



## Exercise 1: Checking Readiness for Somatic Work

### Purpose

- Introduce the mind–body connection.
- Establish consent for somatic exploration.
- Assess if the mind is willing to allow somatic work—without bypassing, interpreting, or entering trauma processing. Exercise 1

### Primary Learning Objective

- Somatic work begins with permission, not technique.
  - Sensation comes before narrative.
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### Phase 1: Establish Consent & Readiness

- **Key Point:** Somatic work is invitational, not corrective.
  - **Therapist Orientation:** Find your own grounding and center. Use a slow, relational, non-goal-driven tone.
  - **Example Language:**  
“Before we do anything different, I want to check—are you open to trying a different mind body-based approach today?”
  - If the answer is unclear or hesitant: Normalize uncertainty and emphasize choice.  
“You don’t have to say yes. We can stay exactly where we are.”
  - **Clinical Note:** Readiness does not mean enthusiasm; a “maybe” is still valuable data.
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### Phase 2: Comfort, Support, and Relational Safety

- **Key Point:** Regulation starts with **external support and relational presence.**

- **Therapist Questions:**  
 "Are you comfortable right now?"  
 "Is there anything I can do to make you more comfortable?"
  - If responses are automatic or polite: Introduce props (pillows, bolsters, blankets). Invite experimentation:  
 "Let's try a few options and see what your body prefers."
  - Gently name relational care:  
 "How does it feel to have me here with you, caring about your comfort?"
  - **Clinical Note:** Check for exteroceptive and relational safety before moving inward.
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### Phase 3: Orienting Awareness — Mind or Body

- **Key Point:** Awareness must be located before it can shift.
  - **Prompt:**  
 "Where do you notice yourself right now—more in the mind, or more in the body?"
  - No correction or coaching; simply track the answer.  
 If "mind": "That makes sense. Let's just acknowledge that."
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### Phase 4: Negotiating With the Mind

- **Key Point:** The mind is a protector, not an obstacle.
  - **Therapist Language:**  
 "Would the mind be willing to step back slightly, so we can get to know the pain on a different level?"
  - If yes: "Okay. We'll move slowly."  
 If no: "What does the mind need to know in order to move back just a little?"
  - Let the response come without interpretation. Reframe:  
 "I see the mind as a wise protector. Thank you for being cautious."
  - **Clinical Note:** Preserves agency; prevents power struggle or bypass. Exercise 1
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### Phase 5: Introducing Somatic Contact

- **Key Point:** Touch is informational, not intervention.
- Always ask explicit permission. Invite the client to place their hand first if needed. With consent, place your hand lightly (neutral, non-manipulative).
- **Therapist Cue:**  
 "We're not trying to change anything." Exercise 1

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## Phase 6: Tracking Sensation (No Story)

- **Key Point:** Somatic narrative begins as sensation, not meaning.
- Ask one neutral question:  
"What is the quality here?"
- Offer non-interpretive options: pressure, temperature, movement or stillness, density or spaciousness.
- Avoid emotions, memories, trauma history, or symbolism.
- If the client drifts into story:  
"Let's come back to the physical quality." Exercise 1

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## Phase 7: Somatic Cue & Pacing

- **Key Point:** Regulation is taught through modelling.
- Demonstrate a slow exhale. Let the client's nervous system entrain naturally. No instruction unless needed.

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## Phase 8: Integration — Relationship to Body & Pain

- **Key Point:** Relationship changes precede symptom change.
- Close with a gentle orienting question:  
"How is it to be with your body in this way?"
- Let the answer land without response or fixing.

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## Scope of Practice Reminder

- This is not trauma processing.
- Do not seek meaning, origin, or emotional release.
- Stay within physical sensation and relational safety.
- The purpose is permission, trust, and orientation.



## Handout: Three Fields of Awareness Through Relational Touch

**Format:** Dyads (Pairs)

**Total Time:** ~30 minutes

**Touch Quality:** Still, non-manipulative, neutral pressure

**Intention:**

Experience how touch is organized differently depending on which field of awareness is foregrounded.

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### Set-Up & Consent (3 minutes)

- Pair up with a partner.
- Decide together:
  - **Where touch will occur:**
    - Hand on forearm
    - Palm to palm
    - Hand on upper back (through clothing)
  - **Pressure:** light, medium, or firm
  - **Position:** seated or standing
- Script:  
"Touch stays still. The learning is not in what we do, but in how we sense."
- One person is the Receiver, the other the Giver. Switch roles halfway.

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### Four Phases of Awareness

#### 1. Exteroceptive Touch (4–5 minutes)

- **Receiver:**

- Let awareness move outward to the room, sounds, temperature, air, and visual periphery (eyes open recommended).
- Touch is part of the environment, not the focus.
- Notice the edges of the giver's hand, contact as shape and pressure.
- **Giver:**
  - Maintain steady contact.
  - Track external cues: room sounds, visual field, your partner as a form in space.
  - Prompt: "Notice how touch feels when it is simply another object in the environment."

## 2. Proprioceptive Touch (4–5 minutes)

- **Receiver:**
  - Bring attention to your body meeting the touch.
  - Track weight, alignment, joint organization, and muscle tone near the contact.
  - Allow micro-adjustments without trying to improve anything.
- **Giver:**
  - Sense your own arm, shoulder, and spine.
  - Notice how your body organizes itself to maintain contact.
  - Prompt: "How does your body know where it is because of this touch?"

## 3. Interoceptive Touch (4–5 minutes)

- **Receiver:**
  - Let attention turn inward.
  - Sense temperature changes, pulsing, breath, internal movement, and emotional tone as sensation.
  - If sensation fades, simply notice that.
- **Giver:**
  - Track your internal state while staying present.
  - Notice breath, heart rate, or visceral response to giving touch.
  - Prompt: "What happens internally when touch is received without doing anything with it?"

## 4. Integrated Relational Field (3–4 minutes)

- Both participants:
    - Hold all three fields (exteroceptive, proprioceptive, interoceptive) simultaneously.
    - Let awareness gently oscillate.
    - (Optional) Receiver briefly names one sensation from each field: outer, body-in-space, inner.
  - Switch roles and repeat the full sequence.
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## Dyad Reflection (5 minutes)

- **Receiver shares:**
    - Which field changed touch the most?
    - Where did touch feel safest or clearest?
  - **Giver shares:**
    - What happened in your own body while giving?
    - Did any field increase effort or ease?
  - End with 30–60 seconds of silence. Exercise 2
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## Key Teaching Distinctions

- Touch does not create regulation—organization of awareness does.
  - Exteroception often stabilizes touch.
  - Proprioception clarifies boundaries.
  - Interoception deepens meaning but can destabilize if isolated.
  - Skilled relational touch keeps at least two fields online.
  - This aligns with contemporary models of embodied regulation and sensory integration (Craig, 2009; Sherrington, 1906).
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## Optional Variations

- Back-to-back touch for early trauma groups.
- Use a prop (e.g., rolled towel) to externalize touch.
- Add slow withdrawal of touch at the end to track interoceptive response.



## Somatic Practices

### Exploring the Horizontal Myofascial Band

These practices invite a *felt, sensory relationship* with key horizontal centres of the body. Each practice uses gentle breath and awareness to support regulation, connection, and embodied presence.

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## 1. The Pelvic Bowl

### Purpose

- Build internal stability and grounding
- Support breath and nervous system regulation
- Develop awareness of the pelvic floor and deep core

### Concept

The pelvis can be sensed as a **bowl or container**:

- A stable base of support
- Holding and supporting internal organs
- Responding dynamically to breath

### Practice

#### Position

- Sit or lie comfortably
- Spine supported and neutral
- Soften jaw, shoulders, and belly

#### Awareness

- Gently notice sensations in the pelvic area
- No forcing—simply observe what's present

## Breath

- *Inhale*: Sense breath arriving into the pelvic bowl, gently **widening**
- *Exhale*: Feel a natural recoil or subtle lift/contraction of pelvic floor
- Keep effort minimal and easeful

## Explore

- Stability and support
- Grounding and weight
- Containment and safety

## Closing

There is no “right” sensation.

This practice is about building relationship through awareness, one breath at a time.

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## 2. The Navel (Umbilical Center)

### Purpose

- Support expansion and connection through the core
- Encourage softness and responsiveness in the belly
- Experience movement from center to periphery

### Concept

The navel functions as a **central hub**:

- A point of origin for movement
- Radiating outward through the body
- Connecting inner sensation with outer expression

### Practice

#### Position

- Sit or lie comfortably
- Let the belly be soft and unbound

#### Awareness

- Bring attention to the area around the navel
- Notice movement, warmth, ease, or tension

#### Breath

- *Inhale*: Sense the belly gently expanding
- *Exhale*: Allow a soft return toward center
- Breath remains natural and unforced

### Radiation

- Sense movement spreading from the navel into:
  - Ribs
  - Pelvis
  - Spine
  - Limbs
- Keep movements small, slow, and organic

### Explore

- Expansion and flow
- Softness and receptivity
- Whole-body connection

### Closing

Movement arises from the center and flows outward with ease when the belly is allowed to soften.

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## 3. The Heart Space

### Purpose

- Support emotional regulation and relational awareness
- Cultivate openness with healthy boundaries
- Develop embodied empathy and discernment

### Concept

The heart space is a **relational center**:

- Where feeling and awareness meet
- Holding both openness and protection
- Supporting connection without overwhelm

### Practice

#### Position

- Sit or lie comfortably
- Chest open but not forced
- Shoulders relaxed

## Awareness

- Bring attention to the center of the chest
- Notice sensations or subtle emotion without judgment

## Breath

- *Inhale*: Sense gentle expansion through the heart space
- *Exhale*: Feel a soft settling and integration

## Relational Awareness

- Notice how the heart responds to:
  - Thoughts of others
  - Memories
  - The surrounding environment
- Track both openness *and* boundary

## Explore

- Empathic attunement
- Emotional steadiness
- Regulated vulnerability

## Closing

The heart is not just emotional—it is intelligent.

This practice supports connection while staying grounded and intact.

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## General Guidelines (For All Practices)

- Move slowly and gently
- Prioritize ease over effort
- If intensity arises, return to simple breath and body contact
- Sensation may be subtle—this is normal

## 4. The Throat Space

### Purpose

- Support authentic expression and communication
- Release patterns of holding or suppression
- Regulate the nervous system through breath and sound
- Cultivate safe, supported vulnerability

## Concept

The throat is a **gateway between inner experience and outer expression**:

- A place where words, emotion, and truth pass through
- A common site of holding or restraint
- Closely linked to nervous system regulation

## Practice

### Position

- Supine and supported with pillows, blankets, etc..
- Soften the jaw, tongue, and shoulders
- Allow space at the front of the throat

### Awareness

- Gently bring attention to the throat, jaw, and neck
- Notice sensations such as tightness, ease, dryness, or movement
- Include awareness of the back of the throat and base of the skull

### Breath

- *Inhale*: Sense breath moving from the chest into the throat
- *Exhale*: Allow the throat to soften and release
- Keep the breath gentle and unforced

### Sound (Optional – Vagal Toning)

- On the exhale, add a soft hum (*mmm*)
- Feel vibration in the throat, jaw, and chest
- Let the sound be low-effort and soothing
- Notice how vibration supports ease and calm

## Explore

- Expression and voice
- Patterns of holding back
- Safe, regulated vulnerability
- Resonance and internal spaciousness

## Closing

The throat is where inner truth meets the outer world.

This practice supports expression that arises from safety, ease, and presence.