

Healing Trauma Through Somatic Experiencing

A Presentation by the Heart-to-Heart: Comienzos East



Defining Trauma

“An event in the nervous system caused when the body’s natural defensive responses are summoned...

...and the defensive response is not completed successfully.”

Trauma, therefore, is an inner event – not something that “happened to me” but something that “happened within me.”

Trauma is an Inner Event

Example: two people get in an auto accident, one, after ten minutes, “shakes it off” and is ready to resume driving. The other, two days later, has continuing traumatic symptoms connected to driving in a car and noises.

Because trauma is an inner event, healing is accessible at any moment. Healing does not require others changing or un-doing what was done.

What needs healing is the trauma survivor’s own nervous system. This is accessible in any moment.

Trauma is healed, then, through cooperation with the body's natural impulse to heal. Key to this cooperation is attending to the life that is inside us. Attending to our Inner Life is the key support needed for healing.



Connecting to Oneself

Key to healing trauma, then, is connecting to oneself, to our inner life.

The act of bringing attention brings healing.

When it is caring attention, when it is compassionate presence that we bring, this catalyzes healing.

Two Helpful Keys: The Presence of Another & Attention to Specific Entry Points

With trauma our own capacity to be compassionately present to ourselves may be under-developed.

Thus, the presence of another can help support our growth in this capacity.

A second key is the awareness of doorways or entry points to the inner life.

Entry Points to the Inner Life

Four Key Entry Points are Awareness of:

1. Thought – the meaning one is making in the present.
2. Feeling – one's affect or emotions in the moment.
3. Heart's Desire – what is most important in the moment; the Need that is currently met or unmet; the Longing that is present.
4. Physical Sensation – for example tightness or loosening in a certain area of our body.

Awareness of Physical Sensation

In bringing attention to the body and scanning the body one can look for:

- Temperature: a sense of warmth or cool in certain areas of the body;
- Density: tightness or looseness; and,
- Movement of life energy or stillness.

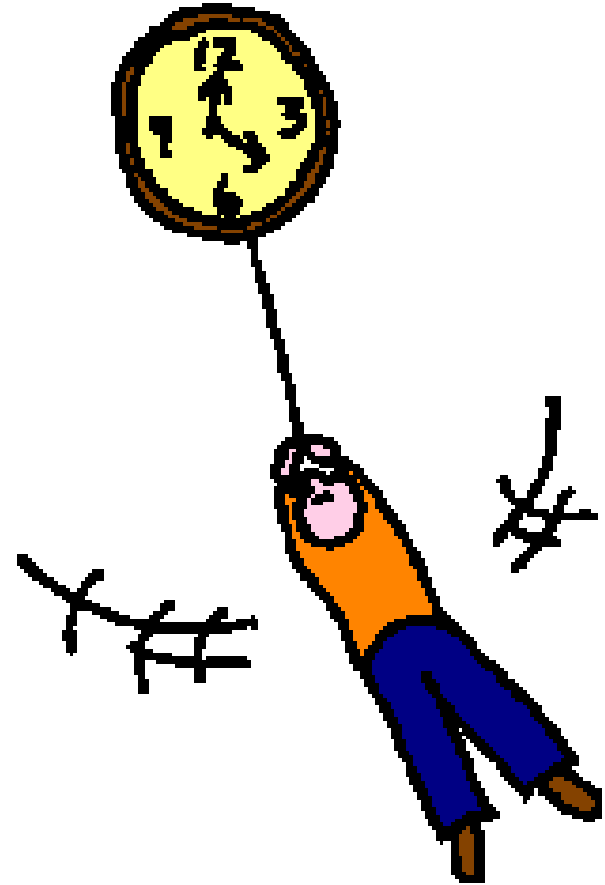
The Body as a Resource

We cultivate a sense of “home” in the body by through attending to where are experiencing sensations that are more relaxed, alive, strong, comfortable, or sensing safety.

Once establishing “home” where the body is more at ease, we are then are more empowered to “visit” where the body is holding tension, constriction and associated emotions such as anxiousness or fear.

Pendulation

- The swinging our attention from where the body is “well-resourced” to where the body is carrying tension, and perhaps trauma, is called pendulation.



Pendulation and Experiencing The Body as Its Own Resource

Pendulation allows us to bring the strength, solidness, and relaxation gained from attention to one part of our body, into the traumatized or more tense parts of our body.

Thus, with Pendulation, our body is its own resource.

Titration

“taking a little at a time”



Good Endpoint



Bad Endpoint (Overly Titrated)

Titration

Titration is the slow addition of one solution of a known concentration (called a titrant) to a known volume of another solution of unknown concentration until the reaction reaches neutralization, which is often indicated by a color change.

(from chemwiki/ucdavis.edu)

Building Resiliency through Titration and Pendulation

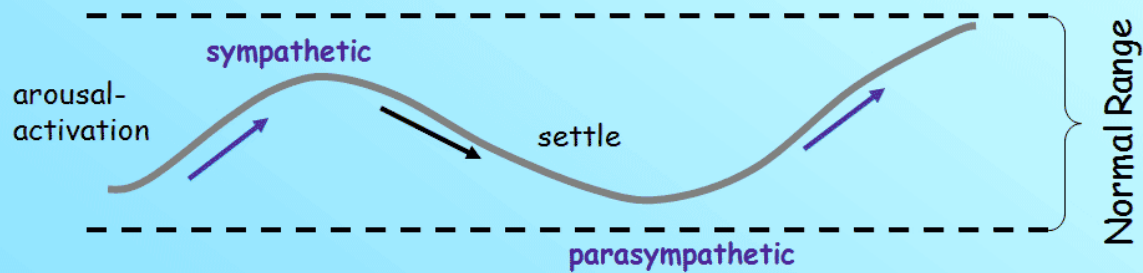
Borrowing this term from chemistry, we learn to titrate, to “take a little at a time” of the constriction we are experiencing.

We bring our attention to ourselves and our inner lives by attending to the four key entry points: thoughts, feelings, longings, and physical sensations. Two other available entry points that may arise are Images and awareness of our behaviors.

We work, then, with one manageable piece at a time. Since we titrate and pendulate, we can be with what we previously experienced as “challenging” or “overwhelming” emotions, thoughts, images, sensations, and behaviors, working with one manageable piece at a time. In doing so, we develop our resourcefulness and resiliency as we heal the trauma and return more fully present to ourselves.

Resiliency

A Healthy Nervous System



**When my Nervous System is balanced
and my activation is low
I feel:**

Open, curious

Embodied

Available for connection

Fluid, resilient

Competent - a sense of mastery

Relaxed yet alert

Appropriately reactive

Able to be present

Emotionally stable

Healthy - symptoms are manageable

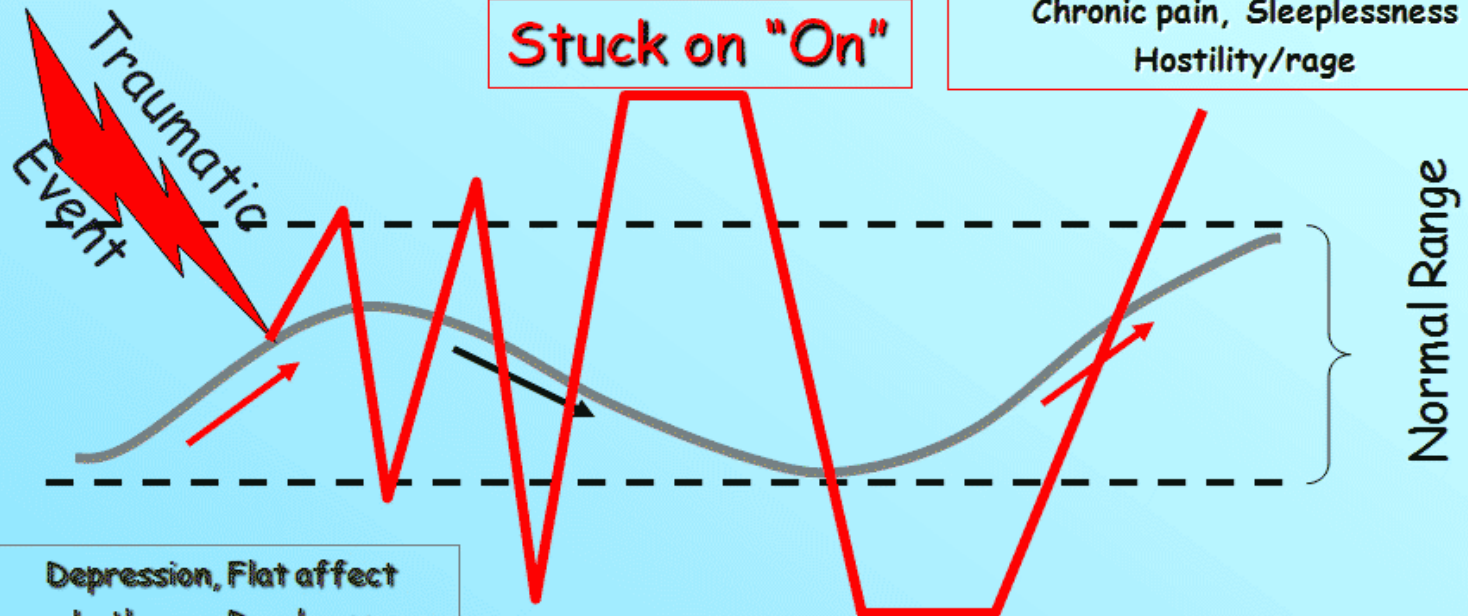
I have choices and options

I recognize when I am moving out of my functional range
and have tools to return to stability and stabilization

I know when to reach out for support
when I can't do it on my own

Symptoms of Un-Discharged Traumatic Stress

Anxiety, Panic, Hyperactivity
Exaggerated Startle
Inability to relax, Restlessness
Hyper-vigilance, Digestive problems
Emotional flooding
Chronic pain, Sleeplessness
Hostility/rage



Depression, Flat affect
Lethargy, Deadness
Exhaustion, Chronic Fatigue
Disorientation
Disconnection, Dissociation
Complex syndromes, Pain
Low Blood Pressure
Poor digestion

Stuck on "Off"

For more information contact

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