

To be brought back to life again.

v/ David Beermann, Psykoterapeut MPF, SE Practitioner, S OMA

What happened after all with Snow White?



“ And now Snow-white lay a long, long time in the coffin, and she did not change, but looked as if she were asleep; for she was as white as snow, as red as blood, and her hair was as black as ebony.”

Grimm's fairy tale: ” Snow White”.

“I will survive” sings Gloria Gaynor. Yes, certainly we survive. But often it is as if parts of our life are slowed down. To tell our story time after time has shown not to be so relieving, as you have believed in many years. The knowledge about trauma teaches us that trauma doesn't come from the event, but is placed in the body and in the nervous system. Therefore in trauma therapy we put more focus on the body's reactions, the small movements and touch.

What is trauma?

When we have our body borders violated and ruptured by falling, car accidents, sexual abuse, violence, war, escape, drowning, birth complications, unhealthy family relations and so on, we are overwhelmed by fear and hopelessness and are locked in our survival preparedness in form of fight, flight or freeze.

The traumatic events are able to influence body, psyche and the nervous system for many years, and subsequently we can be stirred up by many symptoms: panic, stress, PTSD, depression, anxiety, pain in the body, not belonging, feeling isolated and so on.

Trauma is a part of life, but doesn't need to be present for your entire life.

There are a doorway out of the diagnoses.

What is Somatic Experiencing and SOMA?

Somatic Experiencing (SE), founded by Peter Levine, USA, is a body oriented treatment, which addresses alleviating shock, trauma and overwhelming events. The healing focuses on the nervous system and its ability to meet life's ups and downs and not to tell your traumatic stories word by word.

SOMA, developed by Sonia Gomez and Marcelo Muniz, Brazil, have refined Somatic Experiencing(SE) by focusing on touch, gravity, defocused vision and the balance system in the ears.

Living as dead

Just like Grimm's fairy tale about Snow White, who lies "dead" in a glass coffin after having taking a bite of a poisoned apple, we are poisoned by traumatic

experiences, so we go on living as dead men walking – without the ability to be really present in our own lives or the lives of others.

The word trauma in Greek means “tearwound” and in German means “dream” and highlights just like the fairy tale the spell and the unreal, which the poison brings into the traumatised person –i.e. out of contact with themselves and others. Like being surrounded by a transparent glass membrane. You could also say that the nervous and sensory systems are disturbed and wounded, and in their experience of gravity, and **grounding** is minimized.

The seven small dwarfs help Snow White and by accident they give the coffin “a little push” – so that the poisoned apple falls out her mouth. She begins to blush and is brought back to life again.

How can SE and SOMA give “a little push?”

SE and SOMA put focus on the way that our nervous systems daily moves up and down in response to all different kinds of situations which we take part in and that we can learn to calm ourselves down, when we are overwhelmed or feel our body parts frozen or numb.

Pendulation is a technique which teaches us not only to focus on the traumatic material, but also to focus where we feel safe places in the body, where I feel good – feel warmth, safety and comfort. By bringing our awareness to the safe and calm places, the insecure places can be transformed and become calm.

In this way we let go of powerlessness- thinking that our body is the enemy – to feel that I am able to help myself, towards peacefulness and calmness. Therefore we work a lot with awareness on the body sensations: feelings, warmth – cold,

shivering, opening – closing, trembling – hardening, expansion – contraction and so on.

By establishing contact with our bodies – towards inner and outer movements, the broken ability to give and receive and create inner contact to frozen areas will be reestablished. This is healing of the **haptic system**, which is developed between the age of 0 – 6 month, during which two nerve systems meet each other i.e. mother – child, therapist – client.

The therapists hand is not only placed on the body, but awareness is brought to – “how it is to receive the hand “, the touch? But by working more with awareness around touch, nourishes our ability to be in contact again: to give and to receive. How much do I dare to receive? And how far do I dare to let the warmth in? Or don't I want to receive. This is what you experience in the sessions.

Because we are born on the earth, **gravity is our teacher**. We learn to sense the gravity in the body and the different dimensions: up – down, horizontal – vertical, in front of – back, inner and outer space, right – left. We are also taught to be aware of the **inner ear and with focus on the peripheral vision**.

In SOMA and SE we work with very small steps/drops – titration through exercises, small movements and theory and this is exactly what gives “the little push” that helps bring us back to life again – being in contact with ourselves and the other, where we are in our lives.

Clients statements during sessions

The following statements comes from clients working with awareness of the body and gravity in standing/ walking, sitting/lying:

1. A woman 40 years old says during the session: “It is as if I return to the time before the abuse – At that time I was 5 years old. When I look out through my eyes, everything looks fresh and colorful.”
2. A 21 year old woman who has suffered from severe anxiety, detects suddenly in the middle of the session: “ I am able to feel my skin all over. When I see my hands, I know that I am me.”

To be brought back to life again

In SE and SOMA we don't tell our trauma-story again and again, because it will traumatize us. We only tell it in very small pieces, for example a bit before or after the incident. We learn to calm our nervous system by using pendulation and by recognizing our body senses and in small portions to move more and more into our physical body – feel the gravity and look defocused into the world. In this way we learn to calm down, be where we are – in our lives, because our nervous system through this process learns to meet life's ups and downs with larger resilience.

“Small pushes”. Titration has a big importance, so that the poison/the trauma is able to be let go, and we are brought back to life again – coming out of the unreality of the glass coffin.