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Somatic Tracking

A Pain Reprocessing Therapy Mindfulness Practice

What Is Somatic Tracking?

Somatic tracking is a mindfulness-based practice drawn from Pain Reprocessing Therapy (PRT). Its purpose is to help your brain learn that the sensations in your body are safe — not signals of damage or danger.

Chronic pain and other medically unexplained symptoms are often neuroplastic, meaning the brain has learned to generate pain signals even when there is no ongoing injury. Somatic tracking works by shifting the way you relate to those sensations: from fear and bracing, to curiosity and openness. Over time, this sends a powerful message to your nervous system that it can calm down.

This is not about ignoring pain or forcing positivity. It is about observing sensation with a light, interested attention — the way you might watch fish swimming around in a pond.

When to Practice

Somatic tracking is most effective when your pain or symptoms are present but manageable — at a level of 6 or below on a scale of 1 to 10. If symptoms are very intense, it is fine to wait, or to begin by directing your attention to a neutral or comfortable area of the body

Even a few minutes of practice can be meaningful. You do not need to do this perfectly.

Step-by-Step Instructions

1. **Find a comfortable position. Sit or lie down somewhere you can be still for a few minutes.** You do not need to be in a special place — anywhere quiet will do.
2. **Begin with your breath. Take a breath or two and let your body settle.** You are not trying to relax — just arriving.
3. **Turn your attention toward the sensation.** Gently bring your awareness to an area where you notice discomfort. Do not try to fix it or make it go away — simply notice it.
4. **Observe with curiosity.** Describe the sensation to yourself as if you are a curious scientist: What does it feel like? Is it sharp or dull, tight or spreading, hot or cool? Does it stay still or move? Use neutral, descriptive language rather than frightening words.

5. **Remind yourself that you are safe.** As you observe, gently offer yourself reassuring messages: “My body is safe. This sensation is not dangerous. My brain is sending a false alarm.”
6. **If fear rises, soften your focus.** If you notice anxiety or intensity building, simply shift your attention to a neutral part of your body — your hands, your feet, the feeling of the chair beneath you. Rest there until you feel steadier, then gently return.
7. **Close with kindness.** When you are ready to finish, take a breath and acknowledge yourself for showing up to this practice. Every moment of curious attention is progress.

Sample Somatic Tracking Videos

Somatic Tracking Meditation by Maureen Wiley:

<https://youtu.be/Z1jmxMcSyAM?si=YkQPoi7pnw7uElta>

Somatic Tracking Exercise by Tanner Murtagh, MSW: https://youtu.be/GF-BWH4w8ho?si=a0m_uPDXkJuJ-od&t=172

Tips for Practice

- There is no “correct” way to do this. Any moment of curious, non-fearful attention is valuable.
- You do not need sensations to go away during the practice for it to be working. In fact, trying to change or eliminate uncomfortable sensations is counterproductive.
- Bringing a light or even playful quality to your attention can help — think of it as gentle exploration, not hard work.
- Short, regular practice is more helpful than occasional long sessions.
- If you find yourself bracing or holding your breath, that’s a signal to soften and return to the breath first.