PRINCIPLES

“Soma” refers to the body experienced from within (first-person). Experienced from outside (second or third-person), we perceive a body.

Somatic experiencing is the experiencing of embodied consciousness.

Without the experience of embodied consciousness, there is no experience whatsoever. Psychology is the experience of physiology and psychology shapes physiology.

Somatic education is about wholeness.

As the central condition with which somatic education deals, sensory-motor amnesia is a fragmentation or lack of integration of the person's awareness and control of their own faculties. Therefore, by dispelling sensory-motor amnesia, and promoting integration of our faculties, somatic education develops greater wholeness.

Somatic education is a deliberate process.

Without deliberate participation by both the practitioner and client, somatic education has limited ability to evoke awareness and control, by the client, of their own faculties.

Somatic education cultivates the ability to direct attention and exercise intention.

Attention is the foundation of sensory awareness; intention is the foundation of voluntary motor control. Therefore, to improve ones ability to direct ones attention is necessary to improve sensory awareness; to improve ones ability to exercise intention is necessary to improve voluntary motor control. Directing attention and exercising intention are the primary challenges and fruits of somatic education. Difficulty directing attention and exercising intention are experienced as sensory-motor amnesia.

Sensory-motor Amnesia is a breakdown or discontinuity of owning our own faculties; Sensory-motor Obliviousness is immaturity or latency of our own faculties.
Somatic education relies upon a sensory-motor (or attentional-intentional) feedback loop.

Without feedback, there is no capacity for self-regulation or self-correction. Feedback comes via attention to the senses; self-regulation and self-correction come from exercising a motor-intention and guiding it by our sensations of them.

Somatic education depends upon and enhances mind-body awakening and integration.

Without awakening integration of his/her faculties, a client can’t bring the practitioner’s instructions to bear upon their his/her processes, to improve their functioning.

Somatic education is a learning process.

Learning is self-correction based on feedback, either from outside or from within.

Somatic education involves three perspectives, simultaneously: first-person (“I”), second-person (“you”), and third-person (“it”).

First-person is our sense of our internal experience, proprioception (self-sensing). Second-person is our sense of relationship with an other; the contrast between the viewpoints of self and other provides the opportunity for interaction and learning beyond our own inclinations. Third-person is our experience of the objective world and the objective experience of ourselves by others without mutual communication; it is “being seen” as a “body” or “body structure”.

Somatic education proceeds by the Socratic Method.

The Socratic Method involves developing awareness and control by the client (the “first-person”) prompted by a teacher (a “second-person”). This awareness and control pertains to all three domains: first-person (self-control), second-person (learning from and interaction with others) and third-person (he, she, and it, the objective universe, seen by us). Somatic education the practitioner, inviting and guiding the client to direct attention (sensory-awareness) and intention (motor-control) in specific ways that lead to greater wholeness (awakening and integration of ones faculties in ways that gather us into a complete wholeness and control of our faculties).
Somatic education deals with responses, not merely with muscles, the nervous system, or other anatomical or physiological features.

Because somatic education is about developing wholeness, it deals with the body’s parts (seen 3rd person) -- anatomical or physiological features, such as muscles, nerves, etc. -- from the point of view of the person’s “hereness” (1st person) or their sense of the whole body-mind. This sense of wholeness grows as a person’s faculties awaken and are integrated together.

Somatic education is a synergetic process that integrates a person’s functions into a higher level of functional integration, that integrates their parts into a greater sense of wholeness.

Coordination is the synchronizing of multiple movement elements into an integrated movement with the sense that that complex, integrated movement is one movement. Synergy is living organization, a whole that is more than the sum of parts.

Somas perceive by contrast; somas perceive change; somas live by changing.

Whatever ceases to change fades from our awareness. Cessation of the sensation of change is the mechanism by which Sensory-Motor Amnesia sets in. Cessation of self-initiated movement is death.

Awakening, differentiation and integration are the three steps to greater wholeness.

First, a function (such as movement of the legs) awakens on an automatic level (reflexively); then, the individual learns to distinguish that function from others and to control it distinctly and voluntarily; then, the individual learns to incorporate that newly distinguished function into actions (such as walking) that involve other functions (such as going somewhere with purpose).

Awakening, differentiation and integration are the process of learning. They are the exact meaning of the word, education. To the degree that these processes develop unevenly, to that degree, learning is incomplete.
PRACTICES

(principle practice)

“Soma” refers to the body experienced from within (first-person). Experienced from outside (second or third-person), we perceive a body.

We make clear to the client that the results they get depend upon their participation and initiative.

Somatic education depends upon and enhances mind-body awakening and integration.

We guide our clients in placing their attention in specific areas as they pandiculate (assisted/augmented or via somatic exercises). We instruct them in doing the maneuvers in such a way as to create sensation in those specific areas.

Somatic education is about wholeness.

We guide our clients to become aware of connections within themselves that contribute to more and more whole-bodied awareness and control. To do so, once we teach a client to sense a muscle or muscle group, we teach our client coordination patterns that incorporate those muscles or muscle groups into more complex, integrated movements.

Somatic education is a deliberate process that cultivates the ability to direct attention and exercise intention.

We teach our clients to do what they intend to do and not to do what they don’t intend to do. This teaching involves a recognition of “good form” in doing somatic exercises and correct responsiveness in one-on-one clinical sessions.

Somatic education relies upon a sensory-motor (or attentional-intentional) feedback loop.

We have our clients notice the relation between what they mean to do and what they are actually doing and to correct their actions, accordingly.
**Somatic education is a learning process.**

We make sure that our clients understand instructions and perform them accordingly. We make sure that our clients can follow instructions clearly, easily and without confusion or doubt. We teach our clients to act with understanding, and not just by rote.

**Somatic education exists in three domains, simultaneously: first-person (“I”), second-person (“you”), and third-person (“it”).**

We have a clear intention of the desired outcome for each maneuver, so that our instructions and the physical result reflect that intention. We teach our clients how to recognize the alignment between intention (first-person) and result (third-person) through communication (second-person).

**Somatic education proceeds by the Socratic Method.**

We encourage our clients to observe their own state, rather than to depend upon us for validation of results. We teach them to create their own results, rather than create those results for them.

**Somatic education deals with responses, not merely with muscles, the nervous system, or other anatomical or physiological features.**

We teach clients to perceive directly, to sense, rather than only to analyze or intellectualize.

**Somatic education is a synergetic process that integrates a person’s functions into a higher level of functional integration, that integrates their parts into a greater sense of wholeness.**

We do not settle for the client’s control of isolated muscles; we aim for their self-integration: balance, coordination and easy responsiveness.

**Somas perceive by contrast; somas perceive change; somas live by changing.**

We use contrasting sensations, such as effort and rest, right and left side, before and after, more and less, to awaken clients ability to sense and create their own state and changes. We teach how to distinguish felt differences. We use techniques of somatic education to awaken sensation, to develop control, and to recognize the relationship between intention and results, between voluntary and involuntary.
Awakening, differentiation and integration are the three steps to greater wholeness.

We use the techniques, “Means-Whereby”, “Kinetic Mirroring,” and “Assisted Pandiculation” to awaken sensation; we use passive movements (“ Means-Whereby”) to teach our clients to distinguish (differentiate) sensations and movements; we use other passive movements (“Kinetic Mirroring”) to teach our clients to distinguish contraction and relaxation; we use precise positioning and active movements (“Assisted Pandiculation”) to teach the full range of voluntary self-control; we use the “lock-in” maneuver to develop balance and equalize control between opposing action patterns; and we use somatic education exercises – integrative action patterns -- to teach coordination and higher integration.