Pachoto is the space to loosen up- it's the home for free flowing fun'

Purpose

Drumming Reduces Tension, Anxiety, and Stress

Drumming induces deep relaxation, lowers blood pressure, and reduces stress. Stress, according to current medical research, contributes to nearly all disease and is a primary cause of such life-threatening illnesses as heart attacks, strokes, and immune system breakdowns.

Some studies have found that a program of group drumming helped reduce stress and creates a sense of connectedness with self and others.

In a society in which traditional family and community-based systems of support have become increasingly fragmented, drumming circles Pachoto provide a sense of connectedness with others and interpersonal support.





A drum circle provides an opportunity to connect with your own spirit at a deeper level, and also to connect with a group of other like-minded people. Group drumming alleviates self-centeredness, isolation, and alienation.

Time: 30 minutes

What you will need: Comfortable Place to sit: Drums & percussion

Process

- o Encourage those who can to sit comfortably, in a circle.
- o The members can take turns to instruct and lead the process.
- o The instructor will divide the drummers into 3 or more clusters.
- o Each row will be assigned a tune i.e. soft beat, medium, or hard.
- o The first row/cluster will go followed by the others, one after the other.

The instructor can use voice or body movements, to regulate the drummers flow, pace and rhythm.

This exercise can be fused in with dance, other percussion, or sounds. It allows movement, laughter, relaxation, freedom and creativity within the group, and encourages them to exercise their muscles through drumming, and movement.

Section 3

Breathing Exercises

Purpose

When you are depressed about the past or stressed out about the future, bring your attention back to your breath. Breathing is a here and now experience; it takes you back to what is happening this very second.

Francois

Breath is a source of life. It brings fresh energy into the tissues and cells to nourish the body, mind, and the whole person. Breathing through a stressful time is an effective way to let go of the tension that accumulates in the body. Breath work combined with images of light or nature can promote feeling of peace, calm and focus.

TIME: Anywhere from 5 minutes to an hour

What you will need: quiet space, chair or mat or floor rag

Breathing Exercise 1 – Abdominal Breathing

Process

Breathe deeply and centre yourself, letting go of all worries and thoughts. Abdominal breathing can be practiced lying down on your back, sitting down or while standing.

Breathing Exercise 2 – Breathing in Calm

Process

- To begin, sit still and tall somewhere comfortable. Close your eyes and begin breathing through your nose.
- Then, inhale for a count of two... hold the breath in for a count of one... exhale gently, counting out for four... and finish by holding the breath out for a count of one. Keep your breathing even and smooth.
- If the 2 - 4 count feels too short try increasing the breath lengths to 4 in and 6 out, or 6 in and

- 8 out, and so on. But if longer breaths create any anxiety there is no need to push yourself.
- The most important thing is that the exhale is longer than the inhale, not the absolute length of the breath.
- Set a timer and breathe this way for at least five minutes. You will see a difference in your mood.

Breathing Exercise 3 – Breathing in Nature

Process

- Nature is a great resource for healing and grounding.
- With feet on the ground, breathe in deeply imagining that your feet are long roots running into the earth.
- Breathe in earth energy; breathe out stress, tension and pain.
- Slowly focus on tensing and relaxing each muscle group for two to three seconds each. Start with the feet and toes, then move up to the knees, thighs, rear, chest, arms, hands, neck, jaw and eyes — all while maintaining deep, slow breaths.





- Take a moment to listen to the sounds of nature while slowly bringing participants back into the present, asking them to slowly and gently open their eyes when they are ready.

Breathing Exercise 4 – Oxygenating Your Body

Process

Stand with your feet firmly on the ground. Raise your arms in the air.

Take a deep breath in. As you lower your arms breathe out in a vigorous manner, your elbows coming in close to the side of your body. Repeat in cycles of 8. This exercise causes a rapid intake of oxygen and could result in mild dizziness as a result.

Lie down. Separate your legs slightly and let the feet fall to the sides. Interlock the fingers and place the hands on your abdomen, palms facing downwards. Make a conscious effort to inhale deeply, so that your abdomen starts to expand your fingers separate. Allow your abdomen to expand as much as possible. As you begin to exhale, apply gentle pressure on your abdomen with your hands, pushing it downwards. Exhale fully. The secret to good breathing is in proper exhalation.

With better exhalation, your inhalation will also get better.

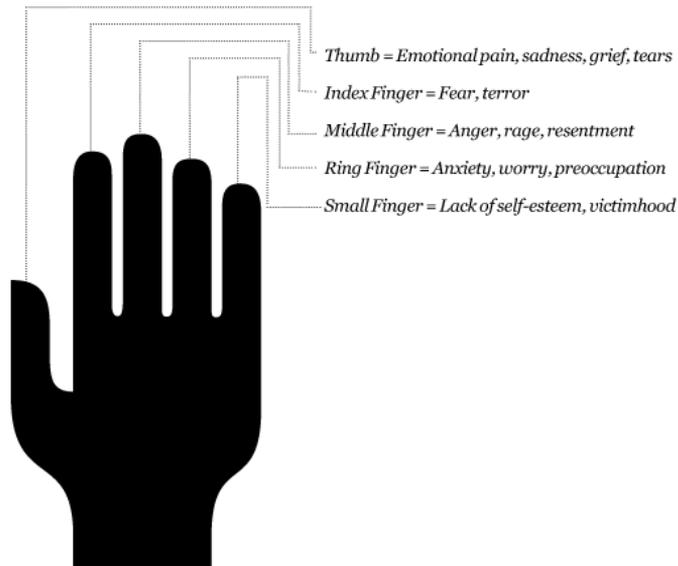
Repeat this process several times. When you feel comfortable, take full abdominal breaths without using your hands. And make your breath long and smooth, for both inhalation and exhalation.



Fingerholds for Managing Emotion

Purpose

The following exercise is based on Polarity and is a simple way to manage emotions by holding the fingers. It is also connected to the art of Jin Shin Jyutsu, a Japanese acupressure technique. Emotion is like a wave of energy that moves through the body. Often with strong emotions the energy of the body becomes blocked. Through the fingers run channels of energy. Through each finger runs a channel of energy that corresponds to the different emotional states (see image below).





The fingerholds are a very helpful tool to use in daily life. In difficult or challenging situations when tears, anger or anxiety arise, the fingers may be held to bring peace, focus and calm so that the appropriate response or action may be taken. The practice may also be done for relaxation with music, or used before going to sleep to release the problems of the day and to bring deep peace to body and mind. The practice may be done on oneself or on another person.

This exercise helps balance the energetic pathways that run through the fingers (referred to as meridians), which brings harmony to the entire body. It is a nice exercise to offer as a simple tool for self-care, and helps to emphasise that we carry the tools for self-care within ourselves. This exercise can be very useful following a challenging or emotional session, to help release emotions and shift the group into a space where they feel more hopeful and empowered.

TIME: 30 minutes

What you will need: Comfortable place to sit

Process

- o Ask participants to gently hold each finger with the opposite hand for two to five minutes until they feel a steady, rhythmic pulse. This will help move and drain blocked energy, and bring back a sense of balance and harmony to the body. They can work with either hand.
- o Explain that deep breathing while holding each finger can also help to

- bring the bodymind-spirit to a state of peace and harmony.
- o As they hold each finger, ask participants to breathe in deeply; recognize and acknowledge the strong or disturbing feelings or emotions you hold inside yourself. Breathe out slowly and let go.
- o Imagine the feelings draining out your finger into the earth. Breathe in a sense of harmony, strength and healing. And breathe out slowly, releasing past feelings and problems.
- o Explain that often, as you hold each finger, you can feel a pulsing sensation as the energy and feelings move and become balanced.

Summarise the exercise by explaining that this is something that participants can do at any time, when they feel stress, anger, anxiety, or any other strong emotion. It only takes a few minutes, and is a useful tool in difficult situations.

Alternative Option

For participants who have challenges using their hands and fingers, or who are missing fingers or limbs, discuss this exercise beforehand and assess their comfort levels with it – they may be able to adapt it to hold other parts of their hand that correspond to the correct meridians, they could place fingers on the centre of the palm (either side).

Head Holds

Purpose

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. As the practice 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.

Time: 30 Minutes

What you will need: chair, essential oil (optional)

Process

If you are using scented oil, place a few drops on your palms and rub hands together.

Halo Hold

Place both hands on either side of the head, near the ear, but not touching the ears. This helps you to connect with the energy of your partner.

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.

Shoulder Hold

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

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.

To Finish

The tops of the feet may also be held to ground the pers

Tai Chi Energy Exercises

Purpose

Tai Chi is an effective exercise for health and well-being. Tai Chi can help with a range of disorders including anxiety, arthritis, fatigue, joint stiffness and stress. A practice for all ages,

Tai Chi can also improve posture, flexibility and strength.

Tai Chi is one of the 'soft' martial arts developed by the ancient Chinese. Tai Chi is a series of slow, controlled movements or postures, usually practised outdoors to take advantage of the surrounding energy of nature. Central to Tai Chi is the belief in the life essence, or Qi (pronounced 'chee'), that flows through invisible channels or meridians in the body. When the flow of Qi is disrupted, illness is the result. The regular practice of Tai Chi is said to strengthen and improve Qi.

For women and women activists, the practice of Tai Chi can be an effective healing tool and way of dealing with the stresses and strains of the work we do. Finding balance is vital to wellbeing and self-care. The ancient Chinese proposed that all living things are sustained by an energy force called Qi that flows through invisible meridians in the body. Yin and Yang are the complete polar opposite of each other: the softer, more pliant and yielding, more feminine and more negative aspects in anything are viewed as Yin while the more masculine, harder, more rigid and more positive aspects are seen as Yang. Both sides complement each other completely and together form a perfect whole. Things which are perfectly balanced and in harmony will be at peace which leads naturally to longevity and wellbeing.

Time: 30 Minutes

What you will need: space to move around (preferably outdoors weather permitting), soothing music if available

Process**The Rocking Movement**

- Stand with feet separated shoulder-width apart, hands at sides.
- Raise your heels and with palms facing upwards raise your hands to the level of your chest.
- Turn your palms downward and move your hands downward while you lower your heels and raise your toes in a rocking movement.
- Continue slowly rocking back and forth, breathing deeply.
- With each move drop your shoulders, relax your arms and fingers. Do the exercise smoothly and slowly. Breathe deeply and imagine that your feet are planted securely on the earth.
- As you raise your hands imagine that you are able to bring down into body and mind healing energy to cleanse and fill you. This is a very beneficial movement for trauma and depression.



The Shower of Light

With left foot forward, raise your hands up over your head, and then move them downward as if showering yourself with light. Feel the energy cleansing and filling your being. Repeat on the right side, with right foot forward. Breathe in the shower of light, and then exhale and let go of any negativity within you. Feel the light cleansing and renewing you. This is an excellent for persons who are depressed or dealing with past wounds of trauma.

Let Go of the Past and Open to Receive

With left foot forward, palms curved softly downward, push your hands outward in a gentle arc, letting go of all tension, negativity, and violence within you. Turn palms upward and draw them back towards the chest, breathing in peace and healing. Repeat with right foot forward. Breathe out the pain and violence. Breathe in peace and healing.

Fly through the Air

With your left foot forward, your left hand upward, swim or fly through the air. The motion should be free and light with arms and shoulders relaxed. Repeat the movement on the right side starting with your right hand upward. Fly freely through the air letting go of all that weighs you down, feeling light, alive and free. Open your heart to all the possibilities for your life and healing. This is good to release pain in back, shoulders and head.

Section 4

Sporting and exercise week: Pachoto

Purpose

The body has been designed to move – to stand, to walk, to run, to dance. The movement of our bodies helps the muscles stay in shape and function correctly, the blood to pump through our veins, the lungs to fill with more air, the heart to pitter-patter, the organs to do their jobs efficiently, the cells to clean and heal themselves. Exercise is a vital part of the correct functioning of the body.

Sport and physical activity has long been used as a tool to improve mental, physical and social well-being. Physical inactivity is a major risk factor associated with a large number of lifestyle diseases such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes and obesity.

The Pachoto facilitators are encouraged to ensure they initiate sporting events for the members and their families.

Time: 30 minutes to an hour

What is needed: netball kits, open spaces, uniforms, soccer kits and skipping ropes.

Section 5

Art/Creative Spaces

Purpose

Art as a form allows for expression, and can be a journey of self-discovery. Art awakens creativity in self, and allows the child in us to come out and may reveal to us the emotions or dream hidden in the subconscious. It may also be used to begin conversation with the self, and builds self-awareness and self-confidence, when we read into our emotions, and when we celebrate our ability to create.

Process

A Day of self-exploration through colour and paint

A free style painting can be a messenger from your unconscious. Like a dream giving you insight and clarification on a situation as well as an opening to whom you are.

Antonella Bargione & Ema dos Santos (2013)

What is needed: paint- multiple colours, brushes, mats, crayons, paper, old magazines, scissors, glue, files, camera, printer

- Find a quite space and allow yourself to sit comfortably.
- Go through the magazines and find images, words that may capture your attention.
- Cut, and paste if you so wish, and glue them onto a piece of paper
- Include any comments, notes if you wish.
- Allow yourself to reach into the depths of your imagination and pick colours from the paint box and get creative.
- A facilitator can reconvene the group to discuss the images; allowing for those who are comfortable to express themselves verbally, and discuss what the process meant for them, and what the images may depict.
- It might be important to do engage a counsellor at this point, or pick one of the breathing exercises for centering and to enable grounding - after the discussion.
- Participants may repeat the painting exercise at the end of the session to present where they are at emotionally.
- Each participant may choose to archive their work in their files which they can keep or can be kept in the group archive for display or future reference.



Supported by



Katswe Sistahood

25 Edmond Ave
Belvedere, Harare
katswesistahood@gmail.com
www.katswesistahood.com