

## Somatics

Foundational to the Study-into-Action process was our practice of Somatics, an integrative approach to healing and transformation that understands and treats human beings as a complex of mind, body, and spirit. With support from Staci Haines, founder of generative somatics and long-time Somatics instructor, who co-facilitated our first sessions, we incorporated somatic practices both to become more aware of our embodiments of privilege and power and to practice taking action in the world that is more aligned with our commitment to challenge male supremacy.

### Somatics in the Study-into-Action

When introducing Somatics to the group, we made clear that we incorporated Somatics not simply as a practice of self-help or self-improvement—which is often socially decontextualized and strongly individualistic—but because we believe that we cannot just think and talk our way out of male privilege and male violence. This felt particularly important to us as so much of this violence manifests in relationship to bodies and what we do with and to them. As we shared in the group, we need to work with our whole organisms and transform ourselves at the level of everyday behaviors in order to shift our practices of male privilege.

In partnering with CMS, and other movement projects, generative somatics (gs) seeks to integrate a transformative change theory and practice of Somatics into leadership development, community organizing, transformative justice, and politicized healing work. As with any praxis, it requires learning, mentoring and development to create the depth of understanding and skills that are needed to translate transformative change theory into practice. The somatic practices used in the Study-into-Action are described here, but it is important to remember that practices are just one aspect of embodied transformation. While somatic practices are powerful in and of themselves, they don't create embodied transformation for individuals or groups, without the other aspects of the transformative change theory also being applied. Please see these practices in that context. Feel free to connect with CMS or generative somatics if you would like to learn more about gs Somatics, embodied practices or to integrate transformative praxis into your work.

### Somatic Practice: Commitments

**Principle:** We practice commitments to become the person or collective who lives them. Knowing our conditions of satisfaction and designing practices allows us to embody what it is we want to create, what we long for, what we are committed to. Our commitment becomes a part of our presence, relating, way of being and actions.

**Brief Description:** Develop and declare a commitment toward your own personal transformation and another toward collective transformation. Determine measurable outcomes for each that will let you know when you embody the commitment, actions

you will take to get there (including daily practices) and who you will you ask to support and hold you accountable in the process.

### **Somatic Practice: Centering**

**Principle:** We center to become more present, open and connected. We center to embody ourselves, allow more aliveness and feeling, and de-numb ourselves. We center to organize ourselves purposefully around what we care about and to have this inform and fill out our psychobiology. Centering builds presence. Centering in the body, mood and commitment gives us a pragmatic, body-based place to return to when triggered.

**Brief Description:** Bring your attention to your sensations, emotions and internal dialogue. Come into the feeling self. Center in length, width, depth and what is meaningful to you (commitment). Length – dignity for you and others, Width – connection and belonging (I, you, we), Depth – history and ancestors, deep longing, meaning and calling. Center in your commitment and what matters most to you.

### **Somatic Practice: Consent**

**Principle:** A deeply embodied capacity to consent, seek consent, to communicate and respect a yes, no, or maybe, is core to our work of challenging male supremacy as it is intimately tied into how we address problems of entitlement. Consent is a core capacity related to both setting boundaries and inviting connection.

**Brief description:** Yes, open palms to the side. Maybe, arms extended at 45 degrees, palms down. No, arms up in “stop sign” position. Center in all three. Practice each of these with a partner moving up to you. Have your partner add language to their approach that is relevant to your commitment.

### **Somatic Practice: Taking Action from Center (Moving, turning, standing in the room)**

**Principle:** Often when we begin to take action and interact, we lose center or quit feeling ourselves. Taking action while centering lets us practice being in action while connected to our commitments, ourselves and others (i.e. community, relationships, organizations, political projects, movements, etc.) at the same time. Often our actions in life are talking, thinking, planning, meeting, etc.

**Brief description:** Whether sitting, standing or walking, move your attention (and if walking, your body) throughout the room. Practice moving and navigating the room from center. Try on different circumstances (rush hour, after receiving alarming news, etc) to learn more about how you organizing yourself in these conditions, and practice coming back to center.

### **Somatic Practice: Mutual Connection (Hand on Chest)**

**Principle:** We practice Hand on Chest to embody the principle of mutual connection and interdependence. In mutual connection we practice feeling ourselves and another (or others) at the same time. Neither is disappeared. This is building relationship from center. This practice allows us to embody being able to fully face another in connection. We add questions to this practice, and “let your body answer” to practice being authentic with ourselves and another. How we are present and how we listen, affects the other. This can be more felt and practiced here. We practice on both sides, right and left, to access both sides of the brain and psychobiology.

**Brief description:** Person A place your hand on the chest or shoulder of person B (this can also be done energetically without necessarily touching), centering, pressing slightly in and down. Feel your self and sensations while also feeling and noticing the other. Ask a question of your partner, listen to their response. Switch hands and ask another question.

### **Somatic Practice: Grab**

**Principle:** The core principle we are working with inside of the grab practice is recognizing, becoming deeply familiar with and eventually making friends with our triggers and Conditioned Tendencies (CTs). How do you react in mood, thinking, sensation, worldview, etc. when you are triggered or “grabbed”? How can you know this so as to be accountable and build more choices? How can you increase your ability to feel sensations and emotions without immediately “acting out” or “acting in”? So as to re-center and act from your values and commitments, from being more connected?

**Brief description:** Partner A grabs the forearm of partner B from the side. B feels the automatic reactions.

### **Somatic Practice: Grab, Center, Face**

**Principle:** We hold this as a lifelong practice (well, all of them are, really) of developing depth, accountability and choice. The principle here is to feel and notice our automatic reactions (those that protect, safety, connection and dignity, our CT's), re-center in body, mood, relations and commitment, and then move toward and “face” what caused the stir or reaction. The principle is to build our capacity to feel, take in and experience what is triggering us, and respond. GCF builds more choice and capacity to act rather than react.

**Brief description:** Partner A grabs the forearm of partner B from the side. B feels the automatic reactions, centers and turns toward A (what has grabbed them).

### **Somatic Practice: Decline and Re-direct**

**Principle:** As we are building our capacity to challenge male supremacy, we want to practice declining dynamics that are out of line with our values, such as being invited into a misogynistic conversation, and move them towards action in line with our values.

**Brief description:** Partner A moves toward B with hand extended, B moves toward A and turns A around – saying no or something relevant to their commitment.

### **Somatic Practice: Extension**

**Principle:** We extend to move our attention, energy, listening and commitment toward something or someone. Extension allows both giving out energy/attention and receiving or listening. We use the practice of extending toward our commitments to train ourselves to focus our attention, aliveness and energy. We extend our attention to feel and be curious about another.

**Brief description:** Practice extending from center. While the practice of extension usually involves the arms at first, we are practicing extending from center and the whole body and being can extend.

### **Somatic Practice: Allying with Another**

**Principle:** We want to build our capacity to be allied with and to ally with others, making requests of others to ally with us (and how) and responding to the requests of others to ally with them. Part of the practice of returning to center as an ally is to stay connected both to the expressed needs and wishes of the person requesting allyship and to our broader commitments to challenging male supremacy as part of the larger project of collective liberation.

**Brief description:** In groups of 3, person A is practicing being allied with around something that they are struggling with, person B is practicing allying with person A, and person C is 'grabbing' person A. Each group decides what the cause of the ally request should be and come up with a statement that can be spoken by person C, acting as the non-physical 'grab'. The person playing role B responds by allying with person A in the ways that they had requested – this could be standing alongside, behind or in front of them, etc.