

## “All the Hemispheres”

Leave the familiar for a while.  
Let your senses and bodies stretch out  
Like a welcomed season  
Onto the meadow and shores and hills.  
Open up to the Roof.  
Make a new watermark on your excitement  
And love.  
Like a blooming night flower,  
Bestow your vital fragrance of happiness  
And giving  
Upon our intimate assembly.  
Change rooms in your mind for a day.  
All the hemispheres in existence  
Lie beside an equator  
In your heart.  
Greet Yourself  
In your thousand other forms  
As you mount the hidden tide and travel  
Back home.  
All the hemispheres in heaven  
Are sitting around a fire  
Chatting  
While stitching themselves together  
Into the Great Circle inside of  
You.

—Hafiz



# The Soma Journey Book

SOMA INSTITUTE *of* NEUROMUSCULAR INTEGRATION®

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# Soma Journey Book Introduction

“Symmetry, as wide or as narrow as you may define its meaning, is one idea by which man through the ages has tried to comprehend and create order, beauty and perfection. Symmetry may have its appeal but it is inherently stale. Some kind of imbalance is behind every transformation...from the origin of matter to the origin of life, the emergence of structure depends fundamentally on the existence of asymmetries.” —Marcelo Gleiser

CONGRATULATIONS on deciding to do something for yourself. Please look upon this experience as a personal journey of your bodymind and exploration of self care.

Soma optimizes the structure and performance of your body in relationship to gravity. Soma is built on a reality that the body and mind are not two separate entities. Soma is about wholeness. Soma is about differentiating and freeing all aspects of your body mind and then reintegrating them into a whole. To maximize the benefit of Soma, explore the practices and concepts within this Journey Book. They are intended to enhance your experience and amplify your ability to make changes in your bodymind.

When you commit to Soma, you are signing up to receive new sensory information. What you do with that information is up to you. In each moment, you have a choice to embrace, or not, the new information. Choice is an ingredient for change. If you hold on to your old ways of thinking, moving and being—strongly enough—no amount of pushing, pulling, skill or desire on the part of your Soma practitioner can change you. You are the only one with the power to change yourself.

“When I showed a fellow bodyworker the first draft of my writings, we went page by page through the manuscript. As we reached the section about touch, her face changed. I had described “Active” and “Passive” touch as ways of working. She said: “There are very few situations when I would encourage someone to be truly passive when they are being touched. When someone is relaxed, they can still be present. When I am working with someone, I rely on being met; I experience touch as an exchange. Even when someone is giving me a massage, my intention is to meet the touch, rather than having something done to me in a passive state. It is important training for life.” —Andrea Olsen, Bodystories

## Self-Integration

This Journey Book includes physical and mindful practices that done consistently will help you integrate the results of the bodywork into all parts of your life. Self care after this first session, and every session is critically important. Your attitude and what you do between sessions is as important as the sessions themselves.

Enjoy the luxury of taking 30 minutes each day for your own unfolding. Spend this time focusing on your internal physical and psychological journey. Reflect on the habits and reactions that caused your present circumstances. Contact your core self. Meet it with curiosity. Enjoy the journey.

“The greatest thing then in all education, is to make the nervous system our ally instead of our enemy.” —William James

# Session One: Inspiration—Freeing the Breath

Notice your own quality of attention and the value of what that attentive energy is on. What is the focus of your attentive energy?

Think for a moment about situations in which you naturally tend to “notice”... when time seems to slow for an instant and the details of the object of your attention loom large in your senses...

Something positive to focus on, inspiration, hope, connection, presence, sensation of the bodymind. The inseparability and unity of body, mind and spirit.

Just as the foundation of our life is our breath, the foundation and first session of the Soma Series is focused on the ability to take full, dynamic breaths. Our ability to experience full and complete inhales and exhales, is vitally important to our bodymind, both physically and emotionally.

Because we live in an upright position in gravity, the ribcage tends to become compressed. In the first session, breathing may become fuller and deeper, creating needed space and a feeling of well-being.

By the end of the first session, you may be more familiar with your line of gravity or core line. It is an energetic and balancing line running vertically and anteriorly to your spine from the crown of your head to the soles of your feet. It works to keep you centered and balanced. It is the line around which, optimally, your body moves.

## **The Physical Goals of Session One Include**

- Lengthening the distance between the bottom of the rib cage and the top of the pelvis.
- Loosening the outer fascial layers of the body.
- Increasing the capacity of your lungs.
- Increasing both the circulation of oxygen into the blood and the removal of toxins.
- Releasing tension to improve blood flow.
- Lengthening the lower back.

## **Preview of Session Two**

One of the primary purposes of Session Two is to work with your foundation, your contact with reality and your relationship with the Earth. We will spend most of our time working with the lower legs and feet. This session may increase your physical and psychological security in gravity. Your way of walking and moving through the world may begin to change after this second session.

# Simple Recipe to Joy

We spend hours of our life in resistance. This is a resistance to moving outside of our self-imposed limitations, outside of the “box”. We are unaware of the amount of resistance we hold onto until we feel it release. Resistance starts when, as young children, we want something unattainable and don’t have our wants satisfied. In our childlike minds, we do not comprehend the implications; we simply want, and our desire is not met. As a child, this feels like, and often is, being controlled by someone else. The reasons for this control really do not matter. We feel controlled. As adults, we then impose the same control limits on ourselves and maintain the control we once resisted. The control then becomes a resistance buried in our minds, behaviors, feelings or our tissues.

This sets patterns. We give up our desire to please ourselves. Instead, we attempt to control ourselves, living in ways we think may please others. This causes resignation; it is powerless and unsatisfying. Relinquishing our desire to please ourselves can show up in the body as illness. Another pattern is to resist outwardly while maintaining our desire inwardly. This pattern sets up confusion between the inner self/body and the outer self/body. These patterns are forms of resistance.

We disguise resistance in many ways. Often, we even disguise it from ourselves. Resistance can show up in the body as armor, or extra weight. It shows up as neediness or reasonableness that keeps us explaining and telling the same story over and over again. We do not tell the truth, saying things are fine when there is clearly something going on. Resistance is apparent in things that look like accidents, such as forgetfulness, “accidentally” damaging something belonging to another, ignoring another person’s needs, or even avoiding another person. Many “I’m sorry” statements could be avoided if we acknowledged our resistance and stated our inner needs.

The difficulty is that as adults, we are unaware of these patterns. Patterns become automatic reactions. We must begin to notice ourselves again and awaken to the automatic patterns in order to surrender our inner self to the outer world.

Awareness is noticing the inward experience. Awareness gives us choice. When we see ourselves clearly, we can be responsible to either stay where we are - or change. For a new creation of ourselves, we must be aware of our stuck, resistant selves and our old habits, which now can be shed. This is the possibility that the Soma work brings forth, the expanded awareness of self.

Life’s experiences request that we surrender and allow the possibility, the availability, of risking ourselves for the opportunity of really being with another person, letting the genuine inner experience come forth. Intimacy means telling the truth about who we really are. We share authenticity, confrontation, acknowledgment, and are vulnerable. Relationships that are working, alive, and self-reliant are relationships that allow vulnerable communication patterns. Each person is available to themselves first and then to each other. They risk being controlled, being wrong. They risk their egos and being hurt for the joy of being with another person. This type of communication requests that we experience and share our fears with each other.

On life’s journey, some people give up, some resist and remain stuck, and others keep moving along. The people who move forward are aware of their own needs and choose to take the risk to share them. We must first be self-aware in order to choose.

Many people perceive that they are aware and available, yet they feel that “life is just doing it to me”. They feel overwhelmed and bereft of control. They may manifest the victimization of heart disease, of abuse, of broken relationships, of anything that keeps them from joy and satisfaction. These are our subtle teachers. Joy and satisfaction are states that we create in the realm of our daily existences. We choose our situations and are responsible for our choices.

When we move from resistance/control... to awareness/experience... to choice, there is a release - to a new level of self-responsibility. A responsible person can choose and create anew. Authentic creation of self is profoundly satisfying. When a person/body is responsible for self, there is a quality that goes beyond all the right words, beyond all the drama, and deeply into our knowing. We recognize when someone (including ourselves) is self-responsible. When you ask someone what they want in life and they answer (as so many people do), “I want to be happy”, they seek the satisfaction of their inner and outer being connected in a state of self-reliance. We crave the congruence of having our body’s language match who we are inside. Until we know who we are and are responsible for creating ourselves through choice, we can only resist.

Resistance ... to experience

Experience ... to choice

Choice ... to release

Release ... to responsibility

Responsibility ... to intimacy and joy

To resistance again

Resistance ... to experience

Experience ... to choice

Choice ... to release

Release ... to responsibility

Responsibility ... to intimacy and joy

There are no absolutes, you know!

“As human beings, our greatness lies not so much in being able to remake the world as in being able to remake ourselves.” —Gandhi

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Written by Karen Bolesky, Director Emeritus of the Soma Institute of Neuromuscular Integration®  
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# Self-Integration: Autogenic Training—Formula I

Autogenic Training (AT) consists of simple exercises in body awareness and relaxation designed to switch off the stress related “fight or flight” response and switch on the “rest, relax, digest” systems of the autonomic nervous system. Developed in Germany in 1932 by Johannes H. Schultz, M.D., AT provides you the opportunity to experience “passive awareness”, a state of alert but detached concentration that is highly restorative and quiets the cycle of excess thinking and stress. Ten minutes of AT can have a very restorative effect on the bodymind including reducing anxiety, pain and headaches, improving cardiovascular functions and promoting more restful sleep. Once learned, this technique forms a lifelong skill that can be part of your health promoting lifestyle.

## Set Up

Practice AT in a quiet room free of distractions. Lie on the floor, on your back with arms at your side and without crossing your feet. Cover yourself with a light blanket if needed.

## The RETURN

Be aware that at the end of each session, you’ll make very tight fists, inhale as you raise your arms over your head, and as you exhale, shake out your fists and lower your arms. You’ll do this vigorously once or twice to restore muscle tone following the deep relaxation of AT. This is called the RETURN.

The best results are achieved by a daily practice of ten minutes.

Before you begin your practice, read through this checklist:

- Remember the RETURN.
- Set timer for ten minutes.
- Assure ten minutes without interruption

## Formula I

As you begin your practice, visualize the RETURN to use at the end of ten minutes.

Then, state silently to yourself, in sequences of three:

I am at peace

I am at peace

I am at peace

Then again, in sequences of three to yourself:

My right arm is heavy

My right arm is heavy

My right arm is heavy

(If you are left handed, consider reversing all statements to refer to your left side.)

From time to time repeat the heavy formula in sequences of three.

In your mind’s eye, create a sign for HEAVY using the materials of your choice.

The goal of this formula is total body heaviness that allows you to give your weight completely to the floor. Allow the ground to support you from below as you imagine heaviness migrating progressively from your right arm through your entire body. If your mind wanders, gently and compassionately refocus on repeating, “My right arm is heavy.” See the sign for Heavy, and think Heavy as you exhale.

At the end of ten minutes, remember the RETURN by making tight fists with your hands and shaking them out over your head a couple of times, breathing deeply.

# Personal Log *for* Soma Session One

Name:

Session date:

*Please use this sheet to record your responses to the Soma Structural Integration session. Careful, honest reflection and accurate recording of your feelings will facilitate the process of Self-Integration. All information is confidential. Use the reverse side if you need more space. Please, bring it to your next session to share with your practitioner.*

My general feeling before this session:

During the session I felt:

Immediately after the session I felt:

Changes I have noticed in my body since the session:

Changes I have noticed in the quality of my movement and posture since the session?

Changes in my lifestyle and attitudes:

Since my last session, I have been feeling mostly:

\_\_\_\_\_ Enthusiastic and happy

\_\_\_\_\_ Variations in my emotions

\_\_\_\_\_ Moody, depressed, or negative

\_\_\_\_\_ Relatively unemotional

Changes in my relationships:

What is working really well in my life:



## Session Two: Grounding—Stepping Out Into the World

“If you have built your castles in the air,  
your work need not be lost;  
that is where they should be.  
Now put the foundations under them.”  
—Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*

The Second Soma Session focuses primarily on the feet, ankles, calves, and knees. The back is worked on towards the end of the session to match the lengthening of the front of the body accomplished in the first session.

Releasing and balancing the feet creates changes throughout the whole body. In this session, by aligning the ankle joints so that they are balanced over the foot and releasing the tissues of the feet so they can adapt to the ground better, a more optimal center of gravity is encouraged. Ideally our body weight transfers down through the ankle and over the sole of the foot, here the multiple tiny bones and web of tissue of our feet communicates to the rest of our structure to keep us dynamically moving. By having our feet more parallel, facing forward, adaptable and grounded, we are able to begin shedding compensations that were needed for our past imbalances.

The feet are vitally important psychologically, they are your physical contact with the earth. Once you find your center of gravity or core line, as we began exploring in the first session, our next step is to support that center in becoming secure. Our core line requires “grounding.” If it is not grounded, or if there is an imbalance in the feet, the balance of the whole structure will be compromised. This second session can affect how a person “stands in the world.” We often gain the feeling of having more grounding, more firmness, more sense of self and stability. As we release the feet, a person literally has both feet on the ground and may feel less afraid to “step out.”

Physical development and movement is paired with cognitive and emotional development. As infants our body movements are organized through a series of reflexes and later through the activities and movements we develop and practice. Movement initiated from these reflexes stimulates the brain to lay down circuitry that is the foundation for what later becomes emotion and cognition. As we grow, this original circuitry is impacted by our experiences, and most importantly, by how we interpret our experiences (perception). This maturation process can be interrupted in little ways, and we can get “stuck” or bypass stages of development. Soma encourages the full development of our physical movement. In session two we address how to walk and allow the whole body to participate and benefit from that fundamental movement.

Oftentimes we cannot release the tension in a part of our body until we have released the beliefs and judgments that are insisting that we hold ourselves in a certain way. Inversely, often we cannot release old thought patterns until our bodies learn to let go of the tension.

“Find your place on the planet. Dig in, and take responsibility  
from there.” —Gary Snyder



### **Preview of Session Three**

In Session Three, we have three main goals: (1) lengthening the sideline of the body (2) unknitting the shoulder girdle from the chest, and (3) further lengthening of the lower back by working with keystone back muscles called the quadratus lumborum.

## **Soma's Three Brain Model- A View of Three Perceptions**

As you proceed through the Soma sessions, you may notice changes in your perceptions, changes in how you interpret experiences. Soma's Three Brain Model is used to help understand these changes of perception. If we are better able to recognize the lens of our perception, then we will be better able to respond from the present moment.

### **Right Brain "Receptive" Mode**

According to experiments in brain function and body integration, the mode of processing information by the right hemisphere has been characterized as receptive and global in nature. Visual, tactile and overall body sensation and information from the environment are perceptually integrated by the right brain mode. From this mode of processing we experience the sense of "being" so that life feels like a journey rather than a challenge.

Meditation, muscle relaxation, biofeedback and the like seem to bring about a particular attitude or thought process that signifies the receptive mode. Experiences in chanting, Tai Chi, and ritual dance seems to affect the consciousness to accent the intuitive aspect of knowing and right brain processing. An early brain researcher, Deikman (1971) commented that "...a shift to the receptive mode could be expected to decrease anxiety because the state of receptivity is not organized around action to be directed at the environment."

### **Left Brain "Action" Mode**

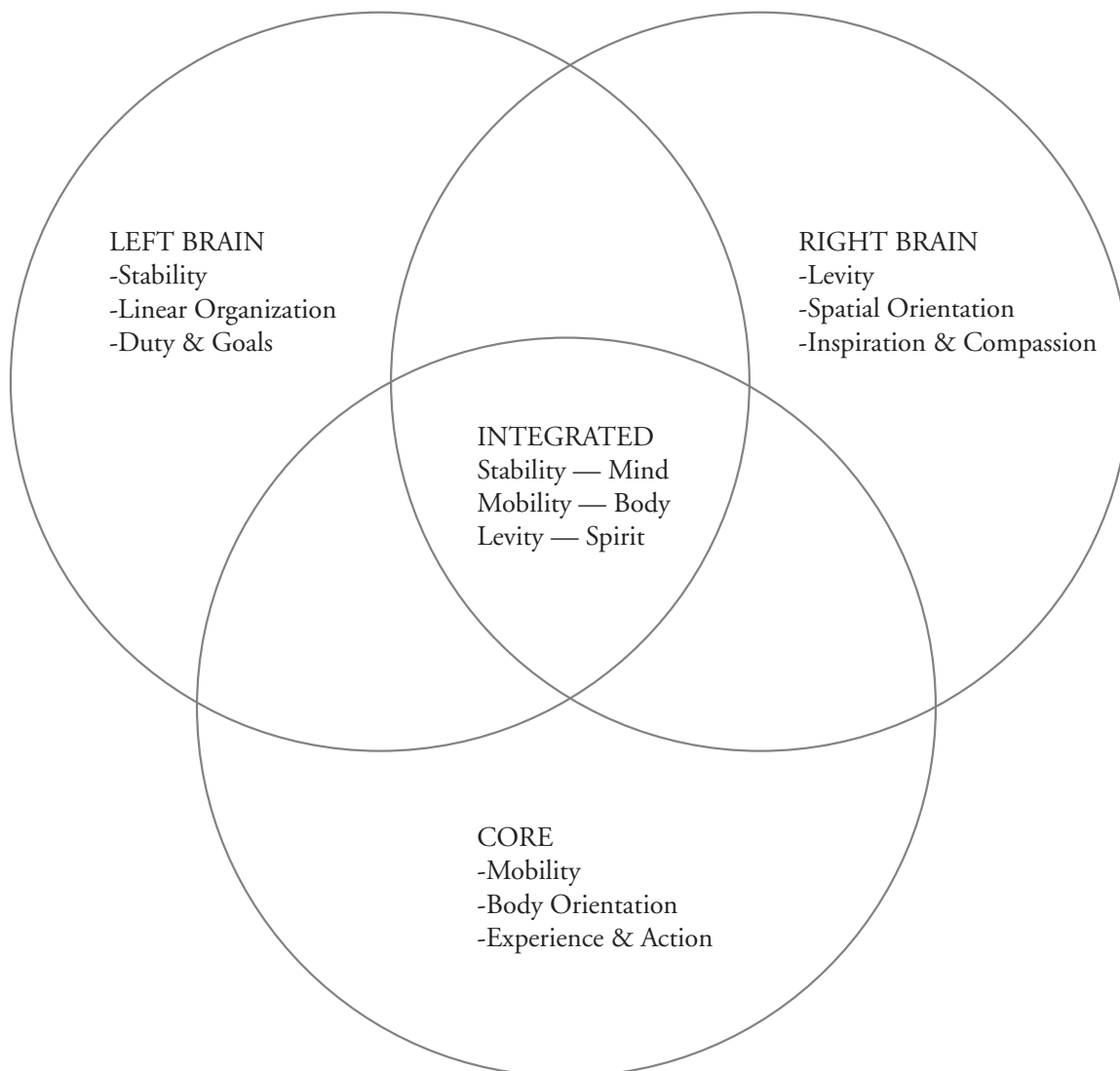
The action mode of the left hemisphere predominates in the perception of spatial details, language, and symbol processing (words, signs etc.). It is responsible for our ability to analyze, use logic and think realistically. From this mode, life feels like a puzzle to be solved.

The left hemisphere is known to be the primary source of motor activity or bodily movement and action, while the right is involved more in body sensations, both internal and external. While the hemispheres do not function in isolation in most people, the "action mode" of the left hemisphere often dominates. This dominance is reinforced by many of the value systems in our culture.

### **Core Mode**

In addition to this split-brain research, the Soma Institute has centered on understanding the functioning and inter-functioning of the body/brain continuity. A "Three Brain" working model has emerged which includes the Left Brain, Right Brain, and the neural system deeply embedded in the body and centered in and around the spinal column. In Soma we refer to this last division as the center of gravity, or the "Core" of the body. The core has responsibilities different from the left and right hemispheres, chief of which is the production and control of energy. Many martial arts address themselves to the core and to the cultivation of this energy center that they refer to as the Hara (Japanese), Tan Tien (Chinese), and Kath (Sufi).

For a vivid demonstration of where this center is and how it works, watch a video of astronauts doing mid-air exercises while outside the field of gravity. Every movement clearly centers and rotates around this core (center of gravity). At birth, the navel is the center of gravity (c.g.). As we mature, head weight and size change relative to the rest of the body, and the c.g. moves down a few inches. This is the structural c.g., there is also a functional c.g. that is affected by posture, position, and fluid movement inside the body. When we get “up-tight,” for example, we constrict many of the blood vessels of the body, and the “juices” are held higher than when we are relaxed. This causes the functional c.g. to rise to a higher position than the structural c.g. It is Soma’s opinion that this separation of structural and functional c.g. sets up conditions of dis-ease, predisposing us to injury and illness. Our state of being (which is the relationship between our c.g., left and right hemispheres) influences not only accidents and disease, but colors our vision. In other words, our perceptions of the world are created by our moment to-moment state of being.



“Western psychology has viewed non-ordinary states as pathological. Pre-industrial cultures use these states to connect with deities, other dimensions of reality, forces of nature, and artistic inspiration. In these cultures, healing always involves non-ordinary states of consciousness.”  
—Stanislav Grof

# Personal Log *for* Soma Session Two

Name:

Session date:

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My general feeling before this session:

During the session I felt:

Immediately after the session I felt:

Changes I have noticed in my body since the session:

Changes I have noticed in the quality of my movement and posture since the session?

Changes in my lifestyle and attitudes:

Since my last session, I have been feeling mostly:

\_\_\_\_\_ Enthusiastic and happy

\_\_\_\_\_ Variations in my emotions

\_\_\_\_\_ Moody, depressed, or negative

\_\_\_\_\_ Relatively unemotional

Changes in my relationships:

What is working really well in my life:

## Session Three: Becoming More Present with the World

“You do not have to be good.  
You do not have to walk on your knees  
for a hundred miles through the desert repenting.  
You only have to let the soft animal of your body  
love what it loves.” —Mary Oliver, “Wild Geese”

The intentions of Session Three are freeing the shoulder girdle, widening the ribcage and lengthening the sides of the body; complementing the lengthening of the front and back from the first two sessions. After this session, breathing is typically much fuller and easier, especially in the sides and back, two places where most people tend to breathe much less deeply than what’s possible. Like the first and second sessions, the third session is also focused on freeing the superficial fascial layers. However, during this session, we begin to address deeper layers of tissue as well.

This session also works to release a key muscle of the trunk, the quadratus lumborum, which connects the bottom (12th) rib to the top of the pelvis (iliac crest). This muscle anchors the rib cage and helps maintain the proper distance between the ribs and the pelvis. When tense, it shortens and thickens, decreasing the distance between the ribs and hips. Breathing can become more difficult, and the abdominal organs have less room to function. Revitalizing and lengthening this muscle thins out the middle of the body, sometimes making it appear as if the person has lost weight because the distance between the ribs and pelvis has increased.

In order for individuals to make full use of the life force that is available to them, it is necessary to make full use of their breath. Most of us breathe shallowly and quickly when we are nervous or upset. If you experiment with shallow, quick breathing, you may notice that you begin to feel anxious and uncomfortable. Just as our brain can change the quality of our breath, our breath has a direct connection to our emotional states. Our breath has the ability to create or change emotional states depending on what part of our body we are breathing into (belly, diaphragm/ribs, upper chest). Try bringing your attention to diaphragmatic and/or belly breathing. How does that feel different than upper chest breathing?

The brain works by association. Neurons that fire together, wire together. When two or more neurons habitually fire together, they will eventually “hard-wire” so that they automatically fire together, just as Pavlov’s dogs automatically salivated at the sound of the bell. We too have our automatic reactions. Through association, certain sensations may become unacceptable, and an affected area of the body that has the sensation may become unacceptable as well. We may shut down communication with that part of ourselves and lose connection.

We are often not even aware of how much unacceptable sensation we’ve experienced until we feel it release. Touch puts us back “in touch” with feelings locked in the tissues of our body. Touch bypasses the story and all our reasons for not associating anymore. Touch calls us to the present.

The brain has amazing plasticity. Associations are continually being made and unmade. Even the hardwired ones, if unused, break free to connect to something new. As Soma softens and loosens the fascial web that locks you in your old posture and movement patterns, we are likewise softening the neural net that restricts your full range of thinking and feeling and keeps you locked into old patterns of emotional reacting. By encouraging openness and space in these structures, you are affording yourself new freedom, spontaneity and flexibility. Every time you entertain and nourish these new possibilities, you are strengthening and exercising an extremely powerful human muscle: choice and the ability to respond, not react. It is impossible and unrealistic to be in a continually relaxing environment. Consequently, it is essential to be able to choose ease in your bodymind, as needs demand, regardless of the circumstances.

To be at ease is to leave things in their natural condition. It means to let feelings run their natural course—to open yourself to what is happening, rather than resist it. It might mean changing your expectations to be more appropriate to a given circumstance, or to simply be present with the moment at hand, experiencing it with curiosity and grace.

Your body is your own unique living structure. Your life is your most intimate work of art.

#### **Preview of Session Four**

During Session Four you may begin to experience a new way of obtaining your psychological security. We will begin to address the core line by working to release and balance the legs and lower pelvis. We will also begin working with the position of the coccyx. After this session, your walking may begin to change toward the way that is more balanced, dynamic and adaptable.

## Self-Integration: Autogenic Training—Formula II

The second AT formula is, “My right hand is warm.” This exercise increases the circulation to the extremities and generally improves blood flow. For this AT formula, attention is paid in a passive way to the warmth of the right hand. (As with the first formula, if you are left handed, simply reverse the statements to refer to your left side.) A good way to achieve this warmth is to call upon a visual image of warmth. Picture yourself in the sun or comfortably near a warm fire. Allow the feeling of warmth to migrate across your body, from one side, through the center, to the other.

### Formula II

Begin by remembering the RETURN.

Make the following statement to yourself in sequences of three:

**I am at peace**

**I am at peace**

**I am at peace**

Then:

**My right arm is heavy**

**My right arm is heavy**

**My right arm is heavy**

Then:

**My right hand is warm**

**My right hand is warm**

**My right hand is warm**

Heaviness makes the warmth come quickly, so it is important to only begin Formula II once you can achieve total heaviness as in Formula I with ease, and in a short time, about one or two minutes.

Make a sign for “Warm” and see it in your mind’s eye. Continue your formulas, repeating three times in succession and picturing your signs.

### Return

After ten minutes, remember to do the RETURN. Getting up too quickly will leave you with reduced muscle tone and often a sluggish feeling. The RETURN restores tone and energy following deep relaxation.

# Personal Log *for* Soma Session Three

Name:

Session date:

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My general feeling before this session:

During the session I felt:

Immediately after the session I felt:

Changes I have noticed in my body since the session:

Changes I have noticed in the quality of my movement and posture since the session?

Changes in my lifestyle and attitudes:

Since my last session, I have been feeling mostly:

\_\_\_\_\_ Enthusiastic and happy

\_\_\_\_\_ Variations in my emotions

\_\_\_\_\_ Moody, depressed, or negative

\_\_\_\_\_ Relatively unemotional

Changes in my relationships:

What is working really well in my life:



## Session Four: The Beginnings of a New Security

“In order to influence the outside world, we must first be responsive to influence from within ourselves. In all important matters one should seek to attain the perfect calm of inner equilibrium. In the depths of introspection we will awaken to the highest influences of nature. The ramifications of this influence are good.” —I. Ching

This session, along with the fifth and sixth, are the core changing sessions. In the preceding sessions, we lengthened the front, back, and sides. We must now attend to the core. We will do that by working on the tissue that controls the position of the pelvis. Session Four frees the pelvis from below by releasing the large muscles at the inside (adductors) and back (hamstrings) of the upper leg. These muscles attach to the bones that you sit on, the ramus of the ischial tuberosity.

The muscles and diaphragms comprising the floor of the pelvis affect the location and functionality of the internal viscera. Our legs may represent emotions that have to do with running away, standing one's ground, falling, or being bound. This session begins freeing the pelvis, leading to security, balance and efficient movement.

Many of us attempt to feel grounded by consciously and/or unconsciously locking our knees. Instead of increasing our grounding, this actually hampers efficient functioning and movement. Following this session, you may experience a decrease in automatically locking your knees. Your balance may become more dynamic and less static. Your strength may begin to come from flexibility rather than heaviness. An expanded sense of these qualities opens as we orient to our core line and center of gravity.

### **Fear**

Fear of change is a strategy for survival. However, feeling restricted by fear can thwart our ability to change and grow. Sometimes our fears inhibit us from freely expressing all of who we are. Try new strategies to observe your fears and challenge them in low risk situations at first; test them and see how they work. Fear is a protective response. The real question is, what is being protected?

“We have loved the stars too dearly  
to be fearful of the night.”  
—e. e. Cummings

Sometimes we are so afraid to feel our fear that we create stories to tell ourselves over and over, keeping us in our heads and away from the truth of sensation. Research has shown that a true feeling, cut loose from the layers of resistance and story, lasts about 45 seconds and is released. You can see the truth of this in children, some of whom have not yet learned to repress their feelings. They may be sobbing one moment, and giggling with joy the next. By taking less than 1 minute, in the moment, to acknowledge and express how we really feel, we can free ourselves for change.

“I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it.” —Nelson Mandela

## Preview of Session Five

In Session Five we contact the actual core of the body. We balance the psoas muscle with the more superficial myofascia. After this session you may begin to experience a new relationship between your trunk and your legs.

### “The Journey”

One day you finally knew  
what you had to do, and began,  
though the voices around you  
kept shouting  
their bad advice--  
though the whole house  
began to tremble  
and you felt the old tug  
at your ankles.  
“Mend my life!”  
each voice cried.  
But you didn’t stop.  
You knew what you had to do,  
though the wind pried  
with its stiff fingers  
at the very foundations,  
though their melancholy  
was terrible.  
It was already late  
enough, and a wild night,  
and the road full of fallen  
branches and stones.  
But little by little,  
as you left their voices behind,  
the stars began to burn  
through the sheets of clouds,  
and there was a new voice  
which you slowly  
recognized as your own,  
that kept you company  
as you strode deeper and deeper  
into the world,  
determined to do  
the only thing you could do--  
determined to save  
the only life you could save.

—Mary Oliver

## Feelings vs. Emotions

Feelings are natural: they need to be felt, expressed, and acknowledged. Emotions are feelings which have been distorted and which have a story attached. The story can keep the emotion alive in the mind and keep us avoiding the feeling experience in the body. According to Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, M.D. a natural feeling lasts about 45 seconds and is released. Emotions last, and last, and last until an awareness of the feeling occurs. Once the true feeling is experienced, the emotion loosens its grip. We have an opportunity to heal once the awareness of the true feeling occurs. The awareness, the moment of noticing, allows us the possibility of letting go of the story and emotional drama.

Healing must always be accompanied by a sense of connection. Touch is healing because it puts us in contact with the feelings which are locked in the tissues. Touch connects us with the body and bypasses the “story” that has been told over and over but never released. The healing must occur in the body. The feeling must be recognized and released from the body.

### **There are five natural feelings:**

#### **1. Love/Joy/Satisfaction**

Purpose: Caring, unconditional love, and altruism, concern, giving and receiving nurturing.

Emotional support, self-worth, self-esteem.

Distortions/Emotions: Demanding, possessiveness, expectations, instability, low self-worth, clinging, self-centeredness, avoidance of people.

#### **2. Fear**

Purpose: Caution and discernment. A natural survival response, caution, startle response, flight-fight impulse.

Distortion/Emotions: Anxiety, panic, phobias, fears.

#### **3. Pain/Grief**

Purpose: Expression of separation and loss. Dealing with loss, tears, and the sharing of loss.

Distortions/Emotions: Regret, blame, victim act, remorse, guilt, self-pity, depression.

#### **4. Anger**

Purpose: Bringing about change. Self-protection, assertiveness, and firmness.

Distortions/Emotions: Rage, hatred, bitterness, revenge, resentment, self-hatred, lack of inner worth, powerlessness.

#### **5. Jealousy**

Purpose: Stimulus that impels and motivates us to grow, improve, emulate another person's behavior.

Distortions/Emotions: Envy, put-down of self or others, making wrong, low self-worth, lack of self-esteem, self-condemnation, competition, comparing, criticizing, judgments.

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Written by Karen Bolesky, Director Emeritus of the Soma Institute of Neuromuscular Integration®

## Self-Integration: Finding Your Core Exploration Exercise

Most of us overly depend upon the musculature of our legs, hips, and lower back for support in standing and walking (Fig. A). In Sessions Four, Five, and Six we will be assisting you in the discovery and activation of muscles more central to your body's core (Fig. B). These muscles are designed to organize and support the internal tower that is your spine, efficiently and effectively. It may take some time to get used to standing and moving differently. The benefits, which include freedom from back pain, knee pain, and more flowing ease of movement are powerful incentives.

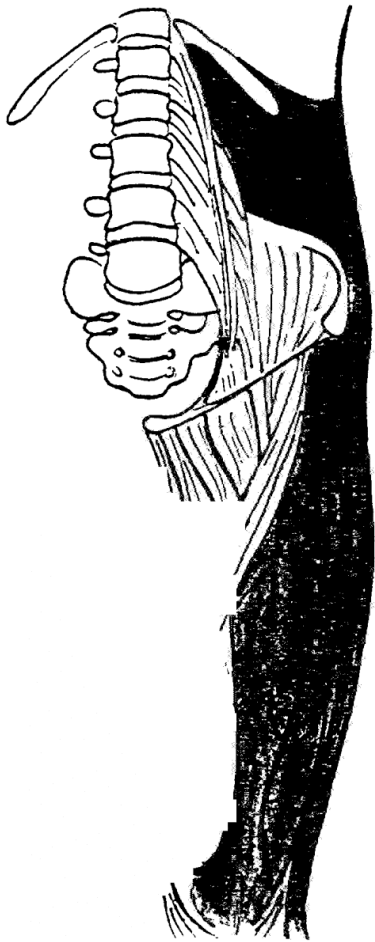


Fig. A.

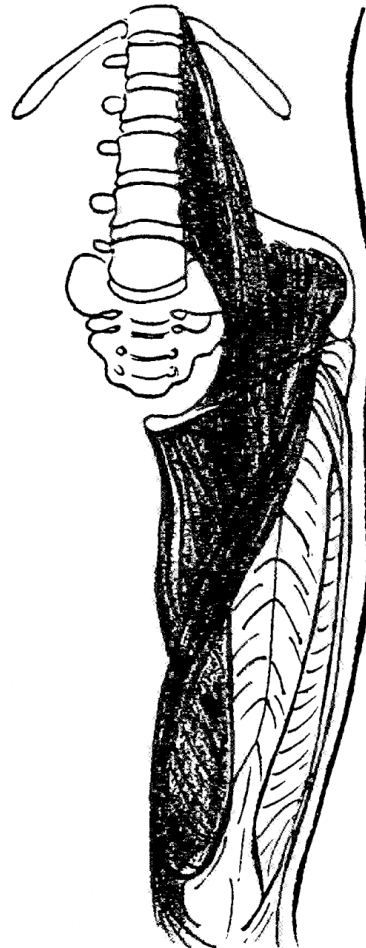
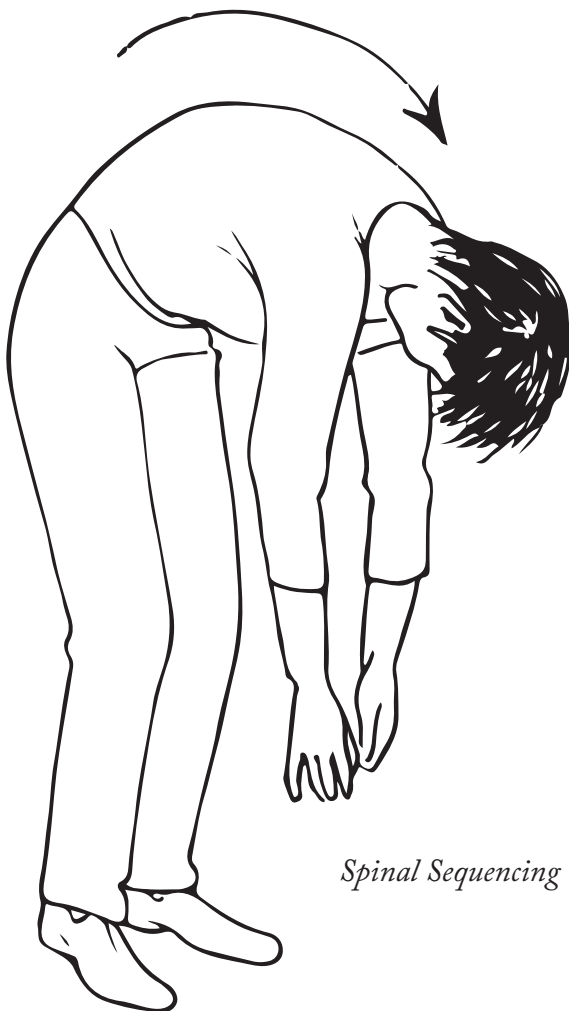


Fig. B.

Following Session Four you may be more familiar with the musculature of your inner thighs and hamstrings that support your pelvis from below. Please spend a few minutes allowing yourself to observe and “digest” these diagrams. See if you can identify the differences in the two drawings and then locate these different regions in your body. Taking the time to sense and feel and visualize will very much assist in the re-patterning process. Most importantly, remember to breathe fully. Allow yourself to entertain the notion of greater ease from the center of your body and the center of your life.

## Self-Integration: Spinal Sequencing Exercise

- Begin standing with your legs parallel and slightly apart. Soften your knees. Take a moment to go inside and feel your breath.
- With the breath, drop your chin towards your chest and slowly begin to roll down, one vertebra at a time. Allow each bone to open upon the one underneath.
- If you notice a group of vertebrae that moves as a unit, stop and come back a little, breathe, bring your awareness into the area, and explore releasing each vertebra individually. The focus here is to discover smoothness in the movement. It is likely that you may experience areas where the movement ratchets and jerks. Continue to stop, breathe, and explore the release.
- Be patient and compassionate with yourself to find the releases deep along these spinal structures.
- Relax the knees and soften in the hip joint. Check to feel yourself standing on the inside and not the outside of your legs. Check to feel the weight of your head and arms.
- At the bottom of the movement (you are dropped over as far as is comfortable), breathe, and slowly begin the roll up from the bottom of the spine, sequencing through each vertebra.



*Spinal Sequencing*

- Repeat at least once. Each time, bring your awareness deeper into your bones.
- In between each roll down, allow yourself a moment to access the change that takes place each time you give your body the opportunity to self-correct.
- Incorporate this movement into your day whenever you would like to become more present in your body.

# Personal Log *for* Soma Session Four

Name:

Session date:

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My general feeling before this session:

During the session I felt:

Immediately after the session I felt:

Changes I have noticed in my body since the session:

Changes I have noticed in the quality of my movement and posture since the session?

Changes in my lifestyle and attitudes:

Since my last session, I have been feeling mostly:

\_\_\_\_\_ Enthusiastic and happy

\_\_\_\_\_ Variations in my emotions

\_\_\_\_\_ Moody, depressed, or negative

\_\_\_\_\_ Relatively unemotional

Changes in my relationships:

What is working really well in my life:

# Session Five: Trust—Further Expansion

“Autobiography in Five Short Chapters”  
—Portia Nelson

1.  
I walk down the street.  
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.  
I fall in.  
I am lost... I am helpless.  
It isn't my fault.  
It takes forever to find my way out.  
2.  
I walk down the same street.  
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.  
I pretend I don't see it.  
I fall in again.  
I can't believe I'm in the same place.  
But it isn't my fault.  
It still takes a long time to get out.

3.  
I walk down the same street.  
There's a deep hole in the sidewalk.  
I see it is there.  
I still fall in...it's a habit.  
My eyes are open.  
I know where I am.  
It is my fault.  
I get out immediately.  
4.  
I walk down the same street.  
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.  
I walk around it.  
5.  
I walk down another street.

---

The work on the adductor muscles in Session Four allows you to experience the core of your body even more. In this session we begin to balance the intrinsic and extrinsic muscles, or the inside and the outside. This balancing affects great changes in the ability of your bodily systems to function.

Session Five focuses primarily on two muscles; the rectus abdominis and psoas. The rectus abdominis is a long abdominal muscle that attaches to the ribs at the midline and goes down the front of the body to the pubic bone. This muscle is often either toneless or hyper-toned which can make the whole psoas-diaphragm system out of balance. Ideally the psoas is active in nearly every movement of the trunk, yet it is often not used at all. One goal of this session is to give your abdominal cavity proper tone by balancing the tensegrity of the rectus abdominis and the psoas.

Your two psoas muscles attach to the front part of the spine above and deep to your belly button, and runs down the spine and across the pelvis, ending up on the upper inner portion of the thigh bone (femur). The psoas is the only muscle that crosses but doesn't attach to the pelvis. Therefore, it connects the top part of the body to the bottom, the spine to the leg, and is crucial for pelvic movement, walking, and body balance.

Session Five strives to relieve pressure on the abdominal and respiratory organs, decreases the tension around the pelvis and genitals, frees the abdominal area at the superficial and deep layers, brings the pelvic floor to horizontal, and lets the lower back shift rearward.

If you've ever regarded yourself as “overly emotional”, consider this observation by sage Joseph Collins: “By starving emotions we become humorless, rigid and stereotyped, by repressing them we become literal, reformatory and holier-than-thou; encouraged, they perfume life, discouraged, they poison it.”



## **Preview of Session Six**

Session Six completes the work with the pelvis. Most of the work is along the back. At the end of this session you will be shown an exercise and a way of walking that may have been impossible before the pelvis work. This type of walking is the way you were biologically designed to walk and move. You may be able to walk using only a fraction of the energy that you used before.

## **Self-Integration: Autogenic Training—Formula III**

One of the most important factors in experiencing AT is the practice of “passive awareness,” effortless effort, attention applied in a detached manner designed to produce a self-induced meditative state. Two weeks of daily practice usually enables you to quickly achieve total heaviness and total warmth. Total heaviness provides complete relaxation of the striated musculature while total warmth improves circulatory function. The third formula, My breathing is calm and regular, improves respiration and can reduce anxiety.

### **Formula III**

Begin by visualizing the RETURN.

Make the following statement to yourself in sequences of three:

I am at peace  
My right arm is heavy  
My right hand is warm

Then:

My breathing is calm and regular  
My breathing is calm and regular  
My breathing is calm and regular

Make a mental sign for “BREATHING” and continue repeating “My breathing is calm and regular”.

After ten minutes: Remember the RETURN

The signs used in AT formulas I and II can be used along with the repetition of the formulas in sets of three. This formula for breath has some of the same beneficial calming effects that are achieved through regular meditation. A sense of peace and restoration of energy is often felt after a ten minute practice.

If you experience difficulty in falling asleep, Formula I, “My right arm is heavy,” without the time limit or the RETURN, will often produce a deep, restful sleep in a few minutes. Many people fall asleep quickly and sleep soundly using this formula.

Once you are comfortable with the formulas and have used them successfully, you can do them while sitting in a chair when necessary. This is not recommended until you have practiced lying down for an extended period of time. Discuss any questions or difficulties you may experience with your practitioner.

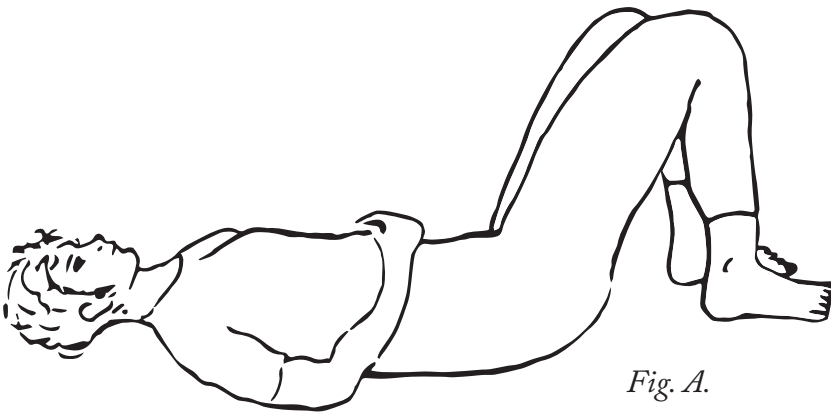
## Self-Integration: Pelvic Tilt Movement Exploration

By now you know a little about the balance we are working toward in the pelvis. The following movement, called the pelvic tilt, will help develop your awareness of pelvic organization. It has proven extremely valuable in relaxing the lower back muscles and in teaching the psoas muscle how to function appropriately.

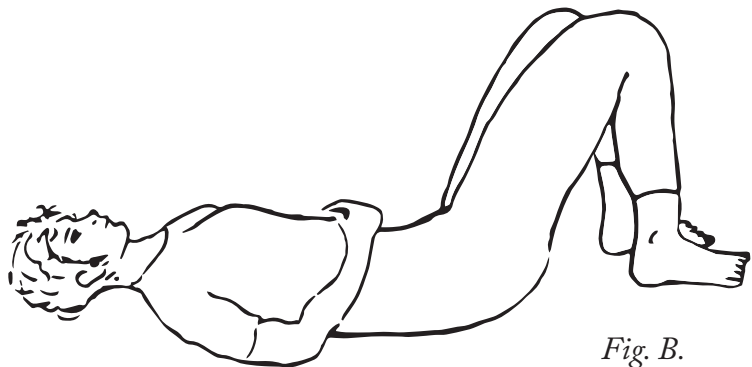
Lie on your back on a carpeted floor with your legs bent. Place your feet flat on the floor with approximately the width of your hips between them (Fig. A). Separate your knees slightly. Release any excess tension in your legs, the inside of your thighs, your shoulders, your jaw.

Without tensing your abdominal muscles, allow your lower back to move slowly toward the floor. Keep your abdomen supple. Drop your navel toward your spine and tip your pubic bone slightly toward the ceiling (Fig. B). Allow your breathing to continue normally as your waist rests fully on the ground. Hold this position for a couple of breaths then allow your back to return to its neutral position, Fig. A. Repeat the pelvic tilt several times, making sure you are not holding your breath, tensing your abdomen, or pushing with your legs. There is very little effort involved.

The usefulness of this movement cannot be overstated. Because of its simplicity, clients sometimes forget the pelvic tilt as part of their ongoing maintenance routine. Feel free to ask any questions you may have.



*Fig. A.*



*Fig. B.*

# Personal Log *for* Soma Session Five

Name:

Session date:

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Changes I have noticed in the quality of my movement and posture since the session?

Changes in my lifestyle and attitudes:

Since my last session, I have been feeling mostly:

\_\_\_\_\_ Enthusiastic and happy

\_\_\_\_\_ Variations in my emotions

\_\_\_\_\_ Moody, depressed, or negative

\_\_\_\_\_ Relatively unemotional

Changes in my relationships:

What is working really well in my life:

## Session Six: Letting Go—Freeing the Pelvis

“The less effort, the faster and more powerful you will be”. —Bruce Lee

Following the lengthening of the front of the body in Session Five, you may have felt like you were standing on your heels. Session Six likely changed that. Session Six focuses directly on the whole back side of your body, including alignment and mobility of the spine, sacrum and coccyx. Working these areas affects the balance of the entire body, including the respiratory mechanism and balance of your pelvis.

For many people, the backs of the legs and buttocks are alien places. They are far away and out of sight. Awakening the energy there may lead to sensations which the person has rarely felt. A whole new area of the body is becoming alive. There is frequently a great deal of holding in the back of the body, because this area bears the burden of presenting a relaxed, stable image. The back must work very hard to present a “good front” to the world. This results in holding and tension in the backs of the legs, buttocks, and lower back.

Session Six pays a lot of attention to specific muscles of the buttocks called the deep lateral rotators. One of these rotators is the piriformis. It extends from the inside of the sacrum (the triangular bone at the base of the spine) to the top of the leg bone (the greater trochanter of the femur). Freedom in this part of the pelvis and middle part of the body allows a free flow of energy and balance into the legs. Releasing and balancing the rotators and piriformis is therefore central to finding and integrating around the core line.

### Preview of Session Seven

In Session Seven we will begin to bring your head and neck into alignment with the core line.

## Resistance & Quitting It

“The present moment is where life can be found, and if you don’t arrive there, you miss your appointment with life. You don’t have to run any more. Breathing in, we say, ‘I have arrived.’ Breathing out, we say, ‘I am home.’ This is a very deep practice.”  
—Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Present Moment*

What is letting go? The term implies that we have held onto something, with some active effort, and then released it. It speaks of choice. When your hands are full and you want to pick up something new, it’s necessary to choose what to put down.

Part of what we are hoping to do through Soma, is to notice and acknowledge what’s working for us and what’s not. To feel in our bodies and make choices based on what’s currently real. Do I feel expansion or contraction? Joy or fear? Excitement or dread? Liberation or suffocation? Part of what we are hoping to do is let go of the choices that inhibit our well-being.

## Self-Integration: Quitting Exercise

Most of us feel our lives are busy, busy, busy. Time seems finite and there is never quite enough of it. We speak of making time for what's important, but what does that mean, exactly? How can one create time? Einstein explained the space/time continuum, similar to Soma's concept of the bodymind continuum. Perhaps, making time is just like making space. Think of a very full suitcase. You can squish and squeeze things in, but only up to a point. Eventually, you have to choose what to keep and what to omit. If you want something new in your life, you must create a space for it. Now it is time to practice making space by letting go.

### Your assignment is to quit.

Yes, that's right. Quit. Quit doing anything you do not enjoy. No matter what it is, if you find that you are not enjoying doing it, stop right at that moment. Nothing is exempt. Try this... next time you're driving and become bored or irritated by traffic, just quit. Quit your resistance to that moment of your life. Instead, open your eyes, ears, nose and awareness of touch and allow the reality of your five senses to fill your attention. Experience the fullness of your sensations. Aliveness will increase with awareness... awareness of the car's qualities, its metal, its special presence; noisy voice, strong being, hurtling character, the feel of the seats and the shape of the glass. Experience the fullness of your sensations in the moment. Let go of what's not serving you.

This is quitting.

Let's consider quitting from another angle.

How many hours do you labor per day? Chances are that you are engaged in effort every minute you're awake and part-time while you're asleep. This is effort for your own sake and for others. Consider all the orders you receive and all the ways you labor to meet the stream of commands. From your boss, "Finish today", from yourself, "Make it neat", from your spouse, "Listen to me", from a problem, "Solve me", and even from your vacation, "Enjoy me!"

You may never have done Quitting, never in any amount of time, just for yourself. You may never have said, "The next ten minutes are just for me," and simply stopped doing. Think about it... ten full minutes to be aware of your existence, just for you, not doing anything. When you are unhappy, most often you will find yourself centered on thoughts, worries, and concerns rather than experiencing the present moment. Do you know what it's like to stop and give it all to yourself—to have the whole world for yourself for as long as ten minutes? Find out. Try it now. For ten minutes there is nothing you must do. Realistically, no matter what your situation is right now, the doing can wait for ten minutes.

Take time now. Quit and stay awake. Be curious.

Explore these questions— What is my experience when I stop doing? What is it like when I am just being?

Try it now... for ten minutes. Stop reading.

QUIT now,  
for ten minutes,  
right where you are.

What was it like?

You probably did not stop, but kept on reading. You may have felt that you did not have time, that you wanted to finish. Finish what? Life is now. That is the whole point. So, stop now. It is important that you stop, NOW. Do not continue reading.

You may have found that a different world emerges. When your mind relaxes, it leaves a space that can be filled with a new experience. Do not be afraid. Let the world move in and fill that space. See what it's like. Reacquaint yourself with the wonder and curiosity you had as a child, before you began to dismiss moments as "unimportant". Consider shutting the door on living life out of habit. Any time you wish, you can open a new door. You can allow yourself to experience the rich, massive presence of the emerging world.

In the twinkling of an eye, the present moment jumps into the room. Get acquainted with your guest; it won't stay long. It's very sensitive to the host's concerns and will be gone before you voice the thought. Enjoy it. Be entertained. Even rest your head a while on its shoulder. You can always come back to thinking, to doing. Quit your resistance to the moments of your life. Go ahead. Check it out. For this moment is, right now, being born.

# Personal Log *for* Soma Session Six

Name:

Session date:

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Changes I have noticed in the quality of my movement and posture since the session?

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\_\_\_\_\_ Variations in my emotions

\_\_\_\_\_ Moody, depressed, or negative

\_\_\_\_\_ Relatively unemotional

Changes in my relationships:

What is working really well in my life:



## Session Seven:

# Getting Your Head in the Right Place—The Here and Now

“If the heat goes over 104 degrees in South Carolina, you have to go to bed. It is practically the law. Some people might see it as shiftless behavior, but really, when we’re lying down from the heat, we’re giving our minds time to browse around for new ideas, wondering at the true aim of life, and generally letting things pop into our heads that need to. In the sixth grade there was a boy in my class who had a steel plate in his skull and was always complaining how test answers could never get through to him. Our teacher would say, ‘Give me a break.’

In a way, though, the boy was right. Every human being on the face of the earth has a steel plate in his head, but if you lie down now and then and get still as you can, it will slide open like elevator doors, letting in all the secret thoughts that have been standing around so patiently, pushing the button for a ride to the top. The real troubles in life happen when those hidden doors stay closed for too long. But that’s just my opinion.”

—Sue Monk Kidd, The Secret Life of Bees

Almost without exception, everyone has their intrinsic structure broken at the neck. The first six sessions have organized the body below the neck so that your body probably feels pretty stable from the neck down. The main goals of Session Seven are to organize and connect the chest and back with the head, neck, face and jaw.

In Session Seven we work with the outside muscles of the head and neck and then with the inside muscles. The tension we hold in our jaws, eyes and tongue and nasal vs. mouth breathing all contribute to the ability of our neck and throat to be relaxed and adaptable. In this session we release the neck, jaw, face, scalp, the tissues of the mouth and nose. These releases enable the head to sit upon the body with decreased strain. For every inch of forward head posture we add approximately 40 lbs. of sensed weight to our structure. However, when our heads are aligned over our line of gravity, our shoulders, back and neck don’t have to work so hard. This alignment frees up energy for clearer communication to ourselves and others, and to being more present to ourselves and the world.

### Preview of Session Eight

As we begin the completion of the Soma Neuromuscular Integration® Series, the sessions are specifically designed to integrate your bodymind in a new and more efficient manner. These are the Integration Sessions. Session Eight addresses the integration of the lower half of the body, striving to allow grace, coordination and ease as you progress in moving through your life.

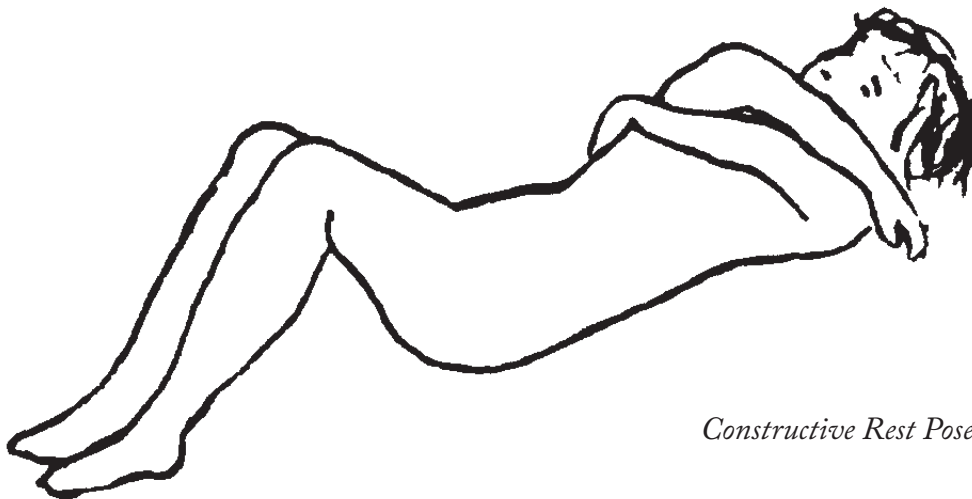
## Constructive Rest

Physicists have defined a body at rest as a condition “when all opposing forces are in equilibrium and when no work is being done.” Physically, for the human body to be completely at rest, it should be in a position that requires no muscular effort. Physiologically, rest gives time for the bodily processes to return to minimal activity, thus providing a period of recuperation. Even a short period of daily rest, therefore, is physiologically essential to our activities. The positioning of the body for constructive rest, is different from common sleeping postures, rather it is one in which the pull of gravity aids in reducing muscle strain and contributes to the relaxation of muscles throughout the body.

### Self-Integration: Constructive Rest Pose

Lie on your back on the floor. You may place a small pillow under your head if you wish, (not under your neck.) Bend both knees to bring your feet flat on the floor as close to your pelvis as is comfortable and pointed straight ahead. The angle of the knee bend should be approximately 90 degrees. Allow your knees to rest against each other. Drape your arms across your chest, criss-crossed, but do not grip any part of your body with your hands. Feel your body against the floor, supported by gravity.

The length of time you can comfortably rest increases with practice of the Constructive Rest Pose. Spend around 10 - 20 minutes, and no more than 45. To get up from the rest position, always roll over onto your side, then slowly come to all-fours with your weight on your hands and knees. Get up slowly to avoid any possible dizziness from a sudden shift to the upright position. Note, this position is not meant to be a sleeping position.



*Constructive Rest Pose*

# Personal Log *for* Soma Session Seven

Name:

Session date:

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\_\_\_\_\_ Enthusiastic and happy

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\_\_\_\_\_ Relatively unemotional

Changes in my relationships:

What is working really well in my life:

## Session Eight: Integration of the Lower Body

“Every man is the builder of a temple, called his body [...]. We are all sculptors and painters, and our material is our own flesh and blood and bones.” —Henry David Thoreau

As the Integrative part of the Soma series begins, we are connecting with the effortless sense of flow that occurs when your actions and intentions are aligned. Is your being in harmony with what you are doing? Or, do you have one foot on the brake and one on the gas? Do you really want to go where you're headed? This brings us back to the question of choice. What do you choose in your life? How do you want to feel? What do you want? What are your goals? Where is your energy focused? Look at how you spend your time. Are you spending your energy pursuing goals that are not really your own?

The Integration Sessions are designed specifically for you. They are meant to support the whole of you to integrate and organize the previous seven sessions. Movement and alignment are used to help create continuity between all the layers of your body, from bone to skin and all the tissues in between. It is in these sessions that we begin to put everything back together, where we can feel the effortlessness of our movement and our being that arises with alignment to our center.

One of the most common experiences people have in going through the Soma Series is the review and revision of many of their long term goals and ways of being in the world. Many of our habits and goals are not really our own, many we have learned from our parents, spouses, teachers, etc. The following goals exercise is designed to help you decide what goals are really important to you now, and more than that, to determine if they are really your goals. This exercise is designed to help you tease out some answers.

You will need about 30-40 minutes to complete this project, and please do not read through the instructions until you are ready to actually do it. You may want to spend a few minutes getting centered, so that you'll have good flow between all three brains. You will need a timer or clock. You will also need something to write with and several blank pages. Use whatever medium allows you the best access to your “brains”, so feel free to crack open the glitter pens or use sticky notes on the wall—only you will see your answers. This is all about imagining what you want... So have some fun!

“I learned this, at least, by my experiment; that if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours.”  
—Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*

### Preview of Session Nine

Continuing the integration process begun in Session Eight, Session Nine addresses the upper half of the body. Here, balance and expressiveness are addressed in the way you feel and move in your torso, shoulders, breath and head.

## Self-Integration: Lifetime Goals Exercise

What are goals? Often we think of goals as concrete things like; I want to be a millionaire, I want to go to Hawaii, I want a child, I want to write a book. While these types of goals have value, if we really want to assess the worth of a goal, we must also know if the goal has emotional value. Firstly, is the goal is ours to begin with? If not, then who's goal is it? If it *is* our goal, will we really feel fulfilled if we achieve the goal? What is the feeling we are looking for upon achievement of the goal? If the flight is canceled, is your vacation time ruined? If you aren't a millionaire by 65 is your life ruined?

This goal setting exercise is about changing perspectives and orienting ourselves toward feelings... if you were a millionaire, how would that make you feel day to day? Stable, free, able to travel the world and have a sense of adventure? By pausing and figuring out what the feeling is that's beneath the goal, what you want to feel by achieving a certain goal, you can then focus on the feeling. It becomes less about the goal itself. Life is messy and unexpected things happen. If you only focus on the goal, you will likely be disappointed. If you focus on cultivating the feeling you will have many more options for achieving your dreams.

### Goals Exercise: *Get several pieces of paper and a pen or pencil.*

#### #1: What are my lifetime goals?

Time yourself and take exactly two minutes to list answers to the question: What are my lifetime goals?

Obviously, you will have to be very general and abstract, but you should still have time to take into account personal, family, social, career, financial, community, and spiritual goals. Try to write as many words as you can in the two minutes.

You are not committed to any of the goals that you write down, so record whatever comes into your head. Include far-out wishes and uncensored fantasies. Don't think about it too much, just keep churning out ideas, as fast as you can. If you get stuck, just write the same one over and over until something new pops up. Now, without reading any further, time yourself for exactly two minutes and write.

Time yourself for an additional two minutes and make any changes necessary so that you feel satisfied with your list.

#### #2: How do I want to feel if I only have six months to live?

If you knew that you would be struck dead by lightning six months from today, how would you live until then? The purpose of this question is to find out whether there are ways of feeling that are important to you that you are not feeling in your daily life or feelings that deserve more of your attention in the next six months. Before you start listing your answers, assume that everything relating to your death has been attended to. Your answer to this question should concern itself with how you would live these last six months.

Time yourself for exactly two minutes and make a list answering: How do I want to feel if I only have six months to live?

Spend an additional two minutes reviewing your answers to this question.

#### #3: Review

What did you discover? Are there any similarities between your answers to questions #1 and #2? Or did

you find yourself jarred into different directions when you realized your time was limited?

Spend four minutes now looking over your three lists and make any additional adjustments.

#### **#4: Priorities**

Now, look at your list of goals, question #1 and desired feeling, question #2. They may be very long lists. Based on who you are today, right this minute, circle the three most important items from list #1 and three from list #2. Now you will have six goals/feelings that you have culled from the two lists. Rewrite these six goals/feelings on a new sheet of paper.

From these six, take a few minutes to look at the three goals from question #1 and confirm that the feelings you wrote down for #2 are in line with the goals. Similarly, confirm that your goals are in line with the feelings you want to cultivate in your life. Make any changes necessary.

Congratulations! You have zeroed in on what is most important in your life as you see it right now. You know what you want and how you want to feel. Your vision is clear. Now you must act. Without action, this is all merely a wish. You cannot do a goal. You can only do an activity. You can also feel how you want to feel.

#### **#5: Activities**

Take a fresh page and write the first of your three most important goals (question #1) on it. You may want to stand up and stretch a little, take some deep breaths or put your hands on your belly to feel your body revving up. Tap into the energy of your body. Connect with the part of you that loves to DO THINGS!

Now, make a list of all the activities that could conceivably contribute toward achieving this goal. Quickly write down as many ideas as you can, trying for quantity and speed. This allows your creative juices to flow and intuition to operate. Speed allows you to run past your inhibitions because you do not give them a chance to operate. Remember that an activity is something that can be done. All the things you list will begin with action verbs (i.e. Call Mary. Tear down the shed. Gaze at the stars. Soak in the tub. Etc.) Remember, the important thing is to just keep writing. Keep the flow going.

Time yourself for exactly three minutes.

Ready...

Set... Write!

#### **#6: Clear Actions and Feelings**

Do you now have more activities than you have time for? Call on your “editor” left brain to do some practical, realistic trimming and refining.

Time yourself for two minutes, and pick the top five activities related to your first goal.

Now ask yourself: How can I do one of these activities with at least one of the feelings that I want to cultivate in my life? How can these activities become “actions with feeling”? For example, if your goal is to get a new job and one of your core feelings is to feel “joy” you could listen to your favorite music and drink your favorite tea while job searching on the Internet. Or, do something that brings you joy before you go into a job interview so you can carry that feeling with you. Maybe you have a fuzzy sweater that brings you joy or just a color that you’ll wear while on the job hunt. Anything, big or small is fine. Just as long as you are practicing feeling how you want to feel while on the path to your goal. The idea is that even if your

goals don't work out how you thought they would (and likely this is the case— often they will be better than you could have imagined), you will have practiced the feeling you want to feel all along the journey, so whether you get to the goal or not doesn't matter as much. It's more about the feeling and less about achieving the goal. The achievement is just a bonus.

With your ideal feelings in mind, refine your top five activities so that they can be done while feeling the feelings you want to cultivate. Time yourself for three minutes.

Repeat this process for your second and third most important goals.

Take three more minutes to go over your three lists of “actions with feeling” and refine each one to your liking.

Rewrite the list if needed, make it fancy if you like. Post it somewhere you'll see it daily so it can inspire and motivate you.

### **#7: Make it Real**

To achieve your goals and your ideal feelings you have to actually do something. Whether you change your attitude, go for the walk, make the call or practice “quitting”. It's now about getting really honest with yourself. For each activity on each goal list, ask yourself, “Am I committed to spending a minimum of five minutes on this activity (or completing it) in the next seven days?” If the answer is no, draw a line through the activity. Be honest. If you find that you've crossed off your whole list, go back to #6 and come up with some action items that you can commit to doing this week.

Culled from the lists will be about a dozen or so tasks that you can prioritize and schedule into your week. All items should be short, actionable and feasible. If not, break them down into smaller tasks.

Select one task from your list and do/feel it right away. Continue with your other activities and their corresponding feelings of choice.

Practice the feelings you want to feel daily. Remember to “Quit” if you need a new perspective. Create the life you desire, one moment at a time.

“ Whatever you can do or dream you can, begin it.  
Boldness has genius and power and magic in it.”  
—Johann Wolfgang von Goethe



# Personal Log *for* Soma Session Eight

Name:

Session date:

*Please use this sheet to record your responses to the Soma Structural Integration session. Careful, honest reflection and accurate recording of your feelings will facilitate the process of Self-Integration. All information is confidential. Use the reverse side if you need more space. Please, bring it to your next session to share with your practitioner.*

My general feeling before this session:

During the session I felt:

Immediately after the session I felt:

Changes I have noticed in my body since the session:

Changes I have noticed in the quality of my movement and posture since the session?

Changes in my lifestyle and attitudes:

Since my last session, I have been feeling mostly:

\_\_\_\_\_ Enthusiastic and happy

\_\_\_\_\_ Variations in my emotions

\_\_\_\_\_ Moody, depressed, or negative

\_\_\_\_\_ Relatively unemotional

Changes in my relationships:

What is working really well in my life:

## Session Nine: Integration of the Upper Body

Having initiated the Soma process of Integration in the lower half of your body, the journey continues as we bridge the lower and upper bodies. Addressing the torso, chest and head, we encourage the continuity of flow and movement throughout your whole structure. Movement around the core line will be enhanced and fluidity amplified. The following Heel Rock exercise offers an opportunity to explore gentle movement, seeking a sense of whole body connection and continuity.

### Preview of Session Ten

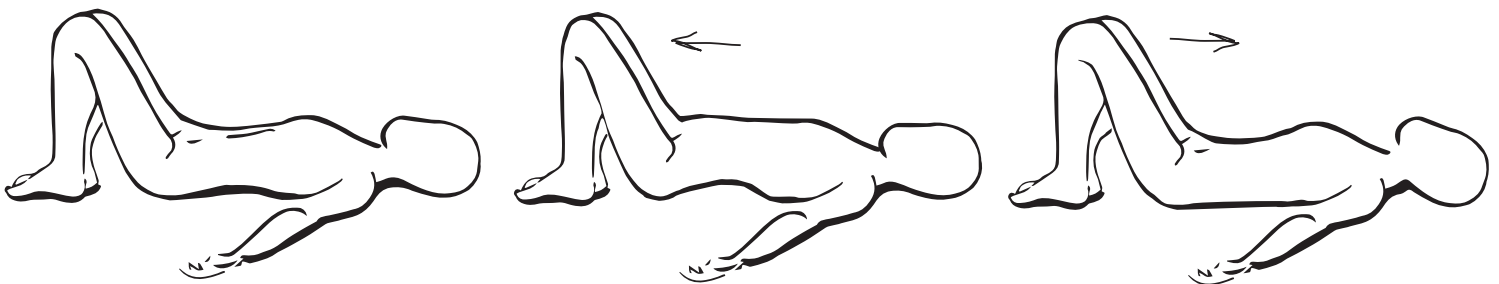
Session Ten further integrates the upper and lower body, focusing on the full functioning of the arms and shoulder girdle for fluidity and range of motion.

### Self-Integration: Heel Rock Movement Exploration

The following undulating movement is designed to help you discover and clarify the connection between your feet and the crown of your head. The Heel Rock supports awareness of the movement available through the whole spine from its base to its connection with your skull. Free movement of the spinal column is vital to overall health.

- Begin by lying on your back with your knees bent. Place your feet no more than a couple of inches apart.
- Make certain your low back is in a neutral position which means it is neither extremely arched away from the floor, nor is it flattened against it.
- Take a couple of moments to breathe deeply in and out as you yield your whole weight into the floor. Let your mind slow down and feel your body being supported by the ground.
- Send your attention into your feet and sense or imagine the weight of your feet connecting you to the center of the Earth.
- When you have this weighted sensation, begin to press and then release with your feet. Press, release, press, release, etc., until you establish a flowing rhythm. Be gentle, subtle.
- Continue rocking and send your attention to your skeleton. Notice the rocking rhythm, starting from your feet, as it moves up through all your joints; rocking, sloshing, and soothing your bones, as well as all the soft tissues of your body.
- Be certain to let your neck go with the rocking, so your head is free to bob up and down.
- Allow whatever images float through your mind to be there and simply enjoy the ride.

From Peggy Hackney, *Making Connections* (pg. 108)



# Personal Log *for* Soma Session Nine

Name:

Session date:

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Changes I have noticed in the quality of my movement and posture since the session?

Changes in my lifestyle and attitudes:

Since my last session, I have been feeling mostly:

\_\_\_\_\_ Enthusiastic and happy

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\_\_\_\_\_ Moody, depressed, or negative

\_\_\_\_\_ Relatively unemotional

Changes in my relationships:

What is working really well in my life:

## Session Ten: Expression

“There is a vitality, a life force, a quickening  
That is translated through you into action,  
And because there is only one of you in all time,  
This expression is unique.  
If you block it,  
It will never exist through any other medium  
And be lost.  
The world will never have it.  
It is not your business to determine how good it is,  
Nor how valuable it is,  
Nor how it compares with other expressions.  
It is your business to keep it yours, clearly and directly,  
To keep the channel open.  
You do not even have to believe in yourself or your work.  
You have to keep open and aware  
Directly to the urges that motivate you.  
Keep the channel open.  
No artist is pleased.  
There is no satisfaction whatever at any time.  
There is only a queer, divine dissatisfaction,  
A blessed unrest that keeps us marching  
And makes us more alive than others.”  
—Martha Graham, from a letter to Agnes de Mille

In Session Ten, we release and balance the intricate structures of our arms and their connections to the shoulders. By finding new ways of moving the arms and realizing that the initiation of movement and stability of the arms can come from the torso, we are then better able to keep our neck free and spine flexible.

The arms are one of our main connections to the outer world. We hug, give, receive, defend and assert ourselves mainly through our arms. We show our love, apathy or disapproval with the slightest gestures of our hands, arms and shoulders. Our arms support our clear communication of needs and ideas. Freeing the arms so they can freely express, move and gesture, may then allows us to feel things that we weren't able to feel earlier. Our body and mind synchronize their experiences, so if our tight shoulders and arms prohibit us from truly finding our core line of gravity, our mind will find reasons why we can't feel fully confident, grounded and stable. Our being seeks congruency between body and mind.

### Preview of Session Eleven

The last session of the Soma Series integrates the entire body in such a way that all your systems may work cooperatively with gravity rather than in opposition to it. Together we will complete the Soma Neuromuscular Integration® process by focusing on movement across the joints and reviewing your structural changes, experiences and progress.

## Self-Integration: Arm Circle Movement Exploration

This movement exercise explored and described by Peggy Hackney examines the relationship between the movement of the arm, shoulder and the entire torso.

- Lying on your left side, knees bent to 90 degrees, arms extended on floor in front of your chest at shoulder level, palms together as if praying.
- From this position, imagine you are slowly drawing a circle around yourself on the floor with the fingers of your right hand. Begin the movement upward, toward your head. Make the circle a comfortable size with a soft elbow, windmilling your arm over your head. Follow the movement with soft eyes so that your head and neck are part of the movement.
- Imagine a small, delicate bird sits on your right shoulder and that you must keep a space open there so as to not crush the bird. Sense the lowering of your shoulder blade as you open space for the bird. Sense the connection through the entire upper body and feel the movement reorganize. Allow your upper body to open as you continue the circle behind you.
- As you continue, your fingers may trace along the floor and across your lower body as you begin to roll forward, let your chest soften. Allow your body to accommodate.
- Return to where you started.



Repeat this phase, beginning with a downward circle, making sure your elbow is soft, not locked. Move slowly.

Notice that there are many subtle relationship changes between the joints of the elbow and wrist and hand as you cycle around the circle.

Notice also that not only is there graduated change at the shoulder but the whole upper body rotates against the lower body.

This simple movement sets up a pattern we can return to over and over in daily life. Many repetitive motion injuries in the upper body are derived from moving the shoulders, arms, and hands in ways that are not supported by the whole structure. This movement reminds the whole structure to engage and move which allows injuries to re-pattern and heal.

Repeat the entire sequence lying on your right side.

# Personal Log *for* Soma Session Ten

Name:

Session date:

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\_\_\_\_\_ Moody, depressed, or negative

\_\_\_\_\_ Relatively unemotional

Changes in my relationships:

What is working really well in my life:

## Session Eleven:

### Completion & “The beginning is always today.” —Mary Shelly

“People say that what we’re all seeking is a meaning for life. I don’t think that’s what we’re really seeking. I think that what we’re seeking is an experience of being alive, so that our life experiences on the purely physical plane will have resonances within our own innermost being and reality, so that we actually feel the rapture of being alive.” —Joseph Campbell

Many new spaces have opened in you; many long dormant growth cycles have been reactivated; many seeds have been sown. What would you most like to grow in yourself over these next months and years? Some seeds will sprout only after destruction such as fire; some are delicate and cannot abide disturbance. What parts of you will you water and tend; what parts will you dig up and burn; what parts will you leave alone to surprise you with their wild beauty?

This is just the beginning. You may see that some of the things you desired to change already have, some are in their fragile beginnings, and many more still lie invisible below the surface, quietly respirating, waiting for the right conditions. The journey has just begun.

#### “The Summer Day”

Who made the world?  
Who made the swan, and the black bear?  
Who made the grasshopper?  
This grasshopper, I mean—  
the one who has flung herself out of the grass,  
the one who is eating sugar out of my hand,  
who is moving her jaws back and forth instead of up and down—  
who is gazing around with her enormous and complicated eyes.  
Now she lifts her pale forearms and thoroughly washes her face.  
Now she snaps her wings open, and floats away.  
I don’t know exactly what a prayer is.  
I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down  
into the grass, how to kneel down in the grass,  
how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the fields,  
which is what I have been doing all day.  
Tell me, what else should I have done?  
Doesn’t everything die at last, and too soon?  
Tell me, what is it you plan to do  
with your one wild and precious life?  
—Mary Oliver

