

# SOMA:HOME

a 6 week deep-dive into befriending  
your body and mind. Facilitated by Erica Webb

**Week 3: The things that get in the way**

## WEEK 3: THE THINGS THAT GET IN THE WAY

Last week was all about identifying the **values** that can guide your relationship with yourself and your body.

You may have noticed a stark contrast between the values that reflect your *deepest desires* for your behaviour toward yourself and how you *currently* behave toward yourself. Maybe some of those desired values feel aspirational and hopeful.

Consider this:

You're exposed to a heck of a lot of messaging throughout your lifetime that plants seeds of beliefs like:

*'I have to work hard in order to be worthy'*  
*'Others' needs are higher priorities than mine'*  
*'I can rest when I've earned it'*  
*'There's a right way to look and a wrong way'*  
*'I have to be hard on myself to get anywhere'*  
and on and on they go.

The thing about seeds is that they can *grow*. And these little seeds can take root deep within you. They grow, but maybe you don't see them. They become invisible yet well-established systems that can get in the way of your relationship with yourself and self-care - without you even realising.

## WEEK 3: THE THINGS THAT GET IN THE WAY

So, that's what this week is all about. Asking the questions:

*What gets in the way of moving toward your values?*

*What gets in the way of having a nourishing relationship with self-care and your body?*

*And, of course, how can you navigate beyond these things?*

We humans can be swift in our self-judgements: I'm not trying hard enough, not organised enough, not disciplined enough, not structured enough ... not *enough* enough. If I just tried *harder* and got it *right* this time, all would be well ... Wouldn't it?

Hm. Maybe. But what if this is a deeper seed of truth: *trying harder is futile if there are literal obstacles in the way of your efforts*. It's like trying to push against a locked door: it takes great effort for very little impact.

What if the thing you're pushing up against isn't a lack of *motivation* or *discipline* or *organisation*, but a collection of beliefs that, from a nervous system perspective, can make self-care feel somewhat unsafe, unavailable or under-nourishing?

Interesting theory? I think so. Let's dive in.

## **SOMATIC CHECK-IN**

Let's take a somatic pause, considering some of the ways we can connect with perception.

### **Outside:**

what can you see?  
what can you hear?  
what can you touch?  
what can you smell?  
what can you taste?

### **Inside:**

Are you tired or alert?  
Hungry, full or neutral?  
Warm, cold or neutral?  
What is your emotional state?  
Can you sense your breath? Your heart beat?  
How is your body positioned?  
Move a little - notice how you can sense this

Can you meet yourself with curiosity?  
Can you sit in self compassion?

**SHOULDs ARE** 

I *should* do this, I *should* do that. There's no doubt you have a loooong list of shoulds for yourself in your life. So let's get them out on paper. What we can acknowledge we can get curious about.

You might find it helpful to think specifically about how you look after your body and mind here, but you might find other areas of your life feel relevant to this exploration, so include them if that's the case.

The things I think I should be doing, but am not doing:

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The things I do because I think I should:

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When I think I should do something, what I notice in my body is:

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Feeling like you *should* do something can feel very fight-or-flight inducing. There's a gap there - between the *should* and the reality of what you *want*; and between the *should* and what you have the *resources* for.

When it comes to self-care, we're not doing these things to give us more fight-or-flight energy, so let's not *should* our way into them!

Use the space on the next page to play with the shoulds you identified

- Try replacing *should* with another word - e.g. *want*, *choose to*, *get to*.
- Check in and notice - does this feel true? How do you tell?
- If not, is it possible this should just doesn't belong to you?
- Are there any of these shoulds that could benefit from a different perspective - looking at the *outcome* of the actions rather than the actions themselves? (e.g. *I want to feel strong* might feel more true than *I want to lift weights*. The outcome may be the same, but the way we frame it matters).
- Come back to noticing what these *feel* like in your *body*. What do you notice that helps you distinguish between yours and other; wanted and imposed?



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Now let's talk about your identity in the world and in relationships. Think about how you *hope* you are seen and understood by others. The following question are adapted from Brené Brown's *I Thought it Was Just Me (But It Isn't)*, 2007).

I want to be perceived as ...  
(Or It's important to me that people think I am ...)

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*e.g. I want to be perceived as smart, caring, organised ...*

I do not want to be perceived as ...  
(Or it's important to me that people don't think I am ...)

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*e.g. I do not want to be perceived as unintelligent, messy, dismissive ...*



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We can learn a lot from Brené Brown's research on shame, in which she recognised the impact of *unwanted identities* on our experiences.

Unwanted identities are "*characteristics that undermine our vision of our 'ideal' selves*" (Brown, 2007) - essentially, how we want to be perceived - which often leaves little room for our humanity.

Consider this: if I want to be perceived as a hard-worker and selfless in my service toward others, what happens when I need to rest and I decide I want to engage in self-care? It's going to feel uncomfortable, right? Because these actions undermine my vision for my ideal self- that self that I'm trying to project into the world.

I may not have consciously chosen this vision - it, like those *shoulds* we explored earlier, has been impacted by all the messages that have been absorbed over a lifetime.

However, as you look at what you wrote on the previous page, consider:

***How could protecting these identities limit my ability to engage in the self-kind, loving, caring relationship I desire with myself?***

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Let's explore this a little more.

For the most relevant 'I want/don't want to be perceived as' statements, consider the following questions:

- If I want to be perceived as \_\_\_\_\_, the parts of myself that have to be hidden are \_\_\_\_\_.
- If I don't want to be perceived as \_\_\_\_\_, the parts of myself that have to be hidden are \_\_\_\_\_.
- Is it realistic for me to never show that I'm \_\_\_\_\_?

## THE REFRAME THAT INTERRUPTS SHAME

I want to share with you my favourite way for interrupting shame, guilt, and other uncomfortable emotions that often leave us feeling a bit stuck.

The key is to introduce CURIOSITY over judgment

“Isn’t that interesting ...”

“I’m noticing that ...”

“I’m having the thought that ...”

What happens when you use this framing to explore those thoughts that feel a bit ick?

e.g. Isn’t that interesting ... I want to rest, but I’m feeling guilty about it. Huh.

e.g. I’m noticing that I feel like x might get mad at me if I do/don’t do y. That’s interesting.

e.g. I’m having the thought that I haven’t done enough today to rest and enjoy my show. Wow, that’s interesting.

## CREATING A PERSONAL STATEMENT

Consider your Values exploration from Week 2 in combination with what you've explored here in Week 3. Looking at this, write out a simple statement that reminds you of what you're moving toward. See the example below for somewhere to start.

*e.g. I desire a kind, honest and compassionate relationship with myself and my body. I notice I find it hard when I think I might be seen as selfish. That makes it tricky to actually rest or take time out. I'm committed to meeting myself with compassion and acting in the direction of my values when I choose how to respond.*

## WHAT NEXT?

- Stay curious; stay compassionate. Notice how shoulds and unwanted identities might pop up through the week. Can you be led by your values when deciding what to do next?
- **Share and ask questions** in the Facebook group.
- Keep moving and sensing through Somatic Exercise
- Keep practicing self-compassion

Next week ... we'll be looking at the Nervous System and starting to map the states that we experience so that we can navigate and regulate those states with more ease.