



# WHY IT'S IMPORTANT TO CONNECT TO THE BODY

By Dr. Luke Sniewski

# ABOUT ME

## ACADEMIC BACKGROUND

- BBA – Accounting (ISU)
- MS – Sustainable Food Systems (GMC)
- PgDip – Drug & Alcohol Studies (UA)
- PhD – Psychology (AUT)

## STUDENT OF THE HUMAN BODY

- Professional Football Player
- CPA - Certified Public Accountant
- Health Expert, Wellness Studio Owner
- Vipassana Meditation
- Therapist/Coach – Compassionate Inquiry Facilitator, Mentor, & Practitioner
- Dedicated Father & Husband
- Author of *Somawise*





# SOMATIC DROP-IN

- **Guided Practice**
- **Unpacking the Exercise**
  - Deepening awareness from outside to inside
  - Inviting stillness
  - Feeling sensations
  - Noticing reactions
  - Inviting shift in nervous system

# SOMATIC DROP-IN

- **Somatic Awareness**

- Body Awareness = Emotional Regulation & Psychological Wellbeing
  - Lazzarelli et al. (2024) - This integrative review synthesizes evidence that mind-body interventions (e.g., mindfulness, yoga, somatic movement) can improve interoceptive ability, which is closely correlated with enhanced emotion regulation and psychological well-being.
  - Mirroring clinical context: Somatic Experiencing® (2021) - This scoping review of Somatic Experiencing suggests that therapies emphasizing interoceptive and proprioceptive awareness show symptom reductions in PTSD and stress-related disorders.

# SOMATIC DROP-IN

- **Stillness (Non-Reactivity)**

- Cognitive Flexibility = Catalyst for change
  - Gu et al. (2020) This RCT found that improvements in non-reactivity fully mediated the effect of an 8-week MBSR program on cognitive flexibility, accounting for about 54 % of the effect, while non-judgment was not a mediator.
  - Baer et al. (2015) & Perth research – Emotion Regulation Strategies - Though older, this peer-reviewed work remains highly relevant: non-reactivity was significantly linked to effective emotion regulation strategies, including reappraisal and acceptance, and inversely related to rumination and avoidance.



# SOMATIC DROP-IN

- **Connected Breathing (Hormetic Stress)**
  - All Change is uncomfortable
    - Fincham et al. (2023) - This meta-analysis found small-to-medium effect sizes for reductions in stress, anxiety, and depressive symptoms from breathwork interventions, though the authors caution more rigorous designs are needed.
    - Havenith et al. (2025) - A narrative review in Nature Communications (2025) reports initial evidence that circular breathwork—a type of deep rapid breathing—reduces anxiety, depression, PTSD symptoms, and boosts life satisfaction and openness. Suggestive of hormetic stress and altered-state pathways
- **Embodiment – Connecting to our Felt Sense – Enhances Clinical Outcomes**

# WHY IS EMBODIMENT IMPORTANT?

## **Cultivating Experiential Flexibility**

- Experiential flexibility, a core concept in Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), refers to the ability to fully attend to the present moment, to know that we can pass through life's diverse experiences without being swayed or impacted, and act in ways that align with one's values, even when facing challenging experiences (Macri & Rogge, 2017).
- “our intent isn’t to feel better, but to get better at feeling.”
  - The Presence Process (Michael Brown)

# WHY IS EMBODIMENT IMPORTANT?

## **Bringing the Unconscious to Conscious Awareness**

- Behaviors/decisions are dictated by subconscious drivers
  - Gerald Zaltman (How Customers Think)
- The body is the subconscious mind
  - Polyvagal Theory (Porges, 2011)
  - Somatic Marker Hypothesis (Damasio, 1996; Barthet et al., 2022; Singh, 2024)
- Our bodies—through unconscious neural and physiological processes—are constantly perceiving, learning, and even deciding before our conscious mind is aware,
  - (Soon et al., 2008; Pessiglione et al., 2008)



# WHY IS EMBODIMENT IMPORTANT?

## **Feeling is Healing**

- Body's intrinsic, inherent processes move towards homeostasis
  - The body heals itself, in line with it's cellular programming
- Candace Pert research on peptides and receptors (Molecules of Emotion)
  - Exist throughout the body... internal conversation
    - Emotions live in the body, not just a label (foundation for somatic therapy)
  - Suppressing emotions disrupts homeostasis
    - Prevents free flow of peptides / Disrupts self-regulation / Inflammation & illness
  - Feeling emotions restores homeostasis
    - Peptides are processed / Return to homeostatic norms

# WHY IS EMBODIMENT IMPORTANT?

## **Holistic Wellbeing**

- Healthy Lifestyle Choices
  - Direct Experiential Evidence vs. Dogma

# WHY IS EMBODIMENT IMPORTANT?

## **Embodied Relationships**

- Presence is the greatest gift we bring into relationship
  - Focus / Attentiveness
  - Active listening

# WHY IS EMBODIMENT IMPORTANT?

## **The Present Day Challenge**

- Living in the Mind
  - Rumination
  - Constant Distraction



# QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION

Thank you