

# Focus on...

## Conscious movements

We explore the concept behind Somatic Movement Education, which could help you to manage your pain and restore balance in your body



Somatic Movement Education (SME) – teaching your body new habits.

### What is SME?

The word somatics means 'self-sensing and self controlling'. Somatics involves learning to feel what is happening inside, in order to create positive change outside. The technique was developed by Thomas Hanna in California and is available in Ireland through Tanya Fitzpatrick and Lisa Peterson of Align.

According to Lisa, Somatic Movement Education is a science dedicated to relieving pain and tension through neuro-muscular reprogramming. "In practical terms, it combines hands-on, guided movement with simple

exercises. The difference with most forms of pain relief is that SME is an education as well as a therapy. We'll teach you to recognise the root cause of your problem and what to do about it." See the pictures on this page to see examples of the movements performed at an SME session.

### Do it yourself

The beauty of SME is that once you've mastered the movements, you can do them yourself at home, which is great for people trying to manage pain and stiffness. A typical movement of SME takes five weeks. "In that time, we analyse your condition, posture and ways of moving (or movement patterns).

**T**he very concept of teaching your body to move in a different way to combat pain and stiffness can seem a little strange. It almost sounds too easy for it to actually work. But this is essentially at the core of

## SME movements

Upper and lower back release



Head and neck release



These are examples of somatic postures only. Please don't attempt any of these movements yourself without prior instruction from a qualified SME instructor. As always, talk to your doctor before beginning any type of exercise programme. He or she may have some specific concerns or considerations you should keep in mind.

### SOMATIC BODY BENEFITS

- > Reduces pain and stiffness.
- > Improves posture.
- > Helps joints to heal and reduces inflammation.

We work together with you to relieve pain and tension and increase ease and flexibility. The benefits are immediate because the results happen in 'real-time'. We also design a home practice, which takes 15-20 minutes a day. Once the problem has resolved, the home practice reinforces your progress and keeps you comfortable and supple for a lifetime. In other words, we give you all the skills you need to be pain-free for life," explains Lisa.

### How exactly can it help with pain relief and how does it help arthritis?

Apparently, it's all down to habit and teaching yourself not to repeat a habit. "Our brains are very clever," says Lisa. "They can learn to ride a bike, play the piano or drive us to work. But sometimes, due to injury, stress or health issues, the brain simply forgets how to completely relax our muscles. In somatics, we call this sensory motor amnesia. Most of the time, we learn to live with it and get used to

## CHANCE TO WIN!

Align Somatics have three sessions of somatic movement classes up for grabs for the first five people to email.

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a certain level of tension so much that it just becomes normal.

### Change of habits

But thankfully it is possible to 'unlearn' these habits. "A lot of pain, stiffness and related conditions start out as temporary tension that become learned habits. With SME, you 'unlearn' those habits through a simple programme of guided movement and reinforcement exercises. As your brain gains control over the area again and you start to understand more about what's happening inside, your muscles respond and start to lengthen and soften."

### Quick results

The benefits of practising somatic movements are immediate because the results happen

### REAL LIFE BENEFITS

Ian Scott (pictured right) has osteoarthritis and has noticed huge improvements in his symptoms since taking up SME.

"After I began a short course of somatic movement, the results were almost immediate. It started with an awareness of having greater movement and a different posture followed by a complete reduction in pain. Each day of self-managed movement resulted in step change improvement and after about a month, I felt as I had lost 10 years in age and ended a potential life time of pain."



in 'real-time'. "With each session (there are usually five), your brain remembers more and more how to release a little more and your muscles remember what it feels like to stay relaxed. The daily home practice reinforces the positive changes a little more each time you do them."

### MORE INFORMATION

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Spinal release

Hip release

