



The Most Effective Sex Coaching Relies on Well-Researched, Science-Based Methods

Over the last two decades, the career of coaching has undergone a significant transformation, becoming much more varied and diverse than ever before. Previously, coaching was primarily associated with sports and athletic performance, but today, it has [become a multi-dimensional field](#) that encompasses a wide range of specialties and applications.

One of the most significant changes in coaching over the last two decades has been the proliferation of niches. Today, coaches specialize in areas like executive coaching, business coaching, leadership coaching, career coaching, wellness coaching, and more. A recent branch of coaching is in the realm of intimacy. This includes all aspects of sex and relationships - everything from communication to actual touch and techniques, and meeting emotional needs to resolving sexual dysfunction.

While many sexuality-related coaching programs have sprouted up in recent years, very few have a coherent philosophical foundation. Even fewer are based on proven methods, shown to be effective in helping people overcome the obstacles that stand in the way of successful intimacy and well-rounded sex lives.

[The Somatica Method](#) has been developed as a cutting-edge, experiential approach to sex and relationship coaching that integrates a host of deeply researched and scientifically-based approaches to personal transformation in the intimate realm.

For example, recent studies on earned secure attachment ^[1] - secure attachment that develops in adulthood - have shown that it is possible to move from a less to a more secure attachment style. [The Somatica Training](#) (which is based on the Somatica Method) creates a space where the 4 key underpinnings of earned secure attachment are available: emotional support, making sense of past experiences, altering self-perceptions, and changes in thought patterns and behaviors. Sex researchers have found that teaching about sexual pleasure increases sexual health outcomes ^{[2][20]}.

What is The Somatica Method of Sex and Relationship Coaching?

The Somatica Method is a unique approach to deepening the skills of emotional and erotic intimacy by practicing them in real-time. Like somatic therapy or coaching methods such as Somatic Experiencing (SE) and Authentic Movement Coaching, the Somatica Method focuses clients on the body and its sensations, emotions, and movements to facilitate personal growth and transformation. It uses body-based coaching methods - such as bringing awareness to the body's physical sensations, learning how to identify and release emotions, and practicing breathwork to regulate the body's nervous system - to facilitate and increase self-awareness and arousal ^[34].

Beyond more traditional somatic coaching approaches, the Somatica Method also incorporates a “relationship lab”. The word “lab” is used because engaging in the method is akin to a college lab, only you practice authentic intimacy in a boundaried container.

By practicing in real time with their coaching practitioner, clients can better understand their own reactions and gain agency, competence, and confidence in the realm of intimacy. Practicing sharing present-moment feelings between coach and client is one such exercise. It’s designed to uncover if the client is able to share vulnerably, and receive vulnerable shares back from their coach.

To create the most holistic, practical, and effective approach, the Somatica Method incorporates philosophies and approaches from a variety of disciplines and teachers. The presented research below measures the effectiveness of this method with regard to changes in our student's sexual well-being and relationship skills, and then sums up the contributing theoretical and practical underpinnings of the Somatica Method.

Research Methodology

To research and test the effectiveness of the Somatica Method, we administered a before-and-after survey to 153 students who attended the Somatica Core Training between February, 2021 through April, 2022.

According to a study by Ohio State University psychologist Terri Fisher, PhD, subjects tend to [misrepresent their sexual experiences to match gendered cultural expectations](#). To avoid this bias, we used an anonymous online survey.

It is also important to note that the presented research is not based on a random sample of survey subjects, but rather a select group of people who strive to be professional sex & relationship coach practitioners.

Summary of Research Results

In the survey, 153 subjects self-reported about the skills they felt they had before and after the training.

After taking the training, people of all genders, ages, and sexual orientations mostly or fully agree that they:

- **Know what turns them on and can express it to a partner:** 90% of people said they know what turns them on and can express it to a partner. This

was 25% more than those who agreed with this statement before they took the training.

- **Are having fulfilling sex:** 88% of Somatica training graduates said they are having fulfilling sex. This was 24% more than the number of people who said they were having fulfilling sex before the training.
- **Have good communication tools:** The number of people who said they have good communication tools increased 17%, resulting in 90% of the students post-training.
Are generally satisfied: 92% of Core training graduates said that they are generally satisfied, which was a 12% increase from before the training.
- **Have a positive attitude towards themselves:** About 11% more students said that they have a positive attitude towards themselves, with 94% saying this overall.
- **Increased self-esteem:** To measure the variable of self-esteem, we asked students about self perceptions around failure, pride, and capabilities. We saw a seven percent increase in people saying that they had something to be proud of and could do things as well as anyone else, with a total of 93% agreeing.
- **Can understand others' feelings:** We saw a somewhat smaller percentage increase in students saying they are able to understand others' feelings - up 4% from 91% to 95%.

Finally, while 68% of Somatica Core Training students had no mention of pleasure during any of their elementary school or high school sex education, and 75% have had at least some experience of sexual trauma, 93% of those who had completed the Somatica Core Training now find sex to be a source of pleasure. We saw a 1% improvement here.

There were a few categories that showed no significant improvements. This can likely be explained by the fact that those people who self-select into a sex and relationship coaching program are already aware of their fluency around these issues:

- **Have no embarrassment when talking about sex, or negative emotions around sex (98% before and after)**

- **Believe they are a good sexual partner** (98% before and after)
- **Can have an orgasm with a partner present or helping** (97% before and after)

The Science and Philosophies Behind the Somatica

Method

While the Somatica Method is a coaching and not a therapy method, many psychological theories inform its approach.

One of the main differences between the Somatica Method and traditional forms of therapy is its focus on putting the healing journey into the hands of the *client*, as opposed to the coach or therapist. For example, instead of just talking about their childhood as they normally would, we help them do a visualization where they move into the parental role with their own inner child. This approach creates empowerment and independence.

In addition to traditional psychological theories such as attachment and individuation, the Somatica Method also draws on somatic therapy modalities. When applying any of these in practice, the client becomes more empowered with the knowledge and practice of tools like self-regulation and attachment styles. They can function as a way to depersonalize what may have previously been seen as slights by their partner.

The Somatica Method also incorporates the history of research and practices around sexual arousal and healing - from Masters and Johnson [\[30\]](#) [\[31\]](#) to Jack Morin's cutting-edge research on the Erotic Mind [\[25\]](#), as well as research on shame and theories of gender expectations and socialization.

Following are explanations of these theories, and how they relate to and inform the Somatica Method.

1. Psychological Arousal Research: Jack Morin and Nancy Friday

An aspect of sexual connection most lacking in coaching and therapeutic interventions around sexual fulfillment is the understanding of psychological arousal. The Somatica Method sought to fill that gap and incorporate practical approaches to helping people discover what turns them on. Two theorists stood out as being most helpful in this field:

The first was Jack Morin, Ph. D. and author of “The Erotic Mind: Unlocking the Inner Sources of Passion and Fulfillment”^[25]. In the book, Dr. Morin presents his research on what he termed “peak sexual experiences” - or narratives that survey respondents identified as their most arousing sexual interactions.

The second theorist was Nancy Friday, whose books surveyed the changing landscape of women’s fantasies. In “My Secret Garden” (published in 1973)^[12] and “Women on Top” (1991) ^[13], Friday chronicled common female fantasies that surprised and titillated audiences, especially because they showed that women were not the non-sexual beings society tried to paint them as, and they had wild and varied fantasies.

Our work with clients, combined with our understanding of [character strategy](#), eventually led us to come to at times similar and different conclusions to Morin about what makes sex arousing. In response to this, we developed an original body of work on what we call [core desires](#). We have found that arousal emerges from fantasies people conjure up to soothe core childhood wounds, missing experiences, or trauma.

The process of developing this core desire can happen in a number of different ways. Perhaps they have fantasies about a person or experience that would soothe their hurts, or they see a character on TV that seems to offer the attention or care they lacked. Alternatively, they might see something or imagine something that reminds them of the wound or trauma - something that repeats it, but where they have choice or agency.

Eventually, these soothing or repetitive thoughts get paired with arousal or masturbation, and they start to create pathways in their brains around these arousing

stimuli. As they start to engage sexually with others or watch media like porn or romance movies, they will be most aroused and gravitate towards situations and imagery that lights up these well-worn pathways created and concretized in their childhood or teen years.

2. Somatic Therapy: Wilhelm Reich and Peter Levine

Somatic therapy is a form of body-centered therapy that looks at the connection of the mind, body, and emotions. It focuses on the importance of the body's role in holistic healing, and that the mind, emotions, and body are interconnected. It recognizes that trauma, stress, and other psychological issues can manifest in physical sensations and symptoms. Somatic therapists work with clients to increase their awareness of bodily sensations, explore the connections between physical and emotional experiences, and facilitate the release of stored tension or trauma.

Practitioners of somatic therapy address the split between body and mind. They believe mind and body are intimately connected, though not always in apparent ways. Thought, emotions, and sensations are all believed to be interconnected and influenced by one another.

Peter Levine is a psychotherapist and the creator of Somatic Experiencing - a well-known form of somatic trauma therapy [\[19\]](#). Dr. Levine is a great example of a practitioner whose trauma therapy methods have brought together mind and body, helping clients access and release trauma that got stuck in the body. They use techniques like breathwork, movement, the release of sound, and physical tools like pushing or punching to move emotions and trauma through the body.

While somatic therapists, coaches, yoga teachers, meditation teachers, and dance therapists routinely use somatic approaches in their work, most of them do not address sexuality.

Wilhelm Reich is one exception. Part of his theory [\[27\]](#) included the importance of what he called ‘orgastic potency’ - a belief that one way to get to full emotional release was through an uninhibited orgasm. He also used physical touch with his clients and worked with them in more interpersonal ways than his psychoanalytic predecessors.

The Somatica Method [integrates both mind and body](#), especially in the realm of pleasure and emotions. It helps expand client’s capacity for pleasure, experience emotional release and self-regulation, and teaches them to use the wisdom of the body in their day-to-day decision-making. Somatica uses touch-based tools to help clients learn through touch, sensuality, and erotic skills. Somatic tools are also used to map the physiological indicators of boundaries, triggers, excitement, anxiety, desires, and arousal.

3. Experiential Learning: David Kolb

Experiential learning is *learning by doing*, as opposed to just talking, memorizing, etc.

New pedagogical research shows that experiential learning is much more effective than didactic learning, where teachers give lessons to students who passively receive these lessons [\[26\]](#).

David Kolb postulated that experiential learning requires a concrete experience, reflection, abstract conceptualization, and then active experimentation [\[27\]](#). It can be accelerated with feedback and ongoing practice. Research has shown that experiential learning is not only helpful in retention, but also increases the likelihood that students gain the confidence to use their new-found skills in real-life situations [\[4\]](#).

The Somatica Method is based on the research that shows the importance of experiential learning in both mastery and confidence. Particularly in regards to learning in the realm of intimacy, a place to practice with a supportive and present teacher is essential. People who train in the Somatica Method learn practical, experiential exercises wherein the tools of intimacy are broken down into [learnable segments](#) and

taught through concrete, embodied practices. It also recommends time to debrief and reflect, conceptualizing what they have done, and then continue to experiment.

4. The Sociology of Gender: From John Money to Judith Butler

The sociological study of gender is quite broad - from John Money's original identification of gender roles [\[24\]](#), to Judith Butler's postmodern feminist deconstruction of gender ^[9].

In Somatica, there are a few main foundational lessons that are important when working with people in the realm of relationships and intimacy. Firstly, our socialized gender roles limit full emotional and sexual self-expression, regardless of where they lie along the gender spectrum. Thus, regardless of how a person currently identifies, we have all been socialized into certain ways of behaving and expressing, based on our assigned sex at birth.

Many sociological researchers have studied the phenomenon of gender socialization [\[32\]](#), and found that people who interact with children - whether they are family, medical professionals, teachers, peers, or strangers - reinforce gender norms by rewarding or punishing certain behaviors, based on what society defines as masculine or feminine. For example, people easily identified as boys or men are rewarded for acting strong and unemotional, while people easily identified as girls or women are rewarded for being pure and helpful. Also, everyone is expected to be heterosexual and are often punished if they are queer, trans or non-binary. People who do not fit neatly into gendered and heteronormative categories often experience violence, exclusion, or invisibility.

Being steeped in these socialized messages over a lifetime frequently causes people to feel ashamed of who they truly are. This creates a cycle of misunderstandings and shaming across gender lines. Fear of being punished or excluded negatively impacts sexual development and hinders empowered decision-making. At the same time, romanticized expectations around gender create unrealistic ideals that leave out the complexity of human needs and feelings.

Thus, part of the Somatica Method is about creating awareness and interventions that directly address gender socialization. It facilitates people becoming choiceful instead of feeling like they have to stick with the same scripts, allowing them to be more authentic in their self-expression.

5. Trauma: How it is Held in the Body, and Racialized Trauma: Resmaa Menakem and Gabor Maté

While many authors before him have written about the way trauma is held in the body, no author to date has described the experience of embodied trauma as viscerally and accurately as Resmaa Menakem. [\[23\]](#)

He talks specifically about trauma in the ways that racism impacts embodiment, as well as the primary and secondary effects of racialized trauma - how it is reproduced and handed down, and how it impacts every American, regardless of race. Importantly, he also points out that resilience is at the core of who we are, and that “healing qualities have been passed down to us alongside any forms of trauma.” He teaches us the importance of resilience and the embodied pathways to both individual and community resilience.

Another eloquent and insightful theorist in the realm of trauma is Gabor Maté. In the documentary “The Wisdom of Trauma” [\[5\]](#), he points out that it’s not the traumatic incident, but what happens inside of us as a result that defines trauma. Trauma fixes us at a point in time, and inhibits growth and development because we harden and act from a place of fear. He emphasizes the importance of a trauma-informed society that is not preoccupied with fixing problems, but with actually understanding the roots of trauma. In his book “In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts”, Maté talks about the way our society has completely misunderstood addiction and blamed it on drugs (the symptoms) as opposed to trauma (the cause) [\[22\]](#).

Somatica does not specifically offer trauma therapy - however, a large part of its focus is on [empowering people in the face of their trauma histories](#). To explain this more clearly:

trauma therapy is when a therapist uses techniques designed specifically for the treatment of trauma - such as SE or EMDR. Somatica, on the other hand, is a trauma-*informed* method - meaning it takes into account the unique needs of people who have a trauma history. It offers exercises to help them become more empowered in the face of their trauma by increasing self-awareness, and awareness of others in regards to trauma.

Embodied practices and visualizations help with self-regulation, as well as trigger identification and de-escalation to increase trauma resilience. We also deshamify the self-soothing practices and protective mechanisms that frequently arise as a result of trauma. In addition, Somatica assists clients with a trauma history to share their stories with loved ones vulnerably so they may get as much empathy and emotional support as possible. Because there is so much acceptance, support, and emotional awareness in the Somatica community, it is also a place to practice with community resilience.

The Somatica Method gives students and clients the experience of removing the shame that trauma may have been a shaping factor in some of their core sexual desires. Also, many traditional trauma therapies help with trauma resolution, but do not go as far as giving their clients a lasting reclamation of their sexual desire. Thus, we often work in concert with trauma therapists or see clients who have already done some trauma therapy and help them find their full experience of sexual self-expression. Trauma may not ever be fully resolved, but the client's and students' relationship to it is permanently de-shamified and accepted.

6. Attachment Theory, Practice, and Neuroscience: John Bowlby, Mary Ainsworth, Hazan and Shaver, Sue Johnson, and Daniel Siegel

While the early theory by John Bowlby ^[6] as well as research on this theory by Mary Ainsworth ^[3] found that children had particular attachment styles, later research on adult attachment showed that styles persisted throughout a person's lifetime.

In the 1980's, Cindy Hazan and Phillip Shaver began to research adult attachment and found there were a lot of similarities between the adult/child bond and the bond that forms in long-term relationships [\[14\]](#). At the same time Sue Johnson started bringing what had been learned about adult attachment into her therapeutic approach [\[15\]](#).

In the early 2000s, Daniel Siegel wrote about how advances in the neuroscience of development, especially longitudinal studies in the field of attachment [\[28\]](#), shed new light on how early experiences influence such fundamental processes as memory, emotion and the regulation of behavior. He looked at the development of the orbitofrontal cortex, which is dependent upon attachment experience for its growth and mediates emotionally-attuned communication, autonoetic consciousness, stimulus appraisal, and social cognition. Additionally, he wrote about memory, emotion, and the importance of interpersonal relationships in organizing the mind. [\[35\]](#)

We look at Somatica coaching as offering a healthy attachment relationship and helping adults do so with one another. As a practitioner, this means being present, loving, unconditional, and honest with our clients. It also requires that we have and communicate clear boundaries. Somatica uses verbal and physical exercises to increase people's sense of secure attachment, whether it be with their partner or their coach. Because attachment is so essential to people's well-being, having embodied experiences of secure attachment and sharing more of these experiences with loved ones and partners is an essential part of the foundation that people can build upon to have a more pleasure-filled life.

7. Individuation Theory: Carl Jung and Margaret Mahler

While attachment is key in people's ability to feel safe and learn new skills, we also are aware that individuation is an important part of adult relationships and the development of a strong and resilient sense of self.

Carl Jung introduced the idea of individuation [\[16\]](#). In Jungian terms, he saw individuation as the integration of the self as distinct from the collective. Jung felt

individuation was an important human urge - the urge towards self-realization - in the desire to become who we truly are.

Later Margaret Mahler studied individuation in the parent/child relationship [\[21\]](#), and found that individuation was an important step for children where they first realize that they are distinct from their parents and go through the process of separation. After realizing they are separate, they individuate - which to Mahler meant that the child establishes a sense of self.

In Somatica, we see both [attachment and individuation as important parts of a healthy adult relationship](#) and as two sides of the same coin. We do not believe one theory is the standard to which relationships should be held - pure individuation or pure attachment.

Since people are always in the dual process of trying to be themselves and to stay in connection with one another, they are always navigating this balance. We know that the greater the sense of secure attachment, the greater the chance someone will be able to experience full individuation (self-realization). We also know from the science of attachment, that the more someone feels ok to be themselves in a relationship, the more they will feel safe (secure) and want to stay in the relationship. Sadly, couples can often experience these two forces as being at odds with one another. We work hard in Somatica to help people be true to themselves while staying in connection.

8. Mindfulness-Based Therapy: Ron Kurtz' Hakomi Therapy, and Jon Eisman's 'Re-Creation of the Self'

Ron Kurtz's Hakomi is a mindfulness-based therapy that uses present, felt experiences in the body to bring people into connection with core material [\[18\]](#). When they are in connection with this core material, they are able to change mistaken beliefs and the negative habits that developed as a result of organizing around these mistaken beliefs. By deepening into awareness of these beliefs they can change them and shift old, unhelpful habits. They also teach their own updated version of character strategy as a

way to better understand patterns and habits that have developed out of particular wounds.

One of the early Hakomi teachers, Jon Eisman, also developed his own approach to understanding human behavior and how to support transformation [\[10\]](#). He called this method *Re-Creation of the Self*. A better name for it, however, might have been ‘Re-Constitution of the Self’ since the theory calls upon our innate knowledge that we are already whole, safe, loved, alive, connected, etc. The method brings us back to these truths when we are pulled away from them as a result of wounds that interrupt this deeper level of knowing.

The Somatica Method has incorporated its own version of mindfulness and embodied wisdom to help bring people back in contact with the deepest truth of who they are, how they want to connect, and what they want for themselves in their lives. Through breathwork, visualization, somatic awareness practices, and practices of embodied empathy, Somatica helps people listen to the truths that they already have inside of them. This helps them move beyond shame and all of the “shoulds” and shut downs that arise when we disconnect from those we love, trauma, and one-size-fits-all socialization.

9. Shame and Vulnerability: Brene Brown

As academics, researchers, and practitioners creating the Somatica Method, we knew that combating shame needed to be a central part of the method. We also realized the [importance of vulnerability to intimacy](#), empathy, and each person’s ability to express their deepest needs and desires. In Somatica, we think of ourselves as [ruthless deshamifiers](#) - identifying and weeding out shame at every turn, and helping people feel good enough about themselves and safe enough to share vulnerably with their loved ones.

No contemporary author and researcher has written quite so eloquently or thoroughly about the topic of shame and vulnerability than Brene Brown [\[7\]](#) [\[8\]](#). Her crusade to raise awareness of the pervasiveness and negative consequences of shame in people’s sense of

self has been invaluable to our students, and has helped them see the ways that people are constantly shaming one another about who they are and what they want.

As Somatica coaches, we are uniquely situated to help people overcome shame and express themselves more fully. We create a safe, loving, and unconditional space for our clients to explore and express their sexual desires and needs for love and connection, which helps them establish a solid foundation of self-love and self-acceptance. This groundwork creates resilience in the face of intimacy challenges, including the moments when their sexual and emotional needs go unmet or are shamed out in the world.

The Somatica Method teaches that shame inhibits people's full self-expression, limits their relationship choices, and stops our bodies natural ability to fully relax into and act in ways that are most likely to deepen and enhance pleasure. Because of this, [we teach multiple approaches to deshamifying](#) and celebrating our client's feelings, desires, and erotic self-expression. We help our clients communicate their own needs, feelings, and boundaries vulnerably and to stop shaming other people, instead noticing when those needs make them uncomfortable and working directly with the resulting discomfort.

10. Queer Theory: Michelle Foucault, Audre Lorde, and Judith Butler

Queer theory emerged in the late 20th century - and authors like Michelle Foucault ^[1] and Judith Butler ^[9] took apart the social construction of gender and sexuality with their writings.

Queer theory challenges the traditional binary categories of male and female and heterosexual and homosexual, instead recognizing a spectrum of identities and orientations. Overall, queer theory seeks to create a more inclusive and equitable society by challenging dominant narratives about gender and sexuality and promoting greater understanding and acceptance of diverse identities and experiences.

Authors like Audre Lorde spoke to the ways that our erotic desires were a source of our power and knowledge that had been robbed, particularly from people socialized as

women [\[20\]](#). In her book, *Uses of the Erotic*, Lorde writes: “We have been raised to fear the yes within ourselves, our deepest cravings. For the demands of our released expectations lead us inevitably into actions which will help bring our lives into accordance with our needs, our knowledge, our desires.”

The Somatica Method incorporates the tenets of queer theory to help people explore the wide variety of potential relationship structures, sexual practices, and sexual identities to see what best fits them. We offer an expanded menu of definitions of sex, and a wide variety of relationship structures so that individuals and couples can create the relational and sexual lives they are most comfortable with - whether they be asexual, bisexual, queer, heterosexual, cisgendered, transgender, monogamous, polyamorous, solo, monogamish, swingers, etc.

In the Somatica training, we introduce discussion around the large diversity of sexual desires and practices, including spiritual, romantic, passionate, and [kinky](#). Somatica is also imbued with the belief that listening to our inner voice of desire and pleasure reconnects us to our power and leads us to make the best choices for ourselves and our relationships.

11. Intersectionality: Kimberlé Crenshaw

Intersectionality is a pivotal concept coined by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw [\[33\]](#) that emphasizes the interconnected nature of various social identities and the unique experiences of individuals who belong to multiple marginalized groups. Crenshaw introduced this concept to highlight how systems of oppression, such as racism, sexism, and classism, do not operate in isolation but often intersect, resulting in complex and compounded forms of discrimination. In Somatica, we look at how intersectional identities [impact power dynamics in sexual and intimate relationships](#), recognizing that an individual's experiences cannot be understood fully without considering the various dimensions of their identity, privilege, and (dis)advantage.

Something Truly Unique, Built On a Strong Foundation

The most effective coaching practices are rooted in the scientific and philosophical foundations that have come before - and then adding something novel and visionary.

While the Somatica Method is drawing on established principles and techniques from psychology, neuroscience, philosophy, and other fields, it has also created an entirely unique and innovative process by converging them with novel approaches like practicing mutual vulnerability and uncovering core wounds and desires. The result is a coaching method that tailors its sessions to the specific needs of the client, helping them achieve their goals and reach their full potential.

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Danielle has published original research on **Orgasmic Birth** and is the **co-author** of three books: **Cockfidence**, **Making Love Real**, and **Coming Together**.



Celeste Hirschman, M.A. is the co-creator of the Somatica® Method, and the co-founder of the Somatica Institute.

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