

What is Somatic Experiencing®?

Integrating a broad scientific understanding of how animals and human beings respond to overwhelmingly stressful circumstances, **Somatic Experiencing® (SE®)** is an innovative and highly effective approach to preventing and healing the consequences of emotional and physical trauma. The result of over forty years of observation, research, and hands-on development by Dr. Peter Levine, SE® recognizes that trauma isn't just restricted to catastrophic events like war, rape, and disaster, but can be the product of an accumulative effect from other more "ordinary" events such as falls, accidents, and invasive medical procedures. A single brief exposure to an overwhelming event can throw a normally functioning individual into an abyss of emotional and physical suffering.

Somatic Experiencing® (SE®) is a clinical methodology based upon an appreciation of why animals in the wild are not traumatized by routine threats to their lives while humans, on the other hand, are readily overwhelmed and traumatized. Fortunately, the very same instincts (and related survival-based brain systems) that are involved in the formation of trauma symptoms can be enlisted in the transformation and healing of trauma. Therapeutically, this "instinct to heal" and self-regulate is engaged through the awareness of body sensations that contradict those of paralysis and helplessness, and which restore resilience, equilibrium and wholeness.

In distinction to cognitive and emotional based therapies ("top-down" approaches which focus on insight and emotions first and only secondarily focus on bodily responses to trauma), SE® is a "bottom-up" approach. It focuses on the brain stem and its survival-based functions (the fight, flight or freeze responses) which are not under conscious or emotional control. These instinctual action and arousal systems are accessed through the vehicle of physical bodily sensations. Cognitions and emotions are included in SE® practice but they are secondary or derivative from physical sensations through bottom-up processing.

An SE® practitioner employs awareness of body sensation to help individuals "renegotiate" and heal rather than re-live or re-enact trauma. SE's guidance of the bodily "felt sense" allows the highly aroused survival energies to be safely experienced and gradually discharged. SE® "titrates" experience (breaks down into small, incremental steps), rather than evoking catharsis, which can overwhelm the regulatory mechanisms of the organism.

For more information, or to find an SE® practitioner, visit:

<http://www.traumahealing.com>