

BODY AWARENESS AND MENTAL HEALTH

The brain-body connection
and its connection to better
health and behavior.



SOMATICS: USING THE BODY TO **BETTER CONNECT** WITH THE MIND.

The brain-body connection is a complex and dynamic relationship that influences our overall well-being. Understanding and nurturing this connection can have profound effects on our health, behavior, and emotional regulation.

In this guide, we will explore the concept of interoception and its positive benefits, with a specific focus on how it leads to faster reactions to health concerns, supports better behavior, and enhances emotional regulation.

Let's dive in.



SOMATIC THERAPY IS A BODY-FOCUSED APPROACH

Somatic therapy, was originally developed by Peter Levine in the late 1970s. It was conceptualized as an alternative to other trauma-focused therapies that didn't work for everyone.

When you practice these body-focused exercises, you focus **on physical sensations**, instead of thoughts and emotions as you'd do in talk therapy, or your fears as you'd do with exposure therapy.

Somatics defines trauma as **“when too much happens too soon for the nervous system to process,”** (Valerie Candela Brower, licensed counselor and certified somatic practitioner). Those sensations become recorded within the body and return as overwhelmed reactions or causes of future misbehavior.



“It’s like eating a big meal and not fully digesting it, but then eating another big meal, and then another,” Candela Brower explains. “The **body does not digest what has happened** and instead, we stuff our feelings, numb out, or deny reality.”

Somatic work offers the body time and space to complete **whatever it needed to do at the time that it didn’t get to.**



HOW IT WORKS:

Body creates **tension in hands** when angry.



Coping doesn’t happen so the child **stores that tension** as a memory in the body.



When child is angered again in a similar way **they react with extra pent up fight nervous system reactions.**

Instead body awareness creates the skills to **regularly de-stress** and support **better reactions in the moment.**

3 coping strategies that ground the body

1. Run water over your hands.

Start by running cold water over your hands. Focus on how the temperature feels on each part of your hand, from your wrist to your nails. Switch to warm water and focus on how the sensation on your hands changes. Do this for a few minutes until you calm down.

Immersion in cold water results in peripheral vasoconstriction which causes blood to centrally pool, followed by peripheral vasodilation directly after removal from the water, thereby enhancing circulation. It also helps bring a person back into the present moment out of highly emotional states.



3 coping strategies that ground the body

Shaking and jumping

This can include jumping up and down, dancing, jogging in place, or stretching. As you move, focus on how your body feels. You can do this with a body scan: Start with your toes and go all the way up your face, one body part at a time.

According to Dr Peter Levine, shaking can help release muscular tension, as well as burn excess adrenaline which is triggered when we're living in fight or flight mode when we're constantly stressed.

Dr David Berceci developed Tension and Trauma Releasing Exercises (TRE), an integrative neurophysiological approach that recognizes the homeostatic and thus therapeutic value of this type of tremor in the human body under stress.



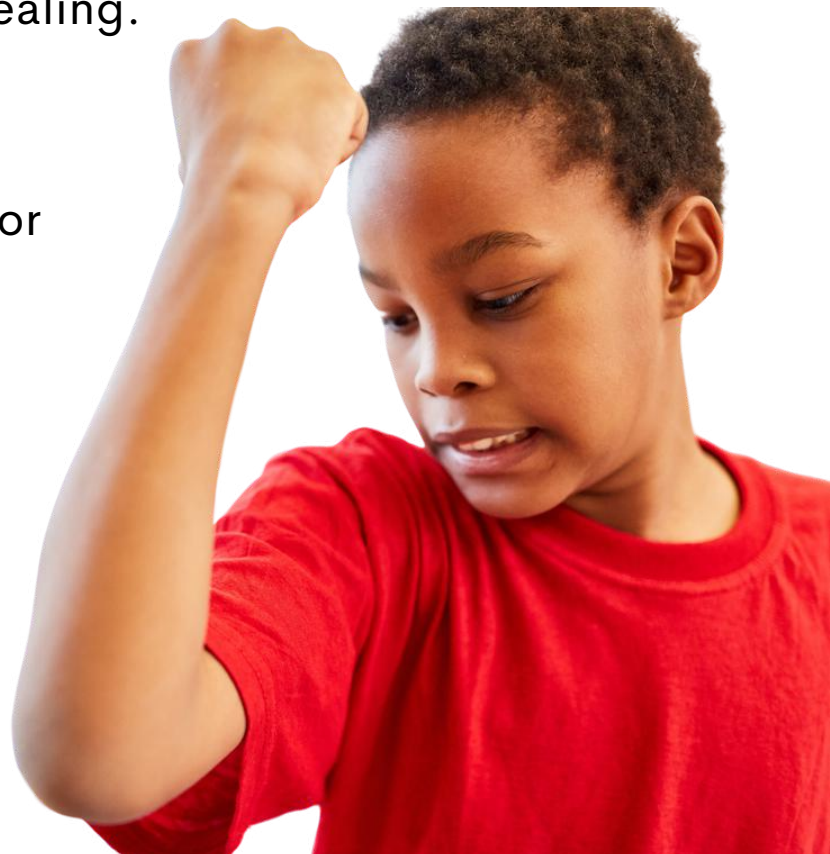
3 coping strategies that ground the body

Tense and relax different parts of your body.

Tension Release Exercises are a body based (somatic) process which can allow the individual to discharge tension from the body.

The exercises activate a shaking mechanism, which causes the muscles to relax. Relaxing tense muscle patterns can often reduce stress in the spine, neck, shoulders and pelvis. When tension is released anywhere in the body, the brain registers a reduction in pain signals, producing new hormones that promotes healing.

For example, press your feet to the ground as hard as you can for a few seconds. Release the pressure and notice how your feet feel now. You can also squeeze the arms of your chair as tightly as you can and then slowly relax and let go.



Thank you for learning about your body with us!

We hope you learned valuable information about your body and ways you can support it during stressful moments.

CREATE has many free resources for parents like explaining modern parenting techniques backed by science, a somatics skill building basketball program for public schools and free live workshops on important parenting topics like punishment.

Get our learning tools to help your child learn **the entire cycle of emotional intelligence.**



1. Name the feeling,
2. Find it in the body,
3. Describe how it feels in the body,
4. Choose a coping techniques that matches



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