

Consent for Somatic Experiencing

This is an outline of the approach I use during a Somatic Experiencing® (SE) session for you to review and decide if it is aligned with what you are looking for in a therapeutic and inner guidance process. Please feel free to ask any questions for clarification that may arise as you read through and also to decide if the approach to SE that I offer is not right for you at this time. I am a Somatic Experiencing® Practitioner (SEP) working within the scope of practice of a bodywork therapist. I use negotiated touch, body awareness, inquiry and movement to help release or ease the effects of stress and trauma in the body and/or to support inner work.

This is done through:

- orientation to the environment, supporting comfort, connecting to resources
- titration and pendulation (slow engagement and going back and forth between touching into direct engagement and stepping back or going from places of distress to places of ease as an example)
- engaging with: **Sensations, Images, Behaviour, Affect and Meaning** (*see end of document)
- educational information and an experiential process to gain understanding and to experience a felt-sense of flexibility and change in our nervous system

Benefits may be felt as: grounding and supportive; a sense of our body and self-agency through negotiated contact; softening of tension in constricted areas; helping us to understand and have self-compassion for how we have responded to stress through our lives; a supportive process to gain inner awareness and insight.

Risks may include: aggravation of physical, emotional, mental difficulties and symptoms - part of the process is to use these symptoms as a guide for adjusting the approach to find the right amount of engagement. Please let me know if there is any exacerbation of existing symptoms or development of new symptoms.

I approach consent as an ongoing communication throughout each session to negotiate and adjust the work as needed for a sense of safety, support and personal agency. Know that you have the right to ask for clarification, for adjustments to be made in terms of pressure or location of contact, or to end a session at any time. Clients are fully clothed, and positioning may include being seated, standing, side-lying and/or supine on a massage table. Each session will begin and end with a seated check-in to assess what direction might be helpful, and to allow for integration.

A few examples of how touch work can be used in an SE session:

- * the practitioner makes foot to foot contact with the client for a sense of being grounded
- * the practitioner makes hand contact with the shoulders to support regulation in the nervous system through containment and grounding
- * the practitioner makes contact just under the collarbones to support connection to the breath and a fuller expression of inhalation / exhalation
- * the practitioner makes contact with one of the joints of the body (for example the knee after a fall has occurred) bringing a sense of support and warmth to the area allowing for an ease of constricted tissues that may be guarding the joint
- * the practitioner makes contact with the kidney / adrenal area of the back at the bottom of the ribs to soften how the chronic stress response impacts these organs

Trauma-Informed

As a Trauma-Informed practitioner I recognize the widespread impact of trauma and engage in practices that can potentially support pathways to recovery. I work collaboratively with clients to recognize when adjustments need to be made and to integrate practices that actively work to prevent re-traumatization through mindful presence, communication, consent, and choice. Please let me know if you would like more support to understand and navigate the effects of trauma. I am also grateful if you let me know when I have misstepped or misattuned so that if you choose we can continue to co-create a safe or “safe enough” space to work together.

If you are using SE bodywork to address significant past trauma or extreme stress and are not already doing so I encourage you to see a registered psychotherapist or registered social worker to process any issues that may arise as we work together. This bodywork model is also an excellent way to support and address physical symptoms in the body while receiving psychotherapy.

Training and approaches that influence my work:

- * Registered Massage Therapist since 1989
- * 2300 hour Massage Therapy Certificate Kikkawa College, Toronto 1987 - 1989
- * First Degree Reiki with Heather Lee, 1994
- * Craniosacral Therapy: 750 Hour Biodynamic Craniosacral with Jan Pemberton 2005 - 2008; 36 hour Cranial Course with Grace Chan (Sutherland/Chan Clinic) 2005; 14 hour Advanced Cranial Osteopathy with Osteopathic Elder Fred L. Mitchell D.O. 2010
- * Spiritual Director - Pacific Jubilee Program 2013
- * The Centre for Mindfulness Studies certificates in MBCT Basics Workshop, CBT: A Primer Workshop and Refining Inquiry with Patricia Rockman in 2014
- * Trained Teacher of Mindful Self-Compassion (Kristin Neff, Chris Germer, Michelle Becker & Steven Hickman teachers) December 2015, August 2016
- * Somatic Experiencing Practitioner - 216 hours Trauma Renegotiation and Nervous System Work, Berns Galloway, Russell Jones & Twig Wheeler 2018 - 2019
- * Touch Skills for Trauma Therapists with Kathy Kain - 40 hour training in 2020
- * Trauma-Sensitive Mindfulness: The Introductory Guide to Recognizing Trauma, Responding Skillfully, and Preventing Re-traumatization with David Treleaven - 13 hours, May 2022
- * Advanced Trauma-Sensitive Mindfulness: Widening the Window of Tolerance and Supporting Trauma Recover with David Treleaven - 25.5 hours, August 2022
- * Crisis Stabilization and Safety - 8 hour training with Somatic Experiencing International - January 2023

I have read the above information and give consent to proceed with Nicola Usher in a Somatic Experiencing session using body awareness, movement, and SE Touch. I understand that this is a collaborative and consent-based model to create a supportive process, and that I have the right to withdraw consent at any time.

Name: _____ Date: _____

I give Nicola Usher permission to contact me by phone, email or texting for the purpose of setting up appointments or receiving information. Initial_____

***Further information about sensations, images, behaviour, affect, and meaning**

Adapted from Peter Levine's work with SIBAM (acronym for the elements of the process.)
Somatic Experiencing supports flexibility and balance in and between these elements.

This may remind you of meditation inquiry, counselling that has a somatic focus, a spiritual direction session or the awareness cultivated through movement practices, etc.) Please do not feel you need to fully take this in as it is meant only to familiarize you with the process that I will guide you through. In the use of SIBAM we can begin without any need for story though clients may also want to bring a specific intention or situation as a place to begin.

As we notice and follow what is happening there is the opportunity to renegotiate the effects of stress and trauma, complete self-protective responses and connect with inner wisdom.

S - Sensations - *Is there a place in your body that is getting your attention at the moment? Or if we begin with an intention or content: As we talk about this, what do you notice in your body?* Other inquiry around sensation could include the location, size, texture, temperature, the weight, if there is vibration, comfort or discomfort, etc. Sensations could include warmth, muscle tension, balance, visceral awareness, increased or decreased HR, etc.

I - Images - *Is there an image or a sense that comes to mind as we explore this?* That which (seemingly) comes from the outside. Internal images may include visions, dreams, metaphors, or colours. External images are input from the senses like sight, smell, hearing, taste, touch or the sense of space (for example the feel of a room.) These may spontaneously arise on their own or with inquiry.

B - Behaviour - *Would it be ok to bring attention to the movement that I notice in your right hand? Is it ok to slow that movement down and see what happens?* These can include voluntary movements that have become habituated over time or emotional expressions, postural shifts, archetypal gestures, or autonomic nervous system responses like yawning, shifts in breathing, etc.

A - Affect or emotions - *As you feel this sadness where do you notice that in your body?* My scope of practice approaches emotions with inquiry that leads back to how they are manifesting in the body and then to work again with the sensations or support the area with contact. The emotion can be expressed, felt and then more fully embodied in this process.

M - Meaning - Meaning-making often arises with an SE process in different ways. It can be an attempt to label or make sense of an experience and at times needs to be slowed down to reconnect with the body (the somatic experience). It can also come in after there is a sense of resolution to reframe the meaning of what we are going through or have been through that deeply connects us to a fresh perspective. Even if the experience lacks meaning or is too devastating to be placed in a coherent narrative, the ability to recognize that it has a beginning, middle and end is important to help settle our nervous system and psyche as we care for ourselves.