

Somatic Experiencing



Somatic Experiencing (SE) is a trauma healing modality that leans into the wisdom of nature. It answers the questions: why are animals in the wild rarely traumatized even though their lives are constantly threatened by other animals and extreme conditions? What can we learn about healing human trauma from observing this phenomenon?

Nature teaches us that when we experience threats to our life, mechanisms of self-defense are activated in our bodies, charged with vital force energy (you may be familiar with the fight, flight, and freeze responses). After animals in the wild survive such a situation, they go through a process of discharging excess energy in order to restore equilibrium in their nervous systems.

When the discharge of energy is blocked from taking place (this can happen for a variety of reasons, including the use of maladaptive coping mechanisms by the person or the lack of an empathetic witness in a person's life, having limited resources and information, etc.), a range of post-traumatic symptoms can occur and cause disorganization in our minds and bodies. But the good news is that the human body is designed to heal from intense and extreme experiences, and trauma is not a life sentence.

The cornerstone of the SE approach is in safely connecting to the "felt sense" of one's experience. The "felt sense" is a physical experience rather than a mental one. Therefore, there is more emphasis on physical sensations, imagery and motor patterns, and less emphasis on cognitive processes. SE recognizes your very own awareness as the healing agent that guides the process. This approach can be used alongside other therapeutic approaches depending on each person's needs.