

SoMA for Counsellors: Listening to the Whole, Embodied Person

The SoMA programme for counsellors, psychotherapists & other listening professionals.

Learn how to create far greater comfort and ease in your own body.

Explore a Somatics-informed perspective on the embodied Self, and how this can deepen and benefit your understanding of yourself, your practice, and your clients.

This innovative programme is a hybrid that combines my self-paced online fundamentals course in releasing embodied stress, with a 10-week live online programme of discussion and experiential sessions designed specifically for counsellors, psychotherapists, and other listening professionals.

SoMA Essentials is an online course that teaches you essential Somatics movements, techniques and more, so you can start to address stress and tension, get rid of stiffness, discomfort, and pain – and move through life with greater ease. *This course is currently being re-named & re-structured into 28 daily 'steps', but I want to make the counsellors' course info available now, not delay it until that's done!*

Through multiple video and audio lessons that build your learning step-by-step, SoMA Essentials provides a clear grounding in how Clinical Somatics works to address and release stress literally stored in the body (*controlled* by your brain, but *stuck* in your muscles). **Practical guidance in self-awareness and movement techniques, as well as in specific movement 'exercises', is supplemented by basic information about the physiology of stress responses and so how stress and trauma impact your soma.**

In addition to the 28 daily 'steps', you get bonuses including 4 full-length classes – so you'll have multiple ways to learn to sit, stand, walk, and move around with more comfort and confidence, and experience greater ease and true relaxation in your soma. And you can take the entire course at your own pace.

Many of the lessons focus on identifying and overcoming 'bracing' (and, so, on helping you create a more *supple* centre in your body, to promote easier movement and better health). **Bracing** is where your body gets stuck in/between multiple stress response patterns, leaving you with a stuck centre. This stuck centre of your body negatively effects not just your mobility and ability to deal effectively with stress & trauma, but your whole system. This often unconscious 'stuck-ness' is a big problem for many people.

You may discover some degree of 'bracing' in your own soma. Whether or not this is the case for you, all the movement lessons and classes are invaluable in your journey to a more comfortable experience of your body. In addition, **understanding how and why bracing occurs provides powerful information about the nervous system, and its relationship to 'symptoms' such as stress, anxiety, and depression.** When working with clients, this can be very helpful as a component of your 'listening' to them as a whole, *embodied* person.

The benefits of Clinical Somatics include enabling you to move between an over-activated level of stress (where your sympathetic state of fight/flight/freeze is 'on' too much, or all, of the time) **and a more balanced state** (where your parasympathetic 'rest or digest' state is able to function far more efficiently, because your sympathetic state is less activated when it's not needed).

This is where **SoMA for Counsellors** adds so much to your knowledge as a therapist: what you'll learn about the physiology of stress can help you understand better for yourself (1) aspects of feelings labelled e.g. 'stress', 'anxiety', and 'depression'; (2) symptoms regarded as 'medically unexplained', or part of a chronic pain condition, and (3) other experiences of discomfort, stiffness, and pain. This Somatics-informed perspective can be incredibly helpful in supporting clients with symptoms that seem bewildering, have been deemed 'psychological', or are not responding to treatments as expected.

The 10 live sessions will give you a range of ways to enhance and expand your knowledge and understanding of a Somatics-informed perspective, as well as opportunities to explore other areas of counselling theory and practice from that different perspective. Much of the material and ideas we'll be discussing draw on similarities and shared influences between counselling and psychotherapy on the one hand, and Clinical Somatics and body-focused 'therapies' on the other.

There will also be **an emphasis on experience** in the context of these new perspectives, and on supporting you to develop your own skills in self-sensing and pandiculation, which are key to improving your own lasting comfort (and freedom from stuck stress, stiffness, and pain).

While the longer movement classes will be Clinical Somatics classes, you'll also get to experience practices from Focusing, Somatic Experiencing® and movements inspired by polyvagal theory and more. So, you'll cover a wider range of 'somatic' approaches, not just Clinical Somatics.

Relatedly, while my own main interest and expertise is in Clinical Somatic Education, one of the aims of this course is to open up your exposure to a range of approaches to 'listening to the whole, embodied person' – including thinking about how to use your new knowledge and/or techniques with your clients, and when and how to best refer a client to a specific other practice or therapy. Also, looking at a range of somatic approaches should leave you well equipped to consider whether you might wish to train further in any of them, and if so, how that fits in with your current practice and/or therapeutic model. I welcome critique and questioning of all the readings – and any ideas or models we discuss – throughout the course.

Outline of the 10-week SoMA for Counsellors sessions

Week 1: Introductions, followed by a movement and relaxation class	Week 8: Seminar discussion: Discussion of the concepts of 'mindfulness' and 'bodyfulness' in the context of this course. We'll also look at (& experience) some practices used to promote neuroplasticity & deal with stress (e.g. shaking, breathwork) and assess them in relation to the neuroscience and a Somatics-informed perspective.
Week 2: Seminar discussion: Carl Rogers and Thomas Hanna: similarities and differences in their concepts of the Self, and how these might inform your own understanding of 'the whole person' and of concepts such as 'embodiment', 'somatics', & 'person-centred'.	Week 9: Q&A session along with a discussion of existential and/or psychodynamic and/or sensorimotor approaches to psychotherapy (depending on course members' practice and interests). Followed by a short movement class.
Week 3: Movement class.*	Week 10: Discussion: A short movement class, followed by discussion of how what you've looked at and discussed has perhaps affected your practice, your understanding of personhood/the Self, and other reflections on the course, Somatics, and your practice.
Week 4: Seminar discussion: 'Focusing' and its basis in Eugene Gendlin's work as well as his early work with Carl Rogers. We will do a short practical exercise in this session.	Each session will be 75–90 minutes long**
Week 5: Movement class.	
Week 6: Seminar discussion: Somatic Experiencing® – its relationship to Hanna's Somatic Education, to psychotherapy, and its focus on helping process trauma. We will again do a short experiential practice.	
Week 7: Movement class.	

**The three weeks where we meet primarily to have a SoMA Somatics movement class, there'll be time for a short check in, and 15–20-minutes for a discussion after class. **Certificates for up to six hours of CPD will be provided at the end of the course, to cover seminar sessions attended live.*

There will be short readings for each seminar week, & some suggested further reading. You'll learn some basics about the neuroscience behind not just Clinical Somatics, but as it's applied & talked about in other approaches. You'll be invited (especially in weeks 9 and 10) to offer ideas for discussion, especially as regards your own practice, or your own interests in the field of counselling, psychotherapy, and somatics.

The course is especially helpful if you see clients who are dealing with stress, chronic pain, and/or trauma – remembering (& foregrounding) that trauma refers not just to 'big' life events, but also to the build-up of unmanaged stresses & strains (think of ACEs, and the causes of 'chronic pain') that Clinical Somatics and other somatic approaches work so well to address at a fully embodied level.