



Informed Consent Form

Body, Touch and Table Work in Therapy

Sarah Schlote, MA, RP, CCC, SEP, is a body-oriented Registered Psychotherapist, Canadian Certified Counsellor and Somatic Experiencing™ Practitioner, who is actively pursuing ongoing training and consultation in SE™ Touch and Body Memory Recall (BMR). These three modalities share many parallels and are described below to help you understand their role in resolving physical and emotional symptoms related to trauma/PTSD, chronic stress/fatigue, fear, anger, anxiety, shame, health conditions or complex syndromes, as well as in restoring boundaries, regulation, resiliency, empowerment and a healthy sense of self.

Ideally our earliest experiences of being soothed, nurtured and held in a bonded relationship happen through touch. However, some of the deepest shock experiences held in the body occur when we are so young that our brains and nervous system are not yet sufficiently developed to process those experiences cognitively. When working through early trauma, some of which can be pre-verbal, touch can be an essential part of the renegotiation process, especially when words are not available.

What is Somatic Experiencing™ (SE)?

Somatic Experiencing (SE) is a naturalistic approach to the resolution and healing of trauma developed by Dr. Peter Levine, resulting from his multidisciplinary study of stress physiology, psychology, ethology, biology, neuroscience, indigenous healing practices and medical biophysics. SE releases traumatic shock (freeze) and supports the body's natural ability to regulate itself, which is key to transforming PTSD, chronic stress and the wounds of emotional and early developmental attachment trauma.

SE is based upon the observation that wild prey animals, though threatened routinely, are rarely traumatized. Animals in the wild naturally regulate and discharge the high levels of energy arousal (fight/flight) associated with defensive survival behaviors and chronic stress. This provides animals with a built-in "immunity" to trauma and stress that enables them to return to normal in the aftermath of highly charged life-threatening experiences.

SE facilitates the completion of self-protective motor responses and the release of survival energy bound in the body, thus addressing the root cause of trauma symptoms, which can result in subtle or more intense experiences as the body discharges. This is approached by *gently guiding clients to develop increasing tolerance for difficult bodily sensations and suppressed emotions*, so as to not get overwhelmed.

- SE employs awareness of body sensation to help people "renegotiate" and heal rather than re-live or re-enact trauma.
- SE's guidance of the bodily "felt sense," allows the highly aroused or frozen survival energies to be safely experienced and gradually discharged.

- SE “titrates” your experience (breaks it down into small, incremental steps) so that you can remain embodied and present, rather than evoking a mindless catharsis.
- **Note: Somatic Experiencing can be used with or without touch.**

SE does not require you to re-tell or re-live the traumatic event; however, working through the trauma story can be done more safely using SE. It offers the opportunity to engage, complete, and resolve—in a slow and supported way—the body’s instinctual fight, flight, freeze, and collapse responses. Individuals locked in anxiety or rage then relax into a growing sense of peace and safety. Those stuck in depression gradually find their feelings of hopelessness and numbness transformed into empowerment, triumph, and mastery. SE catalyzes corrective bodily experiences that contradict those of fear and helplessness and seeks to restore a sense of aliveness and pleasure. This resets the nervous system, restores inner balance, enhances resilience to stress, and increases people’s vitality, equanimity, and capacity to actively engage in life. For more information: www.traumahealing.org

Note: The Somatic Experiencing Trauma Institute states that Somatic Experiencing is neither a form of psychotherapy nor a bodywork technique, though it lends itself well to being integrated into these and other treatment modalities.

What is SE™ Touch?

SE Touch is applied with hands and occasionally with forearm or foot contact, and can also be offered indirectly, such as providing support through a cushion. **SE Touch is done fully clothed** and is not used to manipulate the body. SE Touch offers support to muscles, joints, diaphragms and organs to support regulation and healthy functioning. Touch can be applied with the client in a seated position or lying face up on a table, or standing during movement exercises. Some examples of when touch can be helpful are:

- Identifying an area of the body for tracking internal sensations.
- Supporting an area of the body to release tension or constriction.
- Stabilizing a highly activated / dysregulated nervous system.
- Containing and processing difficult emotions (*e.g., feeling therapist’s hands on the outside of your upper arms to provide a sense of containment to reduce flooding*).
- Bringing awareness to an area of the body that feels disconnected or numb.
- Engaging a reflexive action or defense to support completion / discharge of a response (*e.g., pushing into a therapist’s hands to engage a frozen fight response*).
- Resourcing an individual with positive sensation or a healthy body function (*e.g., pressure on the feet can enhance a sense of grounding*).
- Calming an anxiety response, by supporting the brain stem or the kidney/adrenal area.
- Connecting with tissue / muscle memory or natural biological rhythms.
- Increasing blood flow to damaged tissue.

Touch was incorporated in Somatic Experiencing by Dr. Peter Levine, and was further refined as a practice by Kathy Kain, MA, SEP, somatic and bodywork practitioner and senior faculty member with the Somatic Experiencing Trauma Institute (www.somaticpractice.net).

What is Body Memory Recall?

BMR is a form of hands-on healing, developed by Jonathan Tripodi, resulting from his study of physiotherapy, craniosacral therapy, myofascial release, Reichian therapy and other bodywork modalities. BMR supports the body to release accumulated stress, tension and memory from past experiences, while enhancing the body's capacity to transmit vital life energy. Barriers of movement in the body are created by thwarted protective responses (fight, flight, freeze) that diminish the flow of energy through the chakras (epicenters), craniosacral system, viscera (organs), muscles, fascia, joints and bones. This generates neuromuscular tension, hardens fluids and causes connective tissue (fascia) to thicken and bind together (**body armour**). Unresolved tension can lead to fatigue, pain, destructive behaviours, and a variety of emotional and physical health issues. Following a postural analysis, BMR supports the release of the freeze response and restores healthy flow and flexibility using therapeutic dialogue, **light to heavy pressure, stretching, visceral manipulation, and movement re-education**.

- BMR evaluates and releases tension at 6 specific “epicenters” along the midline of the body, where constriction is often created by suppressed emotion.
- As connective tissue releases during BMR techniques, increased pressure and stretch in the direction of the release movement is known as **unwinding**.
- Increased flow of energy can result in spontaneous movements or sounds as the body unwinds itself, self-correcting back to a state of balance.
- The body can also unwind into positions of past injuries or trauma (**positional memory release**).
- BMR is typically applied **directly on the body**, but can be done over clothing.

For more information: www.bodymemory.com

Scheduling Sessions

Sessions can be held at a frequency that works best for you. However, scheduling sessions closer together is recommended initially in order to maximize results. Your therapist will indicate a specific frequency of sessions based on your goals and your initial response to these modalities.

Benefits and Risks

As outlined above, touch can be very beneficial. Additional outcomes that may accompany these forms of touch work include decreased tension and pain; improved range of motion, posture and alignment; increased energy; resolution and completion of past experiences to allow you to move forward; and a felt sense of inner peace and wellbeing.

Touch- and body-based modalities, especially during the release of a self-protective response or body memory, can also unexpectedly bring up emotions, thoughts, pain, physical reactions or memories that may be upsetting, depressing, evoke anger, etc. It is also quite common for the body to vibrate or tremble during a release, and for clients to experience a sense of fatigue or soreness (especially following BMR, as the body detoxes from toxins that were trapped within hardened tissues). For more information about how to look after yourself after a session, please see the **Aftercare Instructions** handout.

Sharing and processing feelings and sensations with your therapist, if they arise, may be a helpful part of therapy. Also, the goal of Somatic Experiencing is to help you experience emotions and sensations in a way that is not overwhelming, so that you can learn to both tolerate discomfort, move through

challenging experiences with more resiliency, and restore balance and the ability to feel pleasure and joy. BMR as practiced at The Refuge is done following these same principles.

Ethics of Touch

The United States Association for Body Psychotherapy has outlined ethical considerations for the use of touch and body-based approaches in therapy. To read the standards outlined for the safe and ethical practice of touch in psychotherapy, visit: www.zurinstitute.com/ethicsoftouch.html A summary of these guidelines follows:

- Consent is required when using touch-related techniques in therapy, and can be withdrawn at any time. Sarah will ask your permission to use touch and you have the right to decline or refuse touch without fear of punishment, even if you previously provided consent. Sarah will ensure that you understand the nature and purpose of using touch. Sarah will explore with you and evaluate the appropriateness of the use of touch in your situation. She will also check in with you about your comfort level with regards to the location of touch, amount of pressure, length of contact, and her proximity to you both before and during each session.
- Sexual touch of clients by therapists is unethical and illegal. Genital touching is not performed, nor do therapists use touch to sexually stimulate clients deliberately. Touch should not be used to foster dependency of the client on the therapist, and therapists are cautious about the potential to re-enact dynamics or trigger transference coming from early, vulnerable experiences/states. Clear boundaries are outlined prior to and during the use of touch in a manner that is not enmeshing, shaming or derogatory.
- Touch is only used in your best interest to benefit your healing with respect for your self-determination, and never to gratify the personal needs of your therapist. Your needs and wishes take priority over any clinical or theoretical approach. You may request not to be touched at any time during therapy without needing to explain it, if you choose not to, and without fear of punishment. You might also change your mind about touch and decide that you feel comfortable receiving touch support in areas that were formerly uncomfortable.

Informed consent for body and touch-oriented approaches within therapy and counselling is essential and out of respect for your right to choice and self-determination. Consent must be given voluntarily, knowingly and intelligently. Consent is active and you can change your mind at any time.

Statement of Informed Consent

By signing below, I confirm that I have read and fully understand the information contained in this document and the **Aftercare Instructions** document. Any and all questions I have regarding the contents of these documents have been answered to my satisfaction and I consent to receiving body and touch-oriented interventions offered by Sarah Schlote, MA, RP, CCC, SEP.

- I consent to receive Somatic Experiencing
- I consent to receive SE Touch
- I consent to receive Body Memory Recall

Name of client (printed and signed)

Date