

Somatic Patterning

Supplemental Instructor Materials

Chapter 3: Somatic Patterning Roots, Concepts, and Methods

Note: Numbered points in the chapter's reading list, objectives, and summary are correlated and focus on topics that I think will be most relevant for massage students.

In brackets after suggested readings and objectives, you will find an occasional reference from a subsequent chapter that expands on material introduced in this chapter. Please contact your education director for answers to the chapter questions.

Chapter 3 Suggested Readings

1. Discovering Somatic Concepts and Methods, pp. 73-74, [*Proprioceptive Neuromuscular Facilitation Techniques*, pp. 313-316]
2. Discovering Somatic Concepts and Methods, pp. 73-74
3. Holism, pp. 77-78
4. Somatic Awareness, Perception, Sensory Awareness, pp. 78-80, [*Sensory Awareness*, pp. 295-296]
5. The Problem with the Perception of Pain, p. 80
6. Core Movement, Core Movement Patterns, Psychosomatic Patterns and the Core, pp. 81-84
7. Somatic Resonance, Putting Somatic Resonance into Practice, pp. 85-86
8. Resonance and Intuition, pp. 86-87
9. Feedback and Objectivity, pp. 87-88
10. Oscillation between Dualities, p. 89

Chapter 3 Objectives

1. Define proprioceptive neuromuscular facilitation and how it is used in somatic therapies.
2. Define and list several types of autonomic proprioceptive facilitation.
3. Define holism and describe what a holistic approach to somatic therapy entails.
4. Define somatic awareness and its application in somatic therapies.
5. Discuss why pain is subjective and how practitioners deal with the difficulty this creates.
6. Describe core movement on both a physical and psychological level.
7. Describe somatic resonance and its application in somatic therapies.
8. Define intuition and describe how a practitioner can differentiate it from imagination.
9. Identify two ways to promote objective feedback during a somatic session.
10. Describe the concept of oscillating between dualities in somatic therapies.

Chapter 3 Summary

1. Proprioceptive neuromuscular facilitation (PNF) is any therapeutic method that works to improve movement with awareness. This approach was originally developed as a system of three-dimensional rotational joint patterns integrated with active and resisted movements used for the rehabilitation of polio patients. Many neuromuscular massage practitioners use PNF techniques of contract-relax-stretch with resisted movements.
2. Autonomic proprioceptive facilitation (APF) is any therapeutic method that works to improve autonomic nervous system tone through active techniques that elicit the relaxation response. Methods of APF include biofeedback training, stress management techniques, relaxation massage, cranialsacral therapy, and trauma resolution therapies. *[For expanded material on this topic, see Chapter 13 on Physiological Patterning.]*
3. The concept of holism views a system as far more than the sum of its parts. A holistic approach to bodywork and somatic therapy works to improve the functional relationships between the parts of the body and the interplay between thoughts, feelings, and body responses in order to improve the body/mind connection.
4. Somatic awareness is a combination of sensory awareness, which is the body-based process of tracking physical sensations, and perception, and is how the mind interprets physical sensations.
5. Pain is the perception of sensations of intense pressure, heat, and cold. Because every person interprets sensation differently, pain is subjective and pain tolerances vary from one person to the next. This makes pain difficult to measure. A somatic practitioner measures a client's pain by tracking the pain levels that a client reports in each session.
6. On a physical level, core movement is an action that either initiates in or is stabilized through the center of the pelvis and trunk. On a psychological level, core movement is the expression a person makes from a centered body state free of muscular armoring.
7. A positive somatic resonance results in rapport between practitioner and client, which supports an expansive healing process and is a vital condition for a healthy therapeutic relationship. Somatic resonance is a type of body intuition that manifests in a positive energetic exchange between two or more people.
8. Intuition is the direct perception of truth; it is the keen insight or flash that a person gets about something without having to go through a mental reasoning process. A practitioner can sort out intuitive knowledge from imagination by sharing intuitive insights she has about a client to determine if they have any basis in the client's reality.
9. A practitioner garners objective feedback about how well a session is going by tracking whether or not the client's body is relaxing and is receptive to touch and change, and helping the client get feedback about her or his body by contrasting the old body patterns with new ones.

10. In somatic patterning, the oscillation of attention between dual aspects of a pattern, such as thoughts and feelings, or areas that move and are restricted, helps to integrate the disparate parts. *[For expanded material on this topic, see Chapter 4: Balancing Patterning Approaches.]*

Chapter 3 Questions

*Note: Make sure to pay attention to the italics in some of the questions because they ask you to identify the statement that **does not** refer to the topic of the question.*

1. Which of the following statements *does not* describe a proprioceptive neuromuscular facilitation (PNF) approach to somatic therapies?
 - a. A PNF approach is any therapeutic method that works to improve movement with awareness.
 - b. Several PNF techniques are used in neuromuscular massage therapy, such as the contract-relax-stretch technique applied with resisted movement.
 - c. The original PNF approach was a set of rotational joint patterns that were integrated with resisted movement techniques for the treatment of polio patients.
 - d. The basic PNF approach is a system of hands-on techniques in which a client is taken through passive joint movements.

2. Which of the following statements describes an autonomic proprioceptive facilitation (APF) approach to somatic therapies?
 - a. This method works to improve peripheral nerve flexibility through myofascial release and stretching.
 - b. This method works to improve autonomic nervous system tone through techniques that promote the relaxation response.
 - c. This method works to improve muscle tone through strengthening and conditioning exercises.
 - d. This method works to improve skeletal nervous system balance through trigger point therapy.

3. Which statement most accurately describes a holistic approach to somatic therapy?
 - a. A holistic therapy helps clients focus on problem areas of the body while ignoring the rest of the body.
 - b. A holistic therapy helps clients realize that the emotions they feel during a bodywork session have nothing to do with muscular tension.
 - c. A holistic therapy helps clients become aware of the relationship between parts of somatic experiences in order to improve the body/mind connection.
 - d. A holistic therapy helps stressed clients relax and shut out incoming stimuli and thoughts.

4. Perception is
 - a. the sensation of heat, pressure, or cold.
 - b. a mental interpretation of bodily sensations.
 - c. the feeling of the body's changing position.
 - d. sound, smell, taste, touch, and sight.

5. Sensory awareness is
 - a. the experience of stimuli received from sensory nerves.
 - b. the motor responses made to incoming stimuli.
 - c. a neuromuscular pattern of movement.

- d. a relaxation response through the entire body.
6. Identify which of the following statements *does not* describe the experience of pain.
 - a. Pain is the mind's interpretation of intense sensation.
 - b. Pain is a subjective experience, which explains varying pain thresholds.
 - c. Pain is an objective experience, and everyone feels the same level.
 - d. To measure pain, a practitioner asks a client to report on pain levels.
 7. Which of the following movements is a core pattern?
 - a. Curling the body into flexion during a flip.
 - b. Moving the fingers while typing.
 - c. Extending the knee to tie your shoe.
 - d. Turning the head a quarter turn.
 8. When a practitioner has somatic resonance with a client,
 - a. the client's body will tighten up when being touched.
 - b. the client will not feel anything when being touched.
 - c. the client will have an out-of-body experience when being touched.
 - d. the client's body will relax and be receptive to touch.

Chapter 3 Suggested Learning Activities

Note: Any exercise titled “Patterning Exercise” can be found in the current edition. Page numbers for these exercises (inserted in parentheses) are included to help instructors utilize activities during lessons based on other segments of the book. “Skills Exercises” are not found in the current edition but will be included in the 2nd edition of SP.

Patterning Exercise # 19: Somatic Exploration with a Partner (p. 86)

Each part of this exercise takes 10-15 minutes.

Objectives:

- To notice how your body responds to touch and movement, whether it relaxes or tightens and where this occurs in your body.
 - To notice how your partner responds to touch and movement, whether it relaxes or tightens and where this occurs in your body.
1. With a partner, explore moving toward and away from each other. As you do this, answer the following questions in your own mind:
 - What happens in your body when you move toward the other person?
 - When that person moves toward you?
 - When you move away from that person?
 - When that person moves away from you?
 - When you turn your back on the other?
 - When the other person turns his/her back on you?
 2. Now explore touching each other. One person touches while the other receives the touch. As you do this, answer the following questions in your own mind:
 - What happens in your body when you receive touch from the other person?
 - When that person touches you?
 - When the touch is at a certain location?
 - When that touch has a specific quality?
 3. Explore different qualities of touch, such as strong, light, direct, indirect, moving, nonmoving, general, specific, sensitive, or rough. Notice your responses while giving and receiving each type.
 4. Discuss this exploration with each other.

Patterning Exercising #117: Cellular Holding Exploration with a Partner (p. 298)

Adapted for a classroom exercise.

Note: This exercise can access deep places within a person, including strong emotions and memories, so make sure you and your partner have mutual trust. If, at any time during this exploration, any issues come up for either you or your partner, stop and discuss them with each other.

Objectives:

- To increase somatic resonance in touch.
- To cultivate a positive, soothing, and receptive listening touch.

Exercise: (20-30 minutes)

1. Find a partner and decide who is going to receive first. Begin by getting in a comfortable position and place your hands on a part of your partner's body that you are both comfortable with.
2. Focus your attention on touching the top layer of skin (whether you have direct contact with the skin or are touching through clothes). As you feel the contact between you and your partner, imagine the cell walls in each of you meeting at the place of contact.
3. Now shift your focus to the fluids inside the skin and cells. Feel or imagine the cellular fluids under your hands, sensing the fluid bed under the skin in both you and your partner.
4. Have your partner also track your touch with his or her awareness.
5. Sense or imagine the cells as a conglomerate of millions of fluid-filled sacs resting in the cradle of your hands. Sense any fluid rhythms or subtle motions within them. Explore cellular touch for at least ten minutes.
6. Discuss your experience with your partner afterwards. Then switch roles and repeat the exercise. Discuss the underlying quality of tone in tissues being held. Discuss if and when you felt you or your partner's tissues either relaxing into the contact or retracting away from it.