

Guidebook of

# Somatic Transformational Exercises

*improving the mind-body connection  
to improve physical and mental prowess*

FROM THE LINEAGES OF . . .



Hanna Somatic Education®

and complementary others ...

OCTOBER, 1999 EDITION

*CDs inside back cover*

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**For further information, you may directly contact the author/editor,  
Lawrence (Lorenzo) Gold, somatic explorer and guide, at**

TELEPHONE **505 699-8284**

e-mail: [awareness@somatics.com](mailto:awareness@somatics.com)

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## INTRODUCTION

**T**his handbook exists to enable you to improve your physical and mental prowess by improving your mind-body connection.

Those of us who have worked with the processes described in this book have found that as we combine certain movements together, our strength instantly increases. We have also found that as we do these processes with steadier attention and focused intention, our quality of movement in general becomes smoother and surer. These improvements result from a higher level of mind-body integration.

So the transformative processes described here do more than improve bodily functioning; they also improve mental functioning by exercising your ability to convert ideas (words and instructions) into tangible actions with tangible results. You get results according to how accurately you do so. Take your time.

The influence of Thomas Hanna, the author of Somatics: Re-awakening the Mind's Control of Movement, Flexibility and Health, may be recognized by those who have read his book. I was one of Dr. Hanna's direct students. One of Dr. Hanna's invitations was to explore. This guidebook contains discoveries made in the spirit of such exploration and also some of the somatic exercises he taught us, his students. It also contains technical guidance that, applied to the Cat Stretch exercises of Dr. Hanna's book, magnifies their potency. I welcome your feedback.

This volume stands as the counterpart of another curiosity-evoking work, The Handbook of Assisted Pandiculation, a book of clinical techniques developed and written for use by professional (clinical) practitioners of Hanna Somatic Education. It is available to formal students in training, and relevant parts are available to participants in experiential workshops.

This volume is for everyone. However, clinicians in other disciplines may find that the somatic transformations taught here open a new vista for understanding and working with persistent musculo-skeletal conditions and refractory pain. Somatic educators-in-training may use them to accelerate their development and add them to their vocabulary of somatic transformations.

The material contained in this work resides within the domain of the body-mind – but its source lies beyond. The somatic transformational exercises will take you to a doorway to a *greater* process of individual transformation, which can be carried forward by means of resources found at the end of this guidebook.

**Lawrence Gold**  
on the World Wide Web at [www.somatics.com](http://www.somatics.com)

*GUIDEBOOK OF SOMATIC TRANSFORMATIONAL EXERCISES*  
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## **FOREWORD**

### **New Paradigm Healing -- Somatic Education**

**W***hat in the world is a paradigm?*

A paradigm is a set of criteria we use to define what's important and to determine how to do things. A paradigm is a viewpoint and a set of rules.

We all use paradigms -- for example, about food: we all have ideas of what we like and don't like, which foods are good for us and which are not. For some people, calories are important, for others, nutritional balance, and for others, life-force. Those differences define different "food paradigms".

The healing professions are also built upon paradigms: germ theory, structural alignment, energy flow, etc.

Now, a new healing paradigm is emerging: somatic education. The paradigm of somatic education involves improving control over our own life process -- the mind-body connection.

The term, "somatic", refers to the awareness of the body "from within"; "education" has to do with awakening capacities. The mind-body connection involved in somatic education is the same mind-body connection involved in controlling our own movements, our own attention, our speech, and ultimately, our state of tension in life.

Somatic education produces results particularly effectively with the residual effects of injuries (chronic pain and stiffness) and with *stress-related* disorders (such as headaches and back trouble).

#### **PARADIGMS OF HEALTH CARE**

Health care has changed over the centuries, yet one aspect of healing has remained the same: the body heals itself, whatever other treatment may have been given.

In other words, there are *some* things that no one can do for us; we must do them ourselves.

The shift from medicine-as-intervention to self-healing is a paradigm shift -- and with paradigm shifts come new rules.

Two healing paradigms *immediately* preceded the emergence of the somatic paradigm: those of modern medicine (drugs and surgery, and only primitively, exercise and diet) and of bodywork (manipulation, exercise and diet, but not drugs and surgery!).

### THE MODERN MEDICAL PARADIGM

**"Medicine conquers disease and repairs the body."**

The operating paradigm of modern medicine is that the human body is a "marvelous machine" that occasionally malfunctions and needs fixing. This is its basic viewpoint. The rules of manipulative intervention used in the various branches of modern medicine, which include drugs, surgery, and most physical therapy practices, emerged from this view. So also did those of osteopathy, chiropractic, massage, reflexology, trigger-point techniques, and the use of herbs.

Here, mind and the body are considered separately, as if they are two things that we experience at different times. Their relationship is considered somehow mysterious and arcane. But how could it be more obvious? Every voluntary movement we make is a bodily action governed by a mental intention, speech is a physical expression of a feeling mind, and emotional states correlate with muscular tension, movement and bodily chemistry (hormonal changes). Direct self-observation of body and mind reveals that to feel one is to feel the other. Both mind and body are sensations. Sophisticated practitioners of modern medicine recognize and work with that interrelation.

In modern medicine, the individual's responsibility for healing may be summarized, "take your medicine, do what your therapist says to do, watch your diet, and exercise."

There is an ongoing problem with modern medicine, however: patient "compliance". People don't necessarily do what their doctors tell them to do. This problem bids one become philosophical. Is it that people place too much responsibility upon their doctors and take too little upon themselves (the "fix me" mentality)? Or is it that the methods of modern medicine are so often unpleasant (drug side-effects, painful and invasive procedures, and austere dietary prescriptions) that nobody likes them? Or both? Might it be that people must deny or suppress their feelings to tolerate the methods of modern medicine, an unnatural act for any living creature?

Still, for emergency situations (which often result from patients' lifestyle choices), modern medicine is often the necessary first approach.

### THE PARADIGM OF BODYWORK

**"Body affects mind."**

The operating viewpoint of various schools of bodywork, such as Rolfing<sup>®</sup>, Cranio-sacral Therapy, The Trager Approach<sup>®</sup>, and others, is that body and mind are, in reality, "body-mind", a functional unity. Certain Asian health practices (including acupuncture) use the relation of mind and body as a diagnostic reference in determining treatment. Even

so, where actual application of the method is concerned, it is essentially manipulative; the individual is, for the most part "on the receiving end" -- "done to", manipulated by an outside agent -- though some approaches include pleasurable health practices as part of their recommended regimen.

Still, even in these approaches, patient compliance is a problem -- possibly because people have been so indoctrinated by their previous medical experiences that they bring their indoctrination (the "fix me" mentality) to their bodywork practitioner. In fact, the notion of "compliance" is a problem; *compliance* implies *obedience*, rather than self-generated assumption of responsibility. Part of the task of practitioners of these methods is educating their clients as to their responsibility for their own success.

This leads us to the emerging paradigm.

### THE PARADIGM OF SOMATIC EDUCATION "I am as I decide to be."

The primary observation of somatic education is that how we respond and adapt to the insults and injuries of life largely determines how they affect us, both in the short term and in the long term. We have a major say in the course of our own healing. The rule governing this viewpoint is, "release reactions that are no longer necessary and instill abilities that serve us." Create freedom from the past and apply that freedom into free and regenerative patterns of feeling and function.

With somatic education, the individual learns to correct bodily malfunctions through an internalized learning process. This process is not so esoteric as it might seem. Major bodily systems affecting health and healing (breathing, digestion, circulation) are affected by a system over which we have virtually unlimited potential for voluntary control: our musculo-skeletal system. Our emotional states are also tied in with that system.

Somatic education involves a kind of awakening. What gets awakened is the capacity to feel what is going on with us and to bring it under our control. We make "it" (pain, tension, breathing, etc.) into "ourselves". Integration occurs. Then, when we stop doing "it", "it" stops happening. We seem miraculously freed of the affliction.

Participants in somatic education voluntarily place attention in the feelings of voluntary movement; they create changes actively, rather than receive them passively; at first guided by a teacher, they then proceed guided by their own awareness of themselves and the effects of their actions. The effects are indeed far-reaching.

With certain conditions, such as chronic pain following injury, this approach is the only way that works in the long run. When a person has accumulated nervous tension from injuries, long-term stress, or the emotional and attitudinal conditioning that occurs over a lifetime, muscles can become so tight that they hurt. Spasms occur. Joints get compressed by those muscle pulls. Nerves get pinched. Breathing and physiological functions get impaired. Posture gets distorted. People suffer "body aches". They "age". However, there is nothing wrong with their muscles; they are working as they should. They are only obeying the nervous system. The problems that result can be reversed only by *doing something different*.

Feldenkrais Awareness through Movement exercises, Roling® Movement, biofeedback, Aston Patterning® Neurokinetics, Continuum Movement®, Hanna Somatic Education™, and schools of yoga that go beyond stretching and relaxation, consciously awaken the self-determining, self-correcting link between self-awareness and self-control.

Each healing paradigm has its area of superiority. The superiority of somatic education is its ability to alleviate conditions that arise from the individual's habitual way of functioning, something that only the individual can correct -- often attributed to aging, mysterious causes, or even to genetics. Somatic education operates from a new paradigm that makes it possible to resolve conditions unresolvable by medical or manipulative means: self-awareness and self-mastery. You learn how to be more effective at being as you decide to be.