

A decorative graphic consisting of several small, light blue, multi-pointed stars scattered across the top left and center of the page.

The Conscious Learner

What Is Somatic Experiencing?

Somatic Experiencing® (SE) is an effective, short-term, naturalistic approach to restoring the body's inherent capacity to self-regulate. It was developed by Dr. Peter Levine and is supported by a wealth of scientific research. SE is based upon the observation that animals, though routinely threatened in the wild, naturally and efficiently bounce back from stressful experiences (e.g. being attacked, hunted, chewed upon...). In their natural habitat, animals innately regulate and discharge the high levels of energy arousal associated with survival behaviors. These autonomic nervous system mechanisms provide animals with a built-in “immunity” to chronic stress that enables them to return to normal, healthy functioning in the aftermath of highly charged experiences.

We humans still retain, in our mammalian organism, all of these innate self-regulatory capacities. Unlike other mammals, however, we have the power to override our instinctive self-regulating responses. We use *should* and *shouldn't* to tell ourselves not to react the way that we are feeling inside, which effectively interrupts the natural response. SE gives us direct access to the body's self-restoring wisdom and power.

- SE employs awareness of bodily sensation to help people renegotiate stress patterns that have become “stuck” in the body
- SE's careful guidance of the body's *felt sense* allows highly aroused energies to be safely experienced and gradually discharged
- SE “titrates” experience (breaks it down into small, incremental steps); it *avoids* evoking overwhelming cathartic experiences
- SE may employ —*only with the client's express permission*— respectful touch in support of the renegotiation process
- For more information about SE please note the following references:
 - Levine, P. and Frederick, A. (1997). *Waking the Tiger: Healing Trauma : The Innate Capacity to Transform Overwhelming Experiences*. Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books
 - Kline, M. and Levine, P. (2007). *Trauma Through A Child's Eyes: Awakening the Ordinary Miracle of Healing*. Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books
 - Official web site: <http://www.traumahealing.com>