

Aftercare Instructions

Somatic Experiencing and Body Memory Recall

With Somatic Experiencing, even a little bit of work may result in feeling tired as your nervous system processes and renegotiates old experiences into new ones. It is crucial to not rush or push yourself beyond your capacity following SE, whether it involves touch or not, in order to allow your body to integrate what it experienced in session.

To maximize the benefits of SE, your therapist will encourage you before leaving to take your time to mindfully re-orient to your surroundings through your senses to re-establish a sense of safety in the present (**neuroception**) and to notice what is happening in your body (**interoception**) to encourage embodiment of your experience. You will also be supported to take time before standing (especially if on the table) to give yourself time to orient to being upright and reconnect with your body's sense of itself in relation to the gravity, the ground, movement and contact (**proprioception**). Each of these systems can be impacted by traumatic, stressful or overwhelming experiences, so allowing time to pause and nurture their re-regulation is an important part of the process.

Aftercare:

- If possible, do not schedule any intense physical activity or other activities that require a high level of energy or for you to over-exert yourself after a session, especially if feeling fatigue. Give yourself permission to rest and not override your body's needs. Mindful movements if possible.
- If feeling more energized or invigorated after a session, engaging in mild to moderate exercise or activity to integrate this sense of aliveness may be helpful, without overdoing it.

With Body Memory Recall, it is common to feel increased range of motion, but with increased soreness. This is due to the **detox effect**. As tense, hard tissues are restored through the BMR process to a more elastic and fluid state, toxins that were trapped within the tissues are released. The detox process (which may include aches and pain, nausea, skin rash or redness, headaches, loose stool, flu-like symptoms and a low grade fever) is temporary and will eventually decrease substantially.

Aftercare:

- Give yourself adequate rest, hydration, mild exercise and vital nutrition.
- Moist heat or an Epsom salt bath may also relieve pain and soreness.

NOTE: After expansion (opening up, going outside your comfort zone), you may notice a counter-constriction (needing quiet time, feeling fatigued or noticing old defenses or reactions arise). This is normal, even when proceeding carefully at a slower pace doing smaller amounts of work. The nervous system can respond in a very sensitive way to small amounts of stimulation and needs time to integrate and re-organize itself. Be gentle with yourself and your needs following treatment.

ADDITIONAL AFTERCARE SUGGESTIONS

The Emotional First Aid page on The Refuge's website has some resources that might be helpful in supporting you implement the following suggestions (www.healingrefuge.com). Many of these practices can be useful first thing in the morning, throughout your day or before going to sleep.

Mindfulness Meditation or Contemplative Practices

- Find quiet time each day to clear your thoughts, quiet your mind and center yourself.
- Find or create a place that is reserved purely for this practice, whether indoors or outdoors in nature. You might light a candle or sage prior to your practice, if this feels right for you.
- Your contemplative practice may involve prayer, whether as part of a religious faith or even secularly if agnostic/atheist. Prayer is an act of communication inwardly towards you and outwardly to all of life/universe or to God/Creator. Prayer can be a method to direct your healing and creative energy for positive outcomes in your life, other's lives or the world.
- Rather than worrying, offer positive prayers of love and blessings, or use mindfulness to redirect your thoughts to more grounding anchors in the present, allowing worries to float past without getting caught up in them or feeding them with more energy.

Self-Compassion and Lovingkindness

- Develop your ability to be kind and nurturing towards yourself. Be curious about the way you treat yourself and see if you can soften that harsh criticism or self-judgment.
- This can look like noticing and letting go of negative self-talk, consciously softening your body when you notice yourself be hard on yourself, offering yourself a nurturing gesture (such as one hand on your heart and one on your belly, a gentle hug, holding a pillow, or stroking your skin), or focusing on affirmations to help reprogram your core beliefs about yourself.

Exercise

- Find exercise or movement you enjoy and do it weekly. Include stretching.
- Use props for stretching, such as Thera-balls, foam rollers, Blackroll balls or inversion tables.
- Exercise or movement will help you keep fit and keep energy flowing as opposed to stagnating.
- This might include yoga, pilates, dance, t'ai chi, martial arts or other exercise activities or sports.

Self-Unwinding / Releasing

- Lie on the floor and let your body move spontaneously, if this feels ok for you.
- Allow sensations, movements, emotions or memories to be expressed, should they surface, provided that they do not become overwhelming or lead to dissociation or unhealthy coping (e.g., addictions). See if you can stay present with them and ride them out without panicking or bracing against them, while anchoring yourself with resources. If something becomes too much, you can always redirect your focus, scale things back, take a break and ground yourself. Experiment with titrating a small amount at a time or slowing things down, to the degree that feels tolerable to you. You get to choose.
- If it interests you, allow yourself to be vocal, make sounds or express words.
- Put music on that suits your mood, provided it does not keep you stuck in unhelpful states.

Nutrition

- Hydrate, mineralize and alkalize.
- Eat adequate amounts of healthy fat and protein.

These are general suggestions and not specific to any one person. It is recommended that you consult your physician or healthcare provider prior to implementing these suggestions to ensure that they are appropriate for you and will not harm, injure or worsen any of your physical, medical or mental health conditions.