

Somatic tracking

Pain Clinic

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Somatic tracking

Somatic tracking is gentle mind-body technique that helps you change your relationship with chronic pain. It involves paying close and curious attention to your pain sensations, without fear or intensity.

Instead of trying to ignore, or fight the pain, you will learn to notice it in a calm and open way. Over time, this can help reduce the intensity of your pain and retrain your body's pain system to feel safer in your body. This takes time and requires regular practice. If you approach the exercise with pressure to make the pain go away, it may have the opposite effect.

Somatic tracking is made up of three components:

Mindfulness- this means paying attention to your body on purpose, in the present moment, and without judgement. You gently observe your sensations without reacting to them or trying to change them, just noticing them.

Messages of safety- While you notice, you remind your body that you are safe and okay.

Light-hearted approach- noticing your physical sensations with lightness and curiosity. You are just observing. You are not trying to control or fix anything, you're simply noticing with interest, which helps retrain your response to pain.

“Our goal is to pay attention to the pain without fear. But that can be hard when we have feared the pain for so long” - Alan Gordon, 2021.



When should I practice somatic tracking?

You should practice when you have mild to moderate pain. For example, if you have pain when you sit, do somatic tracking when you are sitting down, or if you have pain when you are walking, try it while walking around.

When should I not practice somatic tracking?

You should not practice when you have high levels of pain/during a pain flare. It will be difficult to feel safe during these times. There is no need to practice somatic tracking when you have no pain, simply enjoy and focus on living your life.

How to do somatic tracking?

- Find a quiet place, taking a few deep breaths to settle your mind.
- Bring your attention to your pain- gently focus on the area where you feel your pain. Notice what is happening, without trying to fix it.
- Observe without judgment- what do you feel? Tingling? Tightness? Is it sharp or dull?
- Stay calm and curious- if fear, anxiety or frustration come up that's okay. Remind yourself "I am safe. My body is not in danger."
- Try to practice little and often- with time it will get easier.

Tips for success

- **Be kind to yourself**- you are learning a new skill, this takes time.
- **Focus on feelings of safety**- try not to put pressure on yourself.
- **Stay curious**- see if you can let go of the need to control the process.

Resources

Insight Timer App (Apple/Android)– search “somatic tracking” and play around with what works for you.

YouTube video Relief from Pain- Somatic Tracking Meditation,
Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z1jmxMcSyAM>

Book/Audiobook: The Way Out by Alan Gordon. Can be purchased or we recommend checking with your local library service for availability.

References

Gordon, A. (2021) The Way Out. London: Vermilion.

If you have any queries, please contact:

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