

## **Somatic Experiencing Post-Session Self-Care and Integration** *a Calm retreat*

After an SE session it is helpful to take good care of yourself and allow for integration through a gentle engagement with the rest of the day and evening. Notice what is available to you as you track what is happening in your nervous system and allow for a self-compassionate response.

**\*You may be feeling social engagement availability if you find yourself able to:** talk easily to others; feel relaxed with energy available if needed; take in new information; enjoy playing games; feel connected to yourself and to others....Notice and enjoy this sense of being relational that may show up in a way that is a bit more expansive.

**\*You may also be feeling a bit quieter & needing to slow down by:** having time alone; engaging with a hobby; resting; hanging out with your pet or someone you feel relaxed with; journaling or reading; anything that supports you to be just as you are....Notice and honour this movement that can feel a bit more interior.

(If we miss the cue, other signals that tell us we may need to retreat a bit may be feeling irritable, sleepy, spacey, distracted, or tender.)

### **Orientation to Pleasure (Mindfulness of Good Things)**

When we are under stress and difficulty, our nervous system responds as if we are in survival mode. This means we may feel a little or a lot of charge, and in order to feel more at ease, we need to give our body the message that we are ok - this will further deepen and integrate the work done in an SE session. This may be as simple as sitting with a cup of tea and noticing what we enjoy about the taste and the comfort of sitting for a while, it could be going for a walk and noticing the beauty in nature, anything that helps us to connect with safety and nourishment.

### **Ongoing Awareness to Support Nervous System Regulation**

**Self-Accompaniment** means that we learn to recognize when we are having difficulty and we stay connected to ourselves, we do not abandon ourselves.

#### **Ways to accompany ourselves:**

- \* using grounding practices by feeling the surface we are sitting, laying or standing on
- \* noticing our breathing or our senses...what are we hearing, seeing, touching, tasting, smelling?
- \* becoming more conscious of our patterns, emotions, sensations, needs, so that we can respond with self-care, self-protection, personal agency, and self-engagement
- \* asking these questions: What do I feel? (tired, overwhelmed, sad, scared, etc.)  
What do I need? (rest, slowing down, validation, movement, co-regulation, etc.)  
What can I do? (lay down, pause to listen & consider, affirm myself, walk in nature, cuddle with a loved one or a pet, etc.)

## Self-Care Kidney / Adrenal Support

This supportive work is done each day to help nourish ourselves and calm the effect of stress on our kidney and adrenals. A good time is 10 minutes before sleeping using a hot water bottle against our lower back around the level of the lower ribs. You could also wrap a piece of polar fleece around your low back or notice the positive affect on your kidneys of cuddling with your pet or listening to calming music or a guided meditation, etc. This can help you learn to feel the settling of your kidneys and the calming affect of settling your nervous system.

### Addressing Difficulty as it Arises

Attuning & tending to our nervous system in a gentle and playful way can help in the ongoing re-negotiation of stress and trauma responses. If fight, flight or freeze show up, you can honour your body through experimenting with practices that acknowledge what is happening through noticing, responding to, and completing these cycles. As we attend to them then they come & go like waves. If they do not come and go this could be an indicator that we need to work through them with a trauma therapist or trauma-sensitive bodyworker.

Please see these exercises as an experimentation, using if they are helpful:

Neutral	Fight	Flight	Freeze
Feeling settled, calm	Feeling charged, edgy & pushy	Feeling charged, wanting to run	Feeling heavy, frozen
Enjoy & take in feeling calm - when we feel neutral, it is a great time to notice what the felt-sense of feeling regulated is like. Drink in this awareness, and let your nervous system feel nourished.	Use an isometric contraction with 10-50% of your strength as you push your feet into the floor, or press your back against a chair, and then slowly release (important to notice the release so you feel the decrease in charge)	Run gently or imagine doing this if you can't actually run; with a medium weight, press your hands into your thighs to meet the running activation of the quadricep muscles (this may be a sign that the flight response is happening...a restlessness in the thigh muscles)	Allow yourself to rest/sleep; or see what movement is available by wiggling fingers/toes; pressing feet into the floor; turning your head to look around in an orientation to the environment around you; naming sensations, emotions that are present
Completion = feeling the wholeness & good feelings and fully feeling the positive quality of this state. Allowing ourselves to take this in helps to balance the stress in our lives and creates more resilience	Completion = feeling the difference in your body from the tension, restlessness and then after you engaged the isometric contraction you may feel warm, tingly, settled, present & able to reflect on the cause of the fight response	Completion = after you honoured the need to move, you may feel more settled, present & able to reflect on the cause of the flight response	Completion = feeling warming, softening & decrease of anxiety; more availability to engage with others or move around; able to reflect on why the freeze may have arisen