

## When You Need A Hug But Nobody's Around, Do This

This exercise (and the one below it) come from Somatic Experiencing, which is a form of therapy developed by Peter Levine, PhD for coping with difficult feelings—especially those caused by sensations stuck in our bodies due to various life stressors.

Somatic Experiencing considers it important to feel “held” in order to move through discomfort. Any of us who have ever craved a hug can relate. Luckily, there is a way to replicate that feeling of being held—on your own and on the fly.

- 1 Place your right hand under your left arm, holding your ribcage/armpit/side of your heart
- 2 With your left hand, firmly grip your right shoulder or upper arm. Use a squeezing, tapping, or rubbing motion to get a real sense for the space between your arms and hands.

In Somatic Experiencing, this may be called drawing awareness to your “container.”

- 3 Pay attention not just to your hands on the outside of you, but pay attention to the inside of your body.

*Prefer a breath-oriented exercise just like this? Peter Levine also offers a counterpart to the above, paying special attention to the breath.*

- 1 Place one hand on your forehead, and the other on your upper chest.
- 2 Just feel what goes on between the hands. Notice how your chest rises and falls with your breath, how the blood seems to flow between your hands, and anything else.
- 3 Keep your hands there a few moments, even 5-10 minutes, until you feel some kind of a shift. Trust your senses to guide you. Keep your chest hand where it is, and move the hand on your head down to your belly.
- 4 Keep your hands here, again until you feel a shift or some sensation of flow.

Remember: sometimes when we feel held and safe, that’s when our most uncomfortable emotions come out. If you experience a flare of difficult feelings, please don’t go through them alone. Reach out, either to a professional, or to your peers at Supportiv.com.