
SOMATIC THERAPY



PRINCIPLES OF WORKING SOMATICALLY

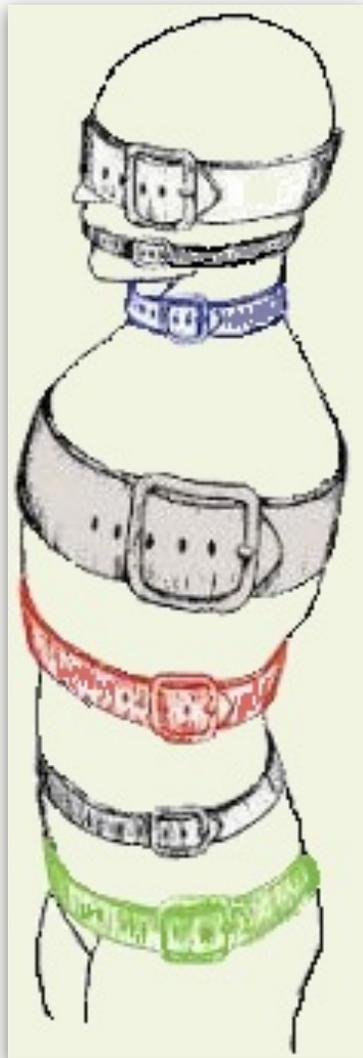
Our body is shaped by our history - “armor” - the current shape tells us about the trauma, tension, energetics, family environment, etc

Ex: eye contact, posture, energetics, tone of voice, body shape

Bringing our clients attention to their armor - breath & holding patterns - involves invites them into a new connection with themselves.

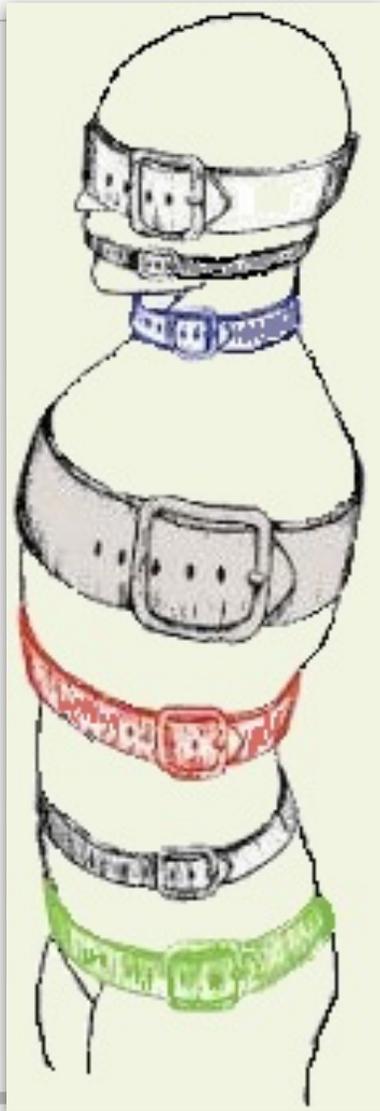
The shape was often supportive & protective but often now is limiting

PRINCIPLES OF WORKING SOMATICALLY



- Totality of psychological and somatic defences/coping mechanisms
- Armouring results when energy is bound by muscular contraction and does not flow through the body. When someone inhibits an impulse they feel tension.
- Beneficial originally
 - keeps potentially explosive/dangerous emotions in, and
 - wards off the emotions of others

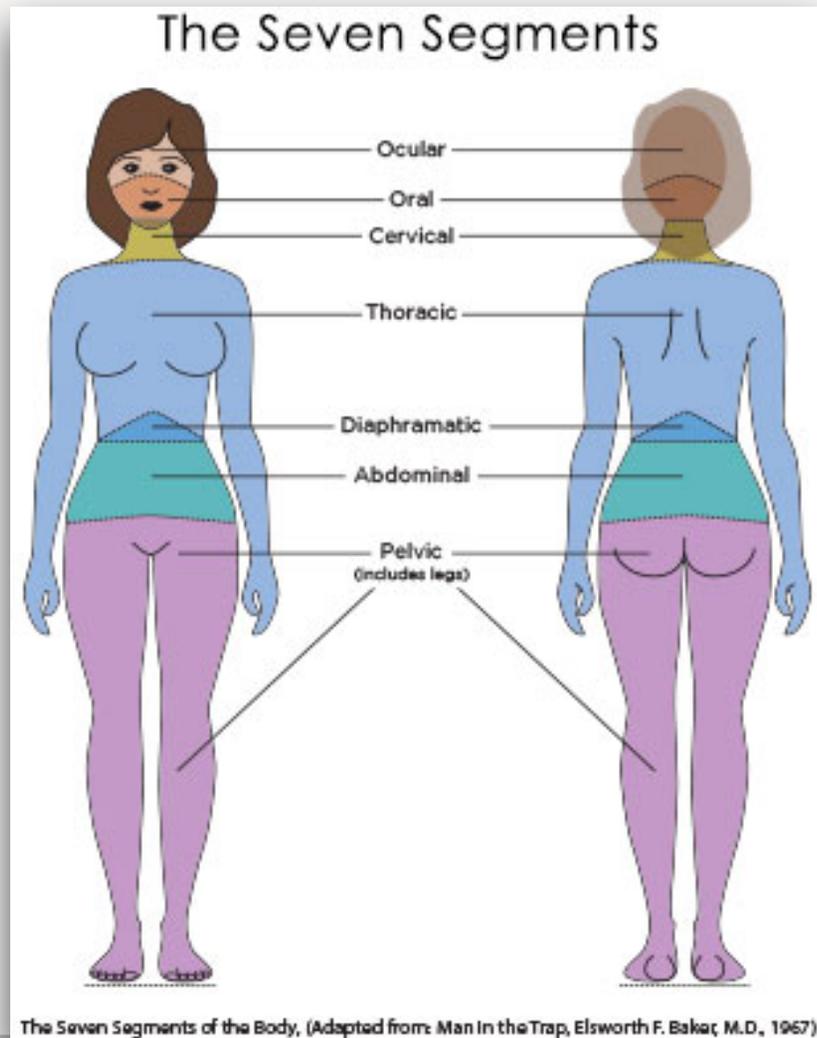
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7 segments that were delineated by Reich:

1. Ocular or Eye
2. Oral
3. Cervical
4. Thoracic
5. Diaphragm
6. Abdominal
7. Pelvic

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Tension tends to spread to muscles within the same segment and has an emotional component

PRINCIPLES OF WORKING SOMATICALLY

1. Occular - Acting as a blindfold, blocking out whatever was/is threatening to see
2. Oral - Like a gag, holds back emotional expression that others may not approve of, blocks all communication of feeling. Defense against being forced to swallow any unacceptable “thing” from the outside (food, medicine, remarks, situations, judgements, etc)
3. Cervical - Imagine a lasso, holding back threatening feelings from the heart and guts from reaching the mind. Armoring impedes the full expression of feeling - particularly anger & tears

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4. Thoracic - Shoulders: acts like a harness carrying excessive burdens or responsibilities.

Arms: Reaching out/ embracing, touching, holding, giving, striking, pushing, etc.

Chest muscles: Shuts down heartfelt feelings, armors against potential pain. Inhibits anger, sadness, laughter and longing.

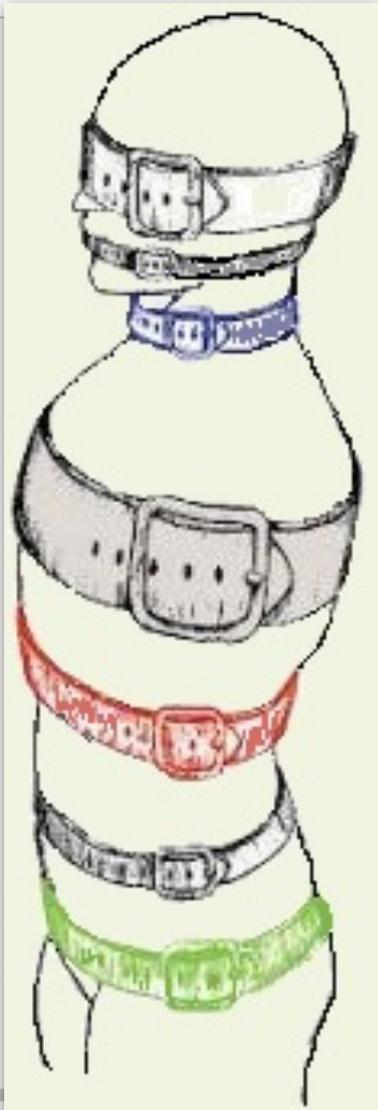
5. Diaphragm - Acts like a corset, cuts off “threatening” feelings from the lower energy centres. Contracts in response to fear of losing control.

PRINCIPLES OF WORKING SOMATICALLY

6. Abdomen - **CONTROL!** Can cut off the heart from the genitals, suppressing sexual impulses. Suppresses tears.

7. Pelvis - Limits sexual feeling (chastity belt image). Cuts off primary needs like discharge/elimination. Legs are connected to grounding - our ability to 'stand our ground'

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Trauma puts us in a contraction - fear and anxiety causes tension, tightening at belts and flow stops moving between the areas.

Touch, movement, breath, embodiment and mindfulness can bring more awareness, expansion and connection within us - greater capacity to hold feeling, sensation and emotions.

Coming out of freeze we have the space for energy, emotions, and sensations to move through us.

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Breath and increasing levels of safe embodiment are essential resources for trauma healing because they enhance self-regulation.

Self-regulation is key:

- Being in the present moment and connected to our thoughts, feelings & body sensations without overwhelm
- Having a sense of control over our behaviours
- Attuned to our needs

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Of all the various functions of our autonomic nervous systems - heart beat, sweating, hormone release, digestion, neurotransmitter secretion, etc. - our breath is the only part that we can consciously control.

By working with breath we can recalibrate our entire system.

Through breathwork, we consciously stimulate the sympathetic nervous system - within someone's window of tolerance - and staying present with body sensations and the subsequent parasympathetic counter-action.

By doing this in a space of safety and support, it allows us to reset our conditioned responses and re-learn how to discharge stress and trauma.

SOMATIC WAYS OF ACTIVATING PNS

Common exercises to help activate the PNS and send the signal to the brain that it is OK in this moment to relax and you are safe

- Orientation
- Longer exhale
- Contact felt sense of feet on the floor and being on the ground/ grounding
- Contacting resources
- Finding an area of the body that feels a bit more open, a bit more of how you want to feel

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RESOURCES

Internal and external tools that allow us to feel grounded in the present moment and capable of turning toward pain without becoming overwhelmed.

Embodied contact with resources can help reclaim a sense of safety, inner calm, and choice about what to feel or do.

Examples:

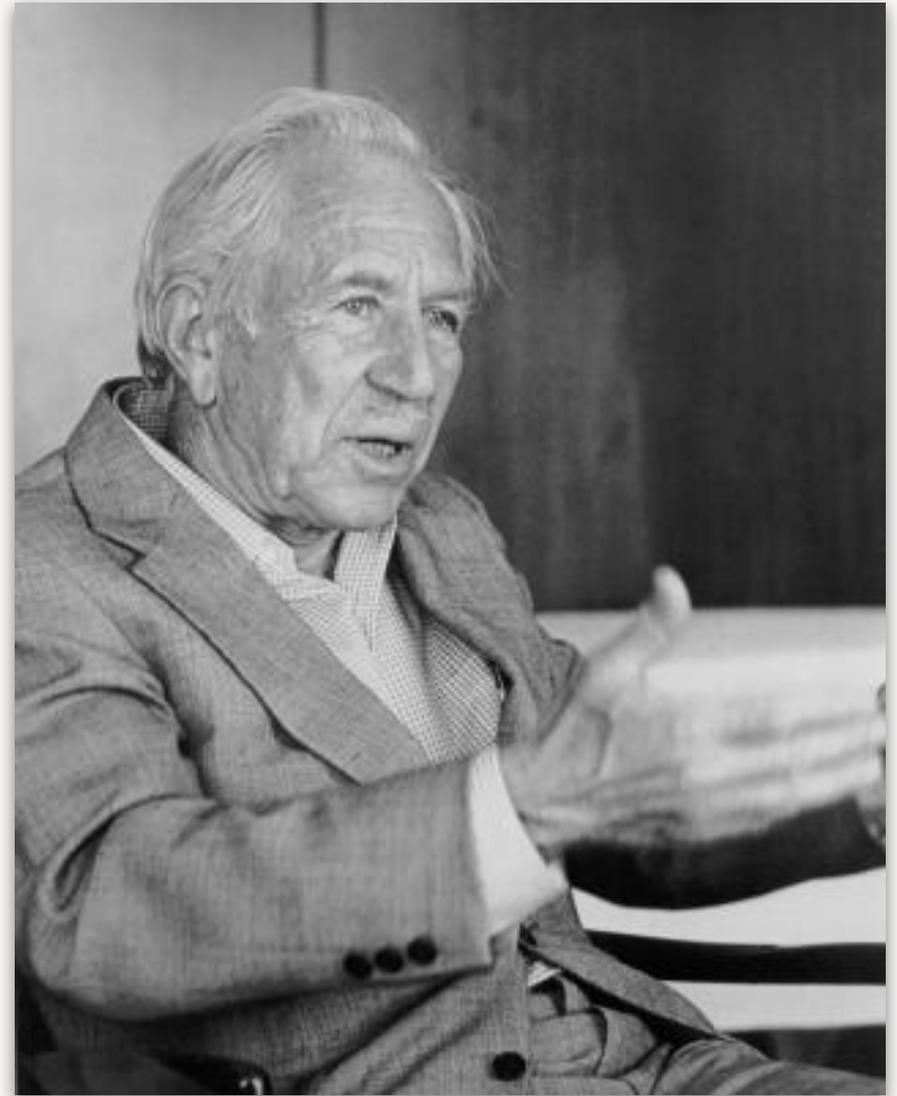
Internal: breathing, prayer, grounding, visualization, physical exercise, mindfulness, and yoga

External: friends, a calm external environment, art, pets, family, nature and other places that facilitate a sense of safety or peace

ALEXANDER LOWEN

“A person who doesn’t breathe deeply reduces the life of his body. If he doesn’t move freely, he restricts the life of his body. If he doesn’t feel fully, he narrows the life of his body. And if his self-expression is constricted, he limits the life of his body”

From his book “Bioenergetics”



THE END.....

