

Sensorimotor Psychotherapy Quick Reference

Dr. Pat Ogden | Linda Curran, BCPC, LPC, CACD, CCPD

Core Principles	
Principle	Description
Body as Resource	The body holds both trauma and healing capacity
Window of Tolerance	Work within optimal arousal zone
Mindful Awareness	Present-moment, non-judgmental attention to body
Top-Down & Bottom-Up	Integrate cognitive and somatic processing
Hierarchy of Information	Sensation → Movement → Emotion → Cognition

Triune Brain Framework		
Brain Level	Function	Trauma Response
Reptilian (Brainstem)	Survival, arousal, instinct	Fight/flight/freeze
Mammalian (Limbic)	Emotion, attachment, memory	Emotional dysregulation
Neocortex	Thinking, planning, meaning	Distorted beliefs

Key Techniques	
Tracking: - Follow body sensations moment-to-moment - Notice posture, gesture, movement impulses - "What's happening in your body right now?" **Resourcing:** - Grounding (feet, seat, spine) - Centering (core, breath, alignment) - Orienting (looking around, taking in environment)	**Working with Movement:** - Explore defensive movements - Complete truncated actions - Experiment with new movements **Boundaries:** - Physical boundary exercises - Pushing away, reaching out - Finding optimal distance

Session Language	
Tracking Sensation: - "What do you notice in your body?" - "Where exactly do you feel that?" - "What's the quality—tight, warm, heavy?" **Slowing Down:** - "Let's slow that down" - "Stay with that sensation" - "What happens as you notice it?"	**Movement Exploration:** - "What does your body want to do?" - "Let that movement happen slowly" - "What's it like to make that movement?" **Integration:** - "What do you notice now?" - "How does that change things?" - "What meaning does this have for you?"

Five Core Organizers		
Organizer	Description	Therapeutic Focus
Perception	How we take in information	Expand sensory awareness
Memory	Implicit and explicit	Process traumatic memories
Arousal	Nervous system activation	Regulate within window
Movement	Action patterns, postures	Complete defensive responses
Cognition	Beliefs, meaning-making	Update trauma-based beliefs

Phase-Oriented Treatment		
Phase	Focus	Techniques
1. Stabilization	Safety, resources, window	Grounding, centering, containment
2. Processing	Trauma memories, responses	Tracking, movement, completion
3. Integration	Daily life, relationships	New patterns, meaning-making

Key Principle: The body keeps the score. Sensorimotor Psychotherapy accesses and transforms trauma through mindful attention to body sensation, movement, and posture.
