

Embodied Psychotherapy

Somatic Psychotherapy, Consultation & Training

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Awareness Practices & Somatic Resources: Exercises to do each day and before, in between and after facing challenging situations or sitting with your traumatized clients. All of the practices should begin with the following awareness practice:

"Internal Weather Report": Take a few deep and intentional breaths. Begin to let your awareness go inside in whatever way you are able to. Even if you do not know how to do this, just invite the possibility. This might include closing your eyes or softly focusing on a point just ahead of you or on the floor. Begin to simply notice whatever your experience is inside. As if your awareness was like a camera taking pictures of your world inside, notice as much detail as is possible. Notice what you are experiencing emotionally, physically/sensation wise, energetically, in your nervous system and thoughts. Simply notice what your base line is- where you are starting from. Then proceed to one or more of the experiments below. After doing a somatic resourcing experiment below, notice what is the same or different than where you started. Somatic resources are meant to be helpful and to support you in feeling more yourself. Sometimes feeling more yourself might mean feeling more grief, sadness etc. It is not only or even usually, a sense of peace. However, whether the resource is working for you can be measured by its capacity to help you feel more connected to yourself and to regulate your sympathetic nervous system arousal.

Boundaries & Containment:

Body Boundary: Vigorously squeeze the muscles of the whole body with one hand and then the other. Squeeze the circumference of the arms & hands, the neck, the skull, the chest, the rib cage, the hips, lower back, belly, legs, feet and anything in between. Really let yourself feel the edges of your own body boundary created by your muscles. Then vigorously rub and then tap the whole area of the body. Holding the intention and saying "This is my body, this is me," as you do this.

Wall Pushing: Stand about a foot or so away from a wall, with legs shoulder distance apart and feet well planted. Bend your knees, keep your arms close in to the body and push into the wall with your arms and hands. Engage your back muscles as you push with your arms and hands. Use your legs as much as your arms! Notice all the muscles in your legs, buttocks, back and arms engage. Do it as long as it feels good and then let it go. Repeat as much as feels good.

Breathing & Regulation:

Belly Breathing: Take a few deep and intentional breaths and turn your attention inside. Place one or both hands on your lower belly just below your navel. Feel the contact of your hands on your belly. Begin to draw your breath into your lower belly, breathing into your hands. Continue to breathe into your lower belly, inviting your belly to be full and soft. Begin to inhale through your nose and exhale through your mouth, making your exhale longer than your inhale. As you exhale through your mouth, imagine that you are exhaling through a straw. Let the exhale be as long and full as possible. Oxygen is a charge. The release of oxygen, decreases the charge. Complete at least 12 breath cycles to inspire the parasympathetic nervous system to engage and help you to calm down.

Grounding: *The experience of being able to touch into the present moment;*

to feel a connection with the ground, the earth beneath you; to lower your center of energy, awareness, breath into the lower pelvis, legs, and feet.

Ball Rolling: While standing, begin by noticing how your feet make contact with the ground. Do you notice more or less pressure and contact on the inside, outside, heels, toes, middle of your foot? Standing on one foot, take a tennis or Pinky ball (available at children's toy stores) and begin rolling the ball under your foot, adjusting the pressure by how much weight you put on the ball and how bent your standing leg is. Explore the shape of your foot with the ball, massaging it over the ball. If you find a particularly painful or tender spot you might choose to hang out in that area. Take your time. When complete (before doing the other foot) stand again on the floor and notice what is different about the foot that you just rolled? Notice the contact, where the weight is, how far up your leg that goes, etc. Do you feel more or less grounded? What do you notice inside your core/ the interior of the trunk of your body? Then roll your other foot and notice again after completing.

Adjusted Deep Knee Bend: Stand on both feet, shoulder width apart and fold your body over at the waste, letting your upper body, neck, head, and arms hang down. Ever so slowly, begin to bend your knees, pressing your feet into the floor. Come down (as far as is comfortable on your knees) into a deep knee bend. The more slowly you go, the more effective the exercise is as the tiny muscles of the legs, feet, and buttocks engage and lower your center of gravity. Slowly, vertebrae by vertebrae roll up. Repeat at least 2 times.

Centering: *the experience of inhabiting and feeling connected to your core, the interior of your trunk; feeling gathered inside; feeling at home and able to rest into yourself inside. The belly and the heart are often the centers that we are working with when trying to find or get centered.*

Breathing in Front of your Spine: Begin to breath into the area behind your lungs and in front of your spine, from tail to occiput (where the head and the neck connect). Inhale sending your breath along your spine all the way down towards your tail. Exhale and let the breath move from tail to occiput.

Heart & Belly: Place one hand on the heart and one on the belly. Bring mindful attention to the body experience what develops: feel the weight of the hands, their warmth or coolness. Notice what happens in the body when all of your attention is focused on these two hands placed on your heart and belly. Continue to inhale slowly and exhale fully into these areas.

The Weight of the Organs: Imagine that you can feel the heaviness of all the organs inside of your body. Go through all the organs that you can name and know of inside your body (sometimes looking at an anatomy book is helpful in visualizing) and invite the possibility, even if you do not know how, to feel their weight, volume and fullness. Breathe into the heaviness of each organ, one by one and let it anchor and fill you. Notice if you feel more present, centered and/or grounded as a result.

Grounding & Alignment: Combined

Anchor & Reins: Sitting, place both feet on the floor a little wider than shoulder width apart. Find your sitz bones- those boney protrusions on your buttocks. Explore and try to find a neutral pelvis by rocking your pelvis back and forth-tucking the tail under and then shifting to point the pelvic bone back towards the tail. Let the tummy be soft. Do that a few times and feel where you end up experiencing the most alignment. This can be felt as a sense of stacking of the spine on top of the pelvis and the neck and head on top of the spine. Then imagine that there are weighted anchors attached to your sitz bones, drawing you down towards the earth. Breath into that. Feel the weight of your pelvis and your lower body dropping down. Hang out there for a bit. Then imagine that there are reins attached to the occipital bones at the very base of the skull, gently drawing your head and neck up and back. As if there was someone up at the ceiling gently drawing your reins up to the sky. Feel your spine gently elongate. Breathe into

that and notice the impact of feeling your spine draw up and your pelvis drop down.

Pushing Feet: Sitting, place both feet on the floor a little wider than shoulder width apart, find your sitz bones. Firmly push one foot- your whole foot- into the floor. Engage your upper legs (hamstrings) and your buttocks as you push. Let it go and repeat with the other foot. You should feel a rocking to each side of your sitz bones as you push. The action should feel as if you are walking even while you are seated. Keep your belly soft and breath while you are doing this. Repeat until you feel more awareness in your lower body and more connection to the ground.

Safety & Calming Flashbacks:

Butterfly Hug: [For Simple Illustrated Instructions Click Here](#)

The process is simple and can be done anytime, anywhere you choose. It can help you induce a sense of safety and calm and empower you to self-comfort and self-soothe. It can also foster your resilience and to allay any disturbing feelings that come up. Most importantly, it can help to ground your awareness in the present moment. Anxiety symptoms are always related to future worrying so any symptom management that helps to ground people to the present moment also helps to manage anxiety.

Sit with your back straight. Do abdominal breathing. Imagine you have a little balloon in your stomach that you inflate and deflate, slowly, deeply, smoothly.

Observe what is happening in your mind, emotions and body as you would observe clouds in the sky.

Cross your arms over your chest, so that the tip of the middle finger from each hand is placed below the clavicle or the collarbone and the other fingers and hands cover the area that is located under the connection between the collarbone and the shoulder and the collarbone and sternum or breastbone. Hands and fingers must be as vertical as possible so that the fingers point toward the neck and not toward the arms.

Now interlock your thumbs to form the butterfly's body and the extension of your other fingers outward will form the Butterfly's wings.

Now begin the bilateral stimulation by alternating the movement of your hands, right, left, simulating the flapping wings of a butterfly.

Continue to breathe slowly and deeply, observing whatever is going through your mind and body (thoughts, images, sounds, odors, emotions and physical sensations) without changing, avoiding or judging anything. Observe it like clouds passing by.

Your eyes can be closed, or partially closed, looking toward the tip of your nose. Next, you alternate the movement of your hands, like the flapping wings of a butterfly. Let your hands move freely. You can breathe slowly and deeply (abdominal breathing), while you observe what is going through your mind and body such as thoughts, images, sounds, odors, feelings, and physical sensation without changing, pushing your thoughts away, or judging. You can pretend as though what you are observing is like clouds passing by.

To Create Safe Place:

Close your eyes and use your imagination to go to a place where you feel safe or calm. Think of the images, colors, sounds, smells, and so forth do you see in your safe place.

Do the Butterfly Hug 6-8 times while you concentrate on your safe or calm place.

Repeat until it helps and as long as it feels good.

Relaxation & Restoration:

Shiva Sana Pose: Lying on your back, spread arms and legs, about 45 degrees from the sides of your body. Tilt head slightly back so it rests comfortably. Make sure you are warm and comfortable. Close the eyes, and start by deepening the breath. Allow your whole body to become soft and heavy, letting it relax into the floor. As the body relaxes, feel the whole body rising and falling with each breath. Scan the body from the toes to the fingers to the crown of the head, looking for tension, tightness and contracted muscles. Consciously release and relax any areas that you find. If you need to, rock or wiggle that part of your body from side to side. Release all conscious control of the breath and invite your body to move deeper and deeper into a state of total relaxation. Even if you do not know how, just imagine that you can. Stay in savasana for 10-30 minutes. To release: slowly deepen the breath, wiggle the fingers and toes, reach the arms over your head and stretch the whole body, exhale, bend the knees into the chest and roll over to one side coming into a fetal position. When you are ready, slowly inhale up to a seated position.

Queens Pose (Reclining Bound Angle pose): You will need a yoga bolster for this pose. It is said that practicing this pose for 15 minutes a day will aid the central nervous system is calming. This is also a helpful pose for insomnia. Sit on the floor and lay bolster lengthwise (parallel to your spine) behind you. Bend your knees, bow your legs out to your sides, and place the soles of your feet together. Place pillows or a folded up blanket underneath you knees. You should not be feeling a stretch here. This is a relaxation pose, so support the knees until they feel at ease. Lie back, with lower, upper back, and head supported on bolster. Place arms at your sides, with forearms and elbows against the floor, palms facing up. Stay in this position anywhere from 5 to 20 minutes.

Clearing:

These practices can vary from simply eliminating, drinking a glass of water, or brushing out your hair after each session. They might include the vaporizing, spraying or burning of various herbs and essential oils used for their cleansing properties such as Basil, Juniper, Rosemary, Sage, or Paulo d'Arco. This practice is helpful before, during and after each triggering or resource shaking experience or after client sessions.