

THE BODY'S PATH TO HEALING

A

# SOMATIC THERAPY WORKBOOK

BY

THE EMBODY LAB

# Let's Heal Together

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Prefer digital? If you have an iPad or tablet with document markup tools, that will work beautifully too.

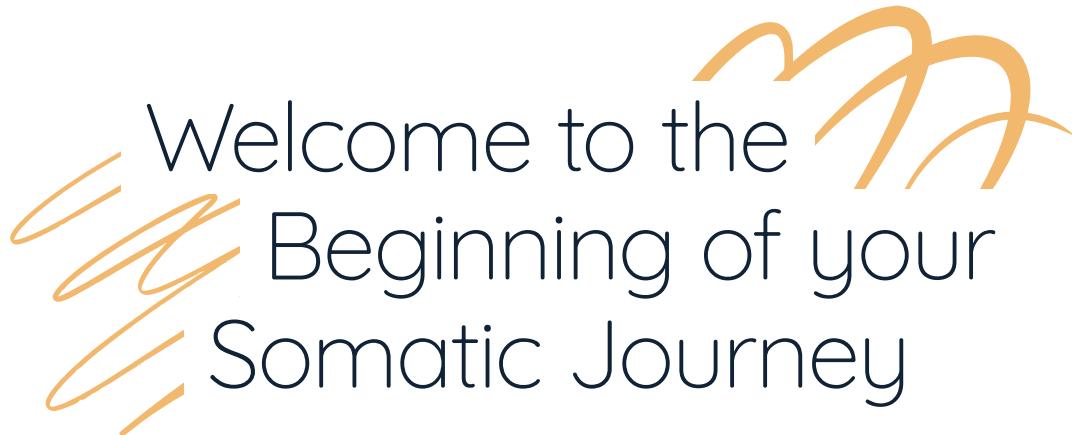
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CHAPTER 01

# INTRODUCTION & FOUNDATIONS



# Welcome to the Beginning of your Somatic Journey

This workbook is here to support you in reconnecting with your body's natural capacity for healing and regulation.

Whether you've experienced feelings of disconnection from your body, find yourself becoming easily overwhelmed, or simply want to deepen your relationship with yourself through embodiment practices — you are not alone.

Please know there is no step-by-step or simple checklist for embodied healing. Your body holds its own unique wisdom and moves in its own timing.

This workbook is here as a gentle guide, offering you tools and reflections as you journey toward deeper connection, embodied awareness and balance.

This workbook is not to be used to diagnose or treat any specific condition. Please seek therapy or support if needed (Resources provided on [page 64](#)).

Now, take a moment to feel your feet on the ground, notice your breath flowing in and out, and acknowledge the courage it takes to begin this journey!

We're so glad you're here.

# Small Moments Matter

As you begin this journey, it's important to remember that embodied healing is not about doing more or pushing harder. It's about building a relationship of trust with your body — one breath, one small moment at a time.

When we talk about practices for regulation, you don't need to carve out long stretches of time to "do it right." Healing often happens in micro-moments— simple, everyday pauses that bring you back into connection with your body.

As you explore the practices in this workbook, you might notice moments of ease, grounding, or release, but you may also notice discomfort or activation. This is completely normal — your body is learning something new.

The most important thing to remember is this: **You are always in choice.**

**You can anchor yourself in what feels safe at any moment.**

If a practice feels too much, pause. If emotions arise quickly, slow down. If you feel overwhelmed, return to what feels steady. Feel your feet on the ground. Notice your breath, just as it is. Place a hand on your chest, or somewhere that feels okay. Look around the room — name what you see.

Recall a person, place, or memory that soothes you. These somatic anchors are always available. They are your foundation as you move forward.

Every time you pause, every time you listen to your body, you are practicing healing.

**That is enough. That is the work.**



# The Body's Story

Your body imprints patterns shaped by your life experiences. Sometimes we learn to:

- ✖ Hold tension to stay alert and vigilant
- ✖ Disconnect from sensation to cope with overwhelm
- ✖ Restrict our breath to manage intense feelings
- ✖ Limit our movement and expression to feel safe

These patterns were important and intelligent adaptations that helped you survive. But that was in the past.

Now, in the present, we can support your system to find new patterns of safety and regulation.

Ultimately, somatic healing will invite you out of reflexive cycles of thinking, feeling and behaving. It opens up more choices – offering you a greater sense of empowerment in your life.

## Sarah's Story

When Sarah first encountered somatic work, she was skeptical. “I’ve always lived in my head,” she shares. “I thought healing meant understanding why I felt anxious, not feeling where the anxiety lived in my body.”

After years of traditional therapy, Sarah found herself still struggling with overwhelming emotions and disconnection. Her journey began when a therapist asked her a simple question: “Where do you feel that in your body?”

At first, Sarah couldn’t answer – she had spent so long disconnecting from physical sensations that she barely noticed them.

But slowly, through gentle guidance and practice, she began to notice patterns: the tightness in her chest before anxiety struck, the way her shoulders hunched when she felt unsafe, the sensation of grounding when she felt her feet on the floor.



*“Learning to listen to my body changed everything. It wasn’t about fixing myself anymore – it was about understanding and working with my nervous system.”*

## WRITTEN REFLECTION

# Body Awareness Check In

Take a moment to take note of physical sensations in your body.

Where do you feel sensation in your body right now?

What quality do these sensations have? (e.g. tight, open, warm, cold, tingly)

Are there areas of your body that feel difficult to sense?

What happens in your body as you pay attention to these sensations?

## ACTIVITIES

# Simple Somatic Practices

On these next few pages, we'll share some simple somatic practices you can try when you need to get grounded, back in your body.

## SHARE YOUR PRACTICE

If you feel called, record yourself doing any of these simple somatic practices and share them with us on your socials.

Tag us [@theembodylab](https://www.instagram.com/theembodylab)

## 01 Grounding

Grounding is a body-based practice that helps reconnect you with your physical senses and present-moment awareness (like noticing things you can see, hear, touch, smell, and taste) to help shift out of an overwhelmed or dissociated state and back into your body when triggered by trauma responses.

Here's a simple exercise you can try to quickly ground yourself.

**Sit in a comfortable chair** or stand with both feet firmly on the floor. Your eyes can be open or closed – whatever is comfortable for you

**Adopt a soft gaze.**  
If your eyes are staying open, adopt a soft gaze on a point on the floor, or wall or a space in the distance. Look at it softly.

**Notice where your feet are connected to the earth.** Focus on the sensation, and feel grounded in your feet.

**Notice your breath.** Keep breathing normally, and observe your breath without changing it, noticing your inhale and exhale, without judgment.

**Orient to your surroundings.** What do you hear around you? Perhaps open your eyes and gently gaze around you without losing the sensation of being grounded through your feet.

**Continue this practice** as you notice your body and your nervous system relax and feel calm.

## 02 Resource Anchoring

Resourcing anchoring is a technique to identify and consciously connect with positive memories, experiences, or sensations that make you feel safe and supported.

Once you have identified these you can then deliberately recall and embody those memories and experiences when experiencing distress or dysregulation.

  
**To start think of a person, place, or memory that helps you feel safe.**

This is your **resource** - a memory, place or person you can use to support you when you are feeling disconnected and unsafe.

  
**When you think of this person, place, or memory what feelings do you notice arise in your body?**

What is happening with your breath? Your face? Your neck or your shoulders? Notice all the different sensations that arise in your body when you connect with this resource.

  
Perhaps you'd even like to **place a hand where you feel this support in your body**, and continue to notice any sensation, emotion or thoughts that arise.

## 03 Pendulation

Pendulation is a gentle way to help your nervous system feel safe by moving between comfort and discomfort.

Just like a pendulum swings back and forth, we'll practice moving our attention between places in our body that feel okay and places that feel activated.

With regular practice, pendulation helps your nervous system learn that it can handle difficult sensations and always return to safety. This is how we build our window of tolerance and develop more emotional resilience.

Notice any shifts in how your body feels after practice. You might feel more grounded, calmer, or more connected to your body. These are all signs that your nervous system is learning to regulate itself.

### REMEMBER

- ✳ If you feel overwhelmed at any point, stay with your resource spot longer
- ✳ Start with mild discomfort and slowly work up to more challenging sensations
- ✳ There's no "right" pace - your body will tell you when it's ready to move
- ✳ Practice this for just 5-10 minutes at first

**Find a quiet space** where you can sit comfortably and won't be interrupted. Place both feet on the ground and take a few deep breaths to settle.

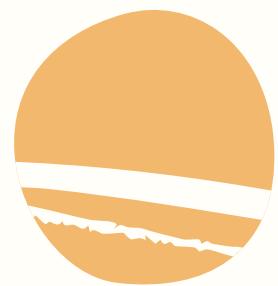
**Gently shift your attention to a place in your body that feels some tension or discomfort.** Don't choose the most difficult spot — start with something mild. Maybe your shoulders feel tight or your stomach feels a little nervous.

**Find a place in your body that feels neutral or pleasant.** This might be your hands, feet, or back against the chair. Take a moment to really notice this comfortable sensation. This is your "resource spot" - a safe place you can always come back to.

**Stay with the uncomfortable spot for just a few seconds** - about the length of one breath. Then, immediately bring your attention back to your resource spot, the comfortable place you identified earlier. Notice how it feels to return to this safer sensation.

**Continue this gentle back and forth movement,** spending 3-4 breaths in your comfortable spot, and a brief visit to discomfort for one breath, and repeat.

# UNDERSTANDING YOUR NERVOUS SYSTEM





# Understanding your Nervous System

Your nervous system is constantly working to keep you safe and connected. When we experience overwhelming events, particularly in early relationships with caregivers, our nervous system adapts to help us survive. These adaptations show up as patterns in our body that can persist long after the original events.

## THREE KEY THINGS HAPPEN IN OUR NERVOUS SYSTEM WHEN WE'RE OVERWHELMED:

- ✳ **Fight or Flight**  
A heightened state of alert your system prepares to respond to perceived danger.
- ✳ **Freeze or Shutdown**  
You disconnect from bodily sensations when overwhelm becomes too much.
- ✳ **Social Engagement Shuts Down**  
It becomes harder to connect with others

## THIS CREATES PATTERNS IN THE BODY THAT CAN INCLUDE:

- ✗ Muscle tension and constriction
- ✗ Difficulty feeling grounded or present
- ✗ Challenges in feeling safe in relationships
- ✗ Disconnection from emotions or bodily sensations

## Michael's Story



Michael came to somatic work after years of feeling “stuck” in freeze responses.

A software engineer who prided himself on logic, he was surprised to learn that his tendency to shut down in meetings wasn’t a flaw in his character – it was his nervous system protecting him:

*“Understanding that my body was doing exactly what it learned to do so it could keep me safe, changed how I saw myself. Instead of forcing myself to ‘push through’ the shutdown, I learned to notice the early signs and support my system in staying regulated.”*

# How Your Nervous System Adapts

## SURVIVAL RESPONSES IN THE BODY:

### FIGHT/FLIGHT

#### Sympathetic Activation

- Muscle tension
- Rapid heartbeat
- Shallow breathing
- Racing thoughts
- Feeling of urgency

### FREEZE/SHUTDOWN

#### Dorsal Vagal Response

- Feeling heavy or numb
- Difficulty moving
- Sense of disconnection
- Low energy
- Feeling collapsed

### SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

#### Ventral Vagal State

- Feeling present and grounded
- Connected to others
- Access to facial expression
- Natural breath rhythm
- Sense of safety in the body

## THE THREE NERVOUS SYSTEM STATES

Your nervous system operates in three primary states, each with its own unique pattern of response:

### FIGHT/FLIGHT

#### Sympathetic Activation

- Fight or flight response
- Increased heart rate
- Shallow breathing
- Muscle tension
- Racing thoughts
- Digestive disruption
- Feeling of urgency

### FREEZE/SHUTDOWN

#### Dorsal Vagal Response

- Shutdown or collapse
- Feeling numb or disconnected
- Fatigue and low energy
- Difficulty engaging
- Slowed digestion
- Foggy thinking
- Restricted breathing

### SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

#### Ventral Vagal State

- Feel safe and connected
- Can be present and regulated
- Access to creativity and play
- Able to connect with others
- Digestion works well
- Clear thinking
- Natural breath rhythm

## WRITTEN REFLECTION

## Nervous System Check In

When do you feel most regulated and safe in your body?  
Describe the physical sensations.

What situations tend to activate your sympathetic (fight/flight) response? How does your body let you know?

What helps your nervous system feel safe?  
List at least 3 things.

Think of a recent time when you felt dysregulated.  
What physical signs did your body give you?



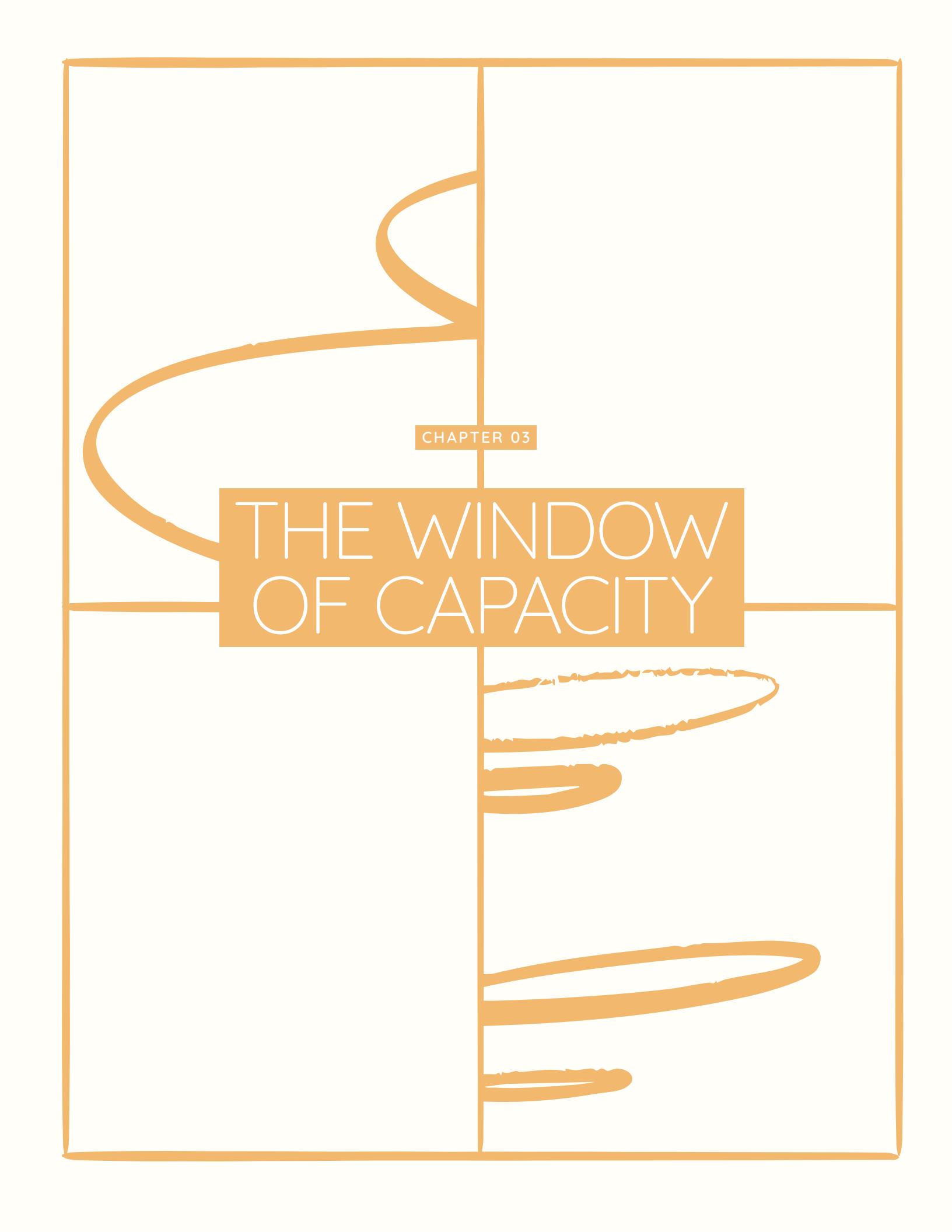
## DIVE DEEPER

Explore this [video](#) to understand more about The Nervous System and Stress Response.  
(53 mins): [Meet your Nervous System](#) (1min)



## SHARE YOUR PRACTICE

We'd love you to share your reflections.  
Take a photo or screenshot, share on your socials and tag us! [@theembodylab](#)



CHAPTER 03

# THE WINDOW OF CAPACITY

# Understanding your Nervous System's Range

## SYMPATHETIC Hyperarousal

- \* Anxiety
- \* Panic
- \* Anger
- \* Hyperactivity
- \* Shallow breathing
- \* Muscle tension
- \* Racing heart

## DORSAL VAGAL Hypoarousal

- \* Freeze & shut down
- \* Disconnection
- \* Collapse
- \* Numbness
- \* Fatigue
- \* Foggy thinking
- \* Difficulty moving

## VENTRAL VAGAL Window of Tolerance

- \* Present
- \* Grounded
- \* Connected
- \* Regulated
- \* Easy breath
- \* Stable heart rate
- \* Social engagement
- \* Feels emotions without overwhelm
- \* Access to resources

The Window of Capacity is your nervous system's optimal arousal zone - the range within which you can function most effectively and be most adaptive to the situation (ie. utilizing the ideal amount of attention, emotion, and energy).

### WHEN YOU'RE WITHIN YOUR WINDOW, YOU CAN:

- \* Think clearly
- \* Feel emotions without being overwhelmed
- \* Connect with others
- \* Make decisions
- \* Learn and integrate new information
- \* Access your resources

## Elena's Story

Elena used to think she was "too sensitive" - everything seemed to overwhelm her. Through working with the Window of Capacity concept, she discovered she wasn't too sensitive - her nervous system had a narrower window of capacity due to early experiences.

*"Learning about my window of capacity helped me stop judging myself... Instead of pushing through overwhelm, I learned to notice when I was approaching my edges and take care of my system's needs."*



## WRITTEN REFLECTION

# Noticing your Window of Capacity

Draw or describe what your personal window of capacity feels like in your body.

What are your earliest signs that you're moving toward hyperarousal (fight/flight)?

What are your earliest signs that you're moving toward hypoarousal (freeze/shutdown)?

What activities or practices help you stay within your window of capacity?

When your window of capacity feels narrow, what supports you in widening it?



## DIVE DEEPER

Explore this [video](#) to learn more about embodied safety as you explore the Window of Capacity. (26 mins)



## SHARE YOUR PRACTICE

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## WRITTEN REFLECTION

# Integration Questions

What have you learned about your nervous system through these observations?

What supports feel most helpful?

What patterns are you beginning to notice?

What questions are arising?

What would you like to explore further?



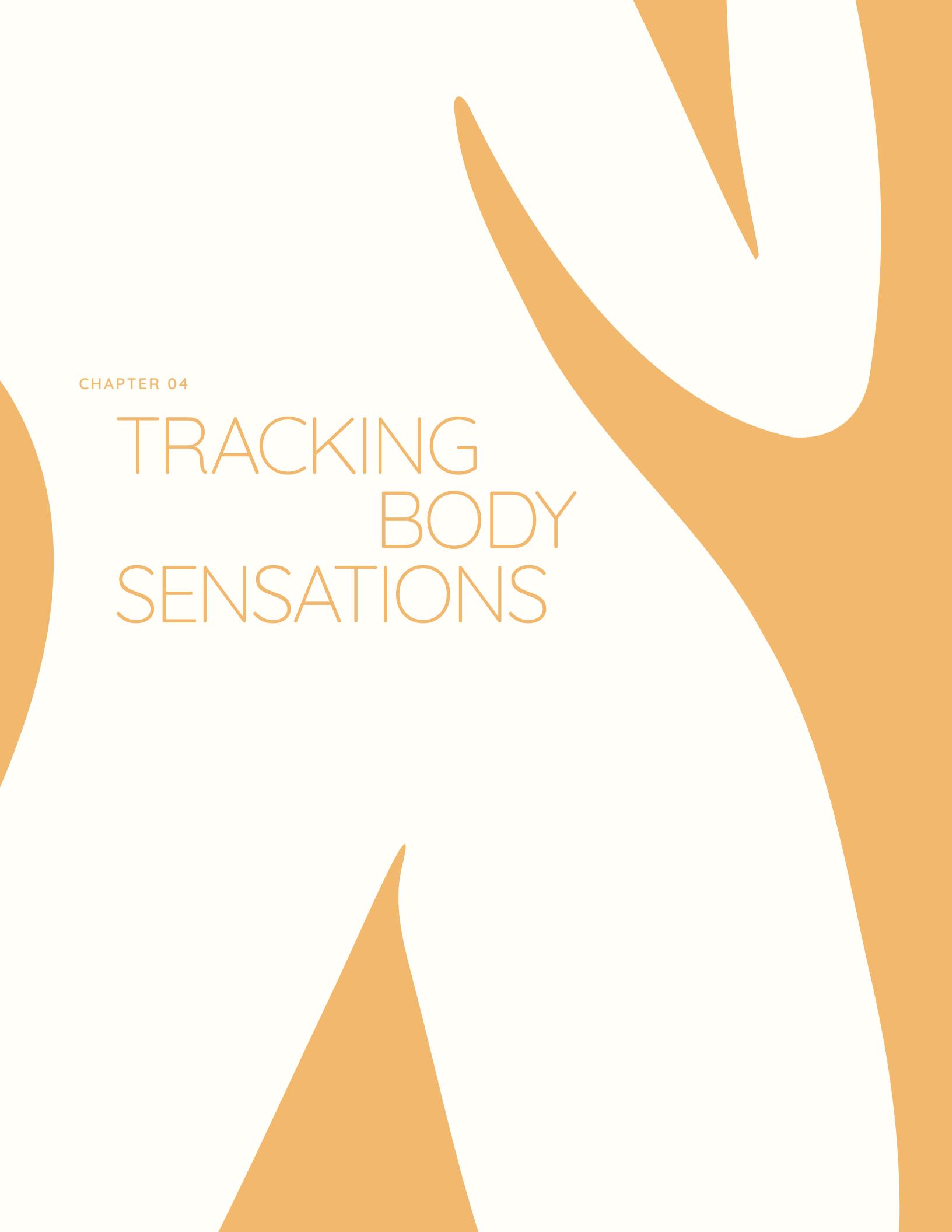
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The background features a minimalist design with large, organic, flowing shapes in a muted orange color. These shapes are composed of smooth curves and rounded edges, creating a sense of fluidity and depth. The orange shapes are set against a plain white background, which provides a stark contrast. The overall aesthetic is clean, modern, and organic.

CHAPTER 04

# TRACKING BODY SENSATIONS

# Body Mapping

## UNDERSTANDING BODY SENSATIONS

When we go through difficult or stressful experiences in life, and we didn't have support to process the experience at the time, we often adapt by disconnecting from our body's natural healing responses.

This disconnection can serve as a powerful coping mechanism — it helps us get through what felt too much. But over time, this can leave us unable to recognize or understand our body's important messages about safety, stress, and emotional well-being.

Many people describe feeling "numb," "floating," or "not really in their body" as they move through their daily lives.

Learning to track body sensations is a crucial step in healing because our bodies hold the truth of our experiences and can warn us about stress or discomfort before our conscious mind catches up. For example, you might notice your shoulders tensing or your breathing becoming shallow before you consciously realize you're feeling anxious.

By becoming aware of these physical sensations, you gain an early warning system that helps you respond to your needs before becoming overwhelmed.

This awareness also helps rebuild trust with your body, creating a stronger sense of safety and allowing you to stay grounded in the present moment.

Rather than being caught off guard by emotional reactions, sensation tracking gives you the tools to recognize, understand, and respond to your body's signals with compassion and understanding.



### WANT TO EXPLORE THIS MORE DEEPLY?

To practice tracking your own body sensations, we invite you to turn to page **XX** of this workbook for a guided exercise.

# Types of Sensations to Track

## TEMPERATURE

- ★ Warm
- ★ Cool
- ★ Neutral
- ★ Hot spots
- ★ Cold areas

## MOVEMENT

- ★ Pulsing
- ★ Vibrating
- ★ Trembling
- ★ Still
- ★ Flowing

## TEXTURE

- ★ Smooth
- ★ Rough
- ★ Tingly
- ★ Dense
- ★ Spacious

## PRESSURE

- ★ Heavy
- ★ Light
- ★ Pressing
- ★ Releasing
- ★ Weighted

### Alex's Story

Alex often felt “disconnected” from his body, describing himself as floating above his experiences. “I couldn’t feel anything,” he explains.

“When people asked me to notice sensations, it was like trying to read a language I’d never learned.”

Through patient practice with tracking sensations, Alex began to develop his somatic vocabulary.

*“It started with just noticing the temperature – was I warm or cool? Gradually, I could feel more: the weight in my feet, the rhythm of my breath, the way my shoulders carried tension. Each sensation became like a word in this new language of my body.”*



## ACTIVITY

# Types of Sensations to Track

- ★ Take a moment now to scan your body. What sensations do you notice?
- ★ Where do you typically hold tension in your body? How does it feel?
- ★ What parts of your body feel difficult to sense or connect with?
- ★ When you feel happy or content, where do you feel it in your body?
- ★ Track your sensations for one day. What patterns do you notice?

What were your experiences working with these different sensations? Write your reflections here:



## DIVE DEEPER

Here's a gentle (and maybe even fun) reminder of your body's wisdom—your body is always communicating with you [Watch Now](#)



## SHARE YOUR PRACTICE

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# BUILDING YOUR

CHAPTER 05

## SOMATIC

## RESOURCES



# Developing Somatic Resources

Somatic resources are body-based tools that help us feel safe, grounded, and connected to ourselves. Sometimes we feel stuck in survival mode — we rarely feel peaceful or at ease.

Building somatic resources means finding and practicing physical experiences that help our nervous system remember what safety feels like. These can include things like feeling the warmth of sunlight on your face, the comfort of a soft blanket wrapped around your shoulders, the steady rhythm of your feet while walking, or the gentle pressure of your hand over your heart. The key is finding sensations that genuinely feel good and soothing to your unique nervous system.

The power of somatic resources comes from their ability to anchor us in present-moment safety, helping our body recognize that past threats are no longer happening

right now. When we regularly practice connecting to these pleasant body sensations, we build new neural pathways that make it easier to return to a regulated state when we're triggered.

Think of somatic resources like building an internal first-aid kit — the more resources we discover and strengthen, the more tools we have available to help us feel grounded when overwhelming emotions arise. Over time, these resources become reliable allies in our healing journey, helping us move from survival mode into a state where we can truly thrive and connect with ourselves and others.

## TYPES OF RESOURCES

### INTERNAL

- ★ Your breath
- ★ Heartbeat
- ★ Body position
- ★ Movement patterns
- ★ Inner imagery

### EXTERNAL

- ★ Ground support
- ★ Wall/chair support
- ★ Texture
- ★ Sound
- ★ Light

### RELATIONAL

- ★ Safe people
- ★ Pets
- ★ Nature connection
- ★ Cultural connection
- ★ Spiritual connection

## Elena's Story

Elena discovered that building resources was like creating a toolkit for her nervous system.

*"I used to think I had to tough it out when things got overwhelming. Learning about resources showed me I could actively support my nervous system to stay with the sensations I was feeling so I could process them. I could find a greater sense of presence and at the same time more safety, more security. Knowing that I have the resources to manage when I feel distressed gives me a greater sense of agency and freedom — they feel a little like an anchor, a safe space I can always return to".*



## ACTIVITY

# Working with your Resources

From the previous list of resources you've identified, select ones that resonate with you. Rate how regulated you feel before and after (1-10).

Notice which resources work best in different states of activation.

Track when you naturally reach for resources throughout your day.

Document any new resources you discover.

Note which combinations of resources work well together.

## PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

# Deepening your Resource Practice

How can you make your resources more accessible in daily life?

What might prevent you from using your resources?

How do you know when you need to access a resource?

What small ways can you incorporate resources into your routine?

How might you strengthen your connection to existing resources?



## SHARE YOUR PRACTICE

We'd love you to share your reflections. Take a photo or screenshot, share on your socials and tag us! [@theembodylab](https://www.instagram.com/theembodylab)

## PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

# Resource Development

What new resources would you like to develop?

How might you expand your current resources?

What resources worked in the past that you'd like to reconnect with?

What resources might help in challenging situations?

How can you create more variety in your resource library?



## SHARE YOUR PRACTICE

We'd love you to share your reflections. Take a photo or screenshot, share on your socials and tag us! [@theembodylab](https://www.instagram.com/theembodylab)

# PRACTICES FOR REGULATION



# Understanding Regulation

Think of your nervous system like a car. Sometimes it's racing too fast (fight/flight), sometimes it's stalled (freeze/shutdown), and sometimes it's running smoothly (regulated).

Regulation isn't about staying in a single state but about adaptability—being able to shift as needed while maintaining balance. Just like a car needs regular maintenance, our nervous system thrives with consistent support. One of the most effective ways to maintain regulation is through movement. Your body naturally knows the movement it needs — maybe it's shaking off stress, rocking when anxious, or stretching to release tension.

The practices in this chapter will guide you in exploring how movement can support your nervous system in finding and maintaining regulation.

Remember, there's no single "right" way to move - only the ways that help your body feel safe, supported, and at ease.

## WHEN WE'RE REGULATED, WE FEEL

- ★ Present in our body
- ★ Connected to ourselves and others
- ★ Able to think clearly
- ★ Neither overwhelmed nor shutdown
- ★ At ease in our skin

## THROUGH MOVEMENT, WE CAN:

- ★ Release accumulated tension
- ★ Discharge excess energy
- ★ Wake up a sluggish system
- ★ Find our natural rhythm
- ★ Restore balance

## Elena's Story

Lisa had always been told to "sit still" and "calm down" when anxious, but it never had a calming result. After being introduced to somatic-based therapies she discovered that different body-based practices could help her find that state of regulation — of the engine that is 'running just right. Starting with small, gentle movements when anxious helped Lisa find new ways to regulate.

*"I didn't realize that movement was exactly what my nervous system needed... Just allowing myself to sway or rock when I feel anxious has made such a difference. My body knows what it needs - I just had to learn to listen and follow its wisdom."*



# Best Practices to Find Calm

Just like a car needs steady, intentional adjustments to stay balanced on the road, our nervous system benefits from simple, mindful practices that bring us back to a state of balance.

The following exercises help ground and regulate your system, allowing you to reconnect with your body and surroundings. There is no perfect way to do these—trust your body's signals and find what feels most supportive.

## ACTIVITY

### Grounding Sequence

Grounding through movement helps regulate your system by creating a sense of stability and presence. As you move through this sequence, set an intention—what state are you inviting in?

## WRITTEN REFLECTION

What came up for you during this practice?

01

#### FIND A STEADY BASE

Stand or sit in a way that feels supported.

02

#### FEEL YOUR FEET

Notice the connection between your feet and the ground.

03

#### SHIFT GENTLY

Slowly shift your weight from side to side, feeling your balance adjust.

04

#### ROCK FORWARD & BACK

Small, rhythmic movements can soothe the system.

05

#### ORIENT WITH YOUR HEAD

Slowly turn your head side to side, taking in your environment at a relaxed pace.

# Best Practices to Find More Energy

Just as movement helps regulate the nervous system, intentional, invigorating actions can wake up a sluggish system and bring in a sense of vitality.

If you're feeling low energy, these practices can help you re-engage with your body and surroundings in a way that feels natural and uplifting.

## ACTIVITY

### Shaking Sequence

Shaking is a simple yet powerful way to release stagnation and invite fresh energy into the body. Try:

01

#### SET AN INTENTION

Find words that resonate for you “I invite movement, energy and a feeling of aliveness in my body”

02

#### FIND YOUR BASE

Stand with feet hip-width apart, knees soft, and take a deep breath.

03

#### START SMALL

Begin shaking your hands, allowing the movement to travel up your arms.

04

#### FULL BODY SHAKING

Bounce lightly on your heels, shake your shoulders, hips, and legs.

05

#### INTENSIFY & RELEASE

Speed up the shaking for 30 seconds, then slow down gradually.

06

#### PAUSE & INTEGRATE

Stand still, feel the sensations in your body, and take a deep breath.

Let your breath flow naturally, sighing or making sounds if it feels good.

This practice can be done for 2–5 minutes to help activate energy and release stored tension.



# Best Practices to Find More Energy

## ACTIVITY

### Go for a Walk

Walking can be a gentle but effective way to bring in energy and alertness. Consider:

- ★ A brisk walk outdoors to engage with nature and fresh air.
- ★ Focusing on the rhythm of your steps and the sensation of movement.
- ★ Swinging your arms freely or picking up the pace to boost circulation.

## ACTIVITY

### Breathwork for Energy

Breathing practices can shift the nervous system into a more awake and activated state.

- ★ **Bellows Breath (Bhastrika)**  
Take quick, inhales and exhales through the nose, pumping the belly.
- ★ **Breath of Joy**  
Inhale in three parts (lifting the arms forward, then to the sides, then overhead), then exhale with a sigh while folding forward.
- ★ **Extended Inhale**  
Inhale for six counts and exhale for four to create an energizing effect.

## ACTIVITY

### Vibrational Sounding Work

Vocalization creates vibration in the body, stimulating energy and releasing tension. Experiment with:

- ★ **Chanting "OM"**  
Feeling the resonance travel through your body, especially in the chest and head.
- ★ **"AH" Sound**  
A heart-opening sound that activates energy while creating a sense of expansion.
- ★ **Humming Breath (Bhramari Pranayama)**  
Inhale deeply through your nose, then exhale while making a humming or buzzing sound, feeling the vibration in your head and chest. This technique stimulates the vagus nerve, enhances focus, and brings a balanced sense of energy.

Playing with different sounds and tones can help you find what feels most energizing and revitalizing for your system

## SOMATIC ENERGIZING PRACTICE

# Ground & Bounce Sequence

Here's a somatic practice designed to boost your energy by activating the body and resetting the nervous system.

## 01 SET AN INTENTION 1 MIN

Stand with feet hip-width apart, knees soft.

Close your eyes or keep a soft gaze.

Take a deep breath and mentally set the intention to invite vitality and energy into your body.

## 02 GROUNDING BREATHWORK 2 MINS

Take deep diaphragmatic breaths.

Inhale deeply through your nose, expanding your belly.

Exhale forcefully through your mouth, pulling your belly in.

Continue at a steady rhythm, quickening your breath slightly to energize the body.

Visualize energy rising from the ground into your body with each inhale.

## 03 SHAKING / BOUNCING 3-5 MINS

Stand and allow your knees to soften.

Begin a gentle bounce by pushing slightly off the balls of your feet.

Let your shoulders, arms, and jaw relax so they move freely as you bounce.

Gradually increase the intensity of the bounce, letting your entire body feel loose and free.

Add a light shake to your arms, hands, and head if it feels good.

Optionally, hum or make a sound on your exhale to activate vibrations in your body.

## 04 FULL BODY STRETCH & RELEASE 2 MINS

After shaking, pause and take a deep breath.

Slowly stretch your arms overhead as you inhale, lengthening your spine.

Exhale and let your arms swing down loosely, bending your knees slightly.

Repeat 3–5 times, feeling the energy flow through your body.

## 05 ENERGIZING MOVEMENT FLOW 3-5 MINS

Begin moving intuitively—walking in place, swaying, or even dancing.

Allow your body to move in ways that feel invigorating and playful

Visualize yourself gathering energy with each movement.

## 06 CLOSING: STANDING STILLNESS 1-2 MINS

Stand still, feet grounded, and take a few deep breaths.

Notice any sensations of tingling, warmth, or energy flowing in your body.

Take a moment to feel gratitude for the energy you've cultivated.

## WRITTEN REFLECTION

# Your Regulation Practices

What types of movement feel natural and supportive to your system?

When you feel anxious or overwhelmed, what does your body want to do?

What movements help you feel more grounded when you're activated?

How does your breath change with different movements?

What positions help your body feel safe and supported?



## SHARE YOUR PRACTICE

We'd love you to share your reflections. Take a photo or screenshot, share on your socials and tag us! [@theembodylab](https://www.instagram.com/theembodylab)

CHAPTER 07

# RELEASING ACTIVATION



# Understanding Activation Patterns



Have you ever jumped at a sudden noise, felt your heart race in a crowded space, or found yourself freezing during a difficult conversation?

These are examples of activation — your body's natural response to a perceived challenge or threat.

Think of activation like your body's alarm system. Just as a home security system monitors for signs of danger, your nervous system is constantly scanning your environment, ready to respond to keep you safe.

Sometimes this alarm goes off in real danger, but often it's responding to memories or patterns from the past. This response might show up as the urge to fight, flight, freeze or fawn (appease to avoid conflict or secure safety). These are all ways your system has adapted to protect you.

As you read this, remember — the goal isn't to eliminate activation. It's to listen to your body's cues and build a relationship with those signals. Listening is the practice.

The practices in this chapter will guide you in exploring how movement can support your nervous system in finding and maintaining regulation.

Remember, there's no single "right" way to move - only the ways that help your body feel safe, supported, and at ease.

## SIGNS OF ACTIVATION

### IN YOUR EXPERIENCE

- ✳ Feeling overwhelmed
- ✳ Sense of urgency
- ✳ Difficulty focusing
- ✳ Feeling unsafe
- ✳ Need to escape or fight

### IN YOUR BODY

- ✳ Racing heart
- ✳ Shallow breathing
- ✳ Muscle tension
- ✳ Digestive changes
- ✳ Temperature shifts
- ✳ Urge to move or freeze

## James' Story

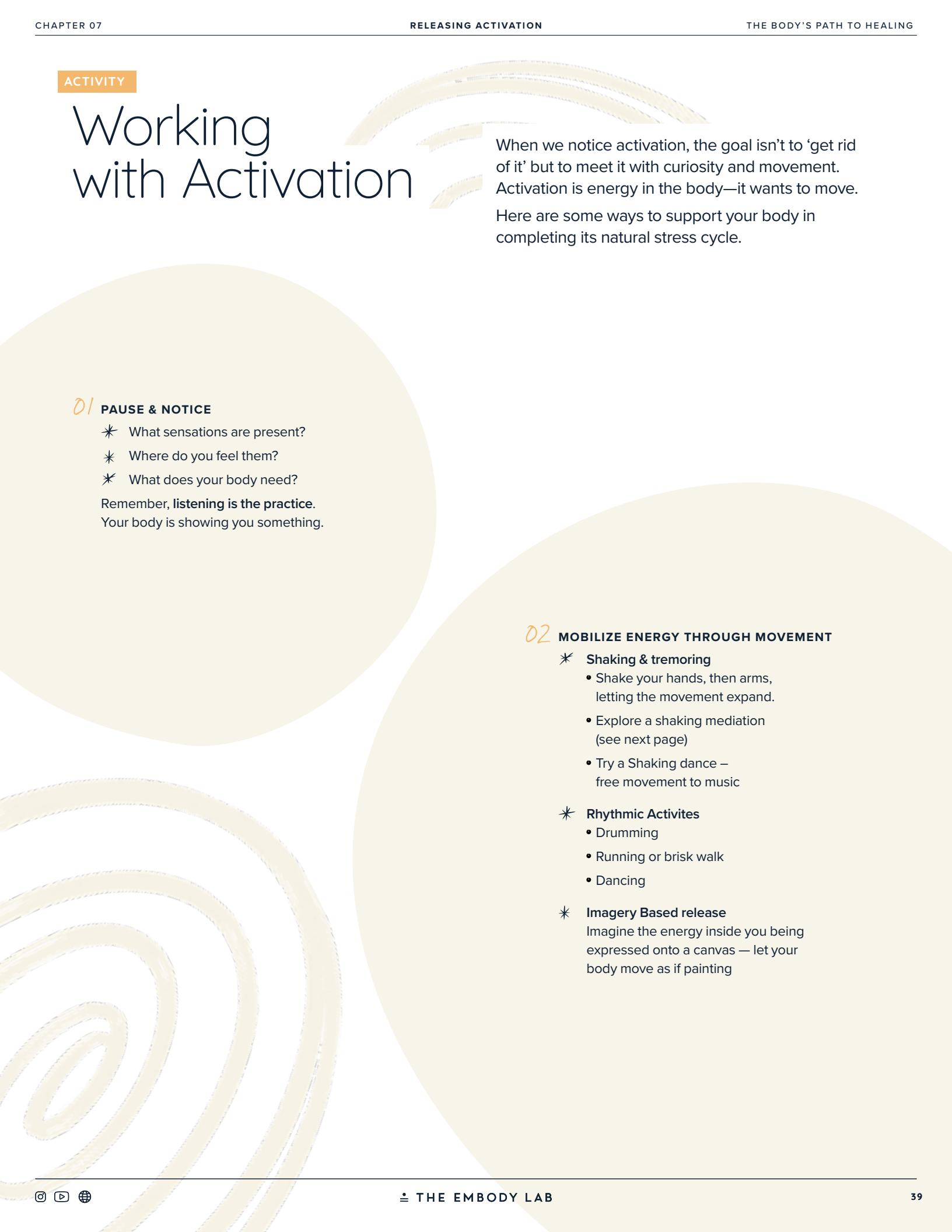
James would find himself suddenly overwhelmed in crowded spaces, his heart racing and breath shallow. James learned to track his activation patterns and notice early warning signs.



*"Before understanding activation, I thought something was wrong with me... Learning that these were normal nervous system responses helped me work with them rather than fight against them. Now I can feel the first hints of tension in my shoulders or changes in my breath. This awareness gives me time to respond before I get overwhelmed."*

## ACTIVITY

# Working with Activation



When we notice activation, the goal isn't to 'get rid of it' but to meet it with curiosity and movement. Activation is energy in the body—it wants to move. Here are some ways to support your body in completing its natural stress cycle.

## 01 PAUSE & NOTICE

- \* What sensations are present?
- \* Where do you feel them?
- \* What does your body need?

Remember, **listening is the practice**. Your body is showing you something.

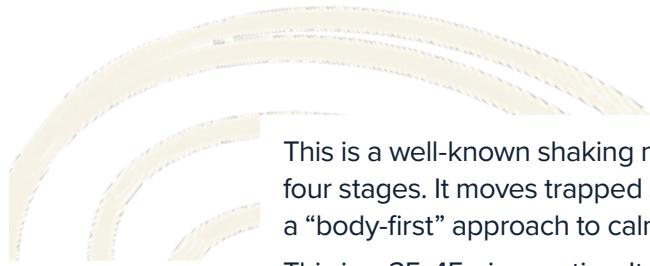
## 02 MOBILIZE ENERGY THROUGH MOVEMENT

- \* **Shaking & tremoring**
  - Shake your hands, then arms, letting the movement expand.
  - Explore a shaking mediation (see next page)
  - Try a Shaking dance – free movement to music
- \* **Rhythmic Activities**
  - Drumming
  - Running or brisk walk
  - Dancing
- \* **Imagery Based release**

Imagine the energy inside you being expressed onto a canvas — let your body move as if painting

## SOMATIC PRACTICE

# Shaking Meditation



This is a well-known shaking meditation that has four stages. It moves trapped stress & emotions — a “body-first” approach to calming the mind.

This is a 35-45min practice. It can be shortened by reducing each stage to 2-5mins.

01

**SHAKING** 10-15 MINS

- \* Stand with feet hip-width apart.
- \* Loosen your body.
- \* Begin to shake from the feet upward.
- \* Let the shaking take over — don’t force it, let your body move naturally.
- \* Close your eyes or soften your gaze.
- \* Imagine stress and emotions shaking out of your body.
- \* Let it be wild, gentle, chaotic — whatever your body needs.

02

**FREE MOVEMENT DANCING** 10-15 MINS

- \* Let the shaking flow into free movement.
- \* Dance however you feel — wild, slow, gentle, expressive.
- \* Let your body lead—not your mind
- \* If you need to keep shaking, that’s okay too.

03

**SITTING IN STILLNESS** 10-15 MINS

- \* Sit comfortably on the floor or chair
- \* Close your eyes.
- \* Notice the vibrations and sensations in your body
- \* Feel your breath, heart and energy still moving

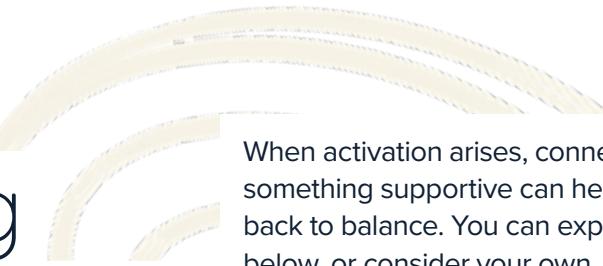
04

**REST & SAVASANA** 5-10 MINS

- \* Lie down on your back (or stay sitting).
- \* Let your body completely rest.
- \* Feel the afterglow of the shaking and movement.
- \* Allow yourself to integrate the release.

## SOMATIC PRACTICE

# Resourcing & Anchoring



When activation arises, connecting with something supportive can help bring your system back to balance. You can explore the examples below, or consider your own.

Notice how your body responds to each of these. Which one brings the most ease?

**SUPPORTIVE TOUCH**

Placing a hand on your chest, or offering a gentle hug.

**SOOTHING OBJECTS**

Holding a comforting item, like a warm cup of tea or a soft blanket.

**SOMATIC ANCHOR**

A place in your body that feels steady or neutral (e.g., your feet on the ground, the warmth of your hands).

**GROUNDING PRACTICES**

Orienting to your environment, noticing the colors, sounds, or textures around you.

## PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Approach these reflections with curiosity and gentleness. There's no right or wrong answer — just the beginning of a deeper relationship with your body.

What resources help you when you're activated?

Describe a recent experience of activation. What happened in your body?

How does your breathing pattern change when you're activated?

What are your first signs of activation?

What helps your body return to regulation after activation?

CHAPTER 08



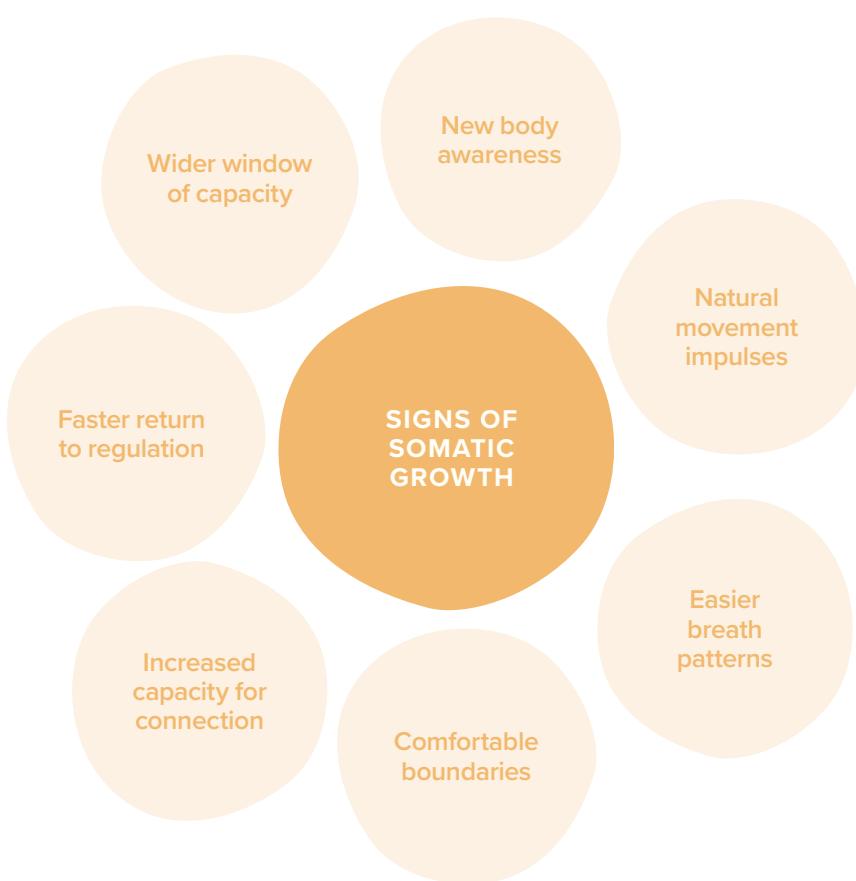
POST-  
TRAUMATIC GROWTH

# Signs of Somatic Growth

Growth doesn't mean the hard days disappear.

It means we develop new capacities alongside the old wounds—more ability to return to safety, more moments of ease, more trust in our resilience. Healing is not a straight line; it moves in

waves. Progress can coexist with struggle. Each small shift is a sign that your nervous system is learning, adapting, and finding new ways to support you.



## Kim's Story

Kim never thought she'd feel comfortable in her body again after trauma. Kim began tracking these small shifts - moments of regulation, new sensations of ease, expanded capacity for connection.

*"I was always braced for danger, but gradually, through this work, I started noticing moments where my body felt safe, where I could breathe easily. Growth wasn't linear, but looking back, I can see how far my nervous system has come."*

# Tracking your Growth



## ACTIVITY

# Personal Reflection

Notice any shifts, no matter how small. Each one is a marker of your body finding new ways to support you. Some days you may feel strong and capable; other days might feel tender.

Both are part of growth.  
Listening is still the practice.

What new sensations or feelings have you noticed in your body recently?

How has your relationship with your body changed through this work?

What new capacities have you developed for managing activation?

What resources have you discovered that you didn't know you had?

How has your window of capacity changed?



## SHARE YOUR PRACTICE

We'd love you to share your reflections. Take a photo or screenshot, share on your socials and tag us!

[@thebodylab](https://www.thebodylab.com)

# Somatic Mantras for Healing

Which of these mantras most speak to you? Or write your own.

I trust my body's natural healing capacity.

I honor my body's boundaries and limits.

I trust my body's natural healing capacity.

I honor my body's boundaries and limits.

I am grounded in my body's strength.

I move at the pace that feels right for me.

My nervous system is learning new patterns.

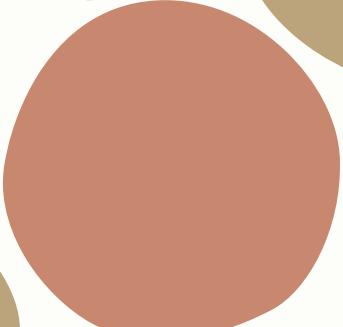
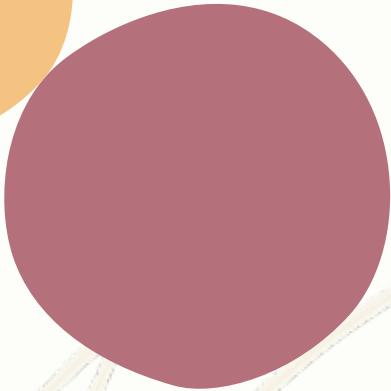
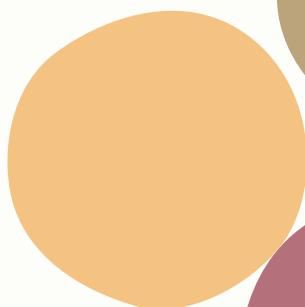
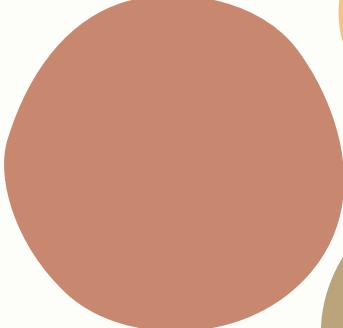
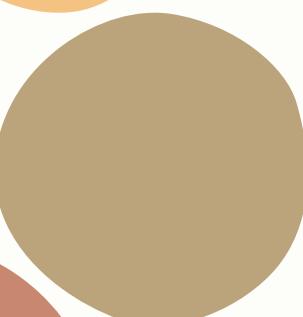
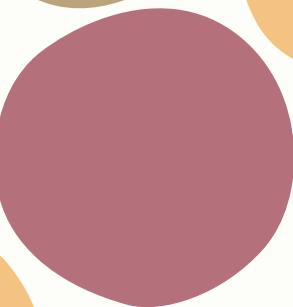
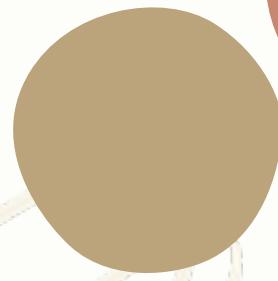
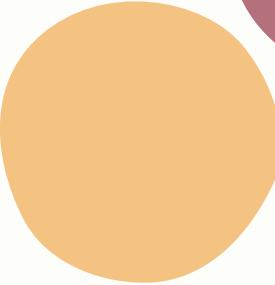
I listen to my body's wisdom and trust its messages.

Each breath brings me closer to regulation and calm.

I am safe to take up space in the world.

I am safe to feel what arises in my body.

My body knows how to return to balance.



The background of the image features a large, solid orange circle centered on the left. To its right, there is a smaller, solid orange circle that overlaps the first one. The overlapping area is shaded in a lighter orange, creating a soft, blended effect. The overall composition is minimalist and organic.

CHAPTER 09

# INTEGRATION

PRACTICE LOGS & WORKSHEETS

# Daily Check-In Log

DATE

TIME

## MORNING BODY SCAN

Main sensations present

Energy level

Quality of breath

Areas of tension

Areas of ease

## EVENING REVIEW

Today's challenges

Resources used

What helped

What i learned

# Daily Check-In Log

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TIME

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Areas of ease

## EVENING REVIEW

Today's challenges

Resources used

What helped

What i learned

# Weekly Integration Log

DATE

TIME

Patterns noticed

New Awareness

Questions arising

Next steps

# Body Mapping Worksheet

DATE

## HOW TO USE THIS WORKSHEET

- \* Use different colors or symbols to mark sensations on the body outline.
- \* Create your own key/legend using the suggestions below or add your own
- \* Take notes about what you notice

## WHAT YOU NOTICE

Location

Quality of sensation

Intensity (1-10)

Changes over time

## REFLECTIONS

Which areas are easiest to sense?

Which areas feel distant or hard to track?

Where do you notice boundaries?

What draws your attention most?

## LEGEND

TENSION	<span style="color: red;">●</span>
RELAXATION/EASE	<span style="color: green;">●</span>
NUMBNESS/DISCONNECTION	<span style="color: blue;">●</span>
TEMPERATURE – HOT	<span style="color: orange;">●</span>
TEMPERATURE – COLD	<span style="color: purple;">●</span>
MOVEMENT – VIBRATION	<span style="color: yellow;">●</span>
PRESSURE/WEIGHT	<span style="color: brown;">●</span>
OTHER SENSATIONS	<span style="color: pink;">●</span>

# Resource Tracking Sheet

DATE

## INTERNAL RESOURCES

RESOURCE	WHEN USED	EFFECT (1-10)	NOTES
BREATH			
POSTURE			
MOVEMENT			
IMAGES			
OTHER			

## EXTERNAL RESOURCES

RESOURCE	WHEN USED	EFFECT (1-10)	NOTES
GROUND			
SOUND			
TEMPERATURE			
OBJECTS			
OTHER			

## RELATIONAL RESOURCES

RESOURCE	WHEN USED	EFFECT (1-10)	NOTES
PEOPLE			
PETS			
NATURE			
COMMUNITY			
OTHER			

# Weekly Reflections

DATE

TIME

Most helpful resources

When resources worked best

Combinations that worked well

New resources discovered

# Activation Response Log

DATE

## ACTIVATION EVENT TRACKING

Time of Activation

Trigger/Situation

## BODY SENSATIONS

- Heart rate changes  Digestion changes
- Breathing changes  Movement impulses
- Muscle tension  Other
- Temperature changes

Location in body

Intensity

## RESPONSE PATTERN:

- Fight  Freeze  Other
- Flight  Fawn

## WHAT I DID

Steps taken

Resources used

What helped?

What didn't help?

## AFTER EFFECTS

Time to return to regulation

Residual sensations

New awareness

## LEARNING

Patterns noticed

Early warning signs

Helpful resources

Next time I could...

# The Practice of Listening

As you reflect on your journey through this workbook, you may notice shifts — moments when your body felt more ease, times when activation softened, or perhaps a growing sense of trust in your capacity to return to balance.

Or you may simply notice this:

You are hearing your body more clearly.

That is the heart of this work.

Every pause, every breath, every small noticing—it was all listening.

Listening when your body asks for rest.

Listening when it needed movement.

Listening when it simply needed to be held.

Somatic healing is not a finish line.

It's a relationship that grows over time.

And listening is the practice.



CHAPTER 10

# DIVE DEEPER

FURTHER READING & RESOURCES

# Further Reading & Resources

## PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT

[The Embody Lab](#)

[Somatic Experiencing International](#)

[Polyvagal Institute](#)

[Trauma Research Foundation](#)

If you would like to work one-on-one with a somatic therapist or practitioner, explore [The Embody Lab's Directory](#)

## RECOMMENDED READING

*Waking the Tiger: Healing Trauma* by Peter Levine

*The Body Keeps the Score: Brain Mind and Body in Healing*

*Trauma* by Bessel van der Kolk

*The Polyvagal Theory: Neurophysiological Foundations of Emotions, Attachment, Communication, and Self-regulation*  
by Stephen Porges

*In an Unspoken Voice: How the Body Releases Trauma and Restores Goodness* by Peter Levine

*Addicted to Drama: Healing Dependency on Crisis and Chaos in Yourself and Others* by Dr. Scott Lyons

*When the Body Says No: The Cost of Hidden Stress*  
by Dr. Gabor Maté

*The Myth of Normal: Trauma, Illness, and Healing in a Toxic Culture* by Dr. Gabor Maté and Daniel Maté

Dr. Arielle Schwartz has [a number of books and useful resources](#)

## TRAINING RESOURCES

[The Embody Lab](#) Your online hub for embodied education

[Polyvagal Theory Training](#)

[Somatic Experiencing Training](#)

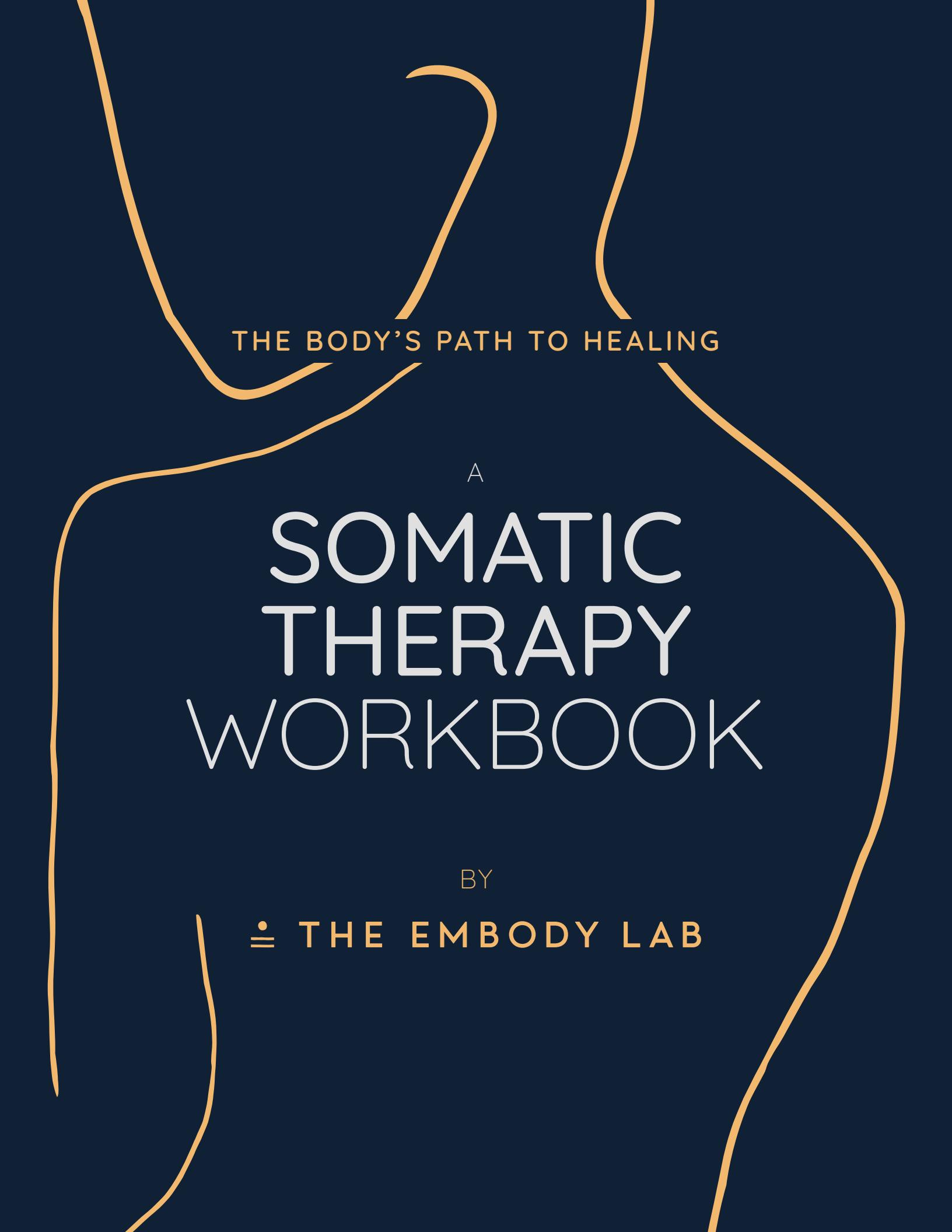
[Trauma Research Foundation](#)

## SUPPORT GROUPS & COMMUNITIES

Local SE practice groups

Body-based trauma healing circles

Somatic movement classes



THE BODY'S PATH TO HEALING

A

# SOMATIC THERAPY WORKBOOK

BY

THE EMBODY LAB