



# Complex Trauma and Body Centered Healing, Part 4

## Body-centered approaches to healing complex trauma

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Our bodies remember wholeness  
in the midst of fragmentation.

*Terry Tempest Williams*



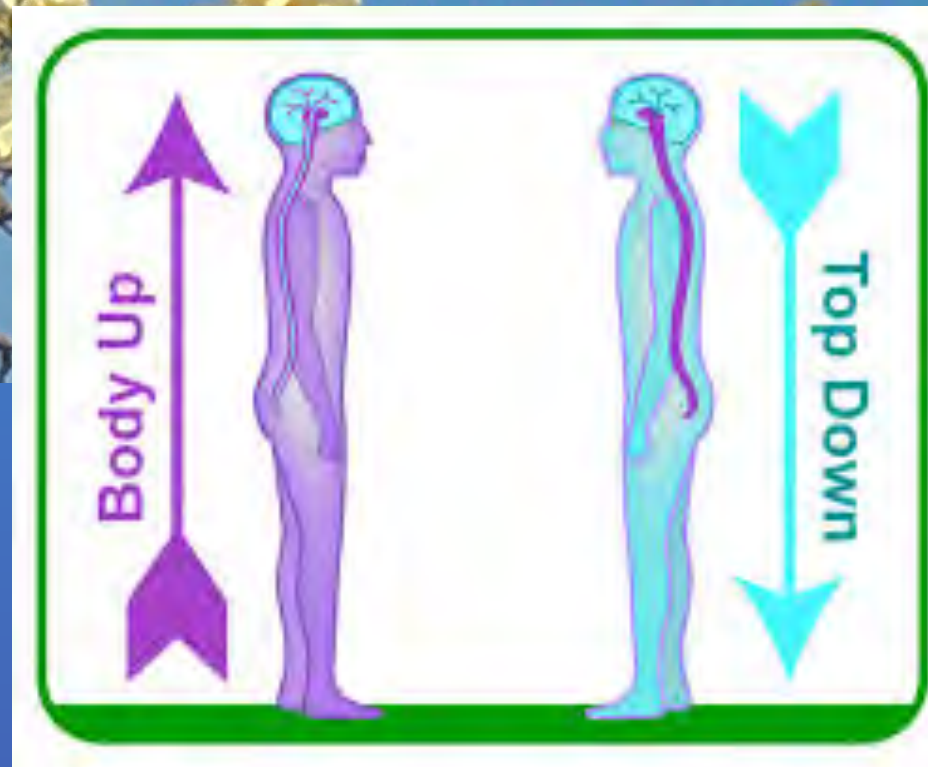




Sometimes learning about trauma can feel overwhelming;  
during this presentation please feel welcome to take care of yourself as needed.



If you like, you might take a moment or two here,  
to breathe, stretch, and notice how you feel, before going on.



In top-down approaches to trauma,  
you work mostly with your mind and awareness  
to develop trauma resilience and to heal from trauma

*With psychotherapy, meditation,  
visualization, affirmations, etc.*





In bottom-up approaches to trauma  
you work mainly with your body  
to develop trauma resilience and to heal from trauma.

*Since portions of traumatic memory can't be accessed cognitively or verbally,  
it can be important to work some with bottom-up approaches to trauma healing.*



“When the alarm bell of the emotional brain keeps signaling that you are in danger, no amount of insight will silence it...

This is where a bottom-up approach to therapy becomes essential. The aim is actually (to change one’s) physiology and relationship to bodily sensations.”

—Dr. Bessel van der Kolk







Here is an incomplete list of some body-centered practices  
that work to heal trauma in specific ways...

*Please feel welcome to contact me with any suggestions for changes to this list*





## I. Calming the Autonomic Nervous System:

- *Trauma Center Trauma-Sensitive Yoga (TCTSY)*
- *Community Resilience Model (CRM)*
- *EMDR*
- *Neurofeedback*
- *Sensorimotor Psychotherapy*
- *Somatic Experiencing*
- *TRE (Tension, Stress & Trauma Release)*
- *Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) Tapping*
- *Yoga, mindfulness, massage*
- *Tai Chi or Qigong*
- *Therapeutic dance or drumming*
- *Spending time in nature*







## 2. Releasing patterns of muscular or energetic tension:

- *Trauma Center Trauma-Sensitive Yoga (TCTSY)*
- *Community Resilience Model (CRM)*
- *Sensorimotor Psychotherapy*
- *Somatic Experiencing*
- *TRE (Tension, Stress & Trauma Release)*
- *Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) Tapping*
- *Yoga and massage*
- *Therapeutic dance or drumming*
- *EMDR*







### 3. Practicing interoception, or body-centered mindfulness:

- *Trauma Center Trauma-Sensitive Yoga (TCTSY)*
- *Community Resilience Model (CRM)*
- *Sensorimotor Psychotherapy*
- *Somatic Experiencing*
- *Yoga, mindfulness, massage*
- *Tai Chi or Qigong*
- *Therapeutic dance*

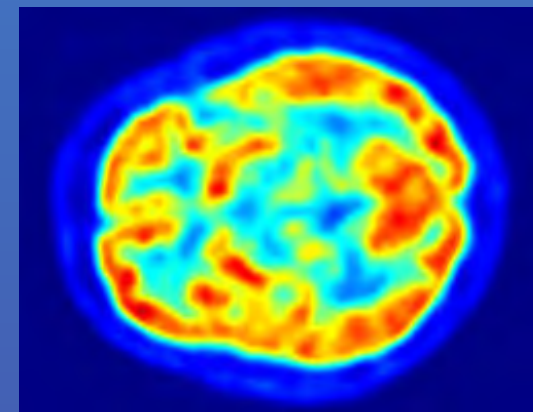






#### 4. Re-activating specific areas of the brain and nervous system compromised by trauma

- *Trauma Center Trauma-Sensitive Yoga (TCTSY)*
- *Community Resilience Model (CRM)*
- *Yoga, mindfulness, massage*
- *Tai Chi or Qigong*
- *Therapeutic dance, drumming*







## 5. Reconnecting with oneself and others through rhythm and synchrony

- *Trauma Center Trauma-Sensitive Yoga*
- *Some forms of yoga*
- *Tai Chi or Qigong*
- *Therapeutic & other forms of dance*
- *Drumming*
- *Playing music with others*







## 6. Practicing self-determination through body centered choice within safe, supportive, non-directive relationship with clear boundaries

- *Trauma Center Trauma-Sensitive Yoga — this is a core element of TCTSY, designed to help heal from attachment harm and complex trauma caused by neglect, abuse, domination, or violence*
- *Other body-centered treatments for trauma may or may not emphasize this aspect. If it's something you want, you might talk about it with the people you work with in your healing.*

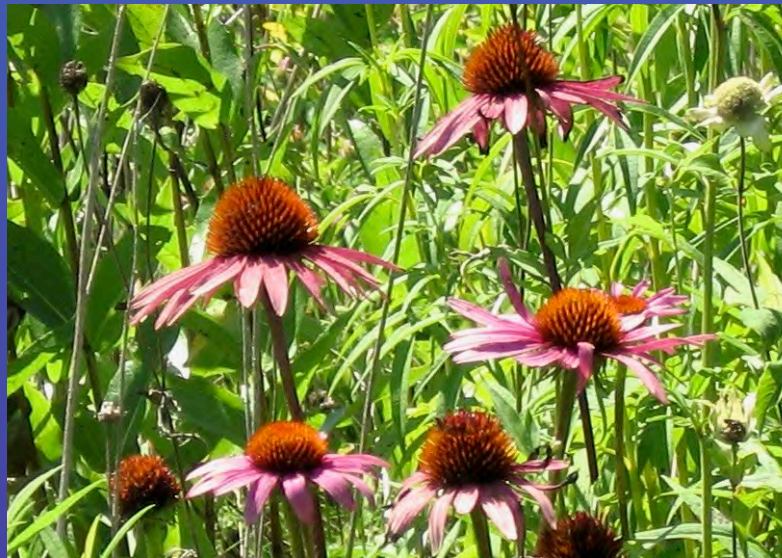






## Some possible treatment goals for body-centered approaches to healing complex trauma

*(based on the practices of Trauma Center Trauma-Sensitive Yoga, or TCTSY)*





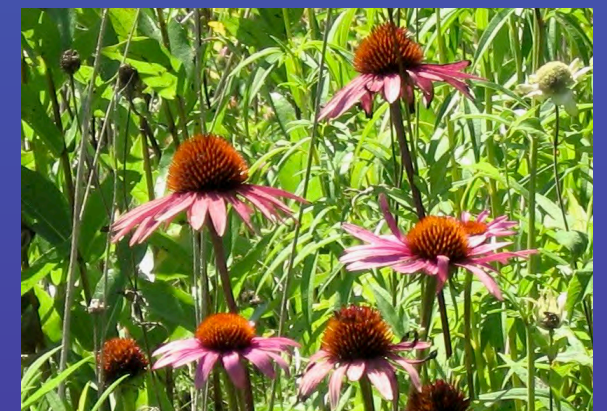


# I. Practice choice

(Meant to calm Amygdala, Insula; strengthen Medial Prefrontal Cortex, interoceptive pathways)

- Making simple body-based choices
- Moving at your own pace: when and how you feel ready to
- Taking effective action to benefit your experience

*Because people with complex trauma have survived or witnessed overwhelming physical or emotional harm from other humans, and have been unable to protect themselves or others from that harm.*





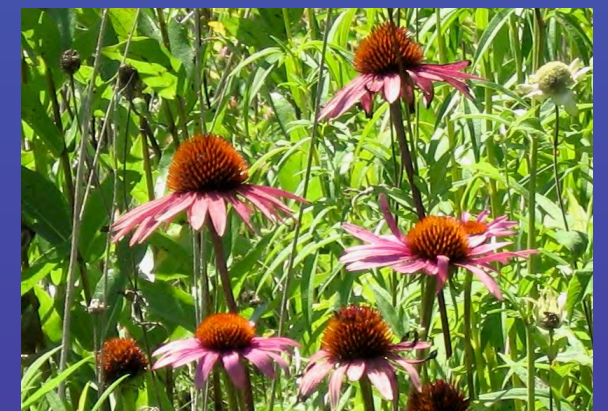


## 2. Connect with the present and the passage of time

(Meant to calm amygdala; strengthen Dorsolateral Prefrontal Cortex, Thalamus, interoceptive pathways)

- Present-moment focus
- Creating rhythms
- Marking time / notice and feel the passing of time

*Because people who have complex trauma may frequently lose connection with the present moment and the passage of time.*





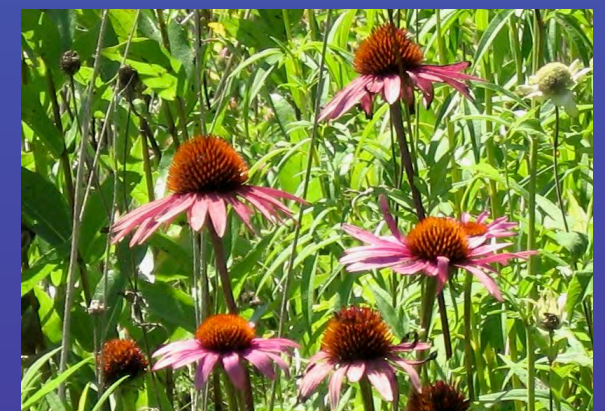


### 3. Learn to feel and tolerate physical, emotional sensations

(Meant to strengthen Medial Prefrontal Cortex, Thalamus, interoceptive pathways; regulate Insula)

- Practicing interoception (body-centered mindfulness) moving and in stillness
- Cultivating curiosity around body sensations

*Because people who have complex trauma may find it hard to accurately or tolerably feel present-moment physical and emotional sensations.*





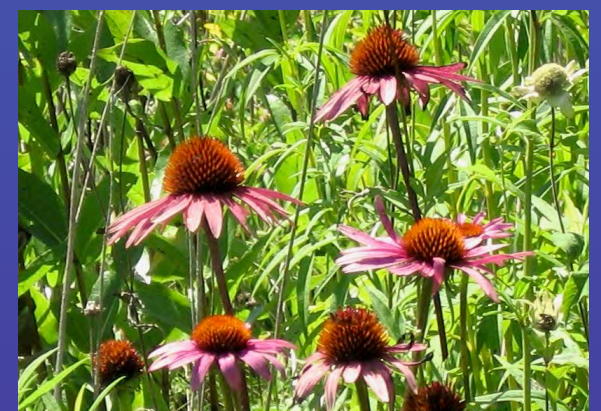


## 4. Be in charge of your own body, while exploring healthy connection with others

(Meant to calm Amygdala, Insula; strengthen Medial Prefrontal Cortex, upper Parasympathetic Nervous System)

- Non-coercive, genuine interactions
- Respect, autonomy, safe boundaries
- Attunement, shared rhythms of movement
- Learning how trauma works—  
to counter stigma & isolation

*Because people who have complex trauma may find that distrust, shame, and other socially painful effects of complex trauma leave them feeling alone and isolated, with difficulty trusting people.*





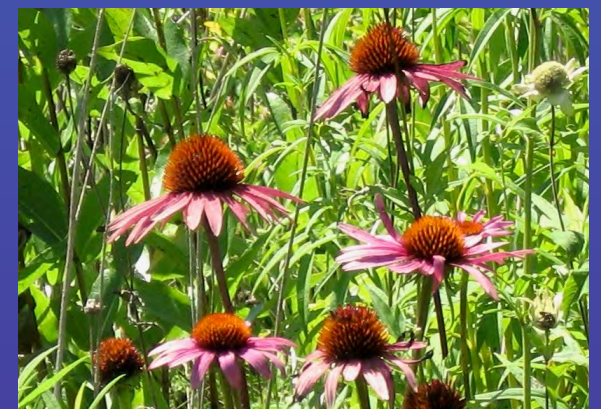


## 5. Take ownership of your own practice and healing

(Meant to calm Amygdala, Insula; strengthen Medial Prefrontal Cortex, interoceptive pathways, Upper Parasympathetic System)

- Centering in what you feel & choose, not (only) in others' perceptions
- Making your own decisions about how you want to continue living in recovery and healing from trauma

*Because people who have complex trauma may become hyper-vigilant about the ways that others perceive or respond to them, and some may feel a strong need to please others.*







To focus on immediate survival, trauma shuts down connections.  
For trauma resilience and healing, we can strengthen connections:



- With the ability to choose
- With the present moment
- With the felt sense of the body
- With other people, animals, plants
- With a sense of efficacy and interdependence in the world





Thank you for your interest in this presentation.

*It was created out of a desire to make information about complex trauma and body-centered healing as accessible as possible. If you share that intention, then you're welcome to share material from the presentation with others—but please acknowledge the sources, out of respect for the work involved.*

*I am grateful to the trauma researchers listed at the end of this presentation for their research and insights into trauma and healing; and still more grateful to my clients, who teach me so much.*

*I offer various versions of this presentation in person (in English and in Spanish), and also facilitate TCTSY sessions for large groups, small groups, and individuals.*

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## This presentation is based on the work of:

**David Emerson** E-RYT, author of *Overcoming Trauma Through Yoga*, and *Trauma-Sensitive Yoga in Therapy*

**Bud Craig** PhD, author of *How Do You Feel? Interoception: the sense of the physiological condition of the body*

**Stephen Porges** PhD. Author of *Polyvagal Theory : Neurophysiological Foundations of Emotions, Attachment, Communication, and Self-Regulation*

**Laura van Dernoot Lipsky**, social justice activist and author of *Trauma Stewardship: An Everyday Guide to Caring for Self While Caring for Others*

**Elaine Miller-Karas** LCSW, author of *Building Resilience to Trauma: The Trauma and Community Resiliency Models*

And **trauma researchers** with the NICABM Treating Trauma Master Series: **Pat Ogden** PhD., **Dan Siegel**, MD. **Ruth Lanius**, MD, PhD, **Ron Siegel** PhD, **Ruth Buczynski** Phd., **Peter Levine** PhD., and **Bessel van der Kolk** MD; also **Wendy D'Andrea** PhD.

And, yoga teacher-trainers **Marlysa Sullivan** MPT, C-IAYT E-RYT and **Hala Khouri** MA, E-RYT

*Thank you to all of these people for their work supporting trauma prevention and healing.*