

# Ep #280: Can Somatic Practices Help If I Don't Have Trauma?



## Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

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This is *Feminist Wellness*, and I'm your host, Nurse Practitioner, Functional Medicine expert, and life coach Victoria Albina. I'll show you how to get unstuck, drop the anxiety, perfectionism, and codependency so you can live from your beautiful heart. Welcome, my love, let's get started.

Hello, hello, my love. I hope this finds you doing so well. Summer is in full swing here. We have a most amazing garden, and I'm just waking up to seeing new blossoms, new birds in the trees.

We're living right now on this beautiful little stream, and we've been going for a little swims and dipping our feet in after work and just really enjoying this time in nature. Summer is this little Leo's absolute favorite, and I'm just so thrilled to be soaking up the sun. It really has such a beautiful and beneficial impact on my mood.

I've been doing a lot of work lately around somatics and embodiment; we've been talking about it here a lot and I've been talking about it a lot in my life. That's the theme for today, it's about somatics and embodiment; a different spin on the last few weeks. And yeah, just thinking about what brings me into the most grounded, oriented embodiment. Nature, bar none. Getting out into nature is absolutely it. So, I'm just loving it. I'm just loving all this sunshine.

I was recently asked, when I was doing a webinar all about embodiment, and my 12-week program in Somatic Studio, if somatics, these practices, these modalities, these ways of getting in touch with ourselves, if they were just for trauma healing or resolution? And if they have any other application? If you're like, "I don't have big trauma, do these help?" It's such a great question, so thanks to the smarty-pants who asked that smart question.

The short answer is, oh, no. Somatics helps with so much and opens up so many beautiful things for us in our lives. And the long answer is, the rest of

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this show. So, if you want the short answer, you're done. Goodbye. It was nice to see you. If you want the long answer, buckle up.

Okay, so I'm going to back it up to say that I have been studying somatic or body-based movement practices and psychology for over 20 years. And if you had asked me in the 90s, when I first got into this, if I was doing it because 'trauma', I would have been very confused. I would have stared at you like you were a talking banana.

I personally didn't come to somatics to heal my drama. I came to it because I felt like a cake pop but a person. Like just a head on a stick bobbling around, not ever really in my body, letting it schlep me around, never really feeling my feelings in a real and profound bodily embodied, somatic kind of way. But instead, just walking through life going from thing to the next thing to the next thing to the next thing. Just kind of going like a perpetual motion machine.

Now, I had no idea that I was living so deeply in functional freeze; Episodes 246 and 247. Or that I was carrying around so much of my own and intergenerational trauma. I had no clue, because frankly, I was just repressing it in such profound, complex, complicated ways. I had no idea it was in there. So, while I didn't start doing somatics to heal trauma per se, that was a beautiful, unintentional benefit that has wildly and profoundly changed my life in every possible way.

Somatics, the practice of mindful body awareness, offers profound benefits for everyone, not just those with identifiable trauma. By focusing on the body and its sensations somatics can enhance wellbeing, improve emotional regulation, and foster a deeper connection with oneself and others.

I also want to say, I said "identifiable trauma", because so often... There are several episodes about trauma, so you can look those up at

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VictoriaAlbina.com/podcast... many of us, when we think trauma, we think shock trauma; the car accident, the wreck, the tsunami, the hurricane, a tornado, the BOOM.

We also need to think about developmental trauma, attachment trauma; the trauma of not feeling seen, not feeling heard, not being attuned to, not being supported growing up. Being a human living in a marginalized body, and the micro and macro aggressions, the trauma of growing up in a system that doesn't support you, humans socialized as women in the patriarchy. Right?

So, I'm not here saying everyone has trauma, but I'm out here saying everyone has some trauma. You know what I mean? And so, I think doing somatic practices, again, not because you've identified a big bad wolf, but because you want to feel better and have a greater connection with yourself and others, that's reason enough.

Let's start by talking about how somatic practices can enhance emotional regulation. First, because we are nerds, we define terms. Emotional regulation is the ability to manage and respond to emotional experiences or stimuli in a healthy, supportive, adaptive way that actually serves you; real adult you, not just your inner children, or some parts.

It involves several key processes, including recognizing and understanding emotions, expressing them appropriately, and modulating their intensity and duration as the moment calls for. What “the moment calls for” means, if you feel rageful anger, but you're at a PTA meeting, you're maybe not going to stand up and start screaming at the top of your lungs. Maybe you are; you get to make that choice, right?

But emotional regulation will be having the capacity to navigate life's challenges, maintain balance, and engage in meaningful relationships with intentionality and choice wholeness. Not just letting your anger take over,

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but surfing the proverbial waves of life instead of getting pulled into the undertow. I was raised by surfers. So, you know.

At its core, emotional regulation is about creating a harmonious relationship with our emotions, neither suppressing nor being overwhelmed by them. It's a dynamic process that involves both conscious and unconscious, or subconscious rather, mechanisms.

Somatic practices are like the secret decoder rings of our internal world, right? Imagine tuning into your body's subtle cues and whispers, those very first indicators of emotional states, that often when we're not in practice, they fly under the radar. By cultivating this subtle moment-to-moment awareness we reconnect with or gain a superpower, which is the ability to regulate our emotions through attunement, by paying attention to them, before they spiral out of control.

Let's do an example. Picture this, you have a perfectly fine day, right? You're super chill, whatever, and then someone makes some offhanded comment that touches a nerve and sets off a chain reaction. They said something that activates your nervous system, and your nervous system is running away and you have no clue what's up, right?

Your heart starts racing, your face flushes, you feel a tingling in your hands, and you just all of a sudden can't think straight. You're just feeling that thing raise up in you. You notice your shoulders creeping up towards your ears, a slight flutter in your stomach... but not that nice... like, "I'm going to see my best friend," but like a grrr-gah.

These are your body's early warning systems signaling, stress, anxiety, and activation in the nervous system. Without emotional regulation, moments like these can feel like you are at the absolute mercy of your emotions, tossed around by every wave of stress, irritation, and annoyance. And it's exhausting, am I right?

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This roller coaster constrains all of our relationships, hinder our productivity, and really, really sap our joy. And when we can recognize these early signs, that's when we can take proactive steps to calm our nervous system so we don't just go and bite someone's friggin' head off. Unless, again, that's what you wanted to do. You do you, I'm not here to tell you what to do.

I'm just saying, I want to support you so that you can make a conscious choice, right? So, deep breathing exercises, with the long, slow exhale I always teach you to do, that engages the vagus nerve, activates parasympathetic response, which soothes our minds and bodies.

By practicing this regularly, not just when we're upset, we can intervene on our own behalf to prevent our feelings from escalating into full-blown panic, overwhelm, murderation. And like boundaries or resentment prevention, I say that all the time, this somatic regulation work is moderation prevention. You know what I'm saying? You know, you know.

But listen, it's not just about avoiding the bad stuff or learning how to handle challenging emotions. Imagine the richness added to your positive experiences when you're fully present and attuned to your body. In my lived experience, joy feels deeper, excitement feels more exhilarating, and even simple moments of contentment become more profound. They sink in more to my body, my spirit, my soul.

By regulating our emotional responses we create more space for positive emotions, the emotions that feel good to flourish. It's like enhancing the resolution on your emotional landscape, making every detail more vivid and meaningful. It's like turning up the volume on the soundtrack of our lives, making every single sound, every note richer, more vibrant.

I know I dance more now; just like randomly all the time; in the kitchen, and the car. I just dance more now. I enjoy life on so many more levels now. It's like life got switched into Technicolor. It's just truly amazing.

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Without emotional regulation, life can feel like a constant struggle. It was for me, for sure. Imagine navigating your day with your emotions always on edge, easily triggered by minor frustrations or unexpected changes. It's like walking a tightrope, the smallest imbalance sends you into a tailspin. I don't know about you, but that constant state of high alert totally drained my energy, leaving me exhausted, depleted, frustrated, and feeling like there was absolutely something wrong with me. And I now know there's not.

When we're not regulated, we have talons at the ready. We're set to pounce at the smallest misstep, because our nervous systems tell us to. So, of course our relationships suffer as we react. We react defensively. We react impulsively, making it hard to maintain true connection because we lose trust.

Somatics steps in as a gentle guide, teaching us to recognize and modulate these emotional spikes before they take over again, to surf those waves by being with the emotions; like we talked about in Episode 275. By practicing mindful body awareness, we learned to identify the physical manifestations of our emotions early on.

This awareness allows us to intervene with techniques that calm and soothe the nervous system, like deep diaphragmatic breathing or progressive muscle relaxation; both of which we've taught here. These practices help to shift us from a reactive state to a more responsive and balanced one.

Over time, these practices rewire our nervous system. Your body learns that it's safe to experience and express emotions without being overwhelmed. This resilience doesn't just make you feel better, it transforms your relationships and interactions. You can become more present with loved ones, more patient in stressful situations, and more attuned to your own needs and boundaries.

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Emotional regulation through somatics cultivates a sense of inner stability, making you feel more in control and less reactive. In essence, somatics offers a pathway to emotional freedom. Instead of being hijacked by your feelings, you learn to dance with them. You develop the capacity to hold space for all of them, joy, sorrow, or anger, love without being swept away.

This balanced approach allows us to live more fully and authentically, embracing the full spectrum of human experience. The result is a richer, more vibrant life where you can navigate the ups and downs of grace and ease.

Another gift of somatic practice is reminding us that our emotions don't ever have to be enemies. Because when you're in flow with them, they never take over. And so, you get to be present for all of them, in mindful partnership with them. Somatics also promotes mindfulness and presence. In our fast-paced world, being present can feel like a very elusive goal. But somatic practices offer a direct pathway to mindfulness that anchor us firmly in the present moment, drawing our attention to the here and now.

When you focus on the sensation of your feet touching the ground during a mindful walk, or the feeling of your breath moving in and out, you are training your brain to stay present, which has tangible benefits. Mindfulness reduces stress, improves mental clarity, and enhances overall sense of wellbeing. There's study after study that back this up.

It makes everyday tasks more manageable and even enjoyable, because you're fully engaged with what you're doing rather than being lost in a swirl of past regrets, future worries. You're here and now. Our bodies carry the imprints of our daily lives. Whether it's the tension from sitting at a desk for hours, the tightness from stress, the aches from sub-optimal posture.

Somatic practices, with their gentle movements and stretches, are like a daily tune up for your body, in which you're accessing deeper layers of



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muscle and fascia, helping to release tension and improve flexibility, which can lead to better posture, reduce pain, increase vitality and greater strength.

I could go on and on and on about the impact of stress on our cardiovascular health, our digestive health, our thyroid, our reproductive health; I've done it in several episodes and I will do it again. So, let me keep moving here or it's going to be another one of those 600-hour shows.

Deepening self-awareness and connection is another benefit of somatics. One of the most important tools we cultivate in Anchored, my six-month program, is intentionality. It's really a focus of The Somatic Studio too. It's a focus of all my work. Because in our emotional outsourcing, which is our codependent, perfectionist, and people-pleasing habits, we lose connection with intentionalism, right?

We live on autopilot, wondering why we're never quite happy or fully content in life. Somatics is like a bridge connecting you to a deeper understanding of yourself, greater self-awareness, and what makes you tick. By fostering a deeper connection with your body, you develop a stronger sense of self-awareness, which fuels intentionality.

To put it in the simple language I absolutely needed when I was starting out, when you're aware of how your body reacts to different situations, you gain insight into your patterns and your triggers, right? And so, this understanding allows you to respond rather than react. Which helps cultivate a more compassionate relationship with yourself.

When you can approach your feelings with curiosity instead of judgment, you open the door to profound self-discovery and growth, and also can stop being such a judgy, meanie-pants towards yourself. Which, as an ex-, former judging meanie-pants, being kind to me feels so much better. This podcast sponsored by “be kind to you, it makes life better.”

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But really, of course, our focus here is always interdependence, and selfcompassion spills out into your relationships with others. By understanding your own needs and boundaries, you become better at communicating them. Which enhances your empathy and connection with others, and gives you more space to understand them and their motivation.

So you're no longer just interacting on the surface level when you're present with you, you're engaging from a place of deeper understanding and authenticity. Which sets the stage for more empathy, kindness, care, and interdependent living.

Somatics can also help us to unlock our creative potential in ways you might not expect. Imagine engaging in freeform movement, allowing your body to express itself without the constraints of judgment, selfconsciousness or choreography. Embodied creativity can break down physical and emotional barriers, freeing us to explore new ideas and new perspectives.

For artists, writers, anyone looking to infuse more creativity into their life, somatics are a game changer. The physical act of moving and expressing through the body can lead to mental breakthroughs, inspiring new ways of thinking and creating. It's like opening a floodgate of innovation and inspiration, all through the simple act of tuning into your body's natural rhythms and movements.

Even without trauma everyday Life is full of stressors that can painfully impact our nervous system. Somatic practices help maintain a healthy balance between the sympathetic fight or flight, and the parasympathetic rest-and-digest branches of the nervous system.

Again, techniques like deep breathing, gentle movement, mindful awareness, they activate parasympathetic, promoting relaxation and resilience against stress. And again, the goal is not to be able to put up with

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more crap, but to have the crap of life, when life gets lifey, not throw you off balance so much, so that you can actually stay present and find the joy.

So, imagine using deep diaphragmatic breathing to soothe your nervous system during a hectic day. Can you imagine how pleasant that would be? This practice sends a signal to your brain that it's safe to relax, reducing the production of adrenaline... the release rather, of adrenaline... eventually cortisol and stress hormones, and brings your body back towards homeostatic balance.

Over time, these practices build resilience, making it easier to handle whatever life throws your way, with grace and composure. Somatics helps bridge the gap between mind and body, which can help us to make more intuitive and embodied decisions.

When faced with choices tuning into your bodily sensation instead of your brain, where all your socialization and conditioning lives, can provide valuable insights that complement rational analysis. Imagine feeling a gut reaction to a decision you're considering. Your body often, I might say mostly always, knows the right answer before your mind does.

By learning to trust these physical signals, these sensations, you can make decisions that are more aligned with your true self, with what you actually for reals want to do. Because embodied wisdom helps you to navigate life's challenges with greater confidence and authenticity.

Participating in group somatic practices can create a sense of community and connection. Shared physical experiences build trust and camaraderie, enhancing social bonds and providing a supportive network. Think of joining a dance or movement class where you and others are fully present engaged in the same physical practice.

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Shared experiences like this foster a sense of belonging and mutual support, and are powerful antidote to the feelings of isolation or disconnection that are so common these days. And support us in creating a community where everyone is tuned into their bodies and each other.

Which is why all the work I do... The Somatic Studio, my 12-week program, and Anchored, my six-month program, the challenges I wrote, the webinars I offer for free... it's all focused on building a supportive community where we're really showing up. We're going through a practice, a process, a growth, together and having each other's back. It's the pathway to interdependence, right?

So, in short... Well, in long really. In long, somatics are the most amazing and bestest. I'm a huge, huge fan. It's wildly changed my life, especially when integrated into a mindset or thought work practice. Because brains matter too, right? We need to work both mind and body, and mind/body together, right? When that's what we're doing, these practices can be deeply life changing, and absolutely have been for me.

So, where's a kiddo to start? Well, join my programs, of course. I do tons of 100% free webinars, and very low-cost, \$27 programs to teach you somatics. And when you're ready to spend some more time and resources developing somatic self-connection, come join The Somatic Studio. The next cohort starts July 1st, and I'd be thrilled to have you with us. Learn more and join us at, [Victoriaalbina.com/tss](http://Victoriaalbina.com/tss).

Meanwhile, here are some practical applications. Mindful walking. Take slow, intentional walks while focusing on the sensations in your feet and the rhythm of your breathing. This practice grounds you in the present moment, reducing stress and enhancing mindfulness. If you're new to this, expect your brain to chatter. Just watch it, label your thoughts "Thinking", and move on.

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Body scans. Regularly practice body scans to increase awareness of bodily sensation and areas of tension. This helps you tune into your body signals and address issues before they escalate. As always, we are trauma thoughtful around here, it's the core of my work.

If your body, like mine, was the site of trauma, going inside and doing an internal body scan, that was not available for me for years. It might not be available for you; that might be something that's too activating. And that's fine, we don't need to problematize it, right? It's just what is right now.

And so, I'll invite you to do your body scan by exploring the edges of your body, where your skin meets the air. Explore the area *around* your body. Bring your awareness to parts of your body that feel safer and okay to explore. Like, what's going on in this elbow? How is my right shoulder? What about my left knee? There's no right way to do it, so just be present with your body in ways that are supportive for you.

Finally, breathwork. Breathwork is a thing I teach in my programs and it's magnificent. The way I do breath work is with a real focus on orienting presence and safety. You've heard me say it once, you've heard me say it 1,000 times, cathartic experiences are cool. Everyone wants one, they're super cute.

“Oh, I did this huge transcended thing. I did this big breath work and rebirth, and it was wow!” And that's cool, but it actually is not supportive or regulating for the nervous system if it's not done within a container of safety, orientation, and grounding.

So, in my work, that is our focus. Because your girl is guided by science, right? So, focusing on the breath. Building presence within the breath. Breath work promotes a balanced and resilient nervous system. I really encourage folks to do it when you're not tense, when you're not stressed. To do any somatic practice when you don't “need” it, so it becomes the

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neural pathway of least resistance and so your body can just go to there when you are actually stressed.

In conclusion, somatics offers a holistic approach to enhancing our physical, emotional, and psychological wellbeing. By fostering a deeper connection with the body somatic practices can enrich our everyday life, promoting mindfulness, emotional regulation, and overall vitality and joy. Whether you're dealing with the minor stresses of daily life, or seeking to enhance creativity, self-awareness, or pleasure, somatics provides valuable tools for everyone.

Thank you for joining me. This was a blast to talk about. I'm so glad for the person who asked that question on my webinar. Thank you so much, because you got my brain going. It's so easy, particularly because my training is in somatic experiencing, which is largely about trauma resolution and helping folks to renegotiate trauma within their nervous systems.

It's easy to start talking about somatics just within the context of stress, distress, and trauma. And oh my goodness gracious, is there so much more. So, thank you for asking that question. Thank you to you for listening in. This is such a delight to talk about, and I cannot wait to see you in The Somatic Studio.

Let's do it what we do. Gentle hand on your heart, should you feel so moved. And remember, you are safe, you are held, you are loved. And when one of us heals, we help heal the world. Be well, my beauty. Mwah! I'll talk to you soon. Ciao.

Thank you for listening to this episode of *Feminist Wellness*. If you want to learn more all about somatics, what the heck that word means, and why it matters for your life, head on over to [VictoriaAlbina.com/somaticswebinar](https://VictoriaAlbina.com/somaticswebinar) for a free webinar all about it. Have a beautiful day, my darling, and I'll see you next week. Ciao.