

SESSION ONE ω FINDING YOUR CENTER

Something we were withholding made us weak, until we realized it was ourselves. -
- Robert Frost

CONGRATULATIONS upon deciding to do something for yourself. I hope that you look upon this experience as a personal luxury, which you are giving to yourself. It is a unique investment, in that it will pay compound dividends every day for the rest of your life.

Essentially, Soma Neuromuscular Integration® (SNI) is about two things: (1) optimizing the structure and performance of your body in relationship to gravity, and (2) increasing your ability to utilize the latent potentials of your nervous system. In order to accomplish these goals and to create the maximum benefit, you must realize that you are responsible for your own evolution.

The body and mind are a unity; changing one must change the other. These handouts are designed to help you focus on the nature of this change and to help you integrate it into more satisfying ways of being in the world.

If at any time you have questions, please make note of them, and we will discuss them during your next visit.

The physical goals of this first session include:

- Lengthening the distance between the bottom of the rib cage and the top of the pelvis.
- Loosening the outer fascial layers of the body.
- Freeing the rib cage.
- Increasing both the circulation of oxygen into the blood and the removal of toxins.
- Releasing tension around the heart muscle to improve blood flow.
- Increasing the distance in the sternal notch (the point between the collar bones).
- Lengthening the lower back.

Because we live in an upright position in gravity, almost everyone's rib cage is jammed into the pelvis. We need more space to allow the abdominal organs more freedom and to give the nervous systems around the spinal column greater ease. Due to the changes in the first session, breathing is fuller and deeper. This creates the space needed and promotes a feeling of well-being.

By the end of the first session, you should be more familiar with finding your gravity. Your center of gravity is a constantly mobile, imaginary line running vertical and anterior to your spine from the head to the soles of the feet, that works with gravity to keep you centered, balanced and graceful. This calm place, comparable to the eye of a hurricane, is the point around which everything should move. This vital line makes it possible for your total being to have uninterrupted contact with the primal unity of life. Try to sense your actions, even your thoughts, moving around this line.

PREVIEW OF SESSION TWO

One of the primary purposes of Session Two is to work with your foundation, your contact with reality and your in-touchness with mother Earth. We will spend most of our time working with the lower legs and the feet, which in turn lengthens the back. This session will increase your physical and psychological security in gravity. Your way of walking and moving through the world will begin to change.

Gravity is the directional force from earth center moving outward to the sky and is vertical through any point in the earth's surface.

Self Integration

*Doing these exercises consistently
will help you integrate
the results of the bodywork
into your life as a whole.*

Western psychology has viewed non-ordinary states as pathological. Preindustrial cultures use these states: to connect with deities, other dimensions of reality, forces of nature, and artistic inspiration. In these cultures, healing always involves non-ordinary states of consciousness.”

~Stanislav Grof

SELF- INTEGRATION

The work that you do after this first session is critically important. You probably felt very good as you left the session. Your attitude and what you do between sessions is as important as the sessions themselves. Look upon these exercises that you do between sessions as a luxury that you are giving yourself rather than as homework.

Going through these early exercises is much like erasing a blackboard. Once it is clean, you can create or draw on it anything that you wish. You can redraw old habits and patterns or you can change. Consider that this processing gives you an opportunity to change anything about yourself and your personality that you wish to change. In instances of some major changes, you will need more than just physical manipulation. You may want additional kinds of support and guidance. If at any time you feel that you need more assistance in some particular area, we can discuss it.

What you do with this experience depends upon you and the goals you have. One of the most immediate decisions that you face is giving yourself the luxury of 30 minutes each day for your own unfolding. Spend this time meditating on (thinking about) the internal physical and psychological changes that are going on within your being. If you insist on maintaining the old habits that caused your present circumstances, then it becomes obvious that you have not taken the time to contact the center of your being.

Obviously, it is easy to relax in a place where nothing distracts you. In the bustling business of this world, you finish one thing, only to find something else waiting to be done. It is impossible to be continuously in a relaxing environment. Consequently, it is essential to be able to relax both body and spirit, as needs demand, regardless of the circumstances.

To relax means to be at ease and to leave things in their natural condition. We can relax if we can permit things to settle down in their proper places.

The proper settling place for the center of gravity of the body is a relaxed spot below the navel in the lower abdomen. Find that place and relax the upper body, so the gravity of all the other parts of the body will settle in their proper positions for a state of over-all relaxation. If a person does not know the house to which they must return, even if they wish to go home, they cannot. If you do not know the place in which to settle your strength, even if you wish to relax, it is difficult.

AUTOGENIC TRAINING

FORMULA I

Autogenic Training, or AT, is a system of exercises to produce relaxation which was developed by Johannes H. Schultz, M.D., in Germany in the early 1900s. AT is designed to produce relaxation of the striated musculature and reconditioning of the autonomic nervous system. A series of formulas is followed while in a state of “passive awareness.” Focus is placed on a formula, such as MY RIGHT ARM IS HEAVY, in a way that allows the entire body to become heavy without effort. This is far easier to achieve than meditation and gives the mind great control over the body in a relaxed manner. It is a daydream-like state, self-induced, and controlled through daily practice.

Practice AT in a quiet room without distractions. A firm foam pad or carpeted floor are the best surfaces. Lie on your back with your arms at your sides and your feet NOT crossed. Place a light cover over your legs, if needed. If your neck is uncomfortable, use a SMALL, FLAT pillow.

At the end of each session, it is important to do the AT exercise called “THE RETURN.” Make very tight fists, inhale as you raise your arms over your head, shake out your fists once or twice, and lower your arms as you exhale. Do this vigorously once or twice to awaken muscle tone following the deep relaxation of AT.

The best results are achieved by a twice daily practice of 10 minutes each time. Before you begin your practice, read through this checklist twice.

REMEMBER THE RETURN
SET TIMER FOR TEN MINUTES
REMOVE CONTACT LENSES
ASSURE TEN MINUTES WITHOUT INTERRUPTION
LIGHT COVER OVER LOWER LEGS IF NEEDED

As you begin to practice, visualize The Return to use at the end of the 10 minutes. State to yourself, **I AM AT PEACE**. The first formula is **MY RIGHT ARM IS HEAVY**. Repeat the formula throughout your practice in this manner:

MY RIGHT ARM IS HEAVY
MY RIGHT ARM IS HEAVY
MY RIGHT ARM IS HEAVY

Pause about 1 minute and repeat the Heavy Arm formula in series of three.

Make a mental sign reading “HEAVY.” Now and then see the sign in your mind’s eye. Use your imagination to make it as elaborate as you like.

The goal of this formula is total body heaviness. This is achieved through passive attention to the arm through the formula. Let the weight fall to the underside of the body and repeat the formula frequently.

Total heaviness is usually achieved within a week; for some individuals, two weeks are necessary. This heaviness is simple to reach if the mind is ignored except for repeating the formula **MY RIGHT ARM IS HEAVY**. If thoughts come to your mind, focus your attention on the right arm, repeat the formula, and use the sign “HEAVY.” Think HEAVY as you exhale.

A general relaxation of the striated musculature of the body for 10 minutes is restorative to the nervous system and, after practice, equals an hour’s nap in restoring energy.

After Session Three we will do another **AT** formula to increase circulation to the entire body.

SIMPLE RECIPE TO JOY

We spend hours of our life in resistance. This is a resistance to moving outside of our self-imposed limitations; outside of the “box”. We are not even aware of how much resistance we hold onto until we feel it release. Resistance starts when, as young children, we really want something unattainable and don’t have our wants satisfied. In our childlike minds, we do not comprehend the implications; we simply *want*, and our desire is not met. As a child, this feels like, and often is, being controlled by someone else. The reasons for this control really do not matter. We feel controlled. As adults, we then impose the same control limits on ourselves and maintain the control we once resisted. The control then becomes a resistance buried in our minds, behavior, feelings or our tissues.

This sets patterns. We give up our desire to please ourselves. Instead, we attempt to *control* ourselves, living in ways we *think* may please others. This causes resignation; it is powerless and unsatisfying. Relinquishing our desire to please ourselves can show up in the body as illness. Another pattern is to resist outwardly while maintaining our desire inwardly. This pattern sets up confusion between the inner self/body and the outer self/body. These patterns are forms of resistance.

We disguise resistance in many ways. Often, we even disguise it from ourselves. Resistance can show up in the body as armour, or extra weight. It shows up as neediness or reasonableness that keeps us explaining and telling the same story over and over again. We do not tell the truth, saying things are fine when there is clearly something going on. Resistance is apparent in things that look like accidents, such as forgetfulness, “accidentally” damaging something belonging to another, ignoring another person’s needs, or even avoiding another person. Many “I’m sorry” statements could be avoided if we acknowledged our resistance and stated our inner needs.

The difficulty is that as adults, we are unaware of these patterns. Patterns become automatic reactions. We must begin to notice ourselves again and awaken to the automatic patterns in order to surrender our inner self to the outer world.

Awareness is noticing the inward experience. Awareness gives us choice. When we see ourselves clearly, we can be responsible to either stay where we are - or change. For a new creation of ourselves, we must be aware of our stuck, resistant selves and our old habits, which now can be shed. This is the possibility that the Soma work brings forth, the expanded awareness of self.

Life’s experience requests that we surrender and allow the possibility, the availability, of risking ourselves for the opportunity of really being with another person, letting the genuine inner experience come forth. Intimacy means telling the truth about who we really are. We share authenticity, confrontation, acknowledgement, and are vulnerable. Relationships that are

working, alive, and self-reliant are relationships that allow vulnerable communication patterns. Each person is available to themselves first and then to each other. They risk being controlled, being wrong. They risk their egos and being hurt for the joy of being with another person. This type of communication requests that we experience and share our fears with each other.

On life's journey, some people give up, some resist and remain stuck, and others keep moving along. The people who move forward are aware of their own needs and choose to take the risk to share them. We must first be self aware in order to choose.

Many people perceive that they are aware and available, yet they feel that "life is just doing it to me". They feel overwhelmed and bereft of control. They may manifest the victimization of heart disease, of abuse, of broken relationships, of anything that keeps them from joy and satisfaction. These are our subtle teachers. Joy and satisfaction are states that we create in the realm of our daily existences. We choose our situations and are responsible for our choices.

When we move from resistance/control... to awareness/experience.... to choice, there is a release - to a new level of self-responsibility. A responsible person can choose and create anew. Authentic creation of self is profoundly satisfying. When a person/body is responsible for self, there is a quality that goes beyond all the right words, beyond all the drama, and deeply into our knowingness. We recognize when someone (including ourselves) is self-responsible. When you ask someone what they want in life and they answer (as so many people do), "I want to be happy", they seek the satisfaction of being inner and outer connected in a state of self-reliance. We crave the congruence of having our body's language match who we are inside. Until we know who we are and are responsible for creating ourselves through choice, we can only resist.

Resistance ... to experience
Experience ... to choice
Choice ... to release
Release ... to responsibility
Responsibility ... to intimacy and joy

To resistance again

Resistance ... to experience
Experience ... to choice
Choice ... to release
Release ... to responsibility
Responsibility ... to intimacy and joy

**There are no
absolutes, you
know!!!**

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