

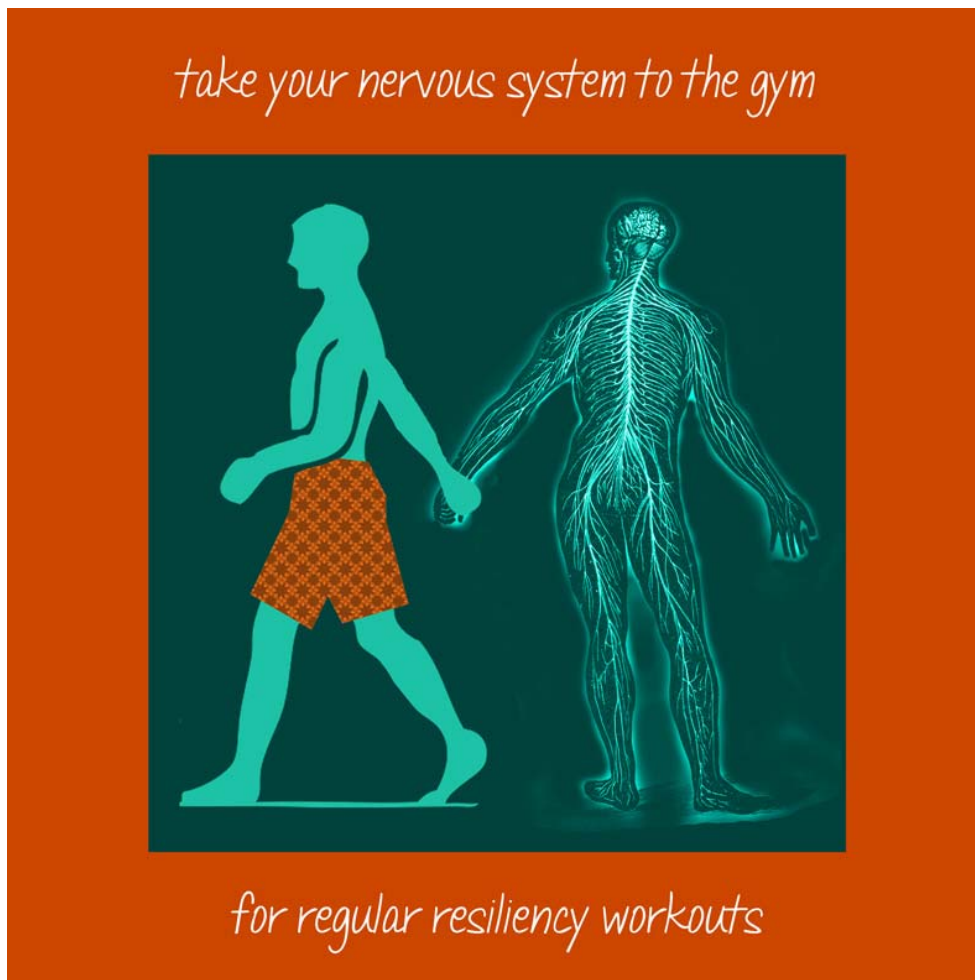
# Resiliency Building Skills to Practice for Trauma Recovery

[www.new-synapse.com/aps/wordpress/](http://www.new-synapse.com/aps/wordpress/)

**Much of trauma healing is helping the nervous system become more “resilient.” Rather than spend a few hours or even days drowning in a state of terror, tension and nervousness after getting triggered, doing one or more of these exercises can help the nervous system shift into a different state sooner.**

**Each time you do an activity or exercise like the ones below, this teaches the nervous system to be more flexible and rebound from activation sooner.**

## Take Your Nervous System to the Gym



**After some type of physical injury that leaves some of your muscles weak or atrophied, you may need to go to physical therapy and exercise the muscles to strengthen them again. After trauma, the nervous system is completely out of whack and the resiliency muscles, so to speak, are very weak. Practicing resiliency exercises on a regular basis is like going to a “Nervous System Gym” and exercising the healthy functions of your nervous system until they become strong once again.**

**In fact, going to a Trauma Resiliency Model or Somatic Experiencing therapist is kind of like seeing a Nervous System Physical Therapist or Nervous System Personal Trainer. When you see a regular Physical Therapist or Personal Trainer, they will give you homework to do in the gym or at home before the next week’s session. In the same way, if you go to therapy for trauma once a week, it’s good to also practice these things on your own between sessions to get those muscles worked out enough to improve your functionality over time.**

## **Resiliency Building Skills to Practice for Trauma Recovery**

### **1. Grounding**

**Feel your feet on the ground.**

**Feel gravity.**

**Feel the pressure of your body on what is supporting it.**

**Feel the texture of objects with your fingers.**

**Name details of what you touch, see, hear, smell and taste.**

### **2. Tracking / Felt Sense**

**Place your attention on sensations in the body and monitor them for a period of time.**

**Describe them and notice when they change.**

**Stay with yourself even if something very uncomfortable comes up; be like Velcro.**

**Challenge yourself not to dissociate.**

### 3. Slowing / Titration

**Deliberately slow down your emotions and disturbing body sensations, like slowing down the tempo of music.**

**Separate out and work on only a small bit of the emotions or sensations and leave the rest for later, like taking only one bite of the pie.**

### 4. Resourcing

**Create an imaginary Safe Place, or recall a safe, calming, comforting experience you had in your life.**

**Imagine you're there and notice what you feel.**

**Know that you can always go to this place in your imagination if you need to calm yourself down.**

### 5. Pendulation

**Be deeply present with an area of your body feeling activation, such as terror, anger, panic, tension. Then move your attention to a place of neutrality or calm in your body. Very slowly go back and forth. Build your capacity to stay with the negative. Also build your capacity to feel positive things again and to stay with the positive.**

### 6. Contact / Self-Holding Exercises

**Put your hands on the parts of your body that feel difficult sensations (tension, discomfort). Notice how the hands feel when on the body. Notice how the body feels under the hands. Notice how the space in the body located between the hands feels.**

### 7. Community

**Socialize and participate in your community. Human connection builds resilience.**

## 8. Presence

**Practice placing your awareness on any emotion or sensation coming up inside you. Say towards it, “You are welcome here.” Stay with it in a loving, compassionate way.**

## 9. Self-Acceptance

**Work on reducing “should” thoughts about yourself. Allow yourself the space and time for your body, emotions and mind to embrace and pass through the processes they need to.**

## 10. Self-Empathy

**Practice being gentle with yourself. Practice self-empathy.**

**Recently, I created an online store for my blog (yay!).**

**Every project like this is a huge ordeal with PTSD and takes forever due to the limited energy, frequent down time to contend with symptoms, dealing with states of anxiety and panic, getting triggered, physical issues (body pains, stress related health problems, injury related issues and panicking about them) and**



**sheer exhaustion – but I finally got it done**

**The first seven items in the above list of resiliency building skills are also part of an art print I created for my online store. It’s kind of challenging to take the subject of trauma and make wall art and posters but the process is calming in a way so I’ve created a handful so far:**





Here is a more in-depth explanation of the above skills (and a few more skills):

## **Trauma Resiliency Model Teaches 9 Skills:**

**Skill #1 Tracking – Tracking of TRM is pretty much the same thing as the Felt Sense of Somatic Experiencing. Placing awareness / presence on your sensations and emotions and holding it there. Watching and being with these parts of yourself and challenging yourself to stay a bit longer than you might want to.**

**Skill #2 Resourcing – The term Resourcing is very broad and pretty much all self-therapy somatic exercises act as Resources.**

**“Resourcing” from TRM specifically is a technique in which you work to find a good resource for yourself – an imaginary place, a life experience, a person, etc. When you find a really good one, you pretend you are in that place and time and deepen your body’s experience of it. Then you name details about the experience which help to bring it into your body more. You pick 3 details that represent the experience best to you and memorize them. When you are stressed, you practice bringing the 3 details back to mind and generate calming sensations in your body this way. I am most familiar with the imaginary Safe Place and a memory of a positive experience – but there are many possible things you can use for this.**

**When Resourcing, I have personally found it to work best if I focus on a past experience, place or imaginary scenario that is characterized mainly by feelings of safety from danger, and isn’t too complex. Good characteristics (for me personally are): relief, rest, safety, comfort, care, sanctuary, relaxed, soft, soothing, loved.**

**Bringing up a positive memory from the past as a resource is actually one of the most complicated skills to learn because memories are usually multi-faceted collections of both positive and negative things. A therapist will help hone in on the most resourceful aspects of the memory and ignore the others. It’s also important not to unconsciously attempt use the resource to try to escape, deny or gloss over bad things. For these reasons, resourcing using a memory of a past event is best done with some guidance from someone experienced in the technique.**

**Skill #3: Grounding – Grounding includes processes to deepen your felt sense connection to the earth, gravity, your body, your sense of weight, location, place and 5 senses.**

**Skill #4: Gesturing – Gesturing is a process of bringing awareness to spontaneous gestures/movements that are self-soothing in order to use them consciously and deliberately to reduce activation.**

**Skill #5: Help Now! – The skills taught for Help Now! are quick, simple and practical (and easy to remember) strategies to get back into the Resilient Zone if experiencing emergency, extreme or very stuck states in which you find yourself completely overwhelmed and unable to get out of the trauma vortex.**

**Skill #6: Shift and Stay – This skill involves shifting into the Resilient Zone and challenging yourself to stay there. This is basically exercising a muscle that has gotten weak during the extreme stress of PTSD – the muscle being the capacity to remain in your Resilient Zone.**

**The 6 skills above are taught to the general public in Community Resiliency Training. The next 3 Skills are only part of TRM:**

**Skill #7 Titration – slowing down and taking small bites of emotions and bodily sensations– *also part of SE***

**Skill #8 Pendulation – gently guiding the nervous system to remember its natural process of going between being settled/calm alert (parasympathetic) and being activated (sympathetic). Pendulation is a technique to help the nervous system become more flexible and to restore its natural rhythm and flow after it has been badly injured/disabled/harmed by trauma.– *also part of SE***

**Skill #9 Completion of Survival Responses – This involves allowing the energies of flight (running jumping, walking) and fight (pushing away, holding off, fighting) that were never able to express themselves during the trauma work their way out of the body tissues within a safe space held by a therapist.– *also part of SE***

**I added in these Skills as well:**

**Contact/Self-Holding Exercises I included *Contact/Self-Holding Exercises* from Somatic Experiencing in my list because of how much those exercises have helped me. They are my emergency go-to exercises. Peter Levine refers to them as “Contact” exercises because they involve placing attention on areas where you make contact with your body using your hands.**

**Community I added *Community* because connecting with people, when ready and able, can be very healing for trauma recovery.**

**Presence, Self-Acceptance and Self-Empathy are all positive postures to take towards one's own process of recovery. Recovery is a real process that needs to take place. Recovery really can be something you need to make some extra time for. It can cause limitations in life for a while. Sometimes it's hard for me to accept the reality of the needs of the recovery process, like time, rest, therapy, relaxation exercises, so many things! – but I think accepting that this is part of my life right now will help me make more progress with it.**

## **The iChill Ap.**

**You can learn and practice the first 6 Skills of TRM using the iChill ap.**

**They are described in detail here: [iChill Ap 6 Skills](#)**

**I just tried out the iChill ap and here are my impressions:**

**My Review of iChill:**

**In the iChill ap for Android there are 4 Skills – Tracking, Resourcing, Grounding and Shift & Stay (perhaps the iPhone/iPad ap has all 6 I'm not sure).**

**I found the ap very good as a way to learn the skills but didn't find it quite as useful as a way to practice them.**

**For Tracking, Resourcing and Shift and Stay, rather than just starting the exercise when you click on the skill, the narrator gives a bunch of preamble that I would rather not have to wait through each time I want to practice the skill. It would be nice if they had two buttons: “Learn all about how to do (Skill)” and “Practice (Skill),” rather than have them both mixed together.**

**I do think that iChill is a great way to initially learn the skills because you're getting the lesson narrated to you rather than reading it yourself. This makes it easier to concentrate on doing the exercise.**

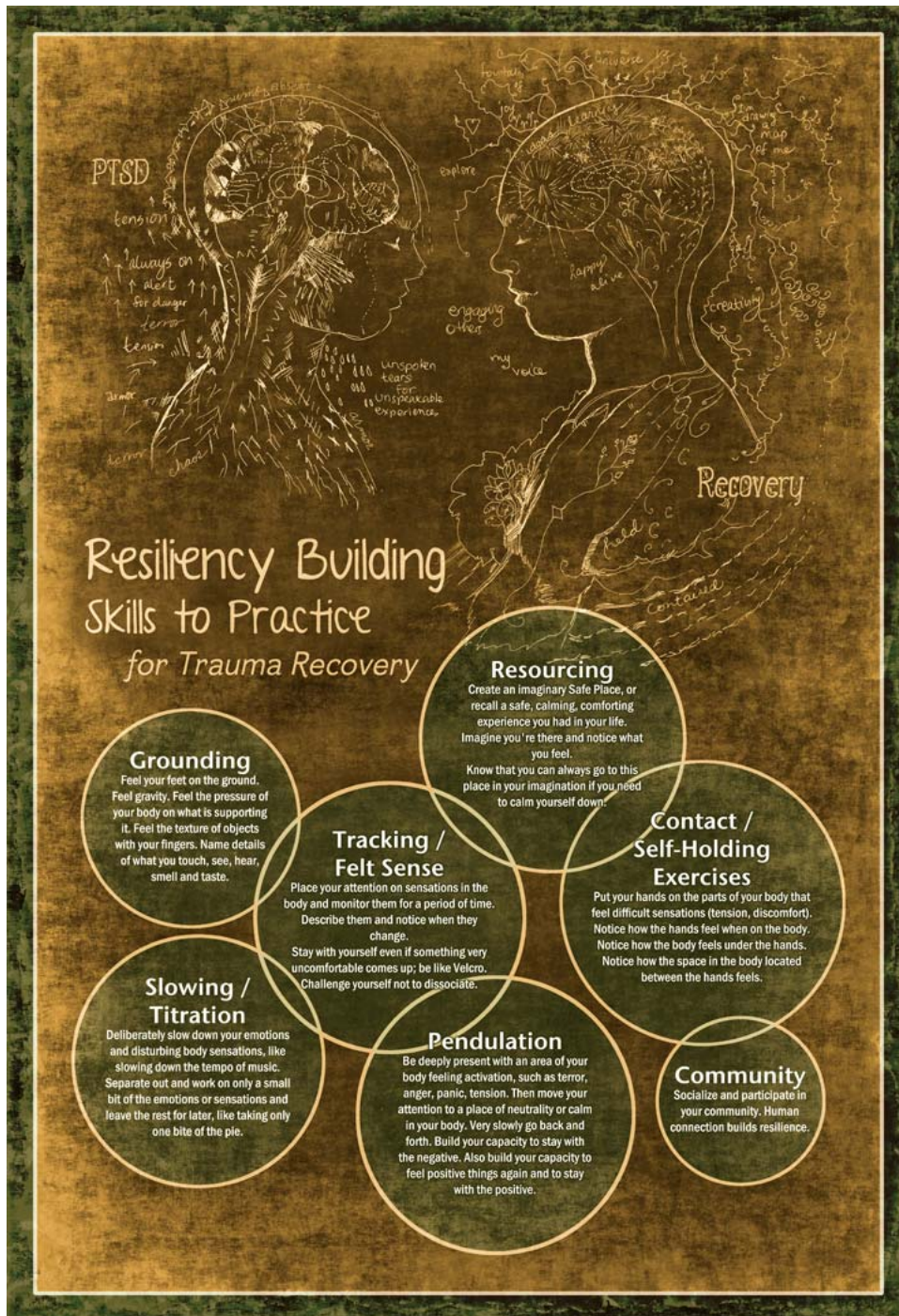
**And one skill – the Grounding Skill – begins very soon without much preamble and can therefore be used to practice whenever you feel you need to ground.**

**In conclusion, I really like the fact that the iChill ap makes these resiliency building exercises available for anyone to learn for free. The iChill ap can be used to learn Tracking, Resourcing and Shift&Stay and to both learn and practice Grounding.**



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Here is another print I designed that has the Resilience building reminders:



Heidi Hanson is an artist and writer in Asheville, North Carolina currently working on an illustrated book chronicling her journey healing from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

<http://www.new-synapse.com/aps/wordpress/?p=1825>