

A Glossary of Terms

Affect Tolerance - the ability to experience negative or overwhelming emotions without acting out, hurting oneself or others, splitting off aspects of experience, or dissociation.

Boundaries - the ability to set limits with others and to recognize the limits set by others. In SE, boundaries are also the ability to sense the difference between oneself and the environment, including other people, and to differentiate between internal and external stimuli.

Breathwork - the use of breath and breathing patterns to affect positive physiological and emotional changes, such as calming and centering; containment and affect tolerance.

Containment - the ability to tolerate negative sensations, energy states and emotions without acting out, dissociating, or self-medicating. Also, the sense of being held by the body and its boundaries.

Centering - the sensation of the core of the “body self.”

Coherence - the natural synchronization between various body systems in a healthy or relaxed state, such as coherence between breath and heart beat; between different diaphragms, etc.

Connection - the ability to be in relationship to others and to oneself.

Defensive Responses - The restoration of appropriate physical defenses and reflexes that were thwarted during developmental or shock trauma (eg., psychomotor movements; muscle activation). Successful completion leads to a sense of competence and security in the body, and reduced traumatic stress symptoms.

Integration – Consolidation of changes accomplished, allowing new capacities achieved through successful pendulation to permeate the entire system.

Grounding - the sensation of the connection with the ground. Usually sensed in the feet and legs; awareness of support from the lower body.

Mindfulness - the curious, non-judgmental awareness of the here and now, enhanced through sensory perceptions, rather than replaying negative events in the past or anticipating and rehearsing possible events in the future.

Orientation - the awareness of oneself in place; a primary defensive response to a threat.

Pendulation - the natural rhythm of movement between constriction and release inherent to all physical systems. In SE, pendulation is also the movement between past events (unresourced state) and the present (resourced state).

Resilience - the ability to manage difficult or traumatic experiences without long-term negative effects; the ability to rebound to resourced states after an overwhelming experience.

Resonance - the ability to sense in one body the physical energy and sensations of another. This unconscious process is one way that humans affect one another, especially when they are in close relationship (such as mother and infant; couple or family; therapist and client, etc).

Resourcing - the ability to identify and use positive coping skills for self-regulation. Resources may include positive memories, images of helpful people, calming thoughts, "a safe place", stress-free areas of the body, physical support, etc. The body also has inherent internal resources that assist in defensive reactions: grounding, centering, balance, boundaries, orientation, etc.

Self-Regulation - the ability to process difficult or negative experience using the body's inherent mechanisms, such as pendulation and discharge. Effective self-regulation decreases negative coping, such as eating disorder behaviors, alcohol, drugs, etc.

Somatic Memory - the body's ability to hold the physical sensations and disruptive energy patterns of past trauma, even in the absence of a clear narrative or a conscious association between the initial cause and current symptom.

Somatic Symptom Relief - the resolution and disappearance of physical complaints as the trauma response is completed and energy is released back into the system. Numerous symptoms can be resolved, including headaches, digestive problems, and pain syndromes.

Stress Response - the body's innate alarm system in response to a perceived danger, also called the "Fight or Flight" response. It is highly adaptive to danger and human survival when threats are physical, but less so when threats are psychological, or imaginary.

Titration - Breaking the activation down into small enough pieces to be integrated easily so that a client can process overwhelming material in a non-overwhelming way. Waiting for the nervous system activation to settle before proceeding to the next perturbation lowers arousal in small steps.

Tracking - The ability to identify, follow, and report changes in physical sensation throughout the body, and to connect these changes to thoughts, emotions, and the release of trauma responses.