

The Stages of Somatic Descent, By Reginald A. Ray

Phase 1: Entry

- 1. Come into your body.** Use whichever practice feels right to you: 10 points practice; earth descent; 12-fold lower belly breathing.
- 2. Greet your body.** Create an atmosphere of devotion, respect, and connection with your body.
- 3. Make a supplication to your body.** Supplicate your body to communicate with you and guide you in this practice.
- 4. Make a request of your soma.** Choose your initial question and establish a dialogue:
 - Exploration: *What's actually going on with me right now?*
 - *What do I need to be aware of? What needs my attention right now?*
 - Ask your soma for information or guidance in a specific life situation.

Phase 2: The Main Practice

- 5. Inhabit and identify with the body.** Start with the backline, the empty space of the central channel; then open your awareness forward into the mid-body, and be there. Be within the density of the experience of the mid-body.
- 6. Feel the totality of the body.** Tune in to what's going on. Start with physical sensations as a way to be present, then move into the felt sense. Ask yourself, what is the "weather," the general atmosphere of the body, how space is manifesting? What does it feel like at the purely somatic level? Here are some synonyms for the felt sense that may be useful.
 - Non-conceptual experience
 - Direct experience
 - Naked experience
 - The direct referent (Gendlin)—this means the basic, raw experience that we then think about with our left brain
 - Implicit bodily sense
 - Pure experience, experience before thinking (Nishida)
 - Somatic intuition
- 7. Ascertaining the felt sense.** What's going on, the global feel in the body? Be right down at the boundary of the unconscious and hold your attention there. It is beneath any labeling, conceptualizing process whatsoever. It is completely direct and naked. In the practice, you will spend the most time with this stage (Zone 1).
- 8. If you can't feel anything or can't find anything, use Mahamudra-style questioning: *Is there nothing going on in my mid-body? Is it empty? Is there something here?*** Then see how your body responds to that question. Say, *okay, I think there is nothing here*, and see how your body responds. This gives you the capacity to feel what is there. You may feel

something, but can't tell what it is; you don't need to go further. Try to stay in touch with that something, hang out, and wait.

9. Wait for a more definitive manifestation of the soma to pop up: the spontaneous expression of the soma (Zone 2). Wait with the *something* until something else pops up that, in a way, makes more particular sense to you. This could be an image, a word, a phrase, a dream-like scenario, a sudden memory, anything that just pops up of its own accord.

10. What if nothing pops up? Then you can use the dialogue method again to draw out more, if there's no spontaneous expression. If nothing pops up, you can:

- Wait—it will happen eventually.
- Find an expression (a handle) by asking the soma questions. Link back to the felt sense, then try out a word, image, or sound that embodies the felt sense. See how the soma responds, then ask another question. The soma needs you to ask questions.
- This “handle” or expression will be important since it will be something we can carry with us and will help us tap back in to the felt sense and stay connected to it.

11. Receive whatever it is in non-thought. Let it be and sit with it. Don't do anything. Let it cook, let yourself cook with it. If you begin thinking, you will exit the process. You will be taking the cake out of the oven too soon.

12. Give it space, and see if your soma has any more to offer about this particular situation or information. Ask, *is there anything more about this that I need to know?*

13. If your body says that in relation to this, it is complete, then ask your soma, *okay, beyond this situation, more generally, is this enough for today, for this session? Is there anything more for today?* You'll feel in your body if there's something else. Often, it's the next thing that happens that is really interesting. Sometimes it is even the main thing for the day.

Phase 3: Conclusion and Post-meditation

14. Express gratitude to your soma for the help and guidance it has offered you, and state your intention to return.

15. Assimilation: incorporating the information into your conscious viewpoint. This is about discovering what you have learned means for your life.

16. Write down key points. We will forget things that we don't at first understand.

17. Carry it with you. Allow the communication to continue to unfold.