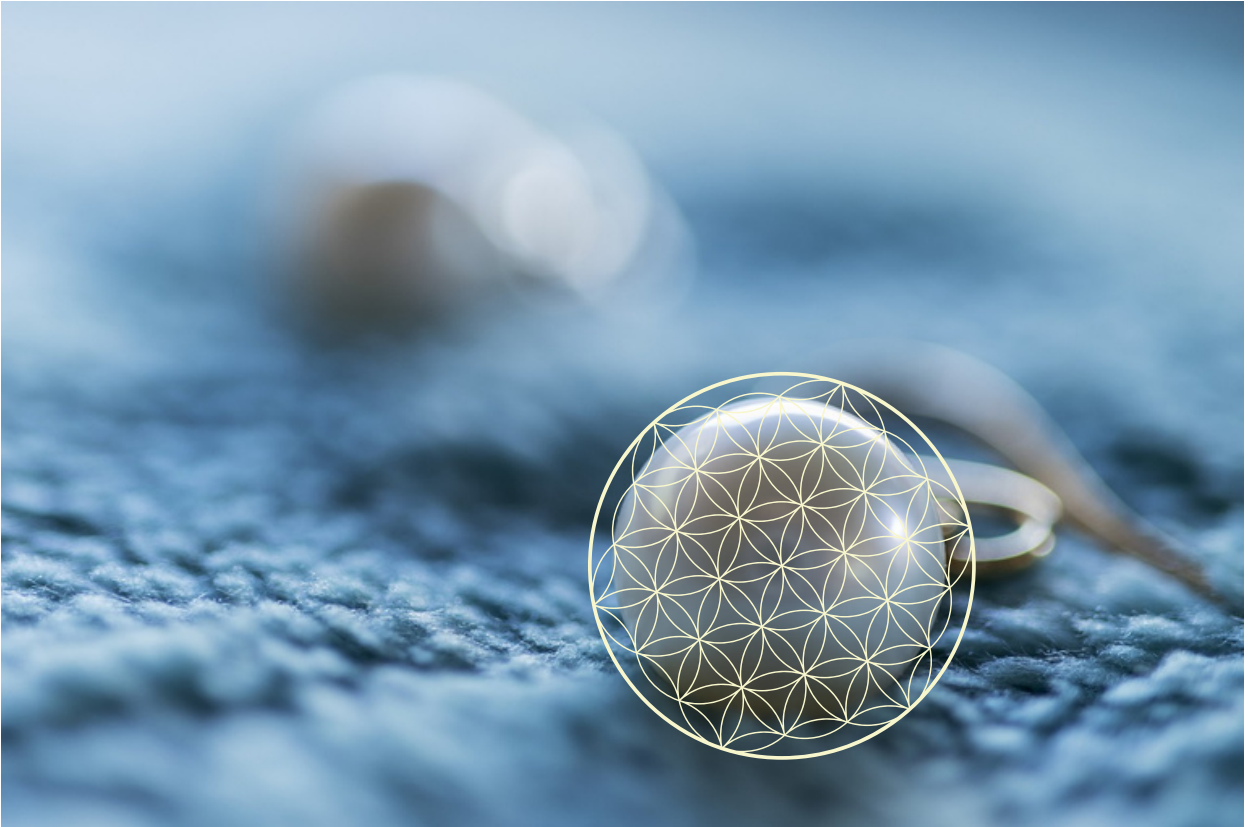


TREASURE



*Elevating Your Somatic
Intelligence*

Part 1

Video Transcript

A huge part of elevating your somatic intelligence involves regulating your nervous system more effectively. So far, we have touched on the physiology of the nervous system so you understand the basics of the vagus nerve and how cultural conditioning and trauma can disrupt the connection with your body's innate intelligence. Chronic stress has become an epidemic, and being in a constant state of anxiety or collapse, of hyper or hypo arousal, is detrimental to our well-being. It prevents us from fully living and expressing our true selves, so it's necessary to find ways to release tension from the body safely and effectively.

When we are able to do so, we get to experience an elevated, an enhanced state of well-being. From this inner state of easeful alignment, we can then show up and shine joyfully. The shift from remaining stuck or frozen in constant distress to flow and movement is the healthy feminine state that we aspire for, and you've learnt that grounding is a key way to help you anchor and feel safe in your body. You've also learnt a few ways in which you can feel more rooted and centered in your being.

From here, let's layer on more ways in which you can elevate your physiological well-being by centering or grounding yourself more powerfully. Now that you understand the connection between mind and body, and now that you understand that stress, tension and trauma is both psychological and physical, let's consider 2 approaches to strengthen your somatic intelligence in this area. Both these approaches are

aimed at helping you to grow deeper, stronger roots, to ground more effectively. The first is cognitive psychology, a mind-body approach where we bring in conscious language and positive psychology. The second is somatic therapy, a body-mind approach. With cognitive psychology, the emphasis is on utilising the mind to shift physiological states, whilst in somatic therapy, the focus is on a bottom-up approach, that is to say, the focus is on leveraging the body's intelligence.

Both have their advantages, and we can utilise all of them to gain the best of both worlds. Let's now see how you can apply cognitive psychology to stressful situations. The premise here is that you have agency and choice in how you interpret stressful or traumatic experiences in your life. When you can change your perspective on the tension and pressure that life brings, you can elevate your connection with your nervous system and support its healthy regulation.

Cognitive Psychology - Stress & Eustress

Let's first dive deeper into the concept of stress. At its simplest, stress can be defined as your body's response to challenge, to anything that requires attention or action. When you are stressed, your heart races, your heart rate goes up, you start to perspire, and your body produces cortisol, etc. This is the physiological mechanism of stress. Stress can also be defined as any type of change that causes physical, emotional, or psychological strain.

At its simplest, stress is stress – there is no judgment on whether it's bad. Remember the earlier exercise we did about observing your trigger thoughts and the train of thoughts which come after? The trigger thought is mostly neutral. An example of this is when you become aware that your heart is racing, and you understand that you are experiencing stress. This observation is neutral; you are merely becoming aware. However, when you add in a judgment that this is bad, dangerous or that this is terrible, you inevitably arouse yourself further into a heightened state of stress. Your body goes into protection and survival mode because your nervous system circuitry believes you are in danger. Alternatively, when you perceive this to be welcome and you embrace it, you look forward to it with joy and excitement.

Let me share a story with you that showcases this idea: A man is walking home at night and sees a coiled rope near the road. In the darkness, he mistakes the rope to be a snake. Convinced of this, he reacts with fear trying to avoid the snake and fearing that it might attack him. He has a complete fear response as if the snake were actually real and his mind is engaged with trying to deal with the situation. The next day, walking back in the daylight, he sees that it was really a rope and not a snake at all. At which point, the fear of the snake vanishes along with all the thoughts and feelings associated with it.

The teaching here is that if you are able to re-frame situations in your life and perceive them as positive and even welcome, you experience joy instead of worry, excitement instead of anxiety. You can consciously use language to shift your mental

programming so that you no longer see stress as a dreaded experience or a threat. What then happens is that your brain will start to actively look for proof to validate your interpretation. You will begin to ground, or find evidence and facts, that support and validate your belief. So, instead of fighting it, you tell yourself that stress is something to be embraced. You use positive language, such as "I look forward to this opportunity to grow" instead of "Oh no, not again!"

Imagine what could happen when you shift your perspective on stressful challenges as situations that you welcome and look forward to. In fact, you've probably had situations in your life that were stressful and which made you happy; for instance, when you went on your first date with someone you liked, or when you went on a roller coaster ride that you were looking forward to. Exercising also produces stress, but in a good way - you know that the pressure you're putting your body through is beneficial for you. This shift in mindset alone means that you no longer avoid stress, but anticipate it as an ally on your life journey. So practice shifting the language you use so that you are consciously shaping your reality; instead of thinking or saying "I'm stressed, I'm nervous," alter the phrase to "I'm excited" or "I'm being called to expand." This way, you can channel the energy you are feeling to help you build resilience.

It was Hans Selye who first came up with the concept of Eustress. Positive stress, also known as eustress, is a healthy response to challenges that can motivate and energize you, and this type of stress can have a beneficial effect on your body and

mind. In fact, although positive stress can make you feel nervous or tense, it should also make you feel focused and energized. These are qualities that support your growth and development as a human being, and it's been shown that healthy stress results in increased productivity and improved overall health. The key is to know what your optimal level of stress is, which is to say, the optimal bandwidth of stress that you can safely hold. To be clear, stress is not the real problem; rather, it is the lack of recovery that is the problem. Therefore, you will want to ensure that your stress levels do not go beyond the eustress level, and that you have ample recovery time.

This graph explains the concept of eustress versus distress more clearly. On the left, when there is little or no stress in our lives, we end up lacking in motivation and drive. Low levels of stress and lack of stimulation is actually detrimental to our well-being; it makes us unproductive and lethargic. On the right, when there is too much stress, when we are overwhelmed and overloaded, we are unable to perform at our best. Instead, we experience fatigue or anxiety, and our nervous system goes into collapse or overdrive.

However, in the middle, what I call the Goldilocks moment, we have an optimum amount of stress that enables us to excel and perform at our peak. Now, this optimum level differs from person to person, and only you know best what is too little or too much, and what is just right for you. Once again, remember to pay attention to your body's threshold limits, and ensure that after each eustress event, you take time to rest and recover before the next experience.

Also, the good news is that you can work on expanding your capacity to hold increasing levels of stress, and thereby widen the window of eustress and peak performance. This is known as the window of tolerance, a term coined by Dan Siegel to describe the optimal zone of arousal for a person to function in everyday life. When you do this, you'll begin to experience fewer and fewer situations in your life as negative stress, and more and more as helpful, positive stress. Much like building muscle at the gym through strength training, you get to develop your ability to take on more stress, and a formidable way to build cognitive muscle is to harness the power of your imagination.

Imagination, also known as Creative Visualisation, is a powerful paradigm shifting tool. In fact, the word "magic" shares a common root word with "image" and "imagine." And to perform an act of magic is to use your imagination to magnify consciousness, to see what cannot yet be seen. Imagination goes beyond mere intellect, and is often connected to your intuition; in other words, your imaginative capacities are a feminine principle. When limiting beliefs appear to struggle with your upgrades, instead of pushing and fighting the masculine way, you instead soften, you relax into your imagination and allow it to create new synaptic linkages.

Remember, your brain doesn't know the difference between reality and imagination, so as you visualise a desired state, you are supporting the manifestation of that reality before you even take action. The more your body starts to produce the feelings of what it feels like to be in that desired state of focused alertness, your brain will ask, "How

can I get more of that?" because it felt real and it felt good. Also, remember that the universe matches your vibration, so what you are essentially doing here is you are elevating your energetic frequency to the desired outcome as your mind makes higher choices through positive visualisation. And when you sit in the energy of what you want, the universe will find ways to help you get more of it.

Two quotes here on the magic and power of imagination:

"Imagination is a divine gift, the piece of heaven concealed in man." (Dennis William Hauck, "The Emerald Tablet: Alchemy of Personal Transformation")

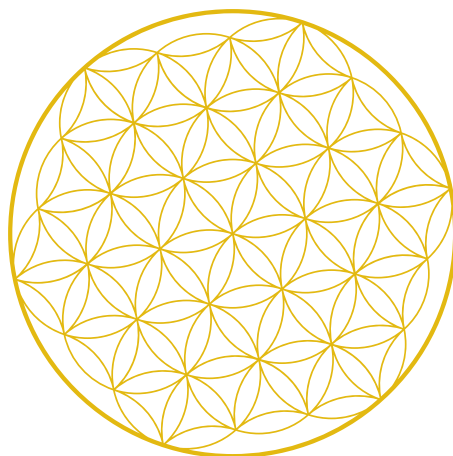
"Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited, while imagination is infinite." (Albert Einstein)

So in this mind body approach, your nervous system shifts into relaxation and focused alertness when you practice imagining yourself going through a situation that would typically overwhelm you. And instead of falling into distress and worry, you shift your state by visualising yourself going through everything in a relaxed and calm state of energised alertness. You practice imagining yourself enjoying success, and you repeat this exercise again and again until it feels completely real to your body.

This sort of mental rehearsal is commonly used by top athletes, and numerous studies have been done to test this. The most famous one being a study conducted by the University of Chicago, where a group of basketball players were split into 3 groups, and each group was tested on how many free throws

they could make. The first group practices free throws every day for an hour. The second group just visualised themselves making free throws. The third group did nothing. After 30 days, the groups were tested them. The first group improved by 24%. The second group improved by 23% without touching a basketball. The third group did not improve, as expected. So imagine, what would happen if you combined visualisation with practice. Imagine how, if your life was lived using conscious creative thought, your desired outcomes would manifest with greater ease.

So tap into your imagination, your creative capabilities, to shift your consciousness and thereby change your reality. There are plenty of guided creative visualisation practices out there, so find one that suits your unique individual preference. You can also choose to do this on your own each day after your meditation practice. I highly encourage you to add this to your daily routine. Personally, I like doing this in the morning before I get out of bed, and at night when I turn in. In the morning, I visualise how smoothly my day is going to go, and at night, I visualise a night of restful sleep and waking up rejuvenated and refreshed.



Part 2

Video Transcript

Somatic Therapy

Let's now move on to the second approach. This one was a gamechanger for me, and I'm excited to share a few key practices that have dramatically changed my life. Before I do that, let me share a little bit about my background and story: I grew up in a family that was physically abusive, and my body definitely stored a lot of trauma and tension. Violent and unpredictable beatings were a regular fixture in my family of origin, and I grew up hating my body. I hated the pain it produced, I hated how weak and powerless I felt, and I grew increasingly dissociated from my physical self. I essentially went through life for much of my younger years by living from the neck up. It wasn't until after I left my family home at the age of 18, that I embarked on a self-healing journey. Through energy medicine, meditation and regression work, I managed to heal parts of my fragmented self. I also realised the importance of strengthening my physical system, but I didn't know what the right approach was.

Over the years, I've engaged in various bodywork modalities to release the stored trauma in my body. I took on practices like yoga, chi gong, dance, and martial arts, with the aim of cultivating a healthier and more loving relationship with my physical self. I developed greater kinaesthetic intelligence through these activities, and therefore became more proficient and confident in my body. However, what I had not realised is that a lot of the strenuous effort and pushing that I exerted was actually

retraumatizing my body. I was operating from a hypermasculine mode, pushing my body to perform, and oftentimes this was quite violent. I would 'perfect' a yoga pose and receive praise from my instructor, but this was at the expense of listening to my body's signals and honouring its limits. It wasn't until I took up training in trauma-informed yoga training that I came to see what I had been doing to my body.

Just to say, the practices I was doing were not harmful by themselves; in fact, they are known to be highly beneficial! It was the way I was approaching them, the way I was doing the exercises, that was destructive. I was steeped in a performative environment, where competitiveness with my peers was encouraged. I was also regularly encouraged to push my body more so my postures would look good, but I was not taught to listen to my body and trust its messages. Even when I went for massages, I would attract therapists that insisted I needed to endure the pain if I wanted to enjoy the benefits of a healthier body.

And because I was so used to pain at that stage, I just went with it and put up with the excruciating pain. Needless to say, the massages were not relaxing, and ended up being counterproductive to my healing process. My journey of coming into right relationship with my physical body finally took a transformational turn when I discovered what I am about to share with you.

So the most dramatic transformation I experienced turned out to also be the most feminine form, which is to say, there was very little doing or pushing. In

fact, the trick was simply to allow my body to release tension the way it's naturally built to do so. It involved surrender and letting go: I had to relearn what it was to trust in my body's innate intelligence. This was a complete game changer from a lot of the teachings I had previously learnt, which advocated using the mind to control the body and push past its limits. I also learnt about the significance of pre-verbal trauma, and how that becomes stored in the body. Even if we don't consciously remember, it's stored there until something triggers and re-activates it. In the healing work I was doing, I gradually began to connect the dots. When I was a baby, during the first 3 years of my life, my birth mother was not present in my life. She suffered from post-natal depression that went undiagnosed, and she placed me in the care of babysitters who were strangers to me. My baby self could not comprehend what was happening, and I thus felt abandoned.

My entire being was overwhelmed by a sense of loss: I needed to be held by my mother, whom I had a connection to when I was in her womb, but she wasn't here for me, and so I developed an insecure attachment. Now, when we were babies, if we experienced neglect or abuse, most of the time disconnection, also known as dissociation from the body, is our only way of coping, so what happened was that I didn't feel safe in my body or my surroundings. This preverbal trauma can be hard to access, though, since we can't articulate it, so I grew up unaware of how I had been negatively affected during my formative infant years. I was confused by how ungrounded I was compared to my peers, how I constantly felt weak in my legs, how I

lacked stability in my balance, or how I would often lose my belongings. I was chastised for being careless, I was criticised for being a burden, that I was useless, and that I needed to work harder and shape up. So the dissociation from my body had a severe impact on my self-esteem and confidence as well.

What finally enabled me to experience a re-embodiment, a coming home to self, and be grounded back in my body, was a surprise to me. I am sure that the physical practices - the mind-body modalities like yoga and martial arts - they helped in some way, but what really empowered me to gain a new level of knowledge and experience of being in my own body was none of these. It wasn't until I learnt a trauma-informed way of relating to my body that I began to hear the signals it was sending me more clearly and accurately, and I consequently developed a greater range of motion, and emotion, in my physicality.

What I also discovered is that the healing path needs to start with the body. For infants, there are no words, and no memories in words, so it wasn't until my adult years when I did regression work that my past experiences of preverbal trauma became conscious for me. I began to understand why I had felt so disconnected from my own body, it was simply the baby's wiring to protect her from overwhelm. Cognitive psychology alone did not enable me to see or articulate this, I needed to get back to the body in order to receive this vital information.

I needed to compassionately understand why I was experiencing frequent digestive issues, even though

I was taking all the right supplements and adopting all the correct diets. I had to understand my body from the ground up, and in doing so, I realised that regaining physical health and emotional well-being wasn't so much a matter of taking in nutrition or doing activities from the outside, it was allowing what was stagnant, what was stuck inside of me, to be released. And because I gained such enormous benefits from it, I'd like to share the benefits of somatic therapy with you now.

And just to reiterate this important point: developing somatic intelligence is the foundation of integrated living, because it is the foundation of coming home to ourselves, it is about learning to know and live within your own body. It involves learning to breathe fully and to move freely; essentially, it is about inhabiting your physical body comfortably and spaciouly, and this spaciousness will have a positive impact on all areas of your life, from your relationships to your career.

Now, you already know that this spacious movement is inhibited when we experience trauma. For instance, trauma stored in the body can present as tightness in the throat, a shaky voice, a compression in your lower back, or strain in your hips. When there is stuckness or stagnation on the inside, no amount of external intervention can resolve the root cause. We have to go within. The somatic practices shared here will support you in experiencing just that. By slowing down, by grounding in the present moment, and by emotionally processing trauma that's trapped in your body slowly and safely - all this will support you in softening and opening.

The aim of somatic therapy is really to release tension that's held in the body, and to regulate the nervous system when you're feeling activated or triggered so you don't remain chronically tense or tight. The key is to feel painful feelings as they arise when we communicate with our bodies, but to do it in a way that feels safe and allows us to release those emotions. By leaning into the body sensations that come to the surface, you can move toward healing from the inside out. By intentionally practising feeling into your discomfort, without forcing or pushing, these emotions will naturally move, the energy will shift and discharge. This feminine way of softening and yielding is what makes all the difference.

At this point, I'd like to add that if you would like to learn more about the mind-body connection and the memories stored inside the body, I recommend books like Bessel van der Kolk's "The Body Keeps the Score" and Peter Levine's "Waking the Tiger." I am especially impressed with Peter Levine's work: he is regarded as a somatic psychology legend who has taught many body-based approaches to recover from traumatic experiences. He developed somatic experiencing (SE) as a body-based therapy, which includes shaking as a technique to release trauma, and that's what we will be practising here. There are tonnes of great resources out there, and the ones I am sharing here in this programme are by no means exhaustive. I've included videos that I feel are worth your time to watch or listen to. If you're new to all this, these resources will support and enhance your learning.

Now, let me provide a brief overview of somatic experiencing, as developed by Peter Levine: Somatic experiencing is based on the idea that, as humans, we can rediscover our ability to reset our system to equilibrium after a threat. We can learn to track our internal arousal states, and use techniques like shaking to discharge excess adrenaline. In other words, you get to restore your ability to self-regulate by releasing energy and natural survival reactions stored during trauma. You can learn to stay embodied when difficult memories come up, and form new neural pathways that help you develop greater resilience.

It's important not to get re-traumatized during this process, and so I only go deeper in my 1:1 work with clients, where I can accurately track my client's inner experience. In my private coaching work, which is trauma-informed, we first establish an environment of relative safety. I then gently guide the women I work with to develop increasing tolerance for difficult bodily sensations and suppressed emotions. It's important to pendulate and titrate my client's experience; in other words, to avoid going too rapidly or intensely. There is co-regulation that takes place as well, which is essential to nervous system recalibration. This is known as embodied partnership. For the purposes of this programme, I'll be sharing the practice of shaking because this is a self-healing mechanism you can easily incorporate into your regular routine.

In his book "Waking the Tiger," Levine notes that animals can be observed shaking to release tension and stress. In fact, when facing a threat, all mammals, including humans, shake. We are

evolutionarily wired to do so to protect our system. If you have noticed, dogs tremble or shake right after they get up or when they face a new situation. By shaking, they literally shake off the old energy and tension, and resettle back into their baseline state. We humans also shake when our fight or flight impulses are activated, which means when we face a threat to our system or are in trauma, shaking out is the easiest way to get rid of it.

The main difference between wild animals and humans is that animals naturally recover from these states by engaging in yawning, trembling, and shaking to release the excess of energy generated. However, humans have learned to hinder these normal responses; through rationalising these actions as uncivilised, by judging, shaming, we've come to fear our body's instinctual sensations. And so this enculturation disrupts our innate capacity to self-regulate and, instead of resetting our nervous system, we frequently remain stuck in a kind of limbo, unable to fully reengage with life. We often freeze or becoming paralysed, even when hyper aroused, and this is a symptom of nervous system dysregulation. If the nervous system does not reset after an overwhelming or highly stressful experience, our sleep, our cardiovascular, digestion, respiration and immune system functions become disturbed. And as I shared in my personal story, these unresolved physiological distress can also lead to an array of cognitive, emotional and behavioural symptoms.

The remedy is to come back to, to restore the innate resilience our bodies have to rebound or bounce back. You already know that shaking is a self-healing mechanism the body employs, that it is

genetically encoded in the body. So you simply need to restore this connection with Mother Nature, by leaning into your instinctual capacities. Now, what are the benefits of shaking, and how can we relearn and make it a habit?

The benefits of shaking are numerous: for one, vibrating your body helps to release muscular tension. Shaking is a process of warming up – the idea is to loosen up and shake out all the built-up tension in your mind and body. It's an act of letting go that's a healthy, natural response. Additionally, shaking releases stress chemicals: when the body perceives a threat, it produces stress hormones like adrenaline and cortisol. Shaking burns excess adrenaline, and also releases endorphins, which are the body's feel-good painkillers that can soothe anxiety and depression, so this helps to calm the nervous system.

Furthermore, shaking activates the lymphatic system and helps get rid of toxins by flushing them out. It also activates the parasympathetic nervous system and signals the brain to calm, relax and let go. Given these numerous benefits, shaking is a highly effective practice that can be used to treat mental and emotional health issues such as stress, anxiety, depression, grief, addiction, post-traumatic stress disorder, and chronic anxiety. It does this by calming the nervous system back to its natural state, to its neutral state, and best of all, it's easy to do and completely free.

Let's give it a go right now: Stand up where you are, with your feet hip-width apart. Take a moment to soften your knees, drop your shoulders. And let's begin. You can try shaking your entire body, or break it down joint by joint, like your wrists, elbows, shoulders, hips, ankles, or head. Simply loosen your body and feel the vibration spread through your body. You can also try playing some music while you shake; I find it best when I put on an upbeat or fast-paced tune and dance it all out. When I do this alone in my room, there's no one watching so I really let it all go and shake all the tension out.

I have also provided 2 guided practices in this module, both are 5 minutes long and you can take turns trying them out throughout the week. It's best to do this a couple of times when you are not feeling especially triggered, just to get into the habit and get comfortable with this practice. Then, when you encounter a particularly dysregulated situation, do this exercise whilst noticing the emotions that are being moved through. You don't have to judge or try to control these emotions; simply observe, and allow them to naturally release and discharge as you move your body. The beautiful thing is, you are simply flowing with what your body innately wants to do. It is safe and effective, and very easy to do.

So this is voluntary, conscious shaking. I'd also like to introduce you to a practice known as Tension and Trauma Releasing Exercises, or TRE for short. Similar to Peter Levine's work on shaking, the founder of TRE, Dr David Berceli, devised a series of innovative exercises based on his observations of the body's natural shaking mechanism to release trauma.

However, his practice differs from the somatic shaking practice you just did in that the shaking here is involuntary. There are a series of movements that intentionally cause this involuntary shaking, also known as neurogenic tremors, which is a term coined by Dr Berceli. Now, if you are new to TRE, at the beginning it can feel weird and strange because we've spent all our lives suppressing these instincts, so the involuntary shaking can take some getting used to.

Although you know that your body has a natural tremor mechanism, you may not have had a point of reference prior to this, so it may look bizarre when you start out. Please know that you are in full control at any point in time, and you can choose to stop the involuntary tremors when you want, so don't be afraid of giving this a go. Also, be aware that befriending your nervous system takes time and practice, so go slow and gradual. Don't rush into it and build trust in your nervous system step by step.

Once I got the hang of it, I have found the reflexive muscle vibrations to be pleasant and soothing. I have personally derived enormous benefits from these exercises, so I highly recommend giving them a go. TRE is unique in that it activates reflexive muscle vibrations, also known as therapeutic or neurogenic tremors. These tremors help calm the nervous system and bring the body back to a state of balance. It assists the body in releasing deep muscular patterns of stress, tension and trauma, and encourages it to naturally return back to a state of balance.

I have attended workshops and undergone trainings, and if you are completely new to this, it is

recommended to do it live with a trained professional who can monitor your movements and guide you. Take note also of common sense precautions, and please exercise due diligence when trying it out. In general, it may not be suitable for people with physical limitations or psychological conditions, so please check with your healthcare practitioner before doing the exercises. That said, for the average healthy person, TRE is designed to be a self-help tool with amazing benefits. Once you learn it, it can be used independently as needed throughout your life.

Tremoring is the perfect process to experience somatic intelligence, because it is an inside out process. When you safely activate the natural reflex mechanism of shaking or vibrating, you are essentially retraining your nervous system. You are unlearning the nervous system's habitual and unhealthy response to stress and trauma. At the same time, you are also paying attention to what surfaces as your body involuntarily shakes, and oftentimes preverbal trauma will surface as memories that can be safely processed.

Of course, it's important to do this practice in a safe and controlled environment, because you want the nervous system to stay calm in case these memories or emotions rise to your conscious awareness. By completing and discharging obstructions that were stored in your body, TRE will help restore your cognitive state unlike anything that any motor control conscious activity ever will. Allowing your body tremors to complete and discharge is what enables your body and mind to heal. I'm going to share a 4 minute clip from a training I took, where

Dr Berceli speaks into the post traumatic growth that occurs when we practice TRE. It is this elevation of traumatic experiences that is the real point of TRE: we become reacquainted with our bodies and reconnected to our nervous system so that we rise above our experiences and become the change agents in our community.

[4 minute Video Clip from Dr Berceli's Training]

So there you have it. By now, you have a clearer idea of your body's natural somatic intelligence. Through the analogy of an electrical circuit and the importance of safe grounding, you learnt a useful way of understanding your nervous system, and how dysregulation is like a short circuit of neurons misfiring. This dysregulation splits and fragments your psyche into parts, which is how we become disconnected, or dissociated from our body.

In order to come back into wholeness and harmony, we need to reconnect your hurt and traumatised parts to your healthy parts. This is done on both a psychological and physical level, and the best practices utilise both. In the 2 approaches we covered, cognitive psychology and somatic therapy, you get to replace old pathways with new ones. Step by step, neuroplasticity allows your nervous system to heal and regulate itself: you get to build new neural frameworks even as you attune and recalibrate your nervous system back to health. Out of all the somatic practices that are available, I have shared shaking for its numerous benefits and ease of practice. Give them a go, and you can refer to the supplementary resources in this section for further support.

Root Chakra - Muladhara

I'd like to end this section with a sharing about the root chakra. Because your physical and energetic bodies are inextricably linked, we also need to pay special attention to your energy body. On the energetic level, grounding is essential for us to not just survive, but thrive. And a key way to regulate your nervous system at the energetic level is to cultivate a healthy root chakra. You will remember from the previous module that the first, or root, chakra, is linked to feelings of security, safety, and survival. Let's now delve deeper into the root chakra. In Sanskrit, it is called Muladhara, which literally translates into 'root of existence.'

As this graphic shows, the root chakra is associated with the colour red. It is situated at the base of the spine, around the coccyx, and its element is earth. The corresponding mantra is LAM, which is a seed mantra said to represent the earth element. It can be chanted to activate and balance the muladhara chakra for it helps you feel connected to the earth and the Mother of nature. Its symbol is a 4 petaled lotus, which refers to the 4 nadis/nerves that emerge at the root chakra. The square inscribed within the circle represents the firm foundation needed to support the body, and the downward pointing triangle points towards the earth, our home. The symbol text you see is the seed mantra, LAM, that stimulates earth energy. Your root chakra is formed during the end trimester when you were still in your mother's womb. It continues to develop during the first year of life, and is facilitated by building a sense of trust in your caretakers. A vibrant root chakra enables you to cultivate a healthy awareness of your physical body, as well as your physical space.

Picture a plant with a sturdy stalk that tethers it to the Earth below. As humans, we have a force that grounds us too, and that's the root chakra. This chakra has to do with feeling grounded, safe, at home in your body, and connected to the Earth. Just as the nervous system is the command center of our physical body, the root chakra is said to be the foundation on which the entire chakra system is based. It is the driving force that gives us the energy to live our daily lives and accomplish physical achievements. According to Cristi Christensen, author of the book "Chakra Rituals: Awakening the Wild Woman Within," "The root chakra is where everything begins... It's the root from which true health, well-being, and empowerment grows. It's the foundation on which our physical and energetic body and every chakra is built upon."

When your survival and well-being are threatened, cortisol floods the body to prepare for fight or flight, so if you are constantly faced with high levels of stress or trauma, it's possible to become imbalanced. You can see the correspondence with nervous system dysregulation here. Also, because the root chakra develops during your infancy, pre-verbal trauma becomes especially important to resolve for this chakra to come back to balance. An example of such trauma is when a crying baby is not heard or attended to. If you had asked for something instinctually and didn't get it, it can also put you at odds with your own being because you learn to stop trusting it or you start ignoring your needs.

When it's out of alignment or blocked, you may stay stuck in survival mode and experience:

- Physical issues like Constipation, Insomnia, and pain or problems in the lower body, including the lower back, legs, feet, knees, and the base of the spine
- Depression and lack of motivation
- Feeling ungrounded, unstable, anxious and fearful
- Increased distractibility, difficulty concentrating
- Disorganised state, erratic behavior
- Restless energy, Rushing from one task to another
- Feeling exhausted or lethargic
- inability to trust in the Earth to support and nourish you
- Existential crisis, doubt about your place in the universe
- loss of will

Conversely, when your root chakra is healthy and balanced, you may feel more grounded and in tune with the world around you. You will then experience:

- focus and presence
- feeling stable and secure
- a healthy survival instinct
- dependability, reliability, and responsibility
- a sense of belonging
- Feeling grounded and connected to self and others
- the ability to care for yourself
- the drive to live

Being consciously connected to your inner wisdom and groundedness is important for managing your energy, so you want to restore your first chakra to optimum health. This chakra should maintain an

openness, an energy flowing between you and the Earth, so you no longer stay small but feel comfortable taking up space and expanding.

Here are some ways to care and activate your root chakra; they include using movement, sound, meditation, ritual, affirmations, and touch.

- Grounding and earthing, having contact with the earth element
- Caring for your feet: reflexology/foot massage as your feet connect you to the ground. You can massage the feet using a tennis ball, a small rubber ball, or a yoga tune-up ball.
- Movement like walking, dancing and drumming
- Wearing the colour red. Put on a red dress, red scarf, or some red lipstick, and watch how your energy shifts. Playing with colour is an easy and fun way to activate your chakras, as colour shifts your frequency and changes your vibration.
- Work with Crystals: onyx, garnet, hematite, jasper, smoky quartz, bloodstone. Since they come from the Earth, crystals are an extra powerful tool to support the root chakra. You can use them to ground and protect your energy, or clear away negative vibrations.
- Essential oils: cedarwood, patchouli, douglas fir, vetiver, Siberian fir
- Keep regular eating hours, soups and root vegetables are especially beneficial
- Activities that involve spending time in nature: Walking/hiking amongst deep rooted trees, gardening
- Self-care: self care routines inner child work, touch therapies like massage

- Sound therapy like sound baths, using mantras. When chanted several times, the seed mantra LAM can have a profound effect of activating and awakening your root center.

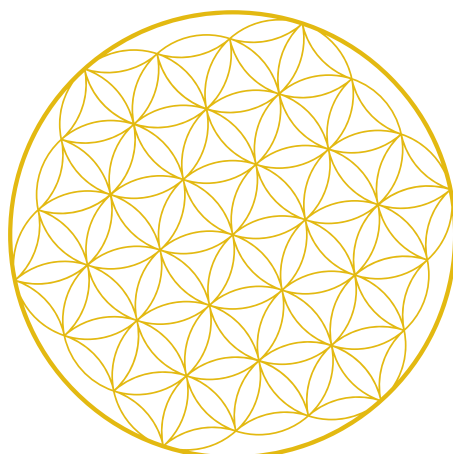
Affirmations. Here are a few that you can play with:

- I am safe.
- I am secure.
- I am at home in my body.
- I am at peace with the here and now.
- The Earth supports and nourishes me.

Because there are so many guided meditations available for the root chakra, I'll be sharing a playlist curated on Insight Timer that you can choose from. Incorporate them into your regular meditation and share your experience.

In this section, I've shared a plethora of strategies to elevate your system. See how the combination of focusing on your mental programming around stress, bringing your nervous system back into healthy regulation, and balancing your root chakra can serve to powerfully elevate your being.

I invite you to put your learnings into action, and you'll be rewarded with tangible experiences that empower and enhance your life.



Additional Resources & Practice

More on Trauma & Shaking:

1. Watch ["How the body keeps the score on trauma | Bessel van der Kolk for Big Think+"](#) (8 minutes)

Bessel van der Kolk, author of "The Body Keeps the Score" discusses the widespread experience of trauma, which prevents people from being meaningfully involved in the present:

2. Watch [Peter Levine on "How the Body Releases Trauma and Restores Goodness"](#) (7 minutes)

This is a shorter video where Peter Levine, author of "Waking the Tiger," introduces how he discovered shaking as a form of trauma release.

3. Watch ["How the Body Releases Trauma and Restores Goodness - Peter Levine | The Embodiment Conference"](#) (55 minutes)

This is a longer video, with video examples of animals trembling. Peter Levine also introduces the concept of wabi sabi (better after being broken), and shares more on the vagus nerve. He also discusses ways to activate the vagus nerve, such as making a vuu sound, relaxing the jaw by yawning etc.

Additional Resources & Practice

Practices:

Here are 2 options, both are 5 minute guided practices of shaking:

1. "Somatic Shaking: Shake off the Stress | Emotional and Physical Healing."
2. "Somatic Full BODY SHAKING Get Rid of Negative Emotions, Negative Thoughts | 5 Minute Daily Routine"

More on TRE:

"If trauma can occur to every human being then a healing process must be available to everyone too."
(Dr David Berceli)

1. Releasing Trauma (with David Berceli) (1 hour 26 minutes)

In this podcast interview, Dr David Berceli shares that he developed TRE as a self-help technique which you can easily do on your own, if your traumas aren't too severe.

The opening offers an introduction to Dr David Berceli. If you just want to get to the meat of the discussion, skip to 22 minutes in. Key points covered:

- Discussion on what trauma is and coping mechanisms

Additional Resources & Practice

- Brief discussion on polyvagal theory (we will cover this in greater detail in the next module)
- The importance of using various modalities to integrate , starting with what you feel most comfortable in.
- The importance of starting from a place of safety and pleasure, before leaning into discomfort
- Tremor mechanism/shaking as a normal and natural human response, which adults have shut off.
- The key is to experience ease and flow (he quotes from Rupert Sheldrake): the interplay of matter and energy
- Advice on doing TRE on your own

Further Reading:

This webpage provides a thorough and concise explanation of TRE: <https://severnclinics.co.nz/tre-trauma-release-exercises/>

Practices:

Watch the following videos to see what TRE looks like. The videos also provide instructional guidance to practice TRE on your own. It is recommended to watch the videos once before following along.

1. [TRE® \(Tension & Trauma Releasing Exercises\): Full Instructions with Dr. David Berceli \(OFFICIAL\)](#) (7 minutes)

Additional Resources & Practice

There are 7 primary movements and this video, from the official channel from TRE, provides an introduction to all 7 exercises.

2. TRE Full Practice Trauma and Tension Release Exercise (24 minutes)

The explanations and instructional guidance about the 7 primary movements are clear and easy to follow.

3. Self-applied interventions for the TRE Experience (16 minutes)

This video by Dr David Berceli provides more detailed guidance for doing TRE on your own.

Root Chakra

Here is a Playlist of Root Chakra Meditations from Insight Timer:

<https://insighttimer.com/meditation-playlists/JJmJFJ8ofPDsmWPstgw0>