

I Stand Guard While You Rest: Instructions

For teaching the nervous system that connection can help us settle and rest. For down regulation, and learning to trust that it is safe to let go and rest around another person.

Sit or recline comfortably facing your co-regulation partner. Decide who will lead first.

If practicing online, be sure you can see one another's torso, head, face, and arms.

Leader - Get comfortable resting in any position you like. Take time to tell your mirror how you want them to be with you, what distance, what posture, what attitude (protective, loving, respectful, non-intrusive). Allow yourself to rest, sleep, daydream, dissociate or check-out. Breathe deep with a relaxed exhale. Open and close your eyes at will. In-person, you may ask for touch.

Mirror - Get comfortable so that you can give your attention to the Leader. Keep your eyes open and offer a smile if they open their eyes. The Mirror is there to help the Leader let go into sleep or dissociation or rest. Mirror may say: "I am here to help you let go and rest," "I'll be standing guard so you feel safe," "I'll make sure that you wake up or come back gently when it is time."

Timing: First Leader rest/doze for 5 minutes. Take 1-3 minutes to awaken. Both TALK: 1-2 min - Share about your experience. Switch roles, and repeat.

Suggestions:

Leader - Notice how you feel before you begin, during your practice, and afterwards. Explore feeling at home in your body, or let go of thoughts and attention completely. Let your mirror know if you want quiet, or to be spoken or sung to during your rest, or as you awaken.

Mirror - Notice your nervous system as you watch your partner rest. You may say: "I'm going to manage everything, and stand guard while you rest," "I'll make sure to wake you gently." "How would you like me to wake you? I could sing, I could talk to you, I could say your name like I'm delighted to see you. I could call your name very softly..." "This is your time. You don't have to worry about keeping me happy, that's my job."

People like: "Feeling safe and cared for." "Knowing I can just be, not do anything, and have connection." "Calming down."

Challenges: Not trusting the mirror (or anyone). Shame about dissociating/checking-out. Too vulnerable resting and/or "waking up" with someone else.