



Radiant Roots
Wellbeing



The Science And Art Of Somatic Healing



**How your body's
nervous system
influences your mind**

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1. Body Before Mind



Have you ever felt suddenly startled, tearful, irritated, or even small when someone honks at you from behind? That's your autonomic nervous system in action - your body responding before your mind has time to process what happened.

Imagine you're unsure which exit to take, and then someone blasts their horn behind you.

In a split second, your nervous system floods with stress signals.

Blood flow shifts away from the thinking brain (the prefrontal cortex) and into survival mode.

Confused and under pressure, you take the wrong exit - not because you didn't know the way, but because your body was trying to get you out of perceived danger as fast as possible.

Afterward, you may notice **your heart still racing**, your shoulders tensed, and your mind replaying the moment.

This lingering alertness comes from a **spike in cortisol** and a sympathetic nervous system surge, keeping your body ready "just in case it happens again."

Sometimes, the emotional response runs even deeper.

You might feel tearful or unexpectedly angry. That's because the honk might not just be about now - it may **echo a past experience** where a loud voice or sudden noise felt like an attack on your safety, worth, or autonomy.

Your body remembers those moments, even when your mind has moved on.

2. State Creates Story

“When you coordinate your mind and body, you have unlimited access to the wisdom of the universe”

Koichi Tohei

These are autonomic responses - your body reacting far before your conscious mind catches up. The brain then interprets these sensations, often shaped by your history. It may conclude, “They’re reckless” or “I did something wrong.”

These stories are not random - they are built upon past experiences, cultural patterns, and early relationships.

And how our bodies experiences the world influences the stories in our minds.

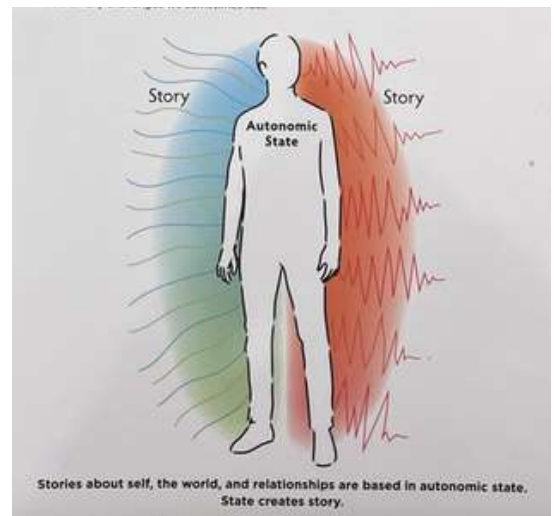
Here’s the key:

If we want to change our mental stories, we begin with the body.

Our state—how safe or threatened we feel in our nervous system—creates our story.

The more safety we restore in the body, the more fluidly our mental patterns begin to shift.

Because State Creates Story.



Source: Polyvagal Flip Chart by Deb Dana

3. The Nervous System

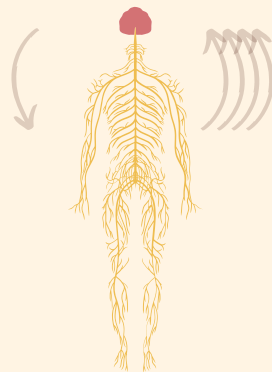
The nervous system acts as the bridge between mind and body.

The vagus nerve, an important information superhighway between brain and body, is part of the nervous system.

Vagus Nerve: Information Superhighway.

Did You Know?

20% of the vagus nerve fibres communicate from Brain to Body



80% of the vagus nerve fibres communicate from Body to Brain

Think of your vagus nerve like a busy motorway. There are two narrow lanes carrying messages down from your brain to your body - this is where thoughts like “you’re okay” or “just calm down” travel.

But going up from your body to your brain are eight wide lanes, filled with signals like “I don’t feel safe” or “something’s wrong.”

When you’re in distress, those eight lanes get jammed with alarm signals. No matter how many reassuring thoughts you send down the smaller lanes, they’re often drowned out. This is why you can’t always think or talk your way out of intense stress. Your body is speaking louder - and it’s often asking to be safely felt, not fixed.

4. Relational Dynamics - a Somatic Perspective

“Trauma is held in the body, but revealed in relationships” - Dr Albert Wong

For many trauma survivors, we turn to our work to fuel ourselves while avoiding our deep longing for meaningful, fulfilling relationships.

When significant trauma has unfolded in early relationships, the body becomes conflicted between the need to connect and the need to protect. Some cues include:



- Tongue-tied in meetings (the larynx constricts) even if you have something valuable to say
- Eyes unconsciously orienting towards ‘sources of threats’ instead of ‘sources of connection’ in large gatherings
- Feeling intensely lonely (a closed heart) when amongst others, or preparing to hide or defend yourself (body armouring) to protect

Somatic perspective invites you to be curious to ways your body reacts involuntary in service of protecting you. Ask new questions such as, *what would I like to experience through relationships? Which relationships do I feel safe in, where parts of me can safely land? What inner work need I do to prepare myself to safely relate to others? What is my attachment pattern?*

*Relationships here refers to all types of connections including friendships and communities

5. How the Nervous System Responds to Cues Of Safety, Danger, Overwhelm

Polyvagal Theory was developed by Dr. Stephen Porges, explaining how our nervous systems respond to cues of safety, danger, and overwhelm.



Green Zone - Ventral Vagal

- You feel open, calm, grounded
- Your breath is steady, and your thoughts are clear
- You're able to connect, communicate, play, rest, and
Your story: "I'm safe. I belong. I can trust."



Amber Zone – Hyperarousal (Fight or Flight)

- You feel agitated, on edge, or tense
- Your heart races, breath quickens, muscles brace
- You may feel anxious, defensive, or overwhelmed
Your story: "Something's wrong. I have to fix, fight, or flee."



Red Zone – Hypoarousal (Freeze or Collapse)

- You feel numb, heavy, shut down
- Energy is low, motivation disappears, speech may slow
- You may withdraw or feel hopeless
Your story: "There's no way out. I give up."

These states are not "bad"; they're protective responses your body learned to keep you safe. The magic lies in noticing which zone you're in, and gently supporting yourself back toward regulation.



Awareness is the first act of healing.
And your body already holds the map.

6. A Tracking Practice: Listening to the Body's Signals

One of the most powerful ways to begin healing is by learning to notice your nervous system patterns - without judgment, only with curiosity.

This practice helps you become aware of your body's responses to stress or overwhelm. Over time, this awareness can gently open the door to regulation and safety.

Which of the following **hyperarousal** reactions you often experience?

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ Racing thoughts | ☐ Emotional reactivity |
| ☐ Self-judgement/criticism | ☐ Nightmares |
| ☐ Anxiety/Panic | ☐ Flashbacks |
| ☐ Feeling on edge | ☐ Irritability |
| ☐ Preparing for battle | ☐ Hypervigilant gaze |
| ☐ Concentration issues | ☐ Fidgety fingers |
| ☐ Anticipating the worst | ☐ Restless feet |

Which of the following **hypoarousal** reactions you often experience?

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Worry/Rumination | ☐ Depression |
| ☐ Avoidance of important decisions | ☐ Fatigue |
| ☐ Emotional numbness/turbulence | ☐ Low motivation/drive |
| ☐ Spaced out | ☐ Loss of time |
| ☐ Low physical energy | ☐ Procrastination |
| ☐ Withdrawal from joyful experiences | ☐ Collapsed torso/posture |
| ☐ Slow thinking/speech/movement | ☐ Lowered/downward gaze |

List is a further adaptation from Healing Trauma by Dr. Albert Wong

“Trauma comes back as a reaction, not a memory”

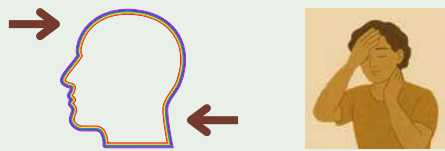
Bessel Van Der Kolk

9. A Somatic Practice

This is an example somatic practice to try when your system is in a state of hyperarousal (Amber Zone).



1. Take a snapshot of where you are in this moment on the scale of 1 - 10 (1: calm, 10, chaos)



2. Practice: Notice if there is excess pressure in the head. To relieve some of the excess energy in this region, place one palm on the back of the neck, the suboccipital area, signalling support to the body ("I've got you") and one palm on the forehead, signaling to the body a sense of containment.



3. Signs of reset: Notice signs of reset such as a sigh, a yawn, deeper breath, or microreleases in tension in the body. Each sign of reset is a signal from your body that it is organically resetting. You may also notice the nature of your thoughts changing gradually.



4. Take a snapshot of where you are on the scale of 1 - 10 (1: calm, 10, chaos)

Bringing curiosity into the picture, what changed, if any? What reduced? What increased? What moved?

Trusting the Body

Your body is not a problem to be solved -
It is an intelligent, adaptive system that longs to bring you home.

Healing doesn't come through force.
It comes through rhythm, safety, and connection.

As you begin to notice, listen, and respond to your body's cues,
you're not just "managing symptoms" -

You're re-weaving trust between your mind, body, and heart.
You don't need to do it all at once.

Each breath, each pause, each moment of awareness is enough.
And you don't have to do it alone.

If you feel called to deepen your somatic journey,
I'd love to walk beside you.

→ Visit Radiant Roots <https://radiant-roots.co.uk>
for somatic resources,
1:1 support,
and other offerings.

With Care,
Raneesha Manoharan,
MCMA - Member of the Complementary Medical Association
Somatic Therapist & Founder of Radiant Roots



Services

1:1, Events, Books, Blogs, and more

Website:

<https://radiant-roots.co.uk>

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The Work, In Their Words



"It is a simple tool which I can use in a few minutes and in any place to feel safe and centered on the heart rather than fear"

"It allows me to completely relax my body after a very emotionally difficult event and to feel my back relieved by the support of the ground. So simple and effective."

"A great set of tools that I can use to manage difficult situations"

"I could listen to my body for the first time"

