

Somatic Experiencing Exercises

Somatic exercises are body-based practices designed to help individuals become more aware of their physical sensations, movements, and posture. These exercises often focus on reconnecting the mind and body, promoting relaxation, reducing tension, and releasing stored emotions. Somatic exercises are grounded in the idea that the body holds memory and experiences, and by cultivating awareness, we can release chronic stress, trauma, and discomfort.

Body scanning

Body scanning is a mindfulness technique used to promote relaxation, self-awareness, and stress reduction. It involves mentally "scanning" your body, part by part, to notice physical sensations and release tension. The practice is often used in meditation and mindfulness exercises to help individuals become more attuned to their bodies and experience the present moment more fully.

Body scanning script

Find a comfortable position where you can relax and focus inward. You may choose to lie down or sit comfortably with your feet flat on the floor and your hands resting gently in your lap or by your sides. Close your eyes, and take a deep breath in... and out... Allow your body to settle, and let go of any tension.

Take a moment to bring your attention to your breath. Inhale deeply through your nose, filling your lungs fully... and exhale slowly through your mouth. With each breath, allow yourself to relax a little more, sinking into the present moment.

Now, bring your awareness to your body.

Start by focusing on the top of your head. Feel the sensation of your scalp, your forehead, and the space around your ears. Notice any areas of tension or tightness. Gently breathe into those areas, and as you exhale, imagine releasing any tension you may be holding.

Now, move your attention to your face. Relax your eyebrows, soften your eyes, your cheeks, your jaw. If you're clenching your teeth, allow your mouth to release and your tongue to rest softly in your mouth. Feel the smoothness of your skin, the warmth or coolness of the air.

Shift your attention to your neck and shoulders. These areas often hold a lot of tension, so take a moment to consciously soften them. Allow your shoulders to drop away from your ears, feeling any tightness melt away with your breath.

Now, bring your awareness to your arms. Start with your upper arms, and notice any sensations you may feel. Let the muscles in your arms soften, releasing any tension as you continue to breathe. Move down to your forearms, wrists, and finally, your hands. Feel the weight of your hands resting wherever they are. Let your fingers relax and uncurl.

Now, bring your awareness to your chest. Notice the gentle rise and fall of your breath as you inhale and exhale. Allow your chest to soften with each breath, feeling a sense of openness and ease in your heart center.

Body scanning script

Move your focus to your stomach and abdomen. Notice if there's any tightness or discomfort. As you breathe, allow your belly to expand with each inhale and soften with each exhale. Let go of any tension or worry stored in this area.

Now, move to your hips and pelvis. Feel the weight of your body sinking into the surface beneath you. Allow any tension in your hips to release, and let your legs feel heavy and grounded.

Move your attention down to your thighs. Notice the sensations in your muscles, the weight of your legs. Allow your thighs to relax, and let go of any tension you may be holding there. Move your awareness to your knees. Feel the space around them, and soften any tightness or pressure.

Now, bring your focus to your shins and calves. Feel the muscles soften and release, allowing your legs to feel completely supported. Notice your ankles and let go of any tension there, feeling a deep sense of relaxation.

Finally, bring your awareness to your feet. Feel the sensation of your feet resting on the floor or surface beneath you. Relax your toes, allowing them to uncurl and soften. Feel the connection of your feet with the earth beneath you, grounding you in this moment.

Now, take a moment to scan your entire body from head to toe. Notice how your body feels now—relaxed, open, and at ease. With each breath, feel a sense of calm moving through you, releasing any last bits of tension.

As we come to the end of this body scan, take a few moments to sit in the stillness, noticing how your body feels now. You may feel more grounded, relaxed, and at peace. When you're ready, gently begin to bring your awareness back to the room around you. Wiggle your fingers and toes, stretch your body if needed, and, when you're ready, slowly open your eyes, bringing this sense of calm and relaxation with you.

Conscious breathing



To help you become more aware of your breath and body sensations, creating a sense of calm and connection with the present moment. This exercise can support the regulation of your autonomic nervous system, which helps process any emotional or physical stress.

Steps:

1. Find a comfortable position

Sit in a comfortable chair or lie down on your back, allowing your body to rest fully. Ensure your posture is relaxed but supportive. Gently close your eyes if that feels comfortable, or keep them softly focused on a point in front of you.

2. Begin by noticing your breath

Take a few moments to simply observe your breath. Don't try to change it; just notice the natural rhythm of your inhalations and exhalations. Pay attention to where you feel your breath the most—whether it's in your chest, belly, or nostrils. You might notice that your breath is shallow, deep, fast, or slow.

3. Ground your body

Bring your attention to where your body is in contact with the surface you're sitting or lying on. Feel the weight of your body supported by the ground, chair, or floor beneath you. Begin to notice how your feet, legs, hips, and spine are grounded. Feel the stability and safety in this support.

4. Engage in conscious breathing

Begin to take a slow, deep breath in through your nose, filling your belly and chest with air. As you inhale, feel the expansion in your body—notice your belly rise and your ribcage widen.

At the top of your inhale, pause for a moment. Allow yourself to briefly settle into the stillness, paying attention to the sensations in your body. Slowly release the breath through your mouth or nose, noticing how your body gently contracts as the air leaves your body. Allow the exhale to be as long and smooth as possible.

After exhaling, pause briefly again before taking the next breath. Notice how your body feels at the end of the exhale.

5. Body awareness with each breath

As you continue with this conscious breathing, begin to bring awareness to any sensations in your body. As you inhale, notice if there are any areas of tension or discomfort. Simply observe them without judgment. When you exhale, imagine releasing some of that tension with each breath out, letting it dissolve with the air leaving your body.

6. Tune into sensations

Bring your attention to any sensations that arise in your body—heat, coolness, tingling, or heaviness. Just observe these sensations as they come and go.

If you notice any areas of discomfort or tightness, stay with them for a moment. Breathe gently into these areas, allowing the breath to soften the tension. If you feel overwhelmed by any particular sensation, try gently shifting your focus to a neutral or pleasant part of your body (like your hands or feet) and breathe into that area.

7. Continue breathing and observe your state

Continue the conscious breathing for several minutes. If your mind begins to wander, gently guide your focus back to your breath and the sensations in your body. Allow yourself to feel any shifts or changes in your body, and notice if your breath becomes more relaxed or deeper as you continue.

8. Close the practice

When you're ready to end the exercise, slowly begin to bring your awareness back to the present moment.

Take a few more deep, conscious breaths. Notice how your body feels now, compared to when you first started. Gently open your eyes (if they were closed), stretch your body if needed, and take a moment to check in with yourself.

Releasing weight through ideokinesis

Ideokinesis is a technique that involves using mental imagery to influence and change physical patterns. In the context of releasing weight—both physical and emotional—we can use imagery to shift the way we sense and carry ourselves, helping to release tension, stress, and heaviness. The following exercise is designed to help you use imagery to activate a shift in your body's posture, energy, and emotions, creating a sense of lightness and freedom.

Steps:

1. Find a comfortable position

Begin by sitting or lying down in a comfortable position. Make sure your body is fully supported, and you feel at ease. If you're sitting, let your feet rest flat on the floor. If lying down, let your body rest in a neutral alignment.

Close your eyes to minimize distractions and begin to connect with your breath. Take a few deep, slow breaths in through your nose, allowing your belly to rise, and exhale gently through your mouth.

2. Ground yourself

Focus on the points of contact between your body and the surface beneath you. Feel your feet grounded on the floor or your body supported by the earth beneath you.

Imagine a deep, stabilizing energy flowing from the ground up through your body, creating a sense of connection with the earth. Allow yourself to feel safe and secure in this grounded position.

3. Bring awareness to weight

Now, bring your attention to any physical or emotional weight you might be carrying. You can do this by tuning into areas of your body that feel heavy, tense, or burdened.

Acknowledge these sensations without judgment. Notice where the weight manifests in your body. It could be in your shoulders, hips, chest, or any area where you feel physical discomfort or emotional heaviness.

4. Activate imagery of lightness

Begin to visualize a shift from heaviness to lightness. Imagine your body as a vessel, full of energy and vitality. Picture this energy as light, fluid, and expansive.

Imagine your body becoming lighter with each breath you take. Visualize your shoulders, arms, legs, and torso gently lifting, as though the weight of the world is lifting off of you. Feel your posture becoming more aligned, open, and free.

5. Use imagery to release weight

Picture the areas where you feel the most weight—whether physical or emotional. Visualize these areas gradually becoming lighter and more spacious with each breath.

- For example, if you feel heaviness in your shoulders, imagine that your shoulders are being gently pulled up by invisible strings of light, releasing tension and lifting the weight from your body.
- If you feel emotional heaviness, imagine the emotions dissolving like mist, rising up and dissipating into the air with each exhale.

Picture the weight you're carrying turning into a soft, fluid energy that you can easily release, allowing it to melt away from your body and mind.

6. Connect with sensations of freedom

Now, shift your focus to the parts of your body that feel light and open. Feel the freedom of movement and the lightness in your posture. As you breathe, imagine your body expanding and becoming more energized. You are releasing the weight and allowing your true, expansive self to emerge.

Visualize your body becoming more open and fluid, free from tension and restriction. Feel the space between your bones, your muscles, and your skin growing and expanding, as though you are becoming more porous, flexible, and free-flowing.

7. Integrate positive imagery

To reinforce the sense of lightness, imagine filling your body with a nourishing, positive energy. Picture yourself being bathed in a warm, golden light that fills every cell, creating a sense of ease and calm. Let this light energy flow through your body, further dissolving any lingering heaviness or stress. Visualize this golden light surrounding you, providing support and warmth, allowing you to feel completely at peace.

8. Check in with your body and emotions

Gently bring your attention back to your body and any sensations you are experiencing. Do you feel lighter? More open? Are there areas that still feel heavy, or are you noticing new sensations of ease?

If you notice any remaining areas of tension, return to the imagery of lightness. Allow these areas to soften, and continue to visualize them releasing the weight they carry.

9. Affirmation of release

As you complete this process, say silently or out loud:

- "I release the weight I carry, both physical and emotional."
- "I create space within my body and mind for ease, lightness, and flow."
- "I allow myself to feel free, unburdened, and at peace."

Let these affirmations resonate deeply within you as you take a few final deep breaths, feeling the benefits of the practice settle in.

10. Closing the practice

When you're ready to end the exercise, begin to slowly bring your awareness back to the present moment. Gently wiggle your fingers and toes, stretch your body, and slowly open your eyes. Take a moment to reflect on how your body feels now—are there any areas of lightness or freedom? Does your posture feel different, more open or aligned?

Carry the sense of lightness and ease with you throughout your day.

Additional notes