



*Nurturing an Embodied Relationship with Ourselves:*

*A Series of Guided Somatic Practices on Audio*

## **Introductory Overview of the Series**

Welcome! I'm so glad you're here. My name is Mariana and I am a somatic practitioner in Philadelphia, PA, in the United States on the traditional lands of the Lenni-Lenape people. I am honored to have this opportunity to serve as your somatic guide and companion in this series.

Before we dive into the first somatic practice, I'd love to give you an overview of what to expect. In this introductory recording I'll touch on what it means to approach ourselves through a somatic lens. I'll address questions like, what is somatics? Why engage in somatic practices? I'll also get into some specifics about how I've structured this particular series and offer some notes to help you most benefit from it. I'm intentionally keeping this overview brief so you can find additional notes related to more practical or logistical aspects of the series in writing alongside this recording. I have also included a transcript of this introductory overview.

Ok, so, what is somatics? Well, the word "somatics" is derived from the Greek word "soma" which translates to "the living body in its wholeness." Our bodies carry information about our experiences in a different way from our minds. Our bodies' nervous systems, muscles, tissues, and cells hold wisdom about how we register and move through the world around us.

Somatic practices enable us to tune into our bodies. There are many reasons why it matters to listen to our bodies. I'll highlight two reasons that are relevant within the context of the somatic practices in this audio series:

First, to get to know ourselves experientially, as embodied beings. We are more than our cognitive selves and somatic practices invite us to discover how life shows up within us,



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in our bodily responses, in a moment by moment way. Our bodies hold trustworthy information about how we interact with our environment in ways that are often out of reach to our conscious mind.

Second, our bodies hold a wealth of resources — such as joy, pleasure, dignity, strength, and many more — all of which we were born with and are part of an amazing evolutionary inheritance. Somatic practices enable us to access, bring forward, and nurture these resources within us.

So how do we cultivate a collaborative and dynamic relationship with our bodies? Well, by learning its language! Our bodies communicate in the language of physical sensations, movement of energy, imagery, and colors.

In the somatic practices that lie ahead, you'll be guided through experiential explorations that include, for example, visually orienting to what's in your surroundings, bringing your attention to your body's contact with the ground, and participating in gentle movement. As we move through each step in our journey, you'll be prompted to bring attention to what you're experiencing in your body, in the form of physical sensations, energies, imagery, and colors, including those which are subtle or ambiguous. For example, you may notice a faint pulsing energy in your belly or maybe something like a dull ache in your chest. Or perhaps the image of a tall leafy tree will emerge in your awareness, even if only momentarily. I encourage you to grant yourself permission to honor whatever arises within you before your mind jumps in with explanations or critiques.

To support you in moving at the speed of your experiential self-awareness, I will walk you through each step of a practice at a pace that is intentionally spacious. What this means is that there will be periods of silence so that you can pause and reflect on your bodily experience in the moment, with the support of my open-ended questions.



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I encourage you to approach your journey with the somatic practices in this series as a process of exploration and discovery, as an exercise of deep listening to your body in its own language, in which there is no wrong or right, and no need to strive, force, achieve, or fix. Somatic inquiry is a gradual, quiet, and non-linear process of cultivating sensory awareness and discernment. From my perspective, our most important allies in our somatic journeys are gentleness, curiosity, and compassion towards ourselves and what we're experiencing in a given moment. And as with any relationship, calling in patience, empathy, and respect provides a fertile ground for nurturing a generative relationship with our own bodies.

Before we come to a close, I'd like to bring forward a few more threads that I hope will be supportive to you as you move through the practices that lie ahead.

The first is that you always have choices about how you engage. I am here with you as your guide and companion and all of what I offer is an invitation. It is up to you to opt in, adapt, or opt out of anything I put forward. I encourage you to honor what is most supportive for you in any given moment.

As somatic practitioner Kai Cheng Thom shared while co-teaching the Movement for Trauma training, "choosing is more important than doing."<sup>1</sup> You may find that certain practices resonate more or less for you and this may even shift on a day-to-day basis, or even at different times of day. All of this is valid and welcome.

Second, you may notice that disconnection, uncertainty, or even resistance arise within you as you explore the somatic practices in the series. This, too, is welcome and deserves respect. In somatic work we move at the pace of our body's consent. There's no need to try to push past or override any disconnection, uncertainty, or resistance. It simply means that your body has put a boundary in place for its own protection. If and



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when this emerges for you, please simply acknowledge and offer compassion to this part of you that's having this experience. Your body will notice being received with gentle kindness and will show you, in its own time, if and when it is ready to reveal more or shift in any way.

Next, the recordings in this series build upon the first one which explores a foundational building block of somatic practice that I refer to as “settling into the body.” The process of settling into the body is important to facilitating embodiment as it supports you in gradually tuning into yourself and turning on your sensory awareness beginning with what's most accessible. You will be guided to progressively shift your attention from more external points of reference — such as what you can see in your surroundings or how you're making contact with the surfaces around you — to more internal points of reference such as noticing the flow of your breath in your body. Eventually you'll move into a different core thematic exploration in each recording, which will always be followed by a guided transition back to your surroundings by the end.

Also, I have intentionally spaced out the release of the audio recordings to encourage you to take your time with what is offered in each practice without any urgency or pressure to get to the next one. Repetition matters in and of itself. Regardless of whether we've engaged in a particular somatic practice one time or 1000 times, each time we do so we have the opportunity to nurture the skill of curious, compassionate, and attentive listening to our bodies in the present moment.

The final thread I would like to bring forward here is that somatics is a broad field that encompasses a variety of frameworks, modalities, and lineages. I am one practitioner among many and I offer these guided somatic practices with humility and gratitude for the wisdom of colleagues, mentors, teachers, and scholars in the field of somatics, embodiment, and the intersection of mental health, anti-oppressive practices, and



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liberatory movements. If I have learned or drawn inspiration from a particular practice, teacher or lineage, I will cite the names or source to the extent of my knowledge in the notes section for each recording. It is also worth stating here that no one owns or is the ultimate authority on somatics or embodiment.

Each of us has a body and within our bodies we carry wisdom about our own lived experiences. Somatic practices are simply a tool by which to uncover and bring forward the full breadth and depth of our humanity.

As we come to a close, I'd like to thank you for your kind and generous attention to this introductory overview. May the somatic practices in this series support you in holding a gentle, curious, and compassionate space for all of what is present in your body.

### *References*

1 - Kai Cheng Thom shared this while co-teaching Movement for Trauma, Level 1 with Jane Clapp in February - March 2021. Kai Cheng explained that she learned this concept while training with Caffyn Jesse at the Institute for the Study of Somatic Sex Education.