



Self Holding

Comments:

While experiencing PTSD, we may feel scattered, broken, shattered, blown apart, chaotic, fractured, or split. Our thoughts and nervousness may become overwhelming, out of control, all over the place. We may even forget we have edges.

This exercise helps us feel, for the first time perhaps in years, “contained.” Peter Levine explains that: “This helps us become aware of our container. The body is the container of all of our sensations and all of our feelings; it’s all in the body.”

This exercise helps create an internal state of calm because to know where we end, to know experientially (inside our body) that we are located in a specific location in space, brings a sense of calm and relief. Being scattered and not knowing where we begin and end is unsettling, even if it is unconscious.

Peter Levine continues, “(this exercise) brings a ‘settling’ feeling, (the person) feels less overwhelmed. When the person can feel the container, then the emotions and sensations do not feel as overwhelming because they are contained.”

Goal:

To feel the body as container. To develop our container.

Instructions:

Place one hand under the opposite arm.

Rest the other hand gently on the first arm.

Pay attention to your body.

Let yourself settle into the position; allow yourself to feel supported by it. Allow yourself to feel contained.

Watch and see if anything shifts with your breathing, bodily sensations, and how you feel in space. See if you can sit with it a while and let it shift your perceptions of yourself and the world somewhat before coming out of it.

Alternatively, take 5 to 10 deep intentional breaths while self-holding. See if you can move your belly button away from your spine as your breath in and then return it as you breathe out. Let your outbreaths go longer than your inbreaths.

Congratulations. You have just taken a step to nurture yourself and help sooth your trauma related symptoms.

Sources for this article: NICABM, National Institute for the Clinical Application of Behavioral Medicine [2013 Trauma Therapy webinar series](#). Peter Levine, [Somatic Experiencing](#).

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