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Our review of trauma therapist Sheryl Close



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QUOTE UNQUOTE

'Do not be afraid of the empty place. It is the source we must return to if we are to be free of the stories and habits that entrap us'

Charles Eisenstein



Sheryl Close, Somatic Experiencing and Trauma Therapist

The quick read: Sheryl Close offers Somatic Experiencing and Trauma Therapy, and her sessions include an eclectic mixture of skills she's developed over the years – including psychotherapy, massage therapy, addiction counselling and Gestalt therapy. The focus is primarily on Somatic Experiencing, and Sheryl's therapy is for anybody who feels stuck in their life, who want to connect more deeply emotionally with him/herself, and who want to release historical destructive patterns. Sheryl can be booked for an individual, hour-long session at private practices in London or Bedfordshire in the UK.

More on Somatic Experiencing: Somatic Experiencing was introduced in 1997, in American psychotherapist Dr Peter Levine's book *Waking the Tiger*. The therapy is based on his observation of animal behaviour in the wild and their response to trauma – plus strands taken from biology, neuroscience, indigenous healing practises and medical biophysics (X-rays, MRI scans, and the like).

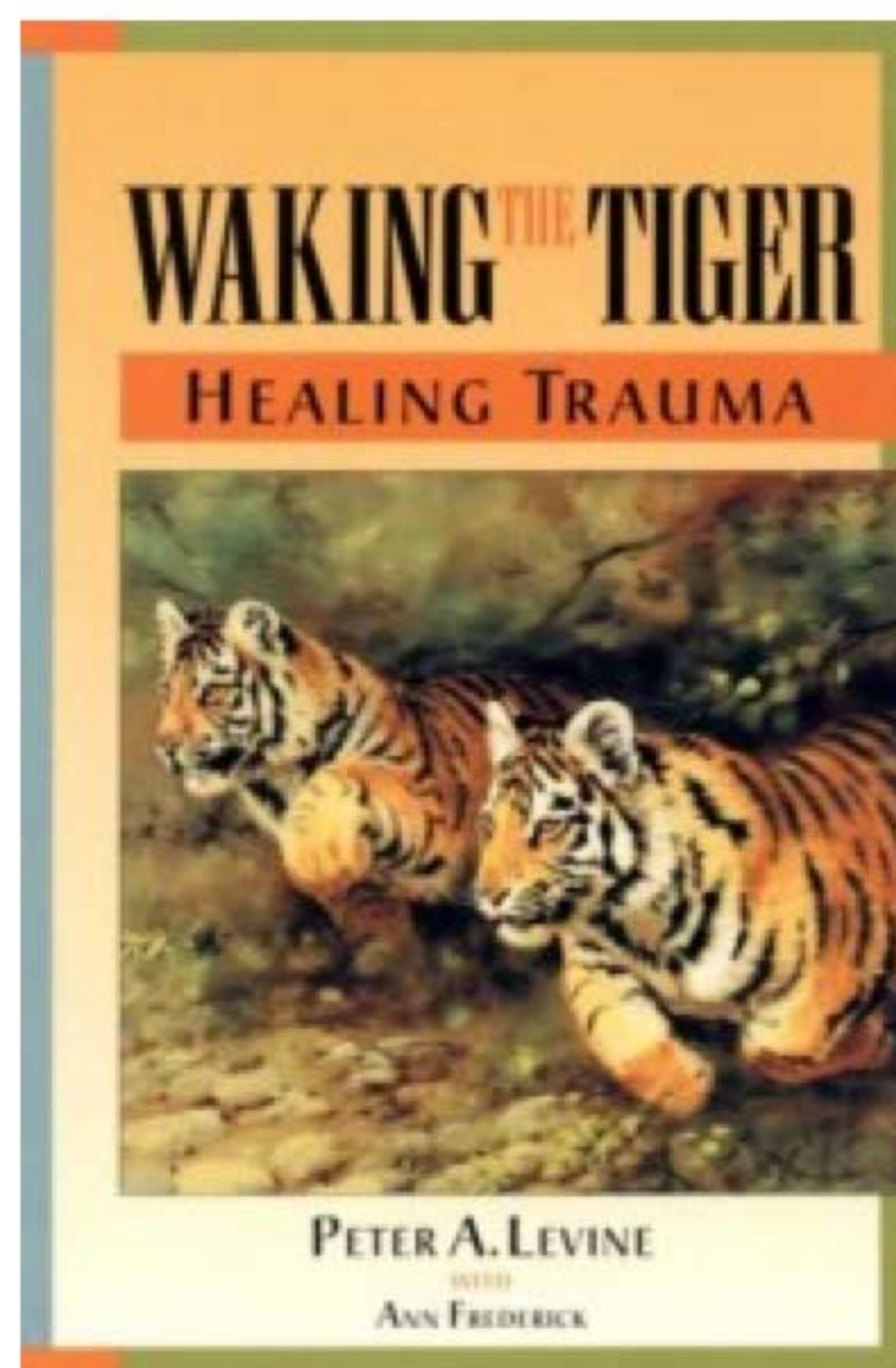
Dr Peter Levine observed that animals in the wild are rarely traumatised – despite routine threats to their lives, after which massive amounts of energy are mobilised for the fight/flight/freeze responses. Once safe, animals spontaneously discharge this energy with involuntary movements such as shaking, trembling and deep breaths. Practitioners believe that we're all equipped with the same capacity as animals to overcome overwhelming experiences, and that we can allow the body to heal the psychological scars of trauma – whether from an accident, scary experience, physical or mental assault, sexual abuse or loss, and much more – enabling frozen or 'stuck' energy to discharge from the body via movements, sounds and visualisations.



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Waking the Tiger: The book that introduced the concept of Somatic Experiencing

to the ‘voice’ of the body – ‘spoken’ through physical sensations such as tingling or warmth. ‘It’s not,’ says Sheryl, ‘just a talking therapy to help clients become aware of the problem. It’s a way to heal the issues on all levels through experiencing and discharging stuck energy.’ Practitioners hold that it is not an event itself that’s traumatic, but the individual’s response to it. You don’t have to have been in a war to suffer trauma; going on the helter-skelter fairground ride, for example, may be terrifying for someone.

 **How was it for us:** I’ve had years of psychotherapy and have tried a wide range of therapies. I am in recovery from addictions, including an eating disorder, and am also bipolar. I found Sheryl very sympathetic and encouraging, trust-inspiring and interesting in her approach. She was very supportive in dealing with the vestiges of my eating disorder – including occasional comfort eating – and my black moods.



Sheryl was very sympathetic & encouraging

This therapy touched the parts that other therapies haven’t reached, especially the talking ones. So how did it work? We’d talk about whatever I wanted to focus on, and then she’d hone in on an aspect. In one session when I felt very stuck and with low energy in my body, she asked what would be the opposite of the sensation I was experiencing and whether there was an image that went with it. ‘A kangaroo,’ I replied. OK, so it sounds ridiculous. But imagining the kangaroo bouncing made me feel lighter and freer. Then I felt a tingling as the ‘stuck’ energy purportedly began to move through my body and discharge. On another occasion, I experienced a ‘buzzy’ energy in my arms, that I felt wanted to move outwards – so, at her instruction, I did some breast-stroke swimming movements, which seemed to release the stuck energy and leave an easier, uplifting feeling in my body. This combined with talk therapy, the occasional touch (to bring me into my body) and her deep understanding of addiction were very healing.

After experiencing trauma humans’ rational brains, through shame, judgement and fear – frequently reject the powerful primal instincts of the body. The result is that the fight/flight energy gets trapped in the nervous system, potentially leading to emotional, physical and/or mental problems – with symptoms ranging from addiction, depression, hyper-vigilance to compulsive worrying/panic attacks, aggression, tiredness, trouble sleeping to OCD and unexplained physical pains. Through ‘tracking’ sensations in the client’s body in therapy sessions, there’s a safe release of the energy connected with the original trauma, of symptoms from the nervous system and the natural flow of energy is re-established.

The therapy doesn’t have to involve the client talking about overwhelming experiences, but rather listening



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More about Sheryl: Sheryl has been practising as a psychotherapist for 20 years and as a Somatic Experiencing practitioner for five. She is also a massage therapist – ‘sometimes using touch’ in Somatic Experiencing. She has worked in many addiction treatment centres, including Farm Place and Lifeworks, Promis and Prinsted. She offered therapy in HMP Coldingley, under the wing of the Rehabilitation of Addictive Prisoners Trust. Wearing her generalist psychotherapist’s hat, she runs retreats and workshops for spiritual development and for healing emotional issues – from lack of confidence to sexuality and relationship problems.

A kind of one-stop shop for healing your trauma



What’s queenly: After you’ve done the years of counselling, psychotherapy and all the rest, Sheryl turns out to be what you needed all along: the one-stop shop for healing your trauma.

What’s lowly: In the hall as you enter the South Kensington clinic in London that Sheryl shares with other therapists, there’s a pong of cooking from the deli next door. But it doesn’t follow you into the treatment room.

Insider tip: It’s not for you if you enjoy cognitive problem solving and prefer talk therapies. But it is for you if you want to gain a deeper understanding of yourself – physically, emotionally and mentally – and to facilitate trauma healing.

Prices: A one-hour session is £120 in London and £70 at her clinic in Bedfordshire.

Website: Sherylclose.co.uk.

Reviewed by [Caroline Phillips](#).

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For further reading see also seauk.org.uk, sosinternationale.org and any books by Peter Levine.

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