

I have a syndrome or syndromes – chronic fatigue, chronic pain, fibromyalgia, MCS, etc... and I can't keep up with the pace of this program. How can I benefit from this work when I can only do a tiny bit, without getting overwhelmed and/or crashing?

This can certainly be frustrating! The best answer we have found is to make peace with just doing those tiny bits, consistently, and with plenty of space after to integrate. 'Less is more' really is true with this work! **Go at your own pace.**

We really cannot stress enough how important this is. The foundation of this work is learning how much of it we can tolerate in any given period. In our achievement-based culture, even learning to sense and honour our own unique capacity IS doing the rewiring work. So even though it may feel like nothing is happening, if we can keep on doing little bits of this work, a little at a time, and work on integrating the principles into our daily life, especially orienting to safety, those little pieces will add up.

It can feel so tempting to try and do 'big work', but if we end up overwhelming our system then we have only reinforced the perception that this stuff is dangerous to work with. Step by step, one bit at a time, slow and steady. This is how we build capacity and restore regulation to even the most damaged systems.

Can I do SBSM while on medications like antidepressants, benzos, SSRI's, medications to support sleep, and others?

Since we are not doctors, psychiatrists, or medical professionals, we cannot advise you on whether or not to take medications. However, we can tell you what we have seen anecdotally with our clients.

Many of us on Team Lyon have worked with clients who were taking some form of psychoactive medication, with varying results. One thing that is common for most though, is that eventually they hit a ceiling with the somatic work, due to the suppressive effects of many of these medications.

My kids activate me or are traumatized themselves which stirs up my own trauma, which makes healing much more difficult. How can I calm myself down and not be so triggered by them, and how can I help them?

Unfortunately, it's a plain fact that healing one's own trauma becomes much more complex when one has children. For one, anything unresolved in us from our own childhood will usually get activated by our children, and often those layers correspond with our kid's age – so we may be plunged into our early/developmental trauma when they are born or may encounter all the stressors from when we were 2, when they are 2, for example. It's not always that direct, but it is quite common.

Also, the more unresolved trauma we have, the more we will invariably pass on to our children, as their nervous systems learn from our nervous systems, and their behaviours are formed by our behaviours. So, the number one thing any parent can do is work to resolve their own trauma, as much as is possible among the many responsibilities of parenthood. And that's usually not a quick process, and more often requires years of dedicated work. Which is trickier when we are getting triggered by our kids. Nevertheless, the most effective focus is on revolving our own trauma and increasing our own capacity and regulation, rather than trying to stop their behaviours that are triggering us.

Most often these behaviours are totally innocent and a natural expression of youthful vitality – running, screaming, jumping, playing, laughing, etc. and the last thing we want to do is squash their vitality because it triggers us. Also, we may be triggered by their pain, anger, sadness, hurt, or symptoms of their own unresolved trauma.

So as parents, despite the challenges, the best thing we can do is work on ourselves. What to do in the meantime? How to remain calm in the face of our kid's natural exuberance, difficult emotions, or expressions of their own dysregulation?

There's no one thing that will work for everyone, but there are general principles to be aware of that can be helpful for everyone.

One – know what calms you! What are your resources? What slows your pulse, and helps you relax? Granted this isn't something unsafe for you or your kids (injecting heroin is not advisable, for example) then use those resources! What SBSM practices are helpful for you to soothe and settle? There is a list of the neurosensory exercises that most commonly have this effect (bearing in mind individual differences) here.... <https://smartbodysmartmind.com/the-20-most-frequently-asked-questions/#collapse-1-119123>

Two – sometimes it's important to allow the activation to be expressed, in order for soothing practices and resources to calm down can be effective. So, you may need to take yourself someplace quiet(er) and more private, such as your bathroom, and allow that sympathetic energy to be mobilized. The [Healthy Aggression tools](#) can be a place to start, but also make room for your own impulses to be heard and followed. AND – another tricky part, especially if our kids are young, it's not the best for them to hear screams and other potentially scary sounds coming from their parent, so you may have to work more with breath, facial expression, and musculature.

Three – Use any good support you have. Partners, spouses, grandparents, uncles, aunts, friends, etc.... Any person who is regulated enough to maintain a calm, connected presence with your kids and who is willing, should be viewed as a very important resource. It does indeed take a village, and though we are often lacking that, we do need to take advantage of any good support that is available to us, even if it only means ten minutes to ourselves to do some processing.

Four – as much as possible, engage WITH your kids in healthy ways. If your young kids have big sympathetic energy coming out, find ways to join them in play that match them (granted this is possible for you, and within your capacity to do). With kids whose imagination is still fully online and are into playing, it can be so easy to find games that give BOTH you and the kid a chance to express and move some of that big energy.

'Let's play dinosaurs! What dinosaur are you? What sound do you make? How do you move? I'm a T-Rex and I go 'grrrrrrrrrr-aaahhhhhhh!' STOMP STOMP STOMP (and do the stomping)' Make a big castle of blocks together and then turn allow the kid to turn into a hurricane that destroys it – granted they are feeling destructive and that is something they want to do. Do sports of some kind together.

Conversely, do easy, co-regulating activities together – snuggle while reading them a story, or watching an (age-appropriate please) movie together, that kind of thing.

It is hard, no doubt, and complex, and messy. It may be a good idea to set up a therapy fund rather than a college fund if you can't afford both, so your kids can get good support individually, or with you in a group session, when they get older. There is a lot you can do however, and I hope this has given you some ideas. Remember – fundamentally, the most helpful thing you can do, is to get regulated yourself.

How to find safety when the entire world feels unsafe? How do we feel safe in the face of existential threat?

While ultimately this depends on the kind of inner work we do, there are also some very practical, everyday kinds of things we can do that will help a lot and make that inner work more effective.

1.) Avoid watching or reading any mainstream media, or even 'alternative' media. I understand that there is a deeply seated need in many people to be 'informed', but the media at this point (and for a long time, but it's gotten much more intense in the past two years) is a fear-generating machine.

There are billions and billions of human interactions and events every day, and the majority of them are neutral or positive. The media only presents you with the most scary stuff, a lot of which is misinformed if not outright manufactured or presented in the worst possible light; but even if it weren't, the narrative presented by the media is a tiny slice of the sum total of human experience, and it seems to have an agenda to keep people afraid. So that's one of the biggest things – stop taking in that poison.

Or, if you feel that it IS important to still take in various forms of media, you may benefit from watching this conversation between Irene and Joe Martino on Media sensemaking from a trauma-informed lens ... <https://youtu.be/VHjC0eOkjB8?si=40ss0uUP-ZXa80GH>

Denzel Washington once said, 'if you don't watch the news you're uninformed, but if you watch the news you are misinformed'. I agree completely, but I'll add that actually, there are many ways to be informed that come from the shamanic traditions of relating to the natural world as our primary source of information.

2.) We did not evolve to be able to process an entire world's worth of events. We aren't meant to know about everything that's happening everywhere. Turn your attention to 'The Earth' not 'The World'. Pay attention to the natural world as much as possible. She tells a very different story than the doom and gloom narrative.

Try to keep your attention local as much as possible – your room, your house, your yard, your street, your neighbourhood. What flowers are blooming? What do they smell like? What's it like to feel the shade of trees, and to touch their bark? How does the wind feel on your skin? What birds are in the area? Spend time with your bare feet on the grass or dirt, which facilitates beneficial electron exchange.

These are very positive sources of information and are the kinds of things we evolved perceiving and relating to for hundreds of thousands of years, and so they inherently support well-being.

3.) Connect to other people that feel safe, people you can be authentic with. Avoid as much as possible any and all people who are toxic, especially if they are family members who have a powerful energetic and biological influence.

4.) Finally, continue to do the inner work that you are learning about in this curriculum so that you can increase your capacity and resiliency in the face of any threat.

How does this work, work? Is it about doing the lessons over and over again?

This work can be best compared to learning a second language, or a musical instrument. You have to practice and repeat a LOT at first. You have to develop your vocabulary and learn conjugations or practice your scales and develop your technique. Ultimately though, this work is not about doing the lessons at all.

Ultimately, it is about becoming so versed in the theory and practices that you don't need to listen to the audio or watch the video – it's all internalized and there, ready to be used spontaneously as needed. You become fluent in your second language and can write poetry. You become skilled enough on your instrument to improvise with a jazz band.

When you find yourself spontaneously and naturally orienting throughout the day, aware of the ground under you and what's around you, and how you feel internally in relationship to that all the time, it's just part of your way of being, then you've become fluent with orienting. It's like that.

I have early/developmental trauma. What are the best neurosensory exercises for building capacity, internal safety, and promoting Parasympathetic downregulation and soothing?

Bearing in mind that everyone is unique, and that some exercises that are soothing for most people may be stimulating for others, these are the exercises that we feel best support building capacity, supporting safety, and the function of parasympathetic downregulation.

LAB 1 > LESSON 1: Researching Your Resources

LAB 3 > LESSON 2: Basic Joints

LAB 4 > LESSON 2: Dropping In

LAB 4 > LESSON 3: Kidney/Adrenal Awareness

LAB 5 > LESSON 4: Dropping Your Adrenals

LAB 6 > LESSON 2: Layers

LAB 6 > LESSON 3: Containment

LAB 7 > LESSON 1: Tickling the Vagus with VOO (VUU)]

LAB 7 > LESSON 3: Gentle Head “Rolling”

LAB 7 > LESSON 4: Gut-Brain Awareness & Intentions

EXTRA RESOURCES: Watering the Brainstem

How do we work with fear and anxiety? What about if it's in the middle of the night?

Anxiety is just another word for fear, which is the energy behind the flight side of the Sympathetic survival response. When working with this energy just staying present and feeling it may be ok if you are able to do that *while not fearing the sensations of fear*. This can be difficult to do without shutting down or getting overstimulated though, so being proactive and mobilizing the body in some way is usually recommended. This is often the most effective at actually transforming the energy and renegotiating the trauma.

Even if you are tired and it's the middle of the night, which is often when fear and panic surface for many, this can still be a good practice sometimes, if you're not sleeping anyway. You could try just sitting up and expressing a bit, or you could get up and mobilize in other ways. I talk about this in this Q&A Call at 37:56. [Have a listen \(password is 'REWIRE'\)](#).

You could also try some of the containment practices from Lab 6 and see how that kind of intervention feels. If you are a new member and we haven't gotten to Lab 6 yet, there is an

example of one containment practice on YT here –
<https://youtu.be/0ICsbXUCKmM?si=UekVzT-w8aPd42Sw>

How do we work with grief?

The best thing we can do with grief is invite it in and essentially, get out of the way.

Grief is like a wave that moves through the body, and most people have a habit of constricting around it, so they associate grief with tightness in the chest, throat, eyes, forehead, but that tightness is actually the body trying to manage the grief, not the grief itself. When the system is open, grief is actually a powerful, expansive experience – it flows through like a wave and out the eyes as tears, so if we are having trouble letting grief move, **we often want to focus on softening the throat, mouth, eyes, and forehead** – this is what I mean by getting out of the way.

Staying connected to the physicality of grief is very important – the wave moving through the body, the sobs that may want to happen and how the diaphragm is involved with that, the wetness of tears on the face, the sounds that may want to emerge. **Staying connected to somatic experience of grief, and NOT the image or story of what the grief is about, is very important in letting it move through.** Otherwise, we can get caught in a loop where we start to feel sad, and then go into the mind and think about it, and feel more sad, and think about it more, etc... which never lets us get to that primal, powerful expression of grief.

Can this work heal autoimmune disorders, neurological conditions, and other severe health issues?

While this work can certainly help with, and even resolve these types of severe health issues, it's very important to also recognize that there can be multiple, more complicated causes for such problems which may not be related directly to trauma and the expected resultant nervous system dysfunction.

If symptoms, issues and conditions arose due to things such as: exposure to toxicity in the air, water, or soil either from chemicals, mold, poor sanitation, or other, various forms of radiation, pharmaceutical interventions, hormonal issues, or if there was and is severe deficiencies in nutrients or other things the body needs, it may be that other interventions in addition to this work will also be necessary.

Some of these interventions could include things like: dietary change to support better nutrition and/or hydration; various detox protocols such as chelation therapy, oxygen therapy, or with a product like [Pure Body and/or Pure Body Extra](#), which Irene and Seth have both used to detox from heavy metals in the body, and which they recommend.

Other helpful interventions they've been using include exposure to natural light outside first thing upon waking (no glasses or contacts), which supports circadian rhythms and mitochondrial health, and grounding with bare feet on the Earth frequently, which discharges electrical buildup in the system and facilitates a beneficial electron exchange. Getting fresh air and moderate to intense exercise regularly can be very helpful, as is hydrotherapy - going from hot to cold, for flushing the lymphatic system and promoting good circulation. Here are some links to interviews Irene has done with various teachers in these fields:

[Healing from toxins & detoxing with zeolite \(interview with Eddie Stone\)](#)

[Understanding sunlight for health and healing with Carrie Bennett](#)

[Harnessing the sun for health and healing with Sarah Kleiner](#)

[Optimizing our health using quantum biologic principles with Corey Ghazvini](#)

[Healthy guts, hormones, sleep & a lot more with Kitty Martone](#)

[A deep dive into hormonal health \(for the ladies\) with Kitty Martone](#)

[Going carnivore & healing with Sarah Kleiner \(aka Carnivore Yogi\)](#)

[Hydrotherapy, Terrain Theory, & Naturopathic Musings](#)

[My health regimen \(20 years in the making!\)](#)

How do I work with fear or anxiety around a specific situation? Like driving, flying, or being around lots of people, for example?

The first thing to know is that these types of specific fears often tend to diminish as we do the overall good somatic trauma work in general. That being said, there are definitely some ways to work with fear of specific situations, and they revolve around the principle of titration.

The first thing to try is, when you are in a state where you do NOT feel activated at all, and your surroundings are safe, to use your imagination. What happens if you simply imagine the thing you are afraid of? Very often this will produce the same kinds of sensations as one might experience when actually in the situation, though sometimes they may be milder, kind of like an echo of the full experience.

So, if that perks things up, then good! You can now work with those sensations using all your somatic tools and know how. You can pendulate between the imagined scenario and orienting to the actual environment around you, you can find out where the uncomfortable sensation is happening in the body and work with principles like tense and relax, or diaphragm work, or maybe some healthy aggression is needed. Follow your impulses and work with what arises.

There are often further ways of titrating the experience and applying the same process. Say you have a fear of driving – ok, then after working solely with the imagination, go and actually get behind the wheel, but don't start the engine. Just sit there and again imagine driving, but this time work the gas and brake, put your hands on the wheel, etc.... – bring in some of the somatic actions associated with driving in the actual environment. Next time maybe you start the engine, but don't go anywhere. Then you go for a drive just around the block, pulling over and stopping at any point and working with the experience. This kind of approach can apply to many situations.

Another thing to try is to bring in a safe ally during these explorations, and then to bring that person with you during the actual experience. So perhaps, if you have a fear of being around a lot of people, you 'practice' going to the mall in the ways described above, with your ally present, and you share with them your experience. Then you try actually going to the mall with them, knowing you can sit and work somatically, or leave, at any time, with them there to support you.

This type of titrated approach, bridging between the imagination and the real experience with titration and support, can be very effective!

How do I tell the difference between freeze and relaxation/tiredness? Is it a good thing if, while doing these exercises, I start yawning a lot?

This seems like a simple question, but it actually is quite complex, so please bear with me... It's not really 'good' or 'bad', but it can be indicative of two very different experiences.

Yawning shows that the Parasympathetic branch of the nervous system (PNS) is coming online, that is the downregulating branch that brings us out of Sympathetic activation (fight/flight). This would seem on the surface to always be a 'good' thing, but it really depends on which branch of the PNS is perking up and producing the yawns – the ventral vagal and/or low tone dorsal, or the high-tone dorsal.

The Ventral Vagal Complex (VVC) is our social engagement system and is very healthy for the human being. The Dorsal Vagal Complex (DVC) is the part of our PNS that governs rest/digest/repair when there is a low voltage (low tone) of energy going to that system, and that is also very healthy.

So, if it is these things that are coming online then that yawn is a sign that you are dropping into greater internal safety and rest, and that is very healthy. However, the DVC also governs our freeze response – this is what happens when a LOT of energy is going to that system (high-tone). And this can also produce yawns and going into the freeze response is not healthy for the human system, as it is meant to be a last resort system that only comes on when we are in imminent danger of dying.

However, due to the complexity of the kinds of trauma we now experience, and the function of our neo-cortex, many human systems have learned to recruit the freeze response as a go-to in times of stress. So, if it is the former, healthy kind of PNS activity (VVC, and low tone DVC) then these yawns will tend to be pleasant and come along with a general feeling of lassitude and well-being. If it is the later (high tone DVC) then these yawns will tend to be uncontrollable, never really able to 'complete', and may come along with a feeling of being knocked out, dissociated, spacey, or numb.

Also, one can go into freeze without the uncontrollable yawns, but you can still tell the difference between freeze and relaxation by noticing if elements of freeze are present. If you feel spaced out, numb, depressed, lethargic, very heavy, dissociated, brain fog – these are indications that freeze is present. If you simply feel tired, fatigued, but kind of neutral or even pleasant too, that's an indication that this is more likely to be exhaustion or tiredness.

What are some signs that will tell me my nervous system is starting to be more regulated, and how long will it take to heal completely?

These are such valid questions, especially after one has (like so many of you have) tried pretty much everything to heal. The thing is though, what that looks like may be different for each person, but I can give some ideas.

One of the main signs of healing and increased regulation is symptoms that have been around forever fading away - that chronic ache is gone, or you find that it's easier to socially engage. Perhaps the anxiety is much less, or you find that you have more energy. There's no way to say for sure what exactly will happen or when, but you can be sure that if you put in the time and effort, your symptoms will start to shift.

And very often, new sensations and experiences will arise! One common experience that is a good, but uncomfortable sign, is that one may feel much better emotionally and mentally - the cycles of depression are gone, and the anxiety has lifted, or the intrusive thoughts are way less, etc. - but their body may hurt more, or a rash may pop up out of nowhere. When this kind of thing happens, it is a definite sign that the system is releasing old trauma and regulation is returning. Same thing if the body starts to feel much better, but one finds themselves angry and irritable for no reason at all, or one starts to feel WAY more in general, whereas before they were numb and didn't feel much at all.

What we are looking for is CHANGE, even if it's a temporarily uncomfortable change, that shows that the patterns of dysfunction that the system has been locked into are shifting, making way for greater energy and health.

As for how long? Sorry, it is impossible to say, as this is completely dependent on what one has been through, what kind of experiences and other treatments they've explored, their personality, their living and work situation, their relationships, and just the unique nature of their being. A person may have had a bad car crash but had solid attachment and a healthy family system growing up, and they can get totally better in a couple months. Or a person may have had really bad early/developmental trauma, and even though there is nothing readily available in their history that identifies as 'a big trauma', it can take years of practicing the work to get back to regulation. It is SO personal that I can't say for sure how long.

One thing I can say for sure though, is that this work is not about 'fixing a problem' in the traditional mechanical way that we tend to see this in the west. It is about fundamentally

changing the way we live and relate to the world and ourselves. It is a total lifestyle shift that lasts a lifetime.

Also, I don't think there IS actually any end to healing. I mean, one can get back to regulation, and have full functionality and live a life full of health, vitality and purpose, and STILL have old layers arise from time to time. Or they may then move into processing more transpersonal trauma at the cultural, planetary, or Universal level. As we get better and better, and have more and more capacity, we simply have room to experience more in general, including deeper processes of healing.

Are there certain exercises that are meant for addressing specific issues?

To some degree, yes. There are a few exercises focused specifically on soothing and regulation, like the Kidney Adrenal exercises and 'Gut-Brain Awareness and Intention'. And there are some tools in the Healthy aggression module that are specifically for working with anger and tension.

That being said, it's highly individual and some people may not respond to these things in the same way as others. Some people may get more uncomfortable and agitated when they tune into their kidneys and adrenals. Some people may respond really well to Orienting when they get activated, others may get MORE activated from this and respond better to something like the Containment exercise.

The exercises in this program are about giving you a large and varied pallet of tools to work with creatively. Ultimately, it's about learning and internalizing these interventions and using them, and even combining them, organically and creatively, moment to moment, in whatever way works well for your unique system.

Why do we have certain phobias? How do we work with them?

Sometimes there are specific traumas that are an obvious cause of phobias and sometimes not. For example, we may have had a close call with drowning in a bathtub as a toddler, and thereafter have a fear of water. Or there may be no obvious cause like this.

Either way, we work with it the same way we work with anything else - somatically! What are the sensations in the body happening when the phobia rears its head? That's the first thing to

find out. Then we work with that experience at the body level in the ways that you are learning.

How do I work with limiting subconscious beliefs, intrusive thought loops, internal dialogue, paranoia, and self-criticism? Will these thought patterns ever change from doing this work?

The first thing to know about this, is that these thoughts are just another symptom of the underlying activation and dysregulation. It is the threat response living in the mind and presenting as worry, fixation, looking for threat, etc.... So yes, as we get more and more regulated, these mental manifestations become less of a problem.

First, they become less convincing, where we still have the same patterns, but they don't hook us in so much as we learn to direct our attention elsewhere. As we get more and more regulated, they will often disappear entirely, though an echo of these patterns CAN persist long after regulation is established and trauma is healed, kind of like a slightly annoying mosquito that's easy to squash.

The best way we have found to work with these mental experiences is a twofold approach.

1. Name it for what it is. Consciously say to yourself, 'I have the thought that xyz...'
2. Redirect your attention to the body. What are the sensations and emotions happening in the body while these thoughts are happening? Focus on those and work at that felt-sense level with the somatic tools you are learning.

This takes a LOT of repetition and practice. Those mental experiences are often VERY well-worn grooves, and it takes a lot of repetition to drag our energy out of those tracks.

Is there a reason why one side of the body is easier to work with than another? Why does one side often seem so different from the other?

This is indeed a common experience, and the reasons why could be many.

It may have to do with the direction that threat came from, or if the stressor or 'bad thing' was associated more with the left or right side of the brain. It may also have to do with postural dynamics, or repetitive motions.

No matter the cause, noticing differences and moving our attention back and forth between those different experiences is a way that we will often work with expressions of held trauma, so oftentimes it can be a gift that one side may feel less stressed than the other, and over time we tend to see the two sides equalize - where the side that was more stressed relaxes, and/or the side where we may have felt very little starts to have new sensations.

How to communicate with loved ones while healing in this work, if they just don't get it?

Have a look at this letter we drafted precisely for this purpose. Feel free to modify or use this as is (this was written for our SmartBody SmartMind students, so if you are in the 21 Days program, just modify it a bit to reflect that). <https://smartbodysmartmind.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/How-toSupport.pdf>

Can I still heal while being in a relationship with a toxic person, or living in a toxic family situation?

If you at least have access to a safe room that is your own and have the ability to have boundaries about who enters (a lock is a good idea!) then you can begin the process. But, in order to fully heal you WILL need to eventually be in a safe living situation and be able to let go of, or hold very strong boundaries with, the toxic people in your life. Here is an article entirely about this subject: [Sometimes we have to break up with our family.](#)

How do we process toxic shame?

This is such an important part of healing trauma. The key to processing internalized toxic shame lies in finding our way towards feeling and expressing disgust. This doesn't mean that we feel disgusted about ourselves, but that we allow ourselves to feel and express the disgust that our body feels at having to hold such toxic energy.

Other elements may include working with the posture of shame by allowing ourselves to collapse into that shame posture - chest collapsed, shoulders forward, head down, tail between the legs - and then to slowly move into the antipode posture, the Superhero posture' - standing tall, hands-on hips, shoulders back, chest high, chin lifted. Moving between these postures mindfully and slowly and really feeling how they feel can also help us, as also may

working with the thwarted self-protective impulses, and healthy aggression that would have wanted to arise to protect us from receiving that toxic shame.

Here are some further resources on this subject:

VLOG: [Disgust: The gateway emotion for healing toxic shame](#)

ARTICLE: [How toxic shame creates the fallout we call depression](#)

VLOG: [The origin of negative thoughts](#)

ARTICLE: [Healthy Aggression](#)

I have resistance to Orienting and/or strange bodily reactions when I do it, is this normal?

Orienting is the single most important basic tool in this program, and for good reason.

Being simultaneously aware of both the environment and our internal response is something ALL mammals (except for us) do automatically and all the time, except for when they are asleep. It's an awareness we are supposed to have ticking away whenever we are engaged with the world. It's a fundamental part of being alive, and yet so few of us know how to do it at all. Also for good reason.

This is because trauma and chronic stress happen in the environment. They happen in relation to people and things in our space. As a result, most of us learn very early on to either not pay attention to the environment because it's too unsafe (resulting in things like clumsiness, being 'accident prone', and having a tendency to dissociate), or we pay attention to the environment in a way that is driven by hypervigilance (resulting in experiences like anxiety and chronic tension).

So, can you see why slowing down and attempting to engage in a gentle, natural curiosity could bring up SO much?

Most of us have avoided doing this for our whole life because being relaxed, curious, and aware in our environment was not possible when we were kids and into later life. So engaging with our self and our environment in this way, which was often NOT supported when we were young or which was overwhelmed by sustained stress at some point, will invariably bring up the stress and trauma we experienced during those times when we lacked any support.

So, we may resist orienting at all or, if we try, we may check out into daydreams or distract ourselves with racing thoughts, get angry or irritated or anxious, feel nauseous or feel nothing at all, etc.... These experiences happen because we are stirring up those old, stuck body memories and emotions, and our system is trying to protect us from feeling all that again.

Sometimes there may also be very specific traumas that have to do with some sector of our environment, like we don't want to look to the left because that's where that bicycle came from that hit us, or I don't want to look up and to the right because that's where my father always stood, over my right shoulder, yelling at me while I tried to do my homework. Or maybe we ALWAYS want to pay extra close attention to those sectors to keep an eye out for bicycles and angry fathers, and we miss the rest of our environment. There can also be physical pain and tension that build up from always avoiding, or habitually going towards, certain areas in our field of vision.

When we manage to do a bit of orienting to the safety around us, even a little bit is often a huge change for our nervous system, and afterwards we may feel nauseous, have a headache, or feel absolutely exhausted.

ALL OF THE ABOVE IS NORMAL

The only way out is through. We need to keep doing it in whatever bits we can manage, as often as we can manage it, even if that only means one minute a day to start. Remember, this is an awareness that we are supposed to have online all the time, unless we are asleep. It is a fundamental shift in our entire way of being in the world and in relationship to our environment, and that's why it can bring up so much.

Here are some further resources on Orienting:

VIDEO: [What do you do when you have unresolved trauma? Two types of Orienting](#)

VIDEO: [What the heck is Orienting? And why is it so important?](#)

Can you explain a bit more about why some of us have constant disturbing dreams? Why is the body/mind perceiving such a threat at night? And what can we do?

When we are holding unresolved trauma in our system, it is always there. Whether we are awake or asleep, that survival energy is running in the background, affecting all levels of the

mind, including the unconscious and subconscious landscapes that we often traverse in dreams, and so we often experience impressions of those survival energies through frightening dreams.

As far as what to do with it, the answer is: do this work. We just have to keep going and do this work consistently and make it part of how we live our life. What is so wonderful to see happen, and I see this over and over again, is that as people start to heal in the waking world, those positive changes also cross over to the dream world, and people start to have changes in familiar, disturbing scenarios - like all of a sudden they are able to say NO, or fight back, or escape.

Also, if we wake up from such a dream, we may want to go to our resources and soothe ourselves, rather than immediately trying to go back to sleep. Or we can work right then and there with the imagery. This means not suppressing or soothing any lingering fear but rather, working with it. Sit up and put your feet on the floor and let the legs run, let them express that fear you are feeling. See yourself in your mind successfully escaping the dangerous thing from your dream. Or flip the script into fight - imagine an image of the thing your system is fearing and use your [Healthy Aggression](#) tools to mobilize the body into expressing self-protection. This approach is more advanced and requires more capacity but can sometimes lead to a deeper resolution than simply soothing the system. Your choice!

Why do I get so tired during the videos and/or neurosensory exercises? Or why do I feel more activated - stressed, angry, afraid - after the videos and/or exercises?

The purpose of this work is to first educate you on what is happening in your system, so you can understand it and have a more conscious, and less reactive, relationship with your internal experiences. And the work itself is meant to guide you into your system in different ways such that the old, stuck, junk in the system can start moving out, and when that happens, it usually doesn't feel 'good' in the way that we normally define that word!

Granted you are not sleep deprived, if you are feeling tired or even exhausted after watching one of the educational videos or doing an exercise, that probably means that your system just did some hard work - which can definitely happen just from taking in the theory. If this happens consistently then it probably means that you need to go a bit more slowly and do less when you watch or engage with the lessons. Same thing if you're feeling activated.

In either case, if you notice these things happening during the lesson, then STOP. Do something else and come back to the lesson the next day.

How do I tell the difference between a healthy impulse or resource vs an unhealthy coping strategy?

The difference between a coping mechanism and a healthy impulse or resource can be blurry, as sometimes a thing is both. But if I have to make a distinction it would be this: a coping mechanism is used to keep one from going into overwhelm or to manage habitual stress, while a resource or healthy impulse is something that helps us be with the overwhelm and stress in a way that genuinely moves us towards greater health and healing. That being said, if a coping mechanism is what we have, that in itself is a form of resource, because it IS helping us maintain our sense of wellbeing, even if it isn't healthy in a holistic sense.

A coping mechanism is typically something we use in order to deal with life. It could be a behaviour, substance we consume, thought pattern, avoidance, or distraction when we get stressed, or even a bodily posture we unconsciously adopt. Coping mechanisms generally aid one in checking out, numbing out, or otherwise avoiding what's happening, and are often detrimental to health. BUT! They are still an important part of us staying sane and feeling safe on the way to developing internal resources hearing our healthy impulses, so in that sense they do contribute to the healing process, as long as we are learning and working to develop different options, and not only staying fixated on our existing behaviours.

Also, sometimes they can be fairly benign. For example, I always read a lot (and I mean a LOT) of science fiction and fantasy as a kid. It was my escape and it helped me survive. There were no adverse effects, so it was a pretty healthy coping mechanism.

To be clear again – a coping mechanism should never be seen as 'bad'; they helped us survive and get to this point. It's better to have coping mechanisms, and better yet to be aware of what they are, than to not have any or to be unaware of what we are doing to manage our stress. And again, if coping mechanisms are all we have at this point – that is a form of resource.

A resource or impulse that doesn't involve coping or management is something that helps us be with the stress without suppressing it, and then enables us to come down from that activation in a natural way, so we can move forward in our healing.

Sometimes though, things that people think are healthy resources are actually coping mechanisms in disguise. For example, someone could say that their meditation practice, yoga routine, or exercise regimen is a resource, and that may be, if they are not rigidly habitual about the practice, and if they are trauma informed, tuned in, and know how to work with the material that may get triggered by these activities. But more often than not in our culture, these practices are actually glorified coping mechanisms that simply look nicer than drugs, booze, or compulsive shopping.

A truly positive resource is often internal, meaning it is some quality or ability we have within ourselves, and for trauma survivors these are generally the things that are lacking and need to be learned the most (which is what this work is all about!).

Internal resources can be things like being able to tap into one's own innate sense of safety or personal power, having the capacity to allow difficult emotions and sensations to move through the body, or having awareness of what fight/flight activation (that sympathetic nervous system) feels like, and how to come down through activating the parasympathetic in different ways. And healthy impulses may mean organically allowing sounds or movements to come through, or simply feeling the kind of tea we want to have, or which way to go on a walk.

Resources can also be external, for instance, social engagement with safe people or even pets, or immersing oneself in water or music, or orienting to the safety in the external environment, are all-natural ways to feel into our experience and to bring down activation. These are the kinds of things we generally see as resources.

A final note on impulses. True, healthy, biological impulses are almost always far 'quieter' than impulses and cravings that are driven out of a need to cope or manage our survival energy. Very often at the beginning of this work we need to learn to really listen for those quieter signals, and one way to cultivate this is by starting with following our most basic, biological impulses – pee when we need to, eat when we are hungry, allow ourselves to pass gas instead of holding it in (granted that won't lead to more stress and activation given the situation), etc... Over time, we can start to hear these internal impulses more clearly and may get guidance about all sorts of things, like turning at a different street than usual and it turns out we saved ourselves from a traffic jam, or which alley we should avoid walking down because it really isn't safe, etc...

Impulses that come from a place of survival and management tend to be more loud, urgent, and often objectively not healthy in a holistic sense, and following them can sometimes lead to further drama and stress – like, I follow my impulse to scream at a co-worker (because actually

I'm triggered into survival energy) and then I lose my job which creates more stress. Or I follow my impulse to eat all the cookies in the cookie jar, but actually I was suppressing grief and now I have a stomachache.

How to know when you need a break from the work?

If, while doing a neurosensory exercise or watching one of the educational videos, you are feeling exhausted, spacey, can't concentrate, disconnected, or numb; or, on the flip side – very agitated, angry, tense, or irritable, those are all indications that it could be time to take a break.

It's okay, and normal, to have moments of all of these experiences as we are working with our system, but if these kinds of experiences persist longer than a few minutes, and don't change no matter how you work with them, then that is generally a sign that we need to take a break from the work and go do something else for a while.

Also, on a bigger picture scale – if you have symptoms that flare after doing a piece of work that is also normal, but if they don't subside after about 24 hours, that is often an indication that you have done too much, so that can serve as good information for doing your next piece of work. SO often with this work, less truly is more, because if we do more than we can integrate that can reinforce impressions in our body and psyche that this material is dangerous to work with.

I'm feeling more stressed than before I started this work, or emotional about things I was "numb" about before, is this normal? I get fear about healing if it means I'll feel more pain!

Yes, totally normal and a good thing. It may not feel like a good thing, because of the discomfort, but there is simply no way to heal this stuff if we are numb. As we say – if you can feel it, then you can heal it!

This is also why it is SO important to go slow and really titrate this work. When we do that, our system will generally not offer up more than we have the capacity to deal with. If we've been living in freeze, functional or otherwise, as we connect and attune to our system, and the freeze starts to lift, we can have periods of actually feeling MORE stressed than before we started this work, as the underlying Sympathetic energy starts to move. We may feel angry, afraid, and new, uncomfortable sensations.

Being afraid of this is understandable, but there simply is no other way out but through, so we really need to work on accepting this, knowing that it is our life energy returning to us, and that the discomfort won't last forever. We also may need to work more proactively with engaging the Sympathetic system in healthy ways, like with increased exercise, and/or things like the Healthy Aggression work in Lab 6, or the VUUU-AHH from Lab 7. Contrarily, we may also need to use our resources more, and support our Parasympathetic downregulation with some of these practices (bearing in mind that everyone is unique, and that exercises that are soothing for some people may be stimulating for others):

LAB 1 > LESSON 1: Researching Your Resources

LAB 3 > LESSON 2: Basic Joints

LAB 4 > LESSON 2: Dropping In

LAB 4 > LESSON 3: Kidney/Adrenal Awareness

LAB 5 > LESSON 4: Dropping Your Adrenals

LAB 6 > LESSON 2: Layers

LAB 6 > LESSON 3: Containment

LAB 7 > LESSON 1: Tickling the Vagus with VOO (VUU)]

LAB 7 > LESSON 3: Gentle Head “Rolling”

LAB 7 > LESSON 4: Gut-Brain Awareness & Intentions

EXTRA RESOURCES: Watering the Brainstem

On the bright side, being able to feel more uncomfortable things means we also will get to feel more wonderful things, though that may not be apparent right away.

I'm behind in the course. I'm following my impulse to go at my own rate but frustrated at being behind!

Totally normal. This is so common in our achievement-based culture, so even going at your own pace often means doing some significant re-wiring work. The benefits of honoring the needs of your own system cannot be overstated, so have a 'talk' with that part of yourself that is frustrated.

First, see if you can feel that worry or frustration in your body. If so, consider gently resting a hand there in the spirit of communication. If you can't feel it in your body just let this be an internal dialogue. Express care for that part of yourself, let it know you hear it, and that the desire to 'keep up' is just one more thing that you are healing. Let yourself know that finding the pace that is right for you is the first, VERY important step in this work.

Finally, understand at the cognitive level that this material isn't going anywhere. You have it for life, and you can return each round we run live to ask questions of the support team. Also, there are many wise and helpful Alumni who have done many rounds and who also maybe supportive in the Peer-to-Peer and/or Alumni threads.

I wake up with a racing heart, fear, and panic. How do I work with this?

The BIG picture answer - keep doing the work. Waking up in a panic is a common expression of a system that is holding a lot of unresolved fight/flight energy, and it is by doing the steady work to clear that out and restore regulation that this will resolve.

Small picture answer - in the moment, there are a couple of things you can do in a broad sense; either work to calm the activation or go with the activation. If you are working in the direction of calming, it means soothing the system, so use your resources, whatever they are - tea, hot water, a teddy bear, whatever. Oftentimes people will just try to go back to sleep, and the system will generally respond better if we actually get up for a bit and attend to it, as inconvenient as that may be.

Or we can go with the activation. This means allowing that panicked energy and even encouraging it. Sit up and put your feet on the floor and let the legs run, let them express that fear you are feeling. Or flip the script into fight - imagine an image of the thing your system is fearing and use your Healthy Aggression tools to mobilize the body into expressing self-protection. This approach is more advanced and requires more capacity but can sometimes lead to a deeper resolution than simply soothing the system. Your choice!

Here are some resources that may be helpful with these approaches:

Video: [Why you are waking up in a panic attack](#)

Video: [DIY Ancient Anxiety Medicine](#)

Blog: [Healthy Aggression: the way to un-frustrate frustration](#)

When do you know if your situation was 'big' enough to be considered early trauma?

There are often big events that are traumatic, even though they have been normalized and may not seem big by society's standards. Things like circumcision, early surgeries or severe illness, choking on food - these are all pretty big events to a young system.

But more often in our society it is the things that don't seem 'big' at all, that have a serious impact on the nervous system - parents who are chronically stressed (that's just 'normal', right?), parents with unresolved trauma, or who don't like each other, who fight a lot in the presence of their kids, who are addicted to drugs and/or alcohol, or who are separated and uncommunicative - all of these things are quite common and not usually considered traumatic, but they almost always are. This is a good article to read on this subject:

<https://irenelyon.com/2019/01/15/9-commonhuman-experiences-that-can-be-traumatic-but-are-often-seen-as-not/>

I'm struggling to titrate/pendulate while doing the lessons because I don't feel much in real time.

When this is the case, we want to err on the side of caution, especially if everything seems fine while doing the lesson, but then we have a big blow up or crash later on. If this happens then revisit the lesson and only do a bit of it, like 5 minutes. Then see what happens later. You can also try just listening to the lesson without participating with it and see if there is the same kind of after effect. Once you internalize the principles of a lesson, you can also do a bit of that work without the audio - just a few minutes - and see what happens.