

## **Somatic Experiencing (SE) – Advanced Year**

The training which I received the funding for was 'Somatic Experiencing Advanced Year' training, to enable me to qualify as a Somatic Experiencing Practitioner (SEP). This was the third and final stage of this part of the training, which I have been doing over the last 3 years. This third year of training that the FPSA kindly provided funding for, was in London, at the Amnesty International Headquarters building.

For certification as an SEP, attendance at 72 hours of training was required, along with supervision (clear hours for these are stipulated over the course of the 3 years), to ensure safe practice that is in line with SE theory, practice, and principles. The training was provided over two residential weeks in September 2023, and February 2024 with six days each of training contact hours with a total of 36 hours per module. There is also a requirement to complete a minimum number personal SE sessions/Personal Supervision and Case Consultations every year, which I completed over the course of the 3 years.

I have found these sessions very valuable in supporting my clinical practice as they have offered the opportunity to reflect on individual case work with clients I am seeing, as well as considering any personal issues that it may be helpful to consider.

I work as an Occupational Therapist in a residential secure children's unit for 2 days a week. For the rest of my week, I work therapeutically with adopted children, young people and their parents, as well as birth families, where there has been high levels of trauma, in particular developmental trauma.

In Somatic Experiencing, it is recognised that trauma is stored in the body, and it uses somatic (body based) approaches to support release of it from the body. Trauma healing and ways to support the individual to move forwards in a way that is right for them, is an area of practice that I believe strongly in, offering the individual the opportunity to develop the resources that supports a greater sense of emotional and physical wellbeing. The other practices that I currently use in my work (sensory integration, and sensory attachment intervention) align closely with an understanding of the physiology of the nervous system, and how we can use this to support and empower the individuals we work with in being able to experience a greater sense of physical and emotional wellbeing and regulation.

Using Somatic Experiencing in my practice has enabled me to support and offer the young people, and their parents/adults (e.g. residential staff) an additional and powerful way of using a body orientated approaches to support the healing process, relating to the impact of the trauma they have experienced. Completing the training has enabled me to further develop my skills when engaging in work with the adolescents, bringing the option to include the body at the core in the release of trauma without the use of words. It also offers the opportunity for greater nervous system stabilization, supporting a shift towards trauma release and recovery, in preparation for other, more higher level nervous system work, such as those requiring greater cognition. I have used this approach with a number of young people, and seen the positive results that it has yielded.

I have continued to use somatic experiencing in my work with the staff team, supporting their regulation, resilience, and hopefully retention in the organisation. This has a direct impact on the self-regulation, and capacity to co-regulate with the young people. Staff report how positive this has been for their emotional wellbeing, and self-regulatory capacities.

In the Advanced year of the training, there has been a transition to considering a more organismic view of the effects of trauma, in recognition that working effectively with clients who have complex and interwoven traumatic symptoms (as is the case for the children in care who I see) such as non-suicidal and self-injurious behaviours, requires a deep understanding of how the whole of their organism has been affected.

I have been able to gain further insight and exposure to SE touch, in addition to my SI knowledge, during this module. This work involves the use of physical touch to various parts of the body, such as the organs, and joints, to further support the release of trauma held in the body. The principles around this also includes the therapist directing their focus and attention to a particular area of the body that needs support and resourcing without the actual physical touch.

Completion of this third year, and the additional skills I have learned, has made a significant contribution to my therapeutic work with young people who have experienced developmental trauma, moving more into somatic mind/body work to support greater emotional regulation and flow in their physiology, rather than cognitive based work. One of the young people I used it with described how it helps the 'impossible feel possible'.

Thank you so much to the FPSA Foundation for the opportunity you have given me to complete my training in this area of practice, as it has had such a positive impact on the work that I do with young people, and the adults that care for and support them. I will continue to use and share it for many years to come.

*Occupational Therapist, & Somatic Experiencing Practitioner (SEP)*