

# Getting Started with Somatics

## A Beginner's Guide to Body-Centered Awareness

From [somatics.donavonlerman.com](http://somatics.donavonlerman.com) *A free resource for exploring somatic practices*

---

### What You'll Find in This Guide

- What somatics is and why it matters
  - Simple practices you can try at home
  - How to choose a somatic practitioner
  - What to expect in your first session
  - Resources for continued learning
- 

## Part 1: Understanding Somatics

### What is Somatics?

**Somatics** comes from the Greek word *soma*, meaning “the body as experienced from within.”

Rather than viewing your body as an object to be fixed or controlled from the outside, somatics invites you to: - **Feel** sensations as they arise - **Notice** patterns of tension, holding, or numbness - **Explore** new possibilities for movement and awareness - **Integrate** mind, body, and emotion as one living system

### Why Practice Somatics?

Research and clinical experience show that somatic practices can help with:

- **Trauma recovery** - Processing stored trauma through the body
  - **Chronic pain** - Releasing unconscious tension patterns
  - **Stress & anxiety** - Regulating the nervous system
  - **Emotional awareness** - Understanding feelings through bodily sensations
  - **Movement & coordination** - Improving how you move through life
  - **Embodiment** - Feeling more at home in your own skin
- 

## Part 2: Simple Practices to Try at Home

### Practice 1: The Body Scan (5-10 minutes)

**What it is:** A practice of bringing gentle attention to different parts of your body.

**How to do it:**

1. Find a comfortable position (lying down, sitting, or standing)
2. Take a few natural breaths
3. Bring your attention to your feet. Notice any sensations—warmth, coolness, tingling, pressure, or even numbness
4. Slowly move your awareness up through your body:
  - Ankles and lower legs
  - Knees and thighs
  - Hips and pelvis
  - Belly and lower back
  - Chest and upper back
  - Shoulders, arms, and hands

- Neck and throat
  - Face and head
5. Notice without judging. There's no "right" way to feel
  6. End by noticing your whole body at once

**Benefits:** Develops interoception (internal body awareness), reduces dissociation, calms the nervous system.

---

### **Practice 2: Breath Awareness (3-5 minutes)**

**What it is:** Noticing how your body moves with each breath.

**How to do it:**

1. Sit or lie comfortably
2. Place one hand on your chest, one on your belly
3. Breathe naturally—don't try to change anything
4. Notice:
  - Which hand moves more?
  - Does your belly expand on the inhale?
  - Do your ribs move? Your back?
  - Where does the breath feel restricted or free?
5. Experiment: Try breathing into different areas (belly, sides of ribs, back of body)
6. Return to natural breathing

**Benefits:** Increases respiratory awareness, reduces anxiety, grounds you in the present moment.

---

### **Practice 3: Mindful Movement (5-10 minutes)**

**What it is:** Moving slowly with full attention to how it feels.

**How to do it:**

1. Choose a simple movement:
  - Rotating your head slowly from side to side
  - Rolling your shoulders forward and back
  - Gently tilting your pelvis forward and back while sitting
  - Reaching one arm overhead and noticing the stretch through your side body
2. Move SLOWLY—much slower than usual
3. Notice:
  - Where do you feel the movement?
  - What muscles are working?
  - Where is there ease? Where is there effort?
  - Can you make the movement even smaller or gentler?
4. Pause and rest between movements
5. Notice if anything feels different after

**Benefits:** Develops mind-body connection, reveals unconscious tension, improves coordination.

---

### **Practice 4: Orienting (1-2 minutes, anytime)**

**What it is:** A simple practice to calm your nervous system by looking around.

**How to do it:**

1. Pause wherever you are

2. Slowly look around the room or space
3. Let your eyes settle on objects or details that are pleasing or neutral
4. Notice colors, shapes, textures
5. Let your head move gently as your eyes explore
6. Take a few breaths
7. Notice how you feel now compared to before

**Benefits:** Helps with anxiety, trauma responses, dissociation. Grounds you in the present.

---

## Part 3: Choosing a Somatic Practitioner

### Types of Somatic Practitioners

Different practitioners focus on different approaches:

- **Somatic Experiencing (SE)** - Trauma resolution through body awareness
- **Feldenkrais Method** - Gentle movement lessons to improve function
- **Alexander Technique** - Posture, alignment, and efficient movement
- **Hakomi** - Mindfulness-based somatic psychotherapy
- **Somatic Sex Education** - Embodiment, consent, pleasure, and intimacy
- **Rolfing/Structural Integration** - Deep tissue work with awareness
- **Body-Mind Centering** - Developmental movement and embodiment

### Questions to Ask a Potential Practitioner

**About their training:** - What certifications or training do you have? - How long have you been practicing?  
- Do you have ongoing supervision or professional development?

**About their approach:** - How would you describe your somatic approach? - Is your practice trauma-informed? - How do you work with consent and boundaries? - What does a typical session look like?

**About fit:** - Do you have experience with [your specific concern]? - What can I expect in terms of progress or outcomes? - How many sessions do people typically work with you? - What is your cancellation policy and fee structure?

### Red Flags to Watch For

- Promises quick fixes or guaranteed outcomes
- Pushes you beyond your comfort level
- Doesn't explain their credentials or approach clearly
- Makes you feel pressured or unsafe
- Crosses boundaries around touch or intimacy
- Lacks clear professional ethics or affiliations

**Trust your body.** If something doesn't feel right, it's okay to leave or find someone else.

---

## Part 4: What to Expect in Your First Session

### Before the Session

- Arrive a few minutes early to settle in
- Wear comfortable, loose clothing
- Eat lightly beforehand (not too full, not too hungry)
- Consider what you hope to explore or work on

## During the Session

**A typical somatic session might include:** - Intake conversation about your goals and history - Guided awareness practices or movement explorations - Verbal inquiry (“What do you notice?”, “Where do you feel that?”) - Optional touch (always with consent and clear communication) - Periods of rest and integration - Discussion and reflection

**Remember:** - You are in charge of your own experience - You can pause, slow down, or stop anytime - There’s no “wrong” way to feel or respond - Discomfort does not equal danger (but you should feel safe)

## After the Session

- Take time to integrate—don’t rush back into obligations
- Drink water and rest if needed
- Notice any changes in how you feel over the next few days
- Journal or reflect if that feels helpful

---

## Part 5: Deepening Your Practice

### Continue Learning

**Books:** - *The Body Keeps the Score* by Bessel van der Kolk - *Waking the Tiger* by Peter Levine - *Somatics* by Thomas Hanna - *Sensorimotor Psychotherapy* by Pat Ogden

**Online Resources:** - [somatics.donavonlerman.com](http://somatics.donavonlerman.com) (that’s us!) - Trauma Research Foundation - Somatic Experiencing International

**Videos:** - Search YouTube for “Feldenkrais lessons” - “Somatic Experiencing” introductory videos - Bessel van der Kolk’s talks on trauma

### Build a Home Practice

Start small: - 5 minutes of body awareness each morning - One mindful movement practice per day - Notice sensations during daily activities (eating, walking, showering) - Practice pausing and orienting when you feel stressed

**Consistency matters more than duration.** A few minutes daily is more valuable than an hour once a week.

---

## Part 6: Working With a Practitioner

### When to Seek Professional Support

Consider working with a somatic practitioner if: - You’re dealing with trauma, PTSD, or complex stress - You experience chronic pain or tension - You want to deepen your embodiment practice - You’re exploring sexuality, intimacy, or consent - You feel disconnected from your body - Self-practice feels stuck or overwhelming

### Finding the Right Fit

The relationship matters. A good practitioner: - Makes you feel safe and respected - Explains their process clearly - Works at your pace - Welcomes questions and feedback - Has appropriate training and ethics - Respects your autonomy and choices

**Location-Based Directories:** - Somatic Experiencing: [traumahealing.org/find-a-practitioner](http://traumahealing.org/find-a-practitioner) - Feldenkrais: [feldenkrais.com/find-a-practitioner](http://feldenkrais.com/find-a-practitioner) - Alexander Technique: [amsatonline.org](http://amsatonline.org) - Somatic Sex Education: [sexualbodywork.com](http://sexualbodywork.com)

## Los Angeles: Work With This Site's Creator

**Donavon Lerman** (creator of [somatics.donavonlerman.com](http://somatics.donavonlerman.com)) offers individual somatic education sessions in Los Angeles.

His approach integrates: - Awareness practices and guided inquiry - Movement exploration - Trauma-informed touch (when appropriate and by consent) - Principles from Somatic Sex Education, Wheel of Consent, and mindfulness practices

Donavon is a Certified Somatic Sex Educator in training with additional training in sexological bodywork, consent education, and body-centered practices. His work is especially supportive for those exploring embodiment, consent, intimacy, or healing from sexual shame and trauma.

**Learn more:** [donavonlerman.com/massage](http://donavonlerman.com/massage)

---

## Your Next Steps

- **Try one practice from this guide** (start with the body scan or breath awareness)
  - **Explore the full website** at [somatics.donavonlerman.com](http://somatics.donavonlerman.com)
  - **If you're ready, find a practitioner** using the directories above
  - **Share this resource** with anyone who might benefit
- 

## Final Thoughts

Somatics is an invitation to come home to your body—not as it “should” be, but as it is right now.

It's a practice of listening, noticing, and allowing. Of slowing down and feeling. Of reclaiming authority over your own experience.

There is no destination. No perfect state to achieve. Just the ongoing practice of being present with what is.

Welcome to your somatic journey.

---

## About This Guide

This guide was created by **Understanding Somatics**, a free educational resource exploring body-centered practices, their benefits, methods, and diverse contributors.

Visit **[somatics.donavonlerman.com](http://somatics.donavonlerman.com)** for comprehensive information about: - What somatics is and why it matters - How different somatic methods work - The history and diverse lineages of the field - Somatic principles in sexuality education - Research, resources, and more

**Support this free resource:** If this guide has been valuable to you, consider supporting the project to help keep it free and accessible for all.

---

*This guide is for educational purposes and is not a substitute for professional medical or therapeutic advice.*

© 2026 Understanding Somatics | [somatics.donavonlerman.com](http://somatics.donavonlerman.com)