

A Gentle Return to the Body

Somatic practices for rebuilding safety, grounding, and processing pain in small, manageable moments.

You do not have to carry this alone.

There is nothing here you need to force or fix.

Emotional abuse and betrayal can be profoundly confusing. It takes time, reflection, and immense gentleness to reconnect with yourself.

These somatic tools are designed to help you rebuild inner safety in small, quiet moments.

You are allowed to move toward safety at your own pace.

If you feel unsafe, overwhelmed, or in crisis, please prioritize reaching out for immediate support.

National Domestic Violence
Hotline: 800-799-7233

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

The Somatic Shift: From Fixing to Allowing

Dimension	The Fixing Approach (Cognitive / Forceful)	The Allowing Approach (Somatic / Gentle)
The Primary Goal	Trying to analyze why I feel this way.	Simply noticing where I feel this in my body.
The Immediate Action	Trying to make the painful emotion stop or disappear.	Breathing gently around the center of the emotion.
The Body's Response	Tightening, bracing, and fighting the sensation.	Softening, offering presence, and resting.
The Internal Voice	I need to get over this and figure it out.	I am offering my body a signal of steadiness and care.

Phase One: Dropping the Anchor



We cannot process pain until the nervous system recognizes that it is currently safe. Grounding comes first. It teaches the body to settle into the present moment, offering a steady foundation before we invite difficult feelings in.

The Sensory Anchor Drop

Take a few slow breaths. Inhale gently through the nose, exhale slowly through the mouth. Then gently descend into the present:



5 things you can SEE



4 things you can FEEL



3 things you can HEAR



2 things you can SMELL



1 thing you can TASTE

Let your attention rest here for a few moments.

Feeling Support in the Body



Notice the solid, unyielding support of the physical world around you. You are being held in this exact moment.

- Notice your feet resting flat against the ground.
- Notice your body being held by a chair, bed, or surface.

You might gently exhale with a sigh. Allow the felt sense of being held to emerge if accessible.

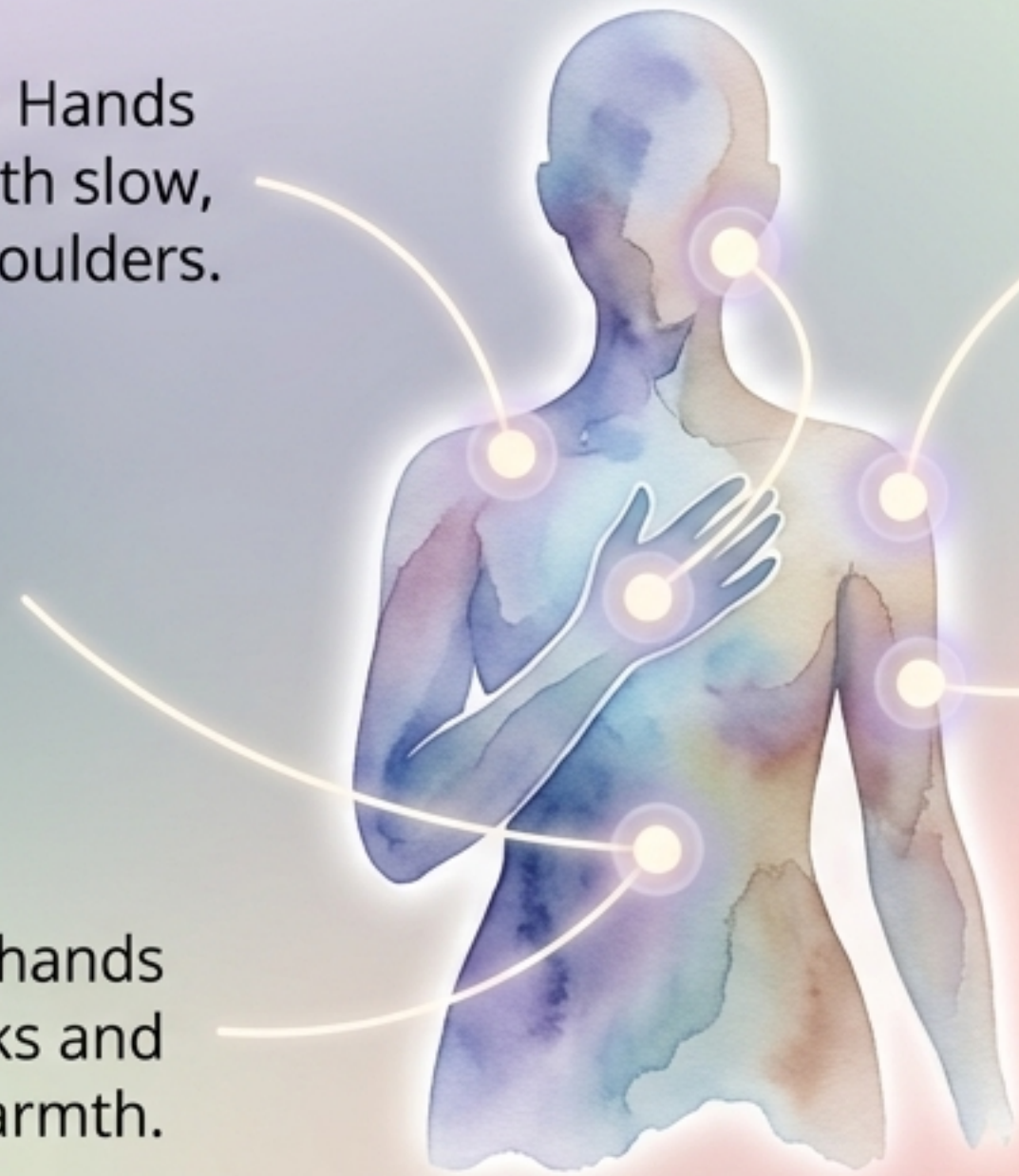
The Compassionate Container: Self-Holding

You are not trying to change anything. You are just offering your body a physical signal of presence, steadiness, and care.

The Butterfly Hug: Hands crossed over the chest with slow, alternating taps on the shoulders.

Heart & Belly: One hand resting on your heart, one on your belly.

Facial Hold: Placing hands softly on your cheeks and noticing the warmth.



Arm Stroking: Gently stroking your upper arms.

The Self-Embrace: A soft hug, gently holding one arm with the other.

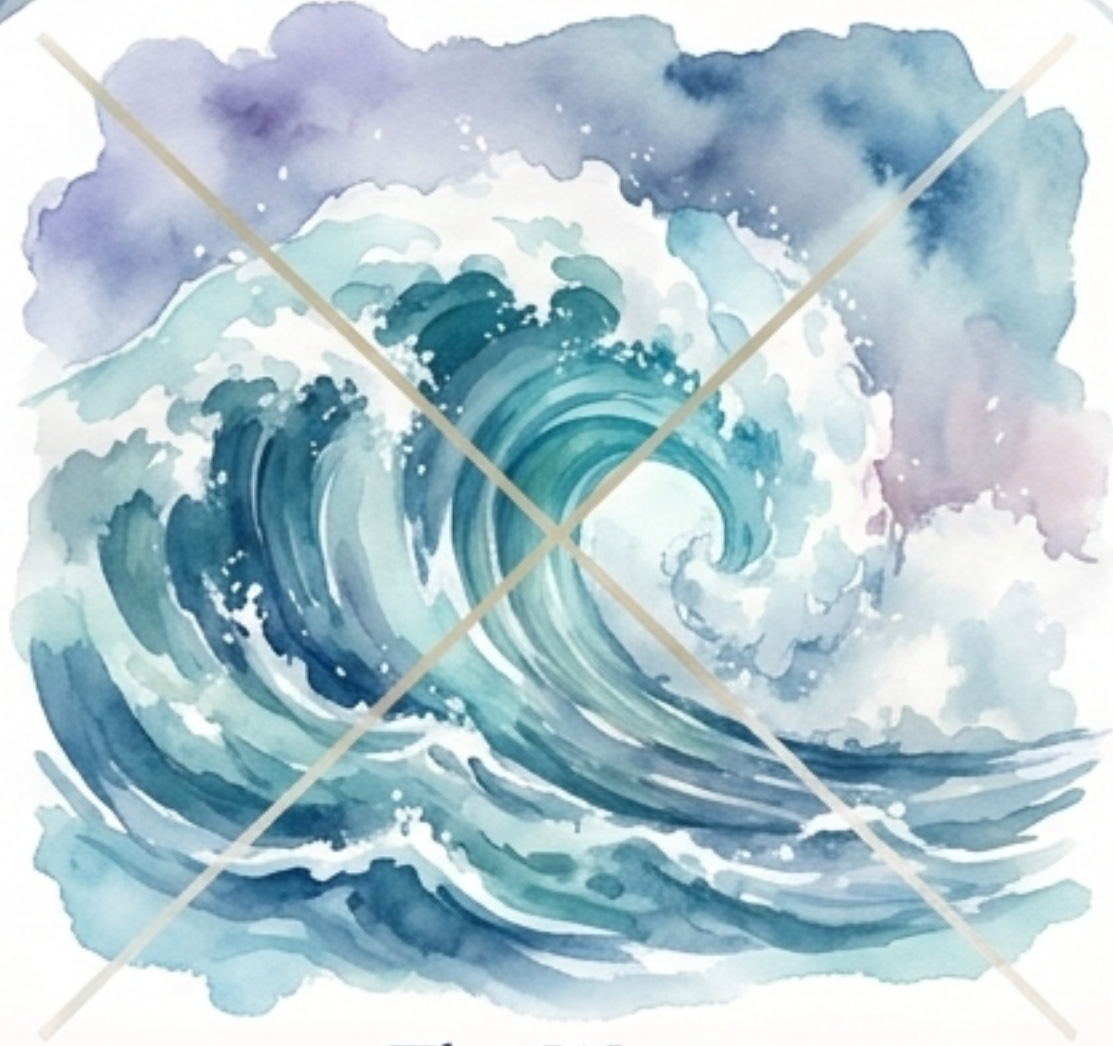
Phase Two: Meeting the Wave



You do not need to force yourself to relive overwhelming emotions in order to heal. Healing begins by learning how to gently stay with painful feelings in small, manageable ways, while remaining connected to your grounding support.

Note: If you have a history of significant trauma, dissociation, or feel emotionally overwhelmed, explore deeper emotional processing alongside a trained trauma-informed professional.

The Principle of Titration: Allow Only What is Manageable



The Wave

There is no need to force emotional release or let the emotion wash over you all at once. Overwhelm tells the nervous system we are unsafe.



The Drop

When ready, allow yourself to feel the emotion in tiny increments. Imagine gently breathing into the center of the emotion, then softening or exhaling around it. Small moments of feeling matter.

Naming the Feeling and Locating the Sensation



Name One Feeling Gently

Choose one feeling that feels present and manageable enough right now. You do not need to choose the biggest feeling.

Examples: Grief, loneliness, sadness, anger, jealousy, guilt, shame, disappointment.

The Emotion

The Body's Experience

The Sensation



Notice How You Feel It

No need to analyze or change it. Simply notice what is here as a body sensation.

Examples: Heaviness, tightness, aching, pressure, hollowness, heat, buzzing, numbness.

Bringing Gentle Support to the Feeling

Once you locate the physical sensation (the heaviness, the buzzing, the tightness), bring physical comfort directly to it.

If it feels supportive, place a hand on the exact area where you feel the sensation most.

Allow yourself to stay curious about the experience rather than fighting it. You are not trying to make the feeling disappear; you are sitting beside it.

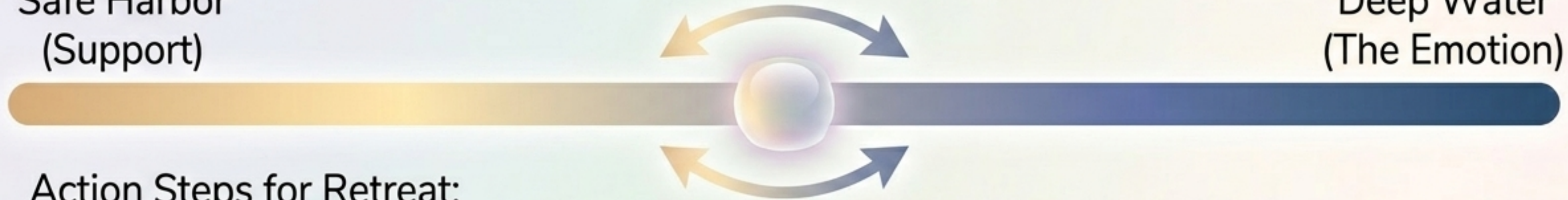


Pendulation: Moving Between Pain and Support

Healing can feel difficult when the system feels overwhelmed.
If the emotion starts becoming too big, use the slider to retreat:

Safe Harbor
(Support)

Deep Water
(The Emotion)

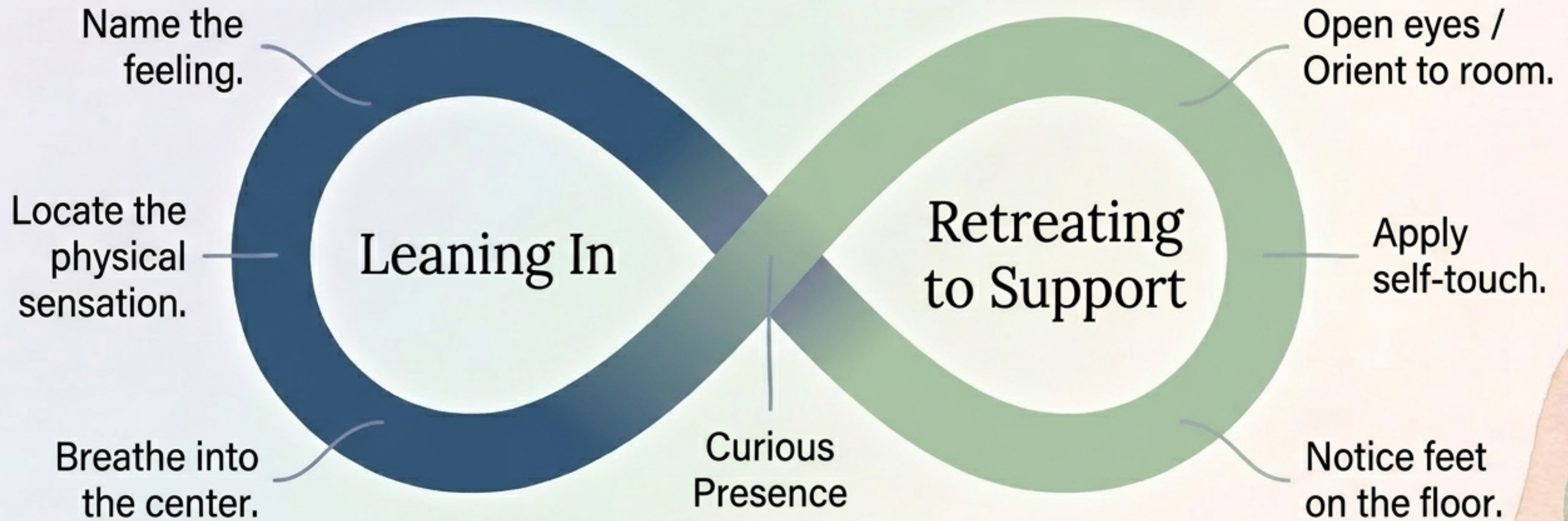


Action Steps for Retreat:

- Pause immediately.
- Reconnect with your sense of grounding support.
- Feel the support beneath your body.
- Open your eyes and orient to the room.

You can move gently back and forth between the painful feeling and something that feels steadier and safer.

The Continuous Loop of Gentle Processing



You do not do this once. You cycle through this loop, taking only small sips of emotion before retreating to safety.

Listening Gently to the Pain

Once you are sitting with the feeling and feeling supported, you might gently ask yourself:



What does this part of me need?

What feels most painful here?

What has not been acknowledged?

There is no pressure to find perfect answers. Tears may come, or a need for a self-embrace, or simply quiet presence.

The Rhythm of Regulation



Healing is not a straight line from dysregulation to regulation. It is a biological rhythm. Grounding is not a distraction from pain; it is the vital prerequisite that makes processing pain possible.

Phase Three: Making Space for Grief



Grief may arise in its own time.
It is something to gently allow, not
something to rush or fix.

Grief for:

- What hurt you.
- What you needed but did not receive.
- What you hoped for.
- The loss of clarity, trust, or safety.

If it feels right, you might journal, speak to
someone safe, or express it privately in a
way that helps it move.

Returning to the Shore: Rebuilding Inner Connection

Over time, as you practice grounding and gentle processing, you may begin to:

1. Notice your needs again.

2. Trust small inner signals.

3. Hear your own voice more clearly.

4. Respond to yourself with care, slowly rebuilding your life in the direction you choose.

Self-trust often returns in quiet, ordinary moments of listening inward.

Your Ecosystem of Safety

Internal Support

Breathwork,
Butterfly Hugs,
Placing hands on
heart/belly,
Noticing sensations.

Immediate Environment

Feeling feet on
the floor,
Noticing 5-4-3-2-1,
Listening to music,
Hydration,
Nature.

External Support

Connecting with
steady, kind people
respectful
of your pace.
Therapists.
Support workers.
National Hotlines.

Closing the Practice: Returning to Nourishment

Finish any processing session by consciously reconnecting with grounding and nourishment. Allow the body and heart time to settle again.

Nourishment Menu



Rest & Sleep



Gentle Movement



Warmth



Music & Nature



Journaling



Hydration or Food



Safe Connection



Self-Compassion

A Gentle Reminder

You do not need to prove your experience.
Healing can begin in small moments of
returning to yourself. One breath at a time.



Safe Connection Box

When possible, seek people who feel steady, kind,
and respectful of your pace. You do not need to
navigate this alone.

US Support Lines:

National Domestic Violence Hotline: 800-799-7233

Suicide & Crisis Lifeline: 988