



Moon Over Matter

An Introduction To The Somatic Method Of Self-Regulation

Mark R. Filippi, DC

It happens a few times a year. You're flipping channels or you notice in the crawl on your phone that there's a story debunking the influence of the moon on our behavior. Silly, old superstitious stuff, right? Wrong as rain. There are about twenty emerging fields of study that have correlated lunar cycles to everything from our metabolic rate to our dream content. And yet we live in blissful ignorance to this. Well, most of us do. About thirty years ago, when I began my career, a client handed me a copy of Elson Haas' book, *Staying Healthy With The Seasons*, because she knew I was interested in something called 'tissue kinetics' - something bodyworkers like myself were reading about the time. In a nutshell, it's the interval different aspects of the physical body are replaced. The classic example are red blood cells, which are cycled through every 120 days. Our brain resets it's chemical composition every 180 days. The extensive fascial network takes 500 days to replace itself, while our ligaments do that every 14 days. The phasic muscles of the body that allow us to move, take 90 days. That was the one that caught my eye since our seasonal cycles are close to that amount of time. That book, among many others, launched me on a journey to reverse engineer how our bodies and our lives use nature's rhythms as a template to adapt to the 'stress of life'. Oh, btw, that's another great book: Hans Selye... I still have that sucker dog-earned on my bookshelf here just FYI...

So what's all that got to do you and the moon? Well in the intervening 28 years or so since I started tracking all these things with the help of Haas and Selye and others, I've created a system called "The Somatic Method" (TSM) to help people leverage that subtle but powerful link we have with the lunar and seasonal cycles. The field of chronobiology has been at this for over fifty or sixty years now as well. My approach with clients is to help them recapture their healing potential by giving them ways to live with more

awareness of their biological roots every day. We're conditioned to mute our connection to nature. The last generation or so of technology has only made that easier. But it comes with a high price; our vitality. This introduction will give you ways to weave your way back to a deeper harmony with the world we're *really* in, one where the moon plays a central role in our mental clarity and social cohesion as well as our physical well-being. Let's start by explaining what TSM is and why it's something you can use at any age, under any condition to optimize your energy and focus in the moment and over time. I've lived this work for you already. It's your turn now to join me and many others who've chosen to follow that moon...

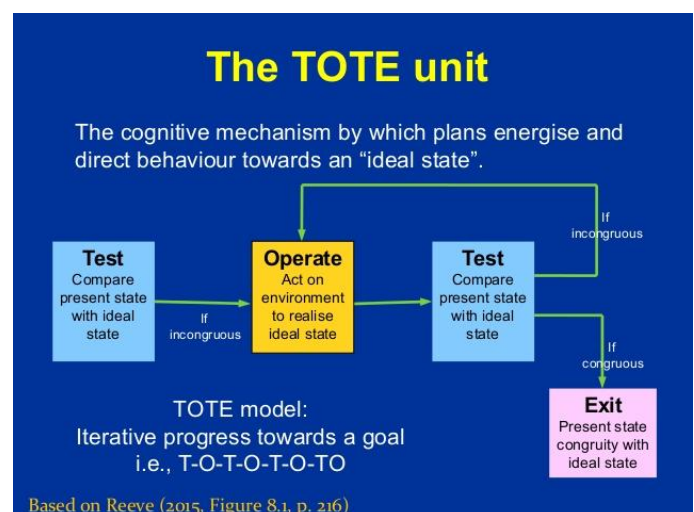
Before I give you a nickel tour of TSM, we need to make a clear distinction between two things that often get confused at first glance. It'll help when we get the moon and all the old werewolf images pop into your head again...

"Self-control is about inhibiting strong impulses; self-regulation, reducing the frequency and intensity of strong impulses by managing stress-load and recovery"

<https://www.kindermusik.com/mindsonmusic/kindermusik/its-self-regulation-not-self-control/>

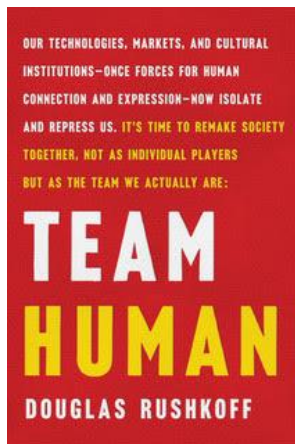
The framework of TSM is to help you to recognize you have a mountain of strong impulses coursing through you 24/7 driving you to execute your routines, habit and other 'nonconscious' behavior... It's a good thing we have them too, because if we had to sanction every impulse our poor brains would fry faster than they already do. The focus of TSM is to free you up to be creative within your extremes and be able to get to a 'cruising' speed and accuracy and not burn your nervous system out. This is where I have to laugh at how obvious (and yes elusive Moshe Feldenkrais) things seem now. I know wisdom is a product of poor judgment but when I tell you how damn simple (hint) it is, you're going to thank me for sparing you a few decades of experimenting. I guess Edison and his first 9,999 light bulbs did the same.

The design of TSM applies a principle about human behavior first articulated in "Plans and the Structure of Behavior", which was published in 1960 by George Miller, Eugene Galanter and Karl H. Pribram. It's called the **Test, Operate, Test, Exit** (TOTE) Model. Think about this. In the last 59 years we've had this tremendous insight to human behavior running in the background of our increasingly conflicted and complex lives. Quick overview here >



"In the TOTE sequence a goal is first planned, and a test is performed to determine whether the goal has been accomplished. If it has not been accomplished, operations are performed to achieve the goal. The test is performed again, and exit occurs if the goal is achieved. Otherwise, the process repeats. TOTE had a significant impact on psychology, because it provided a realistic model of how humans pursue goals and carry out plans. Miller's work encouraged researchers to abandon the more constricted, behaviorally oriented approach based on stimulus-response. The TOTE unit also served as the basis for many later theories of problem solving."

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/George-A-Miller#ref1200618>



Despite the cultural adulation to technology and our modern life, I'm with author, Douglas Rushkoff and I'm on "TEAM HUMAN". This TOTE model blends our capacity to internalize and efficiency repeat successful behaviors and our ability to edit and find creative alternatives when those routines fail. In TSM, the TOTE involves being about to shift from the our socially biased externally focused bias, what General Semantics called our extensional orientation, to our subjective, first person internal one to slow down our thought-and-actions and allow us to register a more complete felt-sense awareness of our behaviors and our surroundings. That is what somatics is as a living science. We exist in a perpetual TOTE that exits connects us all as a species and our personal and collective evolution feeds off self-regulation.

The 4 steps of the TSM TOTE are something we already do nonconsciously.

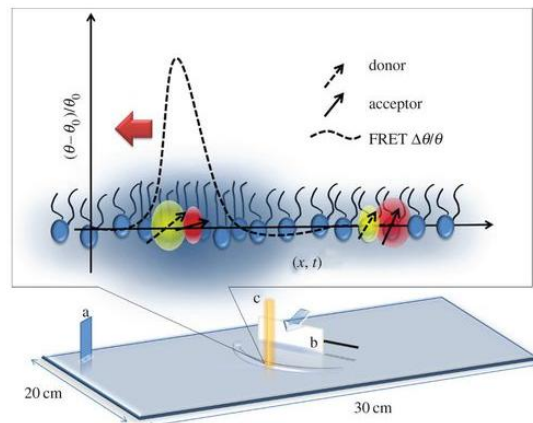
- 1) Soften any distractions
- 2) Simplify your intention
- 3) Strengthen your concentration
- 4) Sharpen attention

That's it! LOL... We do this THOUSANDS of time a day...until we don't and the second T in the running TOTE of our lives changes the plan for us until we can get back in sync again. Now we're closing the gap between how we exercise self-regulation within and between ourselves. Yet something is missing because we're displaying less and less self-control collectively as our litany of addictive, violent, destructive and life-limiting behaviors pile up. Like I said, our lack of connection to nature leaves us in a constant state of oscillation from one extreme to another and that 'OCD'-rhythm exhausts us. The missing piece is that common ground cosmic traffic sign called the lunar cycle that if properly integrated into our lives would dramatically shift how well the cultural TOTE serves TEAM HUMAN. And yes, there's an app for that but first let's reveal the mystery theme that connects all the dots for us...

In the late 90's I was at my first conference that talking about living systems. And I heard a presentation about the concept of INDEXICALITY. I didn't realize it at the time but that happy accident was the seed thought that helped me figure it what I was looking for to connect what seemed like pieces from a million different puzzles. The concept of indexicality goes like this and I swear this is the last heady thing we have to unravel here...

Indexicality the capacity to make generalizations about specific aspects of a dynamical system; an ascribed quality of use. An ability to used as a reference. Human interpretation systems tend to increase indexicality as they expand (we ascribe more meaning over time to our interpretations). How you arrived at the symbol is not as relevant as how flexible the use of that symbol, in its context, plays out. Keep in mind, a "carrying capacity" self-limits the multi-purpose feature of a common ground. This is known as "the tragedy of the commons". The 24-hour day serves as an example of a highly indexical reference, not for any other reason but that the number 24 intrinsically can be subdivided many more ways than the true circadian 25-hour day can. As we move into the digital era, this might shift.

Now imagine me learning that and thinking about how the lunar cycle subdivides into four distinct phases...hey just like the there's four seasons, hey just like there's four parts of a wave (valley, rise, peak and fall), hey just like there's four... OMFG! LOL... Yup, that's right... the brain has 4 lobes, the heart has 4 chambers, we have 4 limbs...you can see how I almost drove off the road as the sheer vastness of this 'Rule of Four' tupperwared in my mind and years of frustration faded away. The terrain and the map were as intertwined as mind and body, heart and soul and the moon and brain. We live in this embedded TOTE (also 4 steps btw) and the fluctuations in the rhythms in our lives and relationships are all 'choreographed' by the common ground of that relentless lunar rhythm which we embody every blink, breath and heartbeat. OK, I lied, one more heady concept: solitons!



Soon after my aha moment I wrote this on an index card and used it my clients to demonstrate how indexicality worked in a real world way. It was one thing to realize the world is not as linear as our manmade clocks made them appear. But as the digital world of cyberspace emerged, we accepted nonlinearity more. The next obstacle was spatial and how our lives are actually nonlocal, interconnected and communal despite all the cultural filters to the contrary. TEAM HUMAN stuff. I wrote this on the card and I'd ask the client to tell me what they saw. Try it...

IAMNOWHERE

During the course of my day, I'd glance up and look at it and let the letters work their magic on me. What does it say in this moment?...or this one? how about now? It's a great way to determine which way our bias is directing us. Most people assume that it's all about being present and wrongly try to force themselves to see I AM NOW HERE even when they naturally feel like I AM NOWHERE. I've hardly ever seen someone try to go from HERE to NOWHERE though. We're socially conditioned to be present and accountable, even as we're awash in daydreams, bodily tensions and other distractions. Being absent or NOWHERE isn't bad or even unusual. Recognizing your absent while you're trying to be present is the first step we make back into 'Soma Space'. We all begin as accidental tourists. By the end of this introduction, you'll be a tour guide in this damn place.

Where Are You...In Soma Space?

The answer isn't a location but an orientation. As you'll learn later on, unlike the cognitive world, the soma is fluid, dynamic and untamed. So it's an ocean of invisible waves, a spectrum of frequencies, vibrations and other subtle influences that we've tuned out in favor of the concrete, stable and divided ones we perceive as the 'outside'. Rather than mince words, after all, they're never going to help us here, let's get ankle deep in the particular kind of wave that Soma Space provides us. It's called a soliton, or a standing wave. Every discrete object we can name in the cognitive world is composed of these soliton waves. Rather

than travel forward in time, they pulse in place and put out a signal. We can observe non-human soliton waves in nature but they are rare and kind of annoying to all involved. Here's a fast story about how solitons were discovered.

"Although no reliable, easily accessible records are available on this topic, it is probably safe to say that not many mathematical discoveries have ever been made on horseback. It may or may not have been sunny in August 1834. The weather conditions for that fortuitous day are unknown but, for the sake of realism and to set the scene, let us just assume that it was overcast, with a light drizzle. The story takes place in the Scottish countryside, on the Union Canal at Hermiston, near Edinburgh. At the time naval engineer John Scott Russell, born and educated in Glasgow, was working on the design of the keels of canal boats. In Hermiston, Russell was riding his horse, following and observing a boat being rapidly drawn along the canal by a pair of horses. As he later recounted in a nicely penned report for the British Association for the Advancement of Science what he noticed when the boat suddenly stopped was a most unusual wave that detached from the prow. The swell quickly moving away from the boat and J. Scott Russell's insight turned out to be surprisingly resilient. It also had a rather unexpected, though tardy, impact on mathematics and applied mathematics. Such a wave would later be dubbed a soliton and, in the following decades and throughout the twentieth century, would play a central role in the theory of nonlinear differential equations, hydrodynamics, nonlinear optics and communications engineering. What Russell saw was a wave rolling forward "with great velocity, assuming the form of a large solitary elevation, a rounded, smooth and well-defined heap of water". This beautiful but subtly odd phenomenon was enough for him to spur his horse and go on the pursuit. The wave kept travelling along the canal, at about 14 km/h when Russell overtook it, apparently undisturbed and preserving its form (a bump of about 40 centimeters in height, extending for some 9 meters). At least two of the properties that would later be recognized as defining characteristics of solitons must have been at once apparent to Russell: the shape of the wave remained stable and, although propagating forward, localised at each instant within a certain region without the dispersion that we would usually associate with an ordinary wave, which instead would eventually flatten out or topple over. The chase lasted for a mile or two, after which Russell lost sight of the persistent wave in the windings of the canal. Following prolonged investigations performed using a tank built in his back garden for this very purpose, Russell concluded that the strange behaviour of what he called the wave of translation was due to the relative shallowness and narrowness of the canal. The stable waves produced in such a body of water at odds with the principles of hydrodynamics known in the mid-19th century, also showed bizarre particle-like behaviours: a wave of translations too big could split into two, and two waves propagating at different velocities. wouldn't merge, but rather overtake each other and carry on undisturbed...."

<http://the-gist.org/2012/07/how-a-scottish-naval-engineer-and-his-horse-discovered-solitons/>

A more detailed description of solitons can be found here too...if you're really curious... or bored?<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soliton>

This is all nice Filippi, but what about the damn moon? Here's where it all pays off for you. I'm going to round off the 29.3 day lunar cycle to 30 days. From the day of a New Moon to the day before the next one we experience 4 (that number again) phase shifts that take us from the RISING to the PEAK to the FALL and back into the VALLEY of the lunar wave. At each junction we undergo a nonconscious shift in our ENERGY and FOCUS that impacts our collective somatic TEAM HUMAN orientation. Since we're a less 'in touch' culture now, it's the visual cues that influence us most. Being able to SEE how we personally and

socially navigate these 'under the radar' tides is all you need to know. The rest is practice. Let's get to heart of how TSM works...

Let's meet the 4 Domains of Soma Space as they exist in their most elemental form. Imagine an intersection with four people standing on each corner all observing the same car accident. The police arrive and interview each person. As luck would have it, they each saw the crash from a different domain in Soma Space (again guess how many). Here's what each person reported back.

Person A – They gave a very detailed, specific account of how fast each car was going, the weather and road conditions, the wind direction and the angle the crash occurred. They don't seem too concerned about the health of the people involved but they are intent that the facts of the accident are reported and recorded accurately. They speak in a very flat, even tone of voice and have very little affect in their face or body. (VALLEY)

*This is the **EXO**-somatic domain. Logic prevails, order is king. Just the facts. Done yet?*

Person B – They gave a very hysterical account of how the crash occurred. They are very concerned about the health of the people involved and they are intent that the ambulance is called and gets them help ASAP. They speak in a very high-pitched fearful tone and have a very unstable freaked out look on their face and in their body. (RISE)

*This is the **PHYLO**-somatic domain. People first, play by the rules. Right what's wrong*

Person C – They gave a very direct, agitated account of how the accident happened and who's fault it was. They are more concerned with justice than peace. They may yell at the driver of the car they feel was at fault. They speak in a very intense and authoritative tone of voice and have a look of anguish on their face and body. (PEAK)

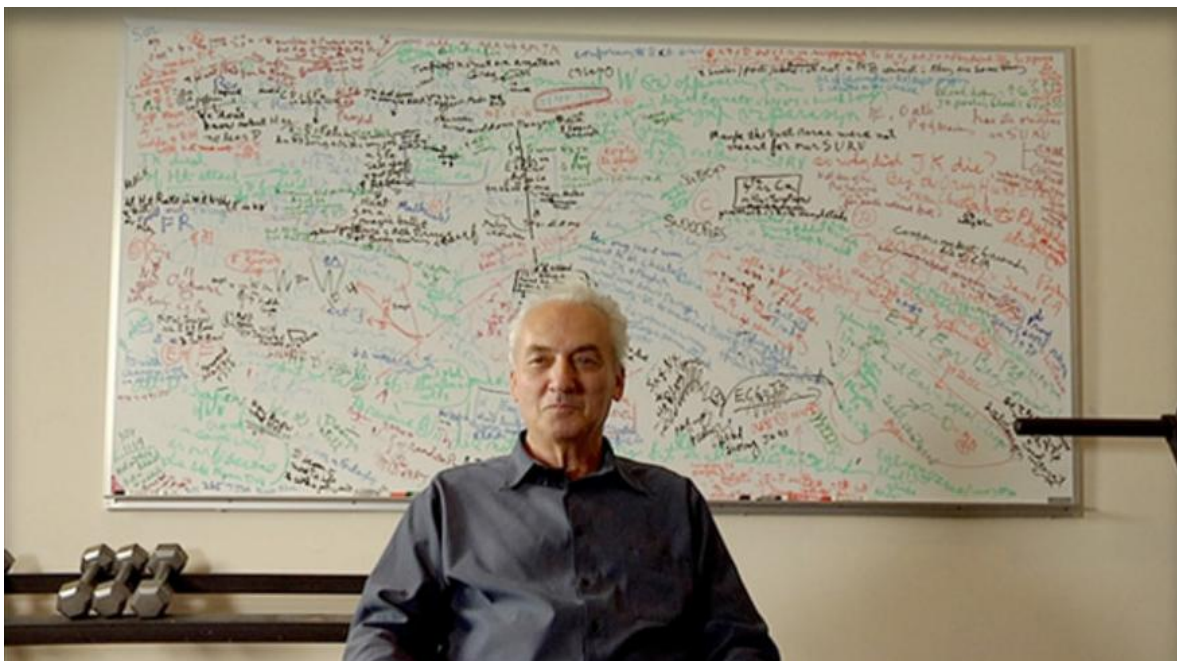
*This is the **ONTO**-somatic domain. I'm the boss, shut up and listen. Are we clear here?*

Person D – They gave a very vague but emotional account of the wreck and how this corner has been a death trap for years. They seem oddly curious about extent of the injuries the people suffered but they are also physically affected by what they saw. They may faint, vomit or convulse in mid-sentence. They speak in a choppy tone of voice and use a wild array of seemingly disconnected facial expressions and body gestures. (FALL)

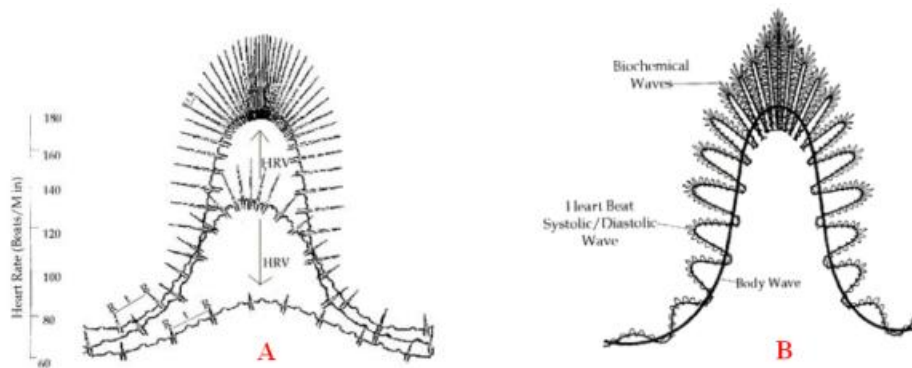
*This is the **ECO**-somatic domain. Feelings first, feelings second, I'm feeling your feelings.*

Let's break down those perspectives a little more so we can understand why they'd be so different. The EXO domain occupies the VALLEY. It represents the least dynamic part of Soma Space. The dust settles here. The EXO view is the closest we get to the cognitive world without resorting to naming. It's where we sort things out. We are viewing life from outside the soma really. It's a flat and lucid outlook. There's no room for grey here. Once we shift to PHYLO domain we sense the RISE and it's like the world is all about what's ahead and just out of reach. We feel energized but vulnerable at the same time. All that goes away when we enter the ONTO domain and reach the PEAK. Now we feel a more sharp and intense perspective and that empowers us to view the world as a place to reinforce our beliefs and project our vast imagination. Finally, nature takes our pins out and we FALL, arriving in the ECO domain. Empathy returns as we embrace the journey downward and all the ambient noise and instability it brings. We loosen our grip and open up and lower our inhibitions. If we're lucky, the FALL is a dive that ends with a nice splash. ;)

Sounds like a typical day here on the muddy rock called Earth, right? Ah, but those four perspectives are not local to those people on the corner at the scene of the accident. They are interwoven into the fabric of Soma Space so again they are in both the I AM NOW HERE and the I AM NOWHERE at the same time. Confused? Good. That's why the moon is key. Next step...



Back in late 2006, I made a pilgrimage to New Jersey with a friend of mine (hi Jeb!) to meet a man who would really help me take all of this and package it up for you nicely. His name is Irving Dardik, MD...or to most, Irv. His work in the field of cardiocybernetics had caught my eye about 10 years earlier. But now I had a clearer view of the puzzle; TOTE's, the 4 domains, solitons, the lunar cycle etc... Now I wanted to make it so clients could use the familiar tools of the linear, boxy, local, techie-biased lives to get to the juicy and renewing realm I had uncovered. Irv's work was primarily about using exercise in sync with the phase of the moon as a means to realign people with what he termed the SuperWave that allows all of life to function optimally.



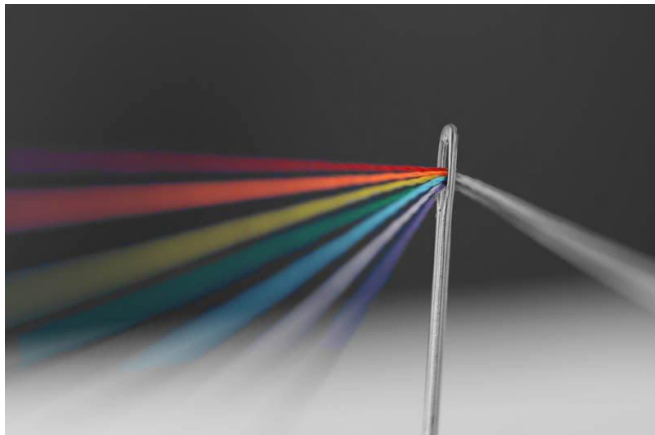
Listening To Your Heart

(A) The higher your peak heart rate wave range gets, the more it increases your HRV capacity. (B) The Heart Wave imprints on the overall body wave of exertion and recovery and our biochemical waves that govern our cellular growth and repair processes

Dardik realized, as I had that matter is nothing but, as he says, 'waves waving within waves' and there really isn't a particle-wave duality at all...it's just that our filters can't perceive it. He connected the overarching body waves of self-regulation with the embedded waves of the heart and the even more tightly bound waves of our biochemistry to the ones reflected in nature. We've all heard of things like our rest-activity cycle, our sleep-wake cycle and a woman's menstrual cycle, which is an example of our growth-repair cycles. Remember I started out with the interest in 'tissue kinetics' and Elson Haas and the 4 seasons. So to meet Irv and integrate this to all I'd cobbled together, it made TSM easier.

All you need to practice the principles of TSM is your mirror and your calendar. I already had years behind me helping clients use their neural imagery to understand how their body responded to their social environment, especially when they encountered their reflection. I'd demonstrate to families in my giant 9' x 12' mirror how their individual asymmetrical postural faults fit like a dysfunctional family puzzle. As they practiced TSM, and became more tone, the postures all entrained into a more functional and sustainable symmetry. Again, nice trick Filippi, but the world (back to Haas & Selye) wasn't going to endorse that over time.

After working with Irv and applying his take to my maps I created what's called the 'Coherence Calendar'. Again, just as we discussed about the 4 domains with the people at the scene of the accident, each lunar phase repositions us on that standing wave or soliton so the moon, yes the frickin' moon, can entrain us to the coherence of that perspective for that month's cycle. If we attune our body's rhythms to that awareness, we get the prize of physical vitality, mental clarity and social cohesion to share 24/7.



Since this is just an introduction, I'll summarize what I call SIMPLES (again, the irony is dripping now) and you can take it from there. I'd long been drawn to the connection of vision and posture. Again, all of my work took place in the era of us being more drawn to technical world and people

started to show more imbalances as they strained their eyes to stare at first monitors, then iPhones, and now a myriad of tablets and other interfaces 24/7. So I created a way to help them refresh their eye muscles called the Quick Fix. Try it out now and notice how your body feels after just one minute of doing it. Then we can get back to the calendar and how SIMPLES and Irv and all this fit together.

The Quick Fix (sample set)

Allow for a full breath in and & breathe out as you do each step...

- 1) Eyes Open & Up To The Right
- 2) Eyes Open & Down To The Left
- 3) Eyes Open & Up To The Left
- 4) Eyes Open & Down To The Right

I did the same thing with the the 4 limbs of the body applying the concept of the Cross-Crawl from my training to get that side of it.

This is the set for right handers...lefties just reverse the pattern and start with your right hand raised and go from there.

The Cross-Crawl (R hand dominant)

- a) Begin standing with your left arm fully raised.
- b) Inhale deeply and reach up with the left arm.
- c) As you exhale, bring the left arm down and the right knee up to the chest. Touch the left hand to the right knee as you complete the exhalation.
- d) As you inhale, reach up with the right arm as you lower the right leg down and left arm to your side.
- e) As you exhale, bring the right arm down and the left knee up to the chest. Touch the right hand to the left knee as you complete the exhalation.
- f) Repeat this scissoring pattern 15-20x within one minute.

Now if you JUST did these SIMPLES you'd get a benefit. If you did them the same time every day - even more. If you did them at the optimal time of each day according to the lunar phase we're in, well now we're talking. And if you did them at varying durations during those lunar phases, my God the world would change. I mean it. If you've ever seen those clips of people doing Tai Chi or meditating as a group the coherence they create is real. It's our way of thanking the moon for being our PHYLO guide, our ONTO mirror, our ECO prism and our EXO map as we migrate through the constraints of our atonal modern world.

Like I mentioned, relax, there's an app for you too! In 2011, I created a digital and portable way to help people who are more drawn to an interactive format. MoodBender Live has (wait for it) 4 'entrainment games' that take a minute to play and they leave a lasting impact on your nervous system's visual-motor integrity (VMI) for up to three hours. In that sense they serves as a form of SIMPLES for the days the 'present shock' is too intense to do the analog versions like the Quick Fix or the Cross-Crawls. The moon accepts both forms of homage and will reward you for it.

~~~~~

In summary, TSM is a system that offers you a way to get to know WHAT you are. Our brains, lives and relationships are not brought to us completed. Assembly is required. We need to develop them. By removing the lens of our social conditioning and stepping back into conversation with nature and especially the awareness of the lunar cycle, our lives are given a renewed sense of context and from that we can transcend our modern limitations. I invite you to visit SOMASPACE.ORG and take the Somatic Signatures Survey to learn which of the 4 people on the corner of that car accident you are. Knowing your primary domain and being able to notice the primary domain of others is a social skill that's been waiting at least 59 years to be realized. Start there and I hope to see you on the path soon. Follow that moon!

For more information please visit [SOMASPACE.ORG](https://www.somaspace.org)

## References & Further Reading

### **Staying Healthy With The Seasons**

<https://www.amazon.com/Staying-Healthy-Seasons-Elson-Haas/dp/1587611422>

### **The Stress of Life**

[https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/806041.The Stress of Life](https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/806041.The_Stress_of_Life)

### **Team Human**

<https://rushkoff.com/books/team-human-book/>

### **Making Waves**

<https://www.amazon.com/Making-Waves-Irving-Superwave-Principle/dp/1594860440>

### **Soliton Stuff**

<https://royalsocietypublishing.org/doi/full/10.1098/rsif.2014.0098>