

# **The Kneading Skill**

## **Soothing the Body to Calm the Brain**

Talking about traumatic wounds does not usually heal, at least not initially, because traumatic memories play out mostly in the right brain, not the logical, verbal, conscious left brain. So skilled trauma therapists will often say, “I see that telling the story is heightening your distress. Let’s put the story telling aside and track what your body is doing.” Paying close attention to what is happening in the body brings back online parts of the brain involved in rational thought and verbal expression, as well as regions that help you feel calmer and connected to your body and emotions.

This skill will help you to track your body. It was developed by Peter Levine, an expert in body-centered therapy. You can use this skill to calm yourself after everyday encounters with stress. Later you can use it when you encounter or attempt to rewire old disturbing memories.

### **Instructions**

1. Place one hand around the opposite wrist. Track what it feels like to squeeze your wrist and then release the pressure. In other words, pay close attention to what you experience in your wrist.
2. Continue to track as you slowly slide your hand up and down your forearm...squeeze, release; squeeze, release. Take your time. Notice sensations on the skin and deep within the arm. Experiment to see what feels best—mechanical or soothing squeezes, fast or slow, firm or soft, deep or shallow.
3. Then notice the effect on your body from doing this exercise. Does your body feel a little calmer? Is your breathing slower? Are your muscles less tense?

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