What is Somatics?


The field of somatics has developed over the last century through a process of inquiry into how consciousness inhabits the living body. The term is derived from the word “somatic” (Greek “somatikos”, soma: “living, aware, bodily person”) which means pertaining to the body, experienced and regulated from within. According to Thomas Hanna, who first coined the phrase, “somatics” is the study of self from the perspective of one’s lived experience, encompassing the dimensions of body, psyche, and spirit.

The field of Somatic Movement Education and Therapy represents a variety of approaches to the process of awakening awareness of the human body, or soma, in movement. Registered practitioners guide individuals and groups into inner experiences of their bodies, deepening the clients’ understanding of themselves in motion. This transformational learning process can include sound, breath, touch and imagery in addition to movement.

Benefits of Somatic Movement Education and Therapy

- Increased health and wellness
- Improved performance
- Expanded creative expression
- Integrated learning and transformation

From: Somatics Educational Resources: [www.somaticsed.com](http://www.somaticsed.com):

Thomas Hanna, Ph.D. (1928-1990), was a philosopher who became a Functional Integration practitioner, and later developed Hanna Somatic Education® or Hanna Somatics. Thomas Hanna created the word "somatics" in 1976 to name the approaches to mind/body integration, ... Since its inception, the field of Somatics has grown by leaps and bounds, both in the number and variety of somatic disciplines, as well as the increased awareness and appreciation for working with the mind/body as a somatic whole by the general public. Thomas Hanna defined somatics as "...the field of study dealing with somatic phenomena, i.e., the human being as experienced by himself (or herself) from the inside." He defined soma as the body experienced from within.
From: Association for Hanna Somatics Education®, Inc: [www.hannasomatics.com](http://www.hannasomatics.com)

Hanna Somatic Education (also known as Hanna Somatics) is a rapidly effective form of neuromuscular (mind-body training) movement re-education that goes directly to the root cause of most chronic muscular pain: the brain and the way in which it senses and organizes the muscles and movement. By learning to regain awareness, sensation, and motor control of muscles – an educational process that can only be achieved through movement – the brain can remember how to relax and move the muscles properly. This process of sensory motor training creates improved muscle function and enhanced sensory awareness.

From: Strozzi Institute, [http://www.strozziinstitute.com](http://www.strozziinstitute.com)

Frequently asked Questions: [www.strozziinstitute.com/about/frequently+asked+questions#3n21](http://www.strozziinstitute.com/about/frequently+asked+questions#3n21)

Somatics is from the Greek word *soma* that literally translates as “the living body in its wholeness.” Wholeness in this sense includes the physical world of sensations, temperature, weight, movement, streaming, pulsation, and vibrations, as well as our images, thoughts, stories, attitudes, yearnings, dreams, and language. Somatics can also be referred to as the mind/body/spirit unity.

From: School for Body-Mind Centering®: [www.bodymindcentering.com](http://www.bodymindcentering.com)

Body-Mind Centering® is an integrated and embodied approach to movement, the body and consciousness. Developed by Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen, it is an experiential study based on the embodiment and application of anatomical, physiological, psychophysical and developmental principles, utilizing movement, touch, voice and mind. Its uniqueness lies in the specificity with which each of the body systems can be personally embodied and integrated, the fundamental groundwork of developmental repatterning, and the utilization of a body-based language to describe movement and body-mind relationships.

The study of Body-Mind Centering® is a creative process in which embodiment of the material is explored in the context of self-discovery and openness. Each person is both the student and the subject matter and the underlying goal is to discover the ease that underlies transformation.

The Body-Mind Centering® approach has an almost unlimited number of areas of application. It is currently being used by people in movement, dance, yoga, bodywork, somatic studies, physical and occupational therapy, psychotherapy, child development, education, voice, music, art, meditation, athletics and other body-mind disciplines.

www.boblehnberg.com
What is Authentic Movement?

From: The Center for the Study of Authentic Movement: [www.authentic-movement.org](http://www.authentic-movement.org)

Authentic movement is a profoundly simple form in which a mover moves with eyes closed in the presence of a witness. Rooted in Jungian depth psychology, it is a practice that stands alone with its own integrity.

At its core, Authentic Movement is about trusting the innate wisdom of the body to lead us toward healing and the development of conscious presence.

In the practice of Authentic Movement, the body is the gateway of awareness itself. It informs the creative process, contemplative practice, and healing on all levels.

From: Authentic Movement Community, [http://www.authenticmovementcommunity.org](http://www.authenticmovementcommunity.org)

Authentic Movement is a simple form of self-directed movement. It is usually done with eyes closed and attention directed inward, in the presence of at least one witness. Movers explore spontaneous gestures, movements, and stillness, following inner impulses in the present moment. The witness watches and tracks inner responses to the mover with the intention of not judging, but focusing on self-awareness.

Authentic Movement's original practitioners integrated Jung's concept of active imagination with modern dance movement improvisation. Students of pioneers such as Mary Whitehouse, Joan Chodorow, and Janet Adler have developed the form in various ways including... as part of psychotherapy process, for enhanced sense of self and well-being; often bringing unconscious thoughts to awareness.

Mindful practices:

**Breathing:** Chest Breathing, Abdominal Breathing, Square Breathing, and Cellular Breathing.

**Meditation:** focused attention with detachment and discrimination. “Meditate, don’t medicate.”

**Movement:** mindless movement (can be dissociative) versus mindful movement (can be integrative).

**Yoga:** (lit. “yoke”) union of breath and body, union of self and divine. Hatha yoga: *hatha* translates to stubborn, willful, or forceful. Another translation is *ha* meaning “sun” and *tha* meaning “moon.” Asana is a comfortable, steady pose/position balancing strength with flexibility and effort with surrender. Origin of yoga: India.

www.boblehnberg.com
Qigong: *qi* meaning “energy” and *gung* meaning “practice.” Qigong and tai chi are based on yin and yang. Yin refers to dark, descending, sinking, condensing, internal, moon, female. Yang refers to light, ascending, rising, expansive, external, sun, male. Tai chi may be described as a form of qigong applying ones qi with martial intent. Origin of qigong: China.

Katsugen Undo: *Katsugen* translates to “core” or “primary energy” and *undo* translates to “exercise.” Katsugen undo translates to “life force training. It is a form of training the autonomic nervous system and can be practiced in solo and partnered forms. Origin of katsugen undo: by Haruchika Noguchi in Japan.


Hara Awareness: [http://www.hara-awareness.de/Katsugen_Undo_e.html](http://www.hara-awareness.de/Katsugen_Undo_e.html)

Seitai Katsugen Undo, Hagi dojo: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y56MBlNudQU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y56MBlNudQU)

Body In Order, Seitai Katsugen Undo: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XFUYB8d5OBU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XFUYB8d5OBU)

Activities:

1. Breathing: Chest Breathing, Abdominal Breathing, Square Breathing, and Cellular Breathing in solo and in partners
2. Movement: Mindless Movement and Mindful Movement
3. Body Shaping: Take a body shape or consider the position of a client. What do you feel or sense in this shape/position? What would the caption be? Now breathe into it and fill it out, color it in, allow your shape to shift. What is the new caption?
6. Authentic Movement: The Witness creates and holds the space for the Mover. The Mover closes their eyes and moves as inspired. The Mover lets go of inner witness and does not “perform.” The Witness tunes into their own response/feelings stimulated by witnessing the Mover; (s)he does not analyze the Mover. When the movement time ends, the Mover verbally shares their experience with the Witness and then the Witness verbally shares their experience with the Mover. Change roles.