

# SCOPE

**Crisis Stabilization and Safety Aid** to help stabilize the physiological stress response and build resilience through crisis (or any difficulty) - developed by the Somatic Experiencing Trauma Institute (SETI)

**Signals that the nervous system is in stress physiology (high activation)** : increased heart rate, shallow breathing, social avoidance, erratic thoughts, muscle tension, heavy fatigue, rapid speech, numbness, insomnia, emotional overwhelm

**High activation in the nervous system may result in:**

Fight/Flight Response (sympathetic) or Freeze/Immobility/Helplessness (parasympathetic)

**S SLOW DOWN** - Take 10 steps very slowly noticing the sensations in your feet.

**C CONNECT TO YOUR BODY** - Cross your arms (and ankles if possible) then tuck your hands under your armpits, soften eyes with downward gaze and breathe. Wait for a sense of settling and that it's time to move to next step (we naturally start to look up.)

**O ORIENT** - Slowly look around (can be just a little) letting your gaze rest on something pleasant/comforting to convey safety.

**P PENDULATE** - Notice a place of ease in your body and a place of tension. Slowly shift attention between - ease - tension - ease.

**E ENGAGE** - Engage socially. Connect with someone who can support you or provide this for yourself through self-talk and validating your own experience and emotions. *"I am with you."* Let yourself feel reassured and connected as best you can.

Following an injury you can use the shortened acronym **COPE** (The **S** has already happened with the surprise / shock of the injury):

**C CONNECT** - Follow the impulse to rub and attend to an injury, fully let it register that you have hurt yourself as you contract inward. If you have fallen and it is safe to do so, stay on the ground as you stay present to yourself.

**O ORIENT** - Wait until your body naturally moves out of the contraction and starts to look up and around. As cognition comes back online you can take in your surroundings again and notice cues of safety like a tree or the stability of the ground.

**P PENDULATE** - Find a place of ease in your body and then notice the injury. Slowly shift attention between - ease - injury - ease.

**E ENGAGE** - Connect with someone for support and/or validate and tend to your own experience through self-care and kind self-talk.

Basic outline from the SETI website: <https://traumahealing.org/scope/>

## **More detailed information about SCOPE:**

**SCOPE** can be used any time we feel ourselves overwhelmed; unable to be in the present moment; during a crisis; in anxiety and/or panic. It can also be used as a practice to become more present any time throughout the day; before we attend to the needs of someone else (putting the oxygen mask on ourselves before helping someone else); as a preventative measure before a stressful situation to mitigate any feelings of intense activation.

**S SLOW DOWN** - As we slow down in movement and/or thought we respond to our need for support in this self-compassionate process that tends to and stabilizes our physiology.

**C CONNECT** - As we connect with our body we are able to ground ourselves through self-touch; connect the left side of the brain with the right side as we cross our arms and legs over the midline of our body giving a sense of wholeness rather than fragmentation; conscious breathing and supporting ourselves.

**O ORIENT** - Once we have slowed down and connected with our body for the time it takes to complete the nervous system's process of activation there will be a natural impulse to look up and around again. We can find stability by noticing cues of safety (a tree, the earth, a pleasurable colour or object, etc.) and as we place ourselves in time and space we help our nervous system to further shift out of the fight/flight/freeze response into a more relational feel.

*Slowing down, connecting with our body,* and *orienting* may be all we have time for or enough to bring some ease and so we could stop here or choose to continue with *pendulation* and *engagement* to further integrate the experience.

**P PENDULATE** - As we go back and forth between an area of tension and then an area of ease our brain registers the difference helping us to differentiate between what is tense and what is not tense to support coming out of overwhelm where everything may have a tone of feeling the same. Another way to pendulate is to contract our muscles and then relax them so we can feel the difference and reset our nervous system out of the loop of tension. This process also prevents us from coming out of deep distress too quickly - instead we go slowly - back and forth taking our time. Another pendulation is to go back and forth between noticing our body (internal awareness) and noticing something around us (external awareness.)

**E ENGAGE** - It's good to talk with another person to communicate our experience. As we connect we can feel the co-regulation that comes through relationship. Choosing someone who we know will validate our experience or doing that for ourselves through kind self-talk we are able to move into a regulated nervous system and integrate our experience so that it holds less charge.

***Over time and with practice we can as Polyvagal Therapist Deb Dana teaches, “befriend” our nervous system and “reshape” our neuropathways to support this listening and responding process that brings resilience.***

## **COPE for minor physical injury:**

**COPE** can be used for ourselves or in support of others when there is *a minor injury to the body that does not require medical attention*. This process can be used for psychological hurt as well and is a great tool in the process of resourcing, self-efficacy, and healing. The **S** of SCOPE in this case can be the **SLOW DOWN or STOP** that naturally comes from the surprise/shock of the injury. Then the COPE process can be followed as we tend to the pain and discomfort and move through a self-protective response cycle into completion.

**C CONNECT** - An injury will bring us into direct experience of our body through difficult sensations and in pain it is natural to contract inward, put your hand to the area of injury, possibly cry out or cuss as we experience an emotional response. Through practicing COPE we allow ourselves to fully follow this natural movement, connect with our body and stay with the contraction until it completes to honour our nervous system. It's good practice to go through this process even with minor bumps to get familiar with it.

**O ORIENT** - After we allow the contraction in our body and the pain begins to dissipate we will naturally look up and around as we continue through the self-protective response cycle. Let and encourage yourself or the other person to look around and see the place they are in and to realize that they are ok now. Following this cycle through to its completion is an important process in setting ourselves up to heal more fully from the injury or to prevent the accumulative affect of many injuries over our lifetime. We need to let go of the resistance to take the time that comes from our social conditioning.

**P PENDULATE** - As we find a place of relative ease in another part of our body it often helps to soften the tension in the part that was injured. Again we are able to differentiate between parts and not feel overwhelmed by the experience of one part.

**E ENGAGE** - This is an important step in completion of the activation as we co-regulate with another and share our story of injury or we use self-talk to validate our own experience bringing a sense of safety through nervous system regulation.

(If you are accompanying another in a minor injury just be "with them" as you orient to their process. You could say, "*I am here.*" "*Take your time before you get up.*" This is different than the toughen up message of "just get up and get going again." Very young children will express themselves naturally and we can learn from their example and just support them when they cry out or fall down. Wait for them to look up at us as they move into orientation and connection. We are showing them that we trust their body's response which teaches them to trust their body as well. Once they look up we can then say things like, "*That must have hurt,*" or "*I am so sorry you fell down,*" anything to validate their experience and let them know we are with them in our compassionate response.)

***\*As with any practice, feel free to adjust as needed.***