

Stress Vortex and Resource Vortex

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[Nervous System Regulation & Somatic Tools](#)

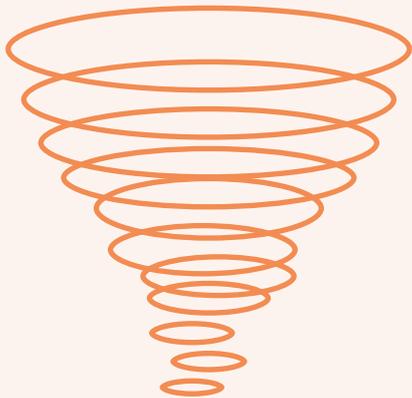
Most of us are already experts at noticing what stresses or activates us. Somatic work is about learning to get equally skilled at paying attention to what supports and regulates you. Most importantly, it's about really checking in with your body to know HOW you recognize something as resourcing:

- ✓ Does your breathing deepen?
- ✓ Do your shoulders drop?
- ✓ Does something soften or open?

This body awareness is where Somatic and Nervous System (NS) work lives. Your body holds the wisdom of what truly supports you.

Understanding the Two Vortexes

When we experience stress, anxiety, or trauma, we often get pulled into the story: the thoughts, worries, and mental loops. While we're caught in that story, our body and nervous system respond with physiological symptoms of over-activation (racing heart, tension, restlessness) or under-activation (numbness, fatigue, disconnection).



Stress Vortex

The downward spiral where difficult experiences pull us into our stories, and our nervous system responds with activation symptoms that can feel overwhelming or lead to shutting down.



Resource Vortex

The supportive spiral: things that help deactivate our nervous system, calm and soothe us, and help us find safety and the capacity to be with our experience.

Building Your Resource Vortex

The goal is to begin gently creating a resource vortex by exploring different types of resources:



Body-Based Resources

- Deep breathing, especially longer exhales
- Gentle movement like stretching or walking
- Feeling your feet firmly on the ground
- Placing hands on your heart or belly
- Warming or cooling sensations on your body



Environmental Resources

- Safe and comfortable spaces
- Being in nature or near water
- Exposure to sunlight or soft lighting and music
- Fresh air



Sensory Resources

- Calming music, sounds, or visuals
- Comforting textures, such as soft blankets or smooth stones
- Pleasant scents
- Warm drinks or nourishing foods



Internal Resources

- Memories of feeling safe or loved
- Personal strengths you can acknowledge
- Qualities you appreciate about yourself
- Times you've overcome challenges

How to Practice

1. Start small. Choose one resource and notice how your body responds.
2. Check in with your body: What shifts? What softens? What opens?
3. Build gradually. As you feel more regulated, your capacity for handling challenging experiences increases.
4. Remember titration: move back and forth between resource and stress as needed.

Think of this as practice, not perfection. You're training your nervous system to recognize and move toward what supports you. Any time you notice you're spiraling into the stress vortex, see if you can gently shift toward your resource vortex. If you find yourself deeply in the stress vortex, invite in even the smallest bit of resource: small shifts create big changes.

 Reflection Questions

1. How can you tell when you are spiraling into the stress vortex?

2. Which type of resource (body-based, environmental, sensory, other, or internal) feels most accessible to you right now?

3. When you think of a time you felt truly supported or calm, what do you notice happening in your body as you remember that experience?

4. What would it look like to give yourself permission to actively seek out and prioritize things that resource you?

Further Worksheets on Somatics by Katie Fleming Thomas, MS, LPC:

- [Somatics 101: Learning Your Body and Nervous System](#)
- [Sensory Orientation Technique](#)
- [Understanding Your Nervous System Regulators](#)
- [Window of Tolerance: Nervous System Zones](#)
- [Recognize and Regulate Your Activation Responses](#)