

Many people learned early in life that the body wasn't a safe place to live, or that they were not permitted to have bodily needs and emotions. Sometimes this is because the parents couldn't handle the challenge of a child's normal needs and emotions, or because in some families only the parents get to have needs and feelings, or sometimes because everyone in the family was expected to be stoic and have no needs and feelings. In any case, many people learned they had to "clip their dashboard wires," and cut off body sensation. That means, just like a car with no dashboard gauges, there is insufficient information to know what's real and true to guide the person through life. They may make poor choices because they are disconnected from their authentic self, as revealed in body sensation. Or sometimes the unprocessed body sensation piles up, causing a number of symptoms. If such people attempt to process trauma or other experience with EMDR without being able to tolerate emotions and body sensations (both pleasurable and uncomfortable), they won't be able to complete trauma processing normally. Therefore, in order to have one's wires hooked up for general life purposes and for trauma processing purposes, those people may benefit from somatic work. This increases tolerance of emotions and body sensations and makes the body a safe place to live again.

Somatic work is related to mindful awareness. It may include grounding, expanding the person's window of tolerance through engaging in life enhancing resources, tracking mindfully in a moment to moment way what is happening in the body. With the therapist's resonant attunement, there may be a gentle pendulation between disturbance and resources, which both gently metabolizes disturbance and prepares the person for subsequent trauma processing with EMDR. The therapist's resonant and empathic attunement holds the space for the client's own bodily experience to emerge into the client's awareness, and release somatic holdings of disturbance in a subtle way.