# Workbook 13: Somatic Healing & Trauma Release

## The Body Keeps the Score: Healing Through Sensation

**For those ready to heal trauma through the body**

## 📖 Table of Contents

1. [Welcome to Somatic Work](#welcome-to-somatic-work)
2. [Understanding Trauma in the Body](#understanding-trauma-in-the-body)
3. [The Nervous System Basics](#the-nervous-system-basics)
4. [Polyvagal Theory Made Simple](#polyvagal-theory-made-simple)
5. [Somatic Experiencing Practices](#somatic-experiencing-practices)
6. [Titration & Pendulation](#titration--pendulation)
7. [Working With Freeze & Collapse](#working-with-freeze--collapse)
8. [Shaking, Movement, Breathwork](#shaking-movement-breathwork)
9. [Touch & Boundaries](#touch--boundaries)
10. [Developing Body Literacy](#developing-body-literacy)
11. [Trauma-Informed Movement](#trauma-informed-movement)
12. [When to Seek a Somatic Therapist](#when-to-seek-a-somatic-therapist)
13. [Daily Regulation Practices](#daily-regulation-practices)
14. [Integration & Embodiment](#integration--embodiment)
15. [Resources & Further Study](#resources--further-study)

## Welcome to Somatic Work

### Your Body Holds Everything

**Not in your head.**

**In your body:** - Every trauma - Every loss - Every time you weren’t safe - Every time you couldn’t fight or flee - Every moment you froze

**Your body:** - Remembers - Stores - Protects - Knows

**And healing happens:**

**Not through thinking about it.**

**But through feeling it.**

**In your body.**

### What This Workbook Offers

**Not:** - Another way to analyze trauma - Cognitive processing - Top-down healing - Thinking your way through

**But:** - Bottom-up healing (body first) - Somatic tools and practices - Nervous system regulation - Trauma release through sensation - Body literacy development - Practical, embodied work

## Understanding Trauma in the Body

### Trauma is Not the Event

**Trauma is:**

Not what happened to you.

**But:**

What happened inside you when it happened.

**And what:**

Your nervous system couldn’t complete.

### The Incomplete Response

**When something threatening happens:**

**Your body prepares to:** - Fight - Flee - Freeze

**This is automatic.**

**Survival response.**

**If you can fight or flee:**

Energy completes.

Nervous system discharges.

You return to baseline.

**If you can’t:**

You freeze.

Energy gets stuck.

Nervous system stays activated.

**This stuck energy is trauma.**

### Where Trauma Lives

**In your body:**

**Muscles:** - Chronic tension - Bracing - Armoring - Holding patterns

**Nervous system:** - Hypervigilance - Reactivity - Shutdown - Dysregulation

**Fascia:** - Tightness - Restriction - Holding - Memory

**Organs:** - Gut issues - Heart racing - Shallow breath - Digestive problems

**This is not “in your head.”**

**This is cellular.**

## The Nervous System Basics

### Two Branches

**Sympathetic (Gas Pedal):** - Activation - Fight or flight - Energy up - Alert - Ready for action

**Parasympathetic (Brake Pedal):** - Rest and digest - Calm - Recovery - Social engagement - OR shutdown/freeze

**Healthy nervous system:**

Moves fluidly between: - Activation (when needed) - Rest (when safe)

**Traumatized nervous system:**

Gets stuck in: - Hyperactivation (constant fight/flight) - OR hypoactivation (shutdown/freeze) - OR ping-ponging between both

## Polyvagal Theory Made Simple

### Three States

**Polyvagal theory (Stephen Porges):**

Your nervous system has three states:

### 1. Ventral Vagal (Social Engagement)

**The safe & connected state.**

**Feels like:** - Calm but alert - Open and social - Curious and playful - Connected to others - Safe in the world

**Body:** - Heart rate regulated - Breathing easy - Face soft - Eyes bright - Gut relaxed

**This is where healing happens.**

### 2. Sympathetic (Fight or Flight)

**The mobilized defense state.**

**Feels like:** - Anxious - Angry - Hypervigilant - Can’t sit still - Reactive

**Body:** - Heart racing - Breathing shallow/fast - Muscles tense - Sweating - Restless

**Purpose:** Protect you from threat.

**Problem:** Can’t turn off when threat is gone.

### 3. Dorsal Vagal (Shutdown/Freeze)

**The immobilized defense state.**

**Feels like:** - Numb - Disconnected - Frozen - Depressed - Can’t feel - Can’t move

**Body:** - Low energy - Shallow breath - Heavy - Can’t think - Dissociated

**Purpose:** Play dead when can’t fight/flee.

**Problem:** Gets stuck here.

### The Ladder

**Think of it as a ladder:**

**Top:** Social engagement (safe)

**Middle:** Fight/flight (mobilized)

**Bottom:** Shutdown/freeze (immobilized)

**Trauma makes you:** - Stuck on a rung - Unable to climb to safety - OR constantly falling between rungs

**Healing is:**

Learning to climb back to the top.

To social engagement.

To safety.

## Somatic Experiencing Practices

### Feeling Sensations (Not Stories)

**In somatic work:**

You don’t talk about trauma.

**You feel:** - Body sensations - Physical experience - Sensation as it is

**Without:** - Story - Meaning - Analysis

**Just:**

Sensation.

### Basic Somatic Practice: SIBAM

**Track five streams:**

**S - Sensation** What do you feel physically? (Tight, warm, buzzing, heavy, etc.)

**I - Image** What images arise? (Colors, shapes, memories, scenes)

**B - Behavior** What does your body want to do? (Shake, push, run, curl up)

**A - Affect** What emotions are present? (Fear, anger, sadness, joy)

**M - Meaning** What meaning comes? (Thoughts, beliefs, understanding)

**Track these without getting lost in any one.**

**Just notice. Name. Move on.**

### Grounding Practice

**When overwhelmed:**

**Come into your body:**

1. **Feel your feet** Press them into ground Feel the contact Notice weight
2. **Name what you see** 5 things you can see Out loud Brings you present
3. **Touch something** Texture, temperature Feel it fully Ground through touch
4. **Orient to space** Look around room Notice where you are You’re here, now, safe

## Titration & Pendulation

### Titration: Slow & Small

**Titration means:**

Working with trauma in tiny doses.

**Not:** - Flooding yourself - Reliving it all at once - Overwhelming your system

**But:** - A little bit at a time - Just the edge - Stay within your window

**Like:**

Homeopathic doses.

Small.

Gentle.

Effective.

### The Window of Tolerance

**Your nervous system has a window:**

**Inside the window:** - Can feel without overwhelm - Can process - Can heal

**Outside the window:** - Too much (hyperarousal) - OR too little (hypoarousal) - Can’t process - Re-traumatizes

**Titration keeps you:**

In the window.

Where healing happens.

### Pendulation: Movement

**Pendulation means:**

Swinging between: - Activation and calm - Sensation and grounding - Trauma and resource

**Not:**

Staying in trauma.

**But:**

Touch trauma → return to resource.

Touch trauma → return to resource.

Back and forth.

**This teaches your nervous system:**

You can go into activation and come back to calm.

You can feel it and survive.

### Practice: Pendulation Exercise

**1. Find a resource**

Something that feels good/calm/safe: - Memory of being held - Image of nature - Feeling of your feet on ground - Sensation of warmth

**Feel it fully.**

**Notice:** Where in your body? What sensations?

**2. Touch the edge of trauma**

Not the full trauma.

**Just the edge:** - Slight tension - Mild discomfort - Beginning of activation

**Notice:** Where in your body? What sensations?

**3. Return to resource**

**Come back to the good feeling.**

Ground.

Regulate.

**4. Repeat**

Trauma edge → Resource.

Trauma edge → Resource.

**This is healing.**

## Working With Freeze & Collapse

### The Freeze State

**Many trauma survivors live in freeze:**

**Feels like:** - Can’t move - Paralyzed - Stuck - Numb - Disconnected

**This was:**

Your survival response.

**Playing dead when you couldn’t fight or flee.**

**It saved you.**

### Thawing Freeze

**Freeze needs:** - Gentleness - Time - Safety - Movement (eventually)

**Don’t:** - Force it - Push through - “Just move!” - Shame yourself

**Do:**

**1. Build safety first**

Freeze thaws when you feel safe.

Create: - Safe spaces - Safe people - Predictability - Control

**2. Tiny movements**

Not big exercise.

**Tiny:** - Wiggle fingers - Move toes - Turn head slightly - Shift weight

**This wakes the system.**

**3. Tremoring/shaking**

Let body shake spontaneously.

This discharges freeze.

(More on this below)

**4. Orient to environment**

Look around.

Notice you’re safe now.

“I’m here. I’m safe. I can move.”

**5. Slow, gradual activation**

Walk.

Gentle movement.

Build capacity slowly.

### The Collapse State

**Dorsal shutdown:**

**Feels like:** - Depression - Exhaustion - Hopelessness - Heavy - Can’t function

**This is:**

Nervous system in deepest shutdown.

**Working with collapse:**

**1. Don’t force positivity**

This isn’t “just think positive.”

**This is nervous system state.**

Needs somatic work.

**2. Gentle activation**

* Cold water on face
* Gentle movement
* Music
* Singing
* Being with animals

**Small doses.**

**3. Co-regulation**

Being with someone whose nervous system is regulated.

Their regulation can help yours.

**4. Professional support**

Collapse often needs: - Somatic therapist - Trauma work - Sometimes medication

**Don’t go it alone.**

## Shaking, Movement, Breathwork

### Shaking: The Body’s Natural Release

**Animals shake off trauma.**

**After a chase:**

Gazelle shakes.

Releases the activation.

Returns to calm.

**Humans:**

Were taught not to shake.

**But shaking is:** - Natural - Healing - Necessary

### Shaking Practice (TRE-based)

**Trauma Release Exercises:**

**1. Tire the legs**

* Wall sit (until shaking)
* Or standing, knees slightly bent, bounce gently

**2. Lie down**

* Knees up, feet flat
* Let knees fall together (supported or trembling)

**3. Allow the shake**

Don’t control it.

Let body shake wherever it wants.

Legs, belly, jaw, arms.

**Let it be involuntary.**

**4. Continue 10-15 minutes**

Or until complete.

**5. Rest**

Lie still.

Feel your body.

Integration.

**Do this weekly (or more).**

**Powerful release.**

### Breathwork for Regulation

**Breath is the bridge:**

Between conscious and unconscious.

You can regulate nervous system through breath.

**Box Breathing (Calming):**

* Inhale 4 counts
* Hold 4 counts
* Exhale 4 counts
* Hold 4 counts
* Repeat 5-10 minutes

**Calms sympathetic activation.**

**Extended Exhale (Parasympathetic):**

* Inhale 4 counts
* Exhale 6-8 counts
* Repeat
* Activates rest/digest

**Soothes anxiety.**

**Breath of Fire (Activating):**

* Quick, sharp exhales through nose
* Passive inhales
* 1-3 minutes

**Energizes from shutdown.**

**Breath Awareness (Grounding):**

* Just notice breath
* Don’t change it
* Feel it moving
* Anchor in present

## Touch & Boundaries

### Touch Can Heal or Harm

**For trauma survivors:**

Touch is complex.

**Can be:** - Deeply healing - Triggering - Violating - Confusing

**All at once.**

### Consent in Touch

**Always:** - Ask permission - Specific (“Can I place my hand on your shoulder?”) - Right to decline - Right to change mind

**Never:** - Assume - Touch without asking - Continue if someone freezes - Make them feel bad for saying no

### Self-Touch Practices

**You can touch yourself:**

**Hand on heart:** - Calming - Self-soothing - “I’m here for you”

**Butterfly hug:** - Cross arms over chest - Alternate tapping shoulders - Self-regulation

**Grounding touch:** - Hands on belly - Feet on earth - Feeling your own body - Reclaiming your body as yours

## Developing Body Literacy

### Learning Your Body’s Language

**Your body speaks:**

Not in words.

**In:** - Sensations - Tensions - Releases - Impulses

**Body literacy is:**

Learning to read these messages.

### Daily Body Check-In

**3x daily (or more):**

**Stop. Ask:**

“What am I feeling in my body right now?”

**Scan:** - Head to toe - Notice sensations - Don’t judge - Just notice

**Name:** - Tight shoulders - Butterflies in belly - Heavy chest - Warm hands

**This builds:** - Interoception (internal awareness) - Connection to body - Early warning system - Self-knowledge

### Sensations Vocabulary

**Expand your language:**

**Instead of:** “I feel bad”

**Try:** “I feel tight in my chest, fluttery in my belly, heavy in my limbs”

**Learn to name:** - Hot/cold - Tight/loose - Heavy/light - Sharp/dull - Buzzing/still - Expanded/contracted - Flowing/stuck

**More precise language = more body literacy.**

## Trauma-Informed Movement

### Movement as Medicine

**Yoga, dance, martial arts:**

Can be: - Deeply healing - OR re-traumatizing

**Depends on:** - How it’s taught - How you practice - Your awareness

### Trauma-Informed Principles

**1. Choice**

You choose: - What feels right - How far to go - When to stop

Not: - Following rigid sequence - Pushing through pain - “No pain no gain”

**2. Interoception**

Feel from inside: - Not just how it looks - But how it feels - Your sensations matter

**3. Present moment**

Stay here, now: - Not dissociating - Not pushing to future - Feel what’s happening

**4. Boundaries**

You can: - Modify anything - Stop anytime - Say no - Leave

**5. Empowerment**

You’re in charge: - Of your body - Of your practice - Of your healing

**Teacher is guide, not authority.**

### Practices

**Trauma-sensitive yoga:** - Choice-based - Invitational language - No hands-on adjustments (without asking) - Modifications always offered

**Authentic Movement:** - Eyes closed - Move however body wants - No choreography - Witnessed (or solo)

**Qigong/Tai Chi:** - Slow, intentional - Grounding - Energy awareness

**Dance:** - Free-form - Shake practice - Ecstatic dance - Movement as expression

## When to Seek a Somatic Therapist

### Solo Practice Has Limits

**Seek professional help when:**

* Trauma is severe or complex
* You’re overwhelmed by sensations
* Dissociation is frequent
* You can’t regulate alone
* Freeze state is chronic
* Self-harm urges present
* You’re stuck despite trying

**Somatic therapy modalities:**

* Somatic Experiencing (SE)
* Sensorimotor Psychotherapy
* EMDR (has somatic component)
* Hakomi
* TRE (with trained facilitator)
* Body-based trauma therapy

### What to Look For

**Good somatic therapist:** - [ ] Trauma-informed - [ ] Trained in body-based modality - [ ] Respects your pace - [ ] Emphasizes safety - [ ] Uses titration - [ ] Tracks your nervous system - [ ] Doesn’t push or force - [ ] Has done their own trauma work

**Red flags:** - Pushes catharsis - Forces eye contact - Touches without consent - “We need to go into the trauma” - Dismisses your limits - Overly directive

**Trust your nervous system.**

**If it doesn’t feel safe, it isn’t.**

## Daily Regulation Practices

### Morning Grounding

**5-10 minutes:**

**1. Body scan** Feel your body waking.

**2. Grounding** Feet on floor, feel earth.

**3. Breath** 5-10 deep breaths.

**4. Movement** Gentle stretching or shaking.

**5. Orientation** Look around. Notice where you are. Safe.

### Throughout Day

**When dysregulated:**

**STOP Practice:**

**S**top what you’re doing **T**ake 3 deep breaths **O**rient to your surroundings **P**roceed with awareness

**5-4-3-2-1:**

* 5 things you see
* 4 things you touch
* 3 things you hear
* 2 things you smell
* 1 thing you taste

**Immediate grounding.**

**Cold water reset:**

* Splash face with cold water
* Hold ice cube
* Cold shower

**Resets nervous system quickly.**

### Evening Wind-Down

**10-15 minutes before bed:**

**1. Gentle movement** Shake out the day.

**2. Breath work** Extended exhale (calming).

**3. Body scan** Release tension.

**4. Gratitude** 3 things your body did today.

**5. Self-touch** Hand on heart: “You’re safe.”

## Integration & Embodiment

### Healing is Non-Linear

**You won’t:** - Heal in a straight line - Be “done” one day - Never feel dysregulated again

**You will:** - Spiral - Return to old patterns (sometimes) - Have good days and hard days - Gradually increase capacity

**This is normal.**

**This is the path.**

### Integration Timeline

**Weeks 1-4:** - Learning your nervous system - Building regulation skills - Small practices daily

**Months 2-6:** - Noticing patterns - Releasing some trauma - More capacity - Still challenging

**Months 7-12:** - Regulation becoming automatic - Less triggered - More embodied - Ongoing practice

**Years 2+:** - Somatic awareness natural - Quick regulation - Living in body - Trauma still there (but different relationship)

**Healing doesn’t mean forgetting.**

**It means:**

Your nervous system learns you’re safe now.

## Resources & Further Study

### Books

**Essential:** - *The Body Keeps the Score* by Bessel van der Kolk - *Waking the Tiger* by Peter Levine - *In an Unspoken Voice* by Peter Levine

**Polyvagal:** - *The Polyvagal Theory in Therapy* by Deb Dana - *Anchored* by Deb Dana

**Practical:** - *Trauma-Sensitive Yoga* by David Emerson - *The Revolutionary Trauma Release Process* by David Berceli (TRE)

### Trainings

**For practitioners:** - Somatic Experiencing (SE) training - Sensorimotor Psychotherapy - TRE certification - Trauma-sensitive yoga training

### Online Resources

* Somatic Experiencing International
* TRE providers directory
* Trauma-informed yoga teachers
* Polyvagal Institute

## Final Words

### Your Body is Wise

**Your body:** - Knows what it needs - Holds the key to healing - Is not the enemy - Is your greatest ally

### Trust the Process

**Somatic healing:** - Takes time - Is non-linear - Is gentle (when done right) - Works

**Even when:** - It’s slow - It’s frustrating - You can’t see progress - You want to give up

**Keep showing up.**

**To your body.**

**To the practice.**

**To sensation.**

### You Are Not Broken

**Trauma is:** - Not your fault - Not permanent - Not who you are

**Your body:** - Stored it to protect you - Can release it when safe - Knows how to heal

**You are:** - Whole - Resilient - Healing

**Trust your body.**

**It knows the way.**

**This workbook is part of the Astral Refined Offerings 2025 course materials.**

For somatic trauma support: [astralamat@gmail.com](mailto:astralamat@gmail.com)

**May you return to your body.** **May you feel safe in your skin.** **May you heal through sensation.**

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*End of Workbook 13*