

TWIN WAVES WELLNESS CENTER



The 12 Stages of Healing

A Guide to Somato Respiratory Integration

Created by Dr. Donald Epstein



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Introduction

Somato Respiratory Integration (SRI) is a set of powerful breathing exercises that help you connect with the natural rhythms of your body through energy, touch, and movement. Created by Dr. Donald Epstein, SRI is based on the 12 Stages of Healing—a framework that helps you understand and navigate your journey of healing and transformation. Each stage has its own unique characteristics, challenges, and breakthroughs, and each has an associated SRI exercise to help you move through it.

This guide provides an overview of each of the 12 stages, helping you identify where you are in your healing journey and how to work with the energy of that stage.

Stage 1: Suffering

When we're in Stage 1, we really are suffering. This includes a deep awareness that something is wrong. Suffering can happen during a traumatic, chaotic event or loss (e.g., a breakup, death of a loved one). Usually, we're in a lot of pain—physical, mental, or emotional.

How do we know we're in Stage 1? We feel powerless, like nothing works. We are helpless. The only thing that feels like it DOES work in this stage of healing is to **acknowledge** that we are suffering. Oftentimes, people realize that they've been blocking things out or ignoring their own pain. Once we acknowledge and are able to experience this pain, we can move towards safety, connection, and ultimately more joy and peace.

Stage 2: Polarities and Different Rhythms

Stage 2 is about connecting with the different polarities and rhythms of our being. We recognize that we have different parts. Even though they might seem separate, they can all come together. Think from the perspective of duality – yin and yang.

People move from powerlessness in Stage 1 to Stage 2, where we have power. This power is an external agent. We look for a cure. Stage 2 begins with the awareness of suffering we gained in Stage 1, and now we feel we need to go and do something about it. We look for outward things, like a specialist, doctor, or guru, to help us with our crises or pain. It's common to think that others or things will be our solution.

In Stage 2, we might feel very polarized and charged about things! Like a tug of war. Extremely angry in one sense, and extremely sad in another. Have you ever felt like a huge part of yourself wants to do one thing, but then another part of you wants to do the complete opposite? A part of me wants to end the relationship, another part of me wants to stay.

As we move through Stage 2 and connect to its rhythm, we become aware of our different parts and polarities. At first, you see them as separate. Then once you do that, you can THEN acknowledge how there's a relationship. The rules of good/bad or right/wrong become more blended. And we DISCOVER that we are somehow involved in the process, and that we are partially responsible for our distress. We realize that it's not just one way or the other, and that we can embrace ALL parts of ourselves because they are ALL ours. We can be with the good, the bad, and the ugly because they make us who we are. This stage ends when each part and separate rhythm can coexist and express identity equally and simultaneously.

Stage 3: Stuck in a Perspective

This is the last stage in the Season of Discover, which is about connecting to our pain and connecting to alienating aspects of ourselves. The goal of Stage 3 is to connect with *stuckness*! As challenging as it can be, we must accept the stuckness, tension, and ways of being frozen in life.

What is feeling stuck like? It could feel like you keep hitting a wall, and no matter what, you can't get over that hump. This could be a mental or emotional block. It could also be in your relationship, your goals, your career, etc. Stage 3 can also be experienced through a **physical block**. 'That neck pain that keeps coming back.' This stuckness can show up as anxiety or depression, too. However it shows up, **it's a pattern**. Nothing is changing. You feel stuck, and it's not your first time here!

Sounds annoying and frustrating, right? Oftentimes, people try to figure out WHY they are stuck and overanalyze the situation. This can bring more pain and suffering through the judgment that we apply to ourselves. It reminds us all too well of Stages 1 and 2. In our culture, we tend to avoid it and get out, rather than connecting with the lesson of stuckness. Accept and be in the stuckness without judgment.

Through that acknowledgment of our stuck self, we realize **we are the common denominator and catalyst for change**. Once we acknowledge – and even celebrate it – we can move into the season of Transform (starting with stage 4).

Stage 4: Reclaiming our Power

Stage 4 is called reclaiming our power, and about exactly that – reclaiming who you are. Unlike in Stage 1, when we feel powerless, in Stage 4, we have much more energy. We can harness that energy as fuel to actually make a change.

In Stage 4, we've had enough. We realize that we've lost our power or restricted ourselves in some way. Now, we are ready to reclaim that which we have lost, whether it be our health, our relationships, or our authenticity. With that comes a sense of strength and authority. You realize that you deserve so much more than what you've been giving yourself. From there comes a greater sense of self and responsibility. People performing this SRI exercise can feel determined, empowered, courageous, and focused. You realize that you are MORE than your circumstance or your symptom.

Stage 5: Merging with the Illusion

During Stage 5, we are in the season of Transform, which is about taking action and making that change we've been wanting to make. In this SRI stage, we revisit our alienated self. We are merging with the fears, pains, and concerns BEHIND the suffering. It's not that we need to re-experience the suffering itself. Instead, we merge and become more INTEGRATED with all parts of ourselves, including our pain and fear.

Our viewpoint is more holistic and inclusive, as opposed to separate parts, like in stage 2. It's healing with a sense of WHOLENESS. We are the observer, and we're able to connect more with what's behind the suffering.

For example, going back to an old neighborhood you used to live in as a child. You have all these memories, yet you know you don't need to live there anymore and be the victim. Since you now have a greater sense of self, you can just be the observer of the past, without being identified with it. You merge beyond it!

Stage 5 is an EMPOWERING experience, and there is excitement with a sense of fear. When we say fear, we mean good fear – similar to that nervous or excited feeling you get when you're about to fly down a roller coaster. In this Somato Respiratory Integration Stage, we connect with our "shadow self" and "light self". There is a merge between our true self, our dark side, and our light. We aren't fighting the illusion or trying to defeat the darkness.

Stage 6: Preparation for Resolution

Stage 6 of Somato Respiratory Integration is the first time you really feel this momentum towards making that change you've been wanting to make. That momentum INCREASES because we're preparing for a discharge or a resolution of those alienated or traumatized parts of ourselves.

We're AWARE that these alienated or dissonant aspects of ourselves are about to be relinquished. It's like the feeling of being nauseous, right before we throw up. Or that feeling right before you make that huge change in your relationship. You KNOW it's coming. With that, you feel this tension building up.

What does Stage 6 look like? In the beginning, we CHOOSE to make those lifestyle changes we've been wanting to make. For example, starting a plant-based diet or a new exercise program. Also, during this time, serendipity seems to show up more. Things seem to just happen "by chance." Maybe you decide you want to run a marathon, and then your family member just happens to get you a new pair of running shoes for your birthday. It's not that this

didn't happen before; it's just now we have done enough healing to actually recognize and act upon it.

Then, as we move through Stage 6 of SRI, a buildup of tension and uncomfortable feelings starts to come up because we are getting ready to discharge the rhythm or pattern that hasn't been working for us. In our bodies, it's like when you rub your belly when you have a stomachache. There's this swirling and churning of energy. The difference is, this feeling of tension is somehow acceptable to us for once.

Then, towards the completion of Stage 6, one of two things happens:

1. The urge to discharge builds up. All channels of life open up until it is about to happen, and nothing can stop it. And you have confidence in that.
2. Tension builds enough to then just melt into a feeling of calm.

Neither one is more valid than the other. These two paths just acknowledge that there doesn't have to be a forceful discharge, and it is still prepared enough if it actually does. The consciousness of Stage 6 is that we feel this stir-up of chi. There is more focused attention, and we feel this churning of energy that's ready to be released. We feel ready to make a change, and will do whatever it takes. This is driven by our determination and excitement, believing with confidence that something big is about to happen.

Stage 7: Resolution

SRI Stage 7 implies that integration and peace have occurred between the alienated part of ourselves and the rest of us (alienated aspects mean our sense of self and those parts of us that aren't really who we are). Resolution is the state of consciousness that produces feelings of calmness, accomplishment, and a sense of freedom and peace.

How do you know you're in Stage 7? You are ready to finally resolve (the energy pattern) whatever it is that's been distracting you from who you really are. We may feel like there is pent-up energy in our being, a scream or tension waiting to burst forth. You are fully committed to doing this. You realize this energy has been distracting you from life and has been connected to stories about who you are or who you are SUPPOSED to be. You accept that these stories were designed to protect you from pain. You fully accept the stories, and with acceptance comes resolution.

Stage 8: Emptiness in Connectedness

In Stage 8, we feel empty—but this is the first state of BEINGNESS. For the first time, we're not talking about "doing," we're talking about "being." We are not having to accomplish or achieve something, and our identities aren't defined by those things. Suddenly, the pause between is what matters. For the first time, thoughts are no longer the way you experience or interpret the world. You start experiencing reality from beyond the mind, beyond the time-space material world.

At the beginning of Stage 8, it's not uncommon to feel a bit lonely and vulnerable. We were just carrying this stuff from Stage 7, and it's just been released. Emptiness is a place where possibilities and opportunities for growth present themselves.

This is the point where we tend to make MAJOR life changes that kind of just happen. We don't so much think about logic or reason. You might leave your job and literally have no idea what's next. It may seem foolish, but you just KNOW you have to. We feel this deep gratitude for the supportive universe. The rhythmic connection, and this profound stillness and peace within the emptiness, are potent. In Stage 8, we experience a sense that there is more to the events and rhythms of our lives than can be perceived by the senses.

Stage 9: Light Behind the Form

During Stage 9, we become aware that there is more to us than our physical bodies. We begin to perceive that there is a life force, or an ENERGY, that flows through us. This energy can manifest as warmth, vitality, vibration, color, or perhaps most commonly, light. People experience this perception of light within themselves and others—the light of wisdom, compassion, healing, and understanding.

As we begin to feel this energy field, we get REALLY excited, in an almost naive, playful, and joyful way. It's similar to a rush of energy you experience when you are in love or attracted to someone. Or the rush that athletes get after an intense workout.

With this rush of energy flow, being fully in this rhythm can be considered a mystical experience. This is the unbound energy. Towards the end of Stage 9, we feel joy, gratitude, love, and amazement for this energy that flows through us. It CONNECTS everyone and everything. We deeply feel that we are all connected. Through love, we experience the basic energy of the universe.

Stage 10: Ascent

Stage 10 is called Ascent. This could be considered the most "sought-after" stage that mystics, gurus, rabbis, and other religious leaders most often speak about. Ascent is all about ONEness. We are no longer separate from the source from which we would ask for help. We ARE that source. We no longer just FEEL things like energy, love, or consciousness—we actually BECOME energy, love, and consciousness.

In Stage 10, concepts and references to things like language, space, and time don't really exist. Because we really are just ONE. When in Stage 10, it's not uncommon for things to feel a bit chaotic, like we're swirling with the universe. This chaos is guided by a divine essence.

How do we know we are in Stage 10? You have a sense that you are not just a physical being having a spiritual experience. You ARE spirit. People oftentimes feel joy, awe, gratitude, exhilaration, and oneness. You are from something beyond the soul.

Stage 11: Descent

Stage 11 begins with blessings of connection to all of creation. Since we know we are all one and there is no "other," we begin a state of massive empowerment and service to others. In gratitude and joy, we inspire others to remember their gifts and who they really are.

During Stage 11, we descend back to the physical to bring our gifts to the world with more energy, a new perspective, and a greater understanding. We are going into regular daily situations with a new light, depth, and wisdom. A basic lesson of this stage is to remain in gratitude and in awe of the miracle of life while we literally perform these daily activities—whether it be cooking, taking out the garbage, working, or being in a relationship. We uplift the situation around us.

People often find that they spontaneously forgive others. If someone no longer loves us, we are no longer deeply hurt because we know we are loved. We radiate love without conditions. Competition and jealousy don't exist. We no longer give others our energy because it's no longer an issue of ours or theirs. People are all channels of universal energy, and energy simply exists.

Stage 12: Community

Throughout this journey, we have been going through the 12 Stages of Healing, and these stages could also be called the 12 stages of wholeness. Wholeness suggests that all parts belong and participate together, INCLUDING our wounds. By BEARING our wounds, we also share our gifts and continue this ongoing cycle of healing. When we cycle back to earlier stages, it's allowing us to heal those alienated aspects of our being even more. It's also about celebrating the diversity in the oneness.

A community is ONENESS, and everything is part of it. Stage 12 recognizes that divergent energies are necessary for a successful community. When we challenge our patterns and perspectives, we can move PAST our wounds. From there, a community is able to achieve a higher level of organization and evolution.

We are each other's medicine. This can be applied to our inner community and the world community. It's this idea that our body-mind produces everything we need in order to prosper in life. In our outer community, we are each other's medicine when we are in relation in the workplace, in partnership, and with our children. We bring our gifts to each other.

The awareness that there is one energy or intelligence that connects and maintains the entire universe. The energy that makes up the sun and the moon is the same energy that creates our body-mind. In Community, Stage 12, we find ways to really EXPRESS and FOCUS this energy, for greater unity and planetary healing.

Want extra support for your Nervous System?

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