

About Somatic Experiencing (SE)

Excerpt From
An Autobiography of Trauma: A Healing Journey
Peter A. Levine

The Somatic Experiencing method is a naturalistic and neurobiological body-oriented approach to healing trauma and other stress disorders. The SE approach releases traumatic shock and restores connection, which is key to transforming PTSD and the wounds of emotional and early developmental attachment trauma. It offers a framework to assess where a person is "stuck" in the fight, flight, or freeze responses and provides clinical tools to resolve these fixated physiological states to restore the authentic self with self-regulation, relaxation, wholeness, and aliveness.

Human beings have an innate ability to overcome the effects of diverse traumas. The SE approach facilitates the completion of self-protective motoric responses and the release of thwarted survival energy bound in the body and nervous system, thus addressing the root cause of trauma symptoms. This is approached by gently guiding clients to develop increasing tolerance for difficult bodily sensations and suppressed emotions, building their capacity for containment and resilience.

Dr. Levine believes that the traumatic event isn't what causes long-lasting trauma, it is the overwhelming trapped response to the perceived life-threat that is causing an imbalanced nervous system. Somatic Experiencing's aim is to help one access the body memory (procedural memory) of the event, not the story. It is not necessary to share the details of your trauma history to do SE. The objective is to diffuse the power of the narrative and remap the body memory to regain aliveness and flow. In 'In an Unspoken Voice', he wrote that trauma is not just what happened to us, but rather what we hold inside in the absence of a present and empathetic other.

Like other somatic psychology approaches, Somatic Experiencing is a body first approach to dealing with the problematic (and oftentimes physical) symptoms of trauma. It helps individuals create new experiences in their bodies; ones that contradict those of tension and overwhelming helplessness. This means that healing isn't about reclaiming memories or changing our thoughts and beliefs about how we feel, it's about exploring the sensations that lie underneath our feelings and beliefs, as well as our habitual behavior patterns.

Somatic Experiencing training programs are designed to be accessible to psychologists, psychotherapists, psychoanalysts, psychiatrists, social workers, counselors, addiction treatment specialists, body workers, osteopaths, occupational therapists, physical therapists, medical doctors, nurses, acupuncturists, dentists, yoga teachers, meditation teachers, art therapists, equine therapists, life coaches, first responders, corrections officers, educators, clergy, spiritual advisors, and support providers for children and those with special needs.

Somatic Experiencing Practitioners (SEP) are devoted to bottom-up somatic-based processing as they begin their client's healing journey. They have backgrounds in a variety of different modalities/psychotherapies so you can find one that specializes in other treatments of interest, like CBT, psychiatry, craniosacral, bodywork, or equine therapy to name a few. SEPs who've taken our training integrate SE work into their other practices to create a well-rounded healing experience. To take the training you must be approved by presenting what other healing modalities you use in your practice.

Remember, no two SE Practitioners are the same, and our nervous systems are not all the same. We recommend that you experience a few and see whom you resonate with the best.

For more information, please visit:
www.somaticexperiencing.com
www.traumahealing.org