



Instructing Group Classes, Individual Sessions and Home Practice

You may want to incorporate Clinical Somatics exercises into your current group classes. Or, you may want to teach group classes that are completely focused on Clinical Somatics. You may also want to offer individual sessions to your students, or incorporate Clinical Somatics exercises into your current one-on-one practice.

TIMING AND CONTENT OF GROUP CLASSES

The most important thing to remember when teaching group classes in Clinical Somatics is *don't rush it*. You may be surprised at how few exercises you will teach in a class when the pacing is done right! Your students should feel extremely relaxed during the class because of the slow pace and the gentle exercises. Dim the lights or turn them off completely, encourage your students to close their eyes, and remember to let your own energy and voice be relaxed.

Here is an example of a one-hour group class:

Standing Awareness: 5 minutes (mandatory in every class)
Teach Lower Belly Breathing and the Arch & Flatten: 10-15 minutes (mandatory in every class)
Teach the Back Lift: 15-20 minutes
Teach the Arch & Curl: 5-7 minutes
Teach the Iliopsoas Release: 5-7 minutes
Rest lying down with both legs extended: 2 minutes (highly recommended)
Standing Awareness: 5 minutes (mandatory in every class)

I recommend making a list of how long it typically takes you to teach each exercise. You can use my video demos as a guide. Then when you are putting together classes, it will be easy for you to figure out proper pacing. You must begin every class with Standing Awareness, Lower Belly Breathing, and the Arch & Flatten. You must end every class with Standing Awareness.

When putting together a class, ask yourself:

Do the exercises work with the core of the body and then move outward?

Is there a theme to the exercises? For example, the sequence of exercises in the class described above work with the forward and backward tilting of the pelvis.

Is there too much of one thing? Will the students get tired working with a certain area of the body for too long?

Do the students change position at least twice, so that they don't get tired of lying on just their back?

TIMING AND CONTENT OF INDIVIDUAL SESSIONS

I recommend that your first session with a new client be 75-90 minutes long, and subsequent sessions be 60 minutes long. You should allow at least one week in between sessions in order for your student to practice the exercises at home and begin feeling changes.

The timing of your first session should look like this:

Student Assessment: 15-30 minutes

Standing Awareness and observations: 5 minutes

Teach Lower Belly Breathing and Arch & Flatten: 15 minutes

Teach second exercise: 10 minutes

Teach third exercise: 10 minutes

Standing Awareness and observations: 5 minutes

Session wrap-up – Give student handouts, discuss home practice, schedule next session and collect payment: 15 minutes

The timing of your subsequent sessions should look like this:

Catch-up – Discuss how the student is feeling and how their home practice is going: 5 minutes

Standing Awareness and observations: 5 minutes

Practice Lower Belly Breathing and Arch & Flatten: 5 minutes

Teach first new exercise: 10 minutes

Teach second new exercise: 10 minutes

Teach third new exercise: 10 minutes

Standing Awareness and observations: 5 minutes

Session wrap-up – Give student handouts, discuss home practice, schedule next session and collect payment: 10 minutes

Depending on how your student's home practice is going, you may choose to not teach three new exercises, and instead spend time reviewing and practicing some of the exercises that they have already learned. Do not feel pressured to teach your student three new exercises at every session.

Remember to never overload your student with new exercises or new information. Less is more! They will benefit more from practicing a few exercises correctly than practicing many exercises and feeling rushed or confused. Make sure your student is feeling completely comfortable with how to do each exercise and that they are feeling the benefits of each exercise before teaching anything new.

Content of Individual Sessions

An individual session with your student serves two purposes. First, it teaches them exercises that they can practice at home on a daily basis so that they can progress on their own. Second, it gives them the experience of practicing a short series of exercises that addresses their pain and conditions. When they stand up at the end of their session, they will feel the effects of what they have just learned. These new sensations will motivate them to practice the exercises on their own at home.

So, as you are teaching your student the exercises, remember that you're not just teaching them so that your student understands how to do them and can do them at home. You are teaching the exercises and having your student practice them several times so that your student fully experiences the effects of the exercises. Do not rush through a session in order to teach your student more new exercises! Your student will benefit more from taking the time to learn one new exercise, and practice and experience it fully, than quickly learning two new exercises and not having the time to experience how the exercises feel.

The first exercise that you should teach each new client is Lower Belly Breathing and the Arch & Flatten. In subsequent sessions, you should always begin by practicing the breathing and Arch & Flatten for several minutes as a warm-up for the session.

The other exercises that you teach your student should be based on the pain and conditions they are experiencing. You always want to work with the core of the body and then move outward. I recommend that the Back Lift, Arch & Curl and Side Curl be the second, third and fourth exercises that you teach your student. You should teach them in the order that makes the most sense for your student. If they are in Green Light Posture, start by teaching them the Back Lift. If they are in Red Light Posture, teach the Arch & Curl first. If they are in Trauma Reflex Posture, teach the Side Curl first.

After you have taught your student these first four exercises, you can proceed to teach the rest of the exercises in the order that you see fit. I do recommend teaching the Diagonal Curl and the Hip Rotator Releases before the Washcloth, as the Diagonal Curl and Hip Rotator Releases will prepare your student for the Washcloth.

The Iliopsoas Release is a demanding movement for the iliopsoas, and it should not be taught in the first session. The student should begin working with their core muscles in a more gentle way (with the Arch & Flatten, Arch & Curl, and Back Lift) before doing the Iliopsoas Release.

You can teach Proprioceptive Exercise 1 anytime after you have taught the Arch & Flatten. You can teach Proprioceptive Exercise 2 anytime after you have taught the Side Curl. If your student has a significant postural issue, consider teaching a proprioceptive exercise in the first session. For example, the exercises you teach in your first session with a student who has scoliosis might be the Arch & Flatten, Side Curl, and Proprioceptive Exercise 2.

INSTRUCTING HOME PRACTICE

You must communicate to your students the importance of practicing the exercises at home every day. You could be the best Clinical Somatics instructor in the world, but if your students do not practice the exercises on their own at home, they will not make progress.

The following “**How to get the most out of practicing Clinical Somatics exercises**” will be given to you as a PDF when you complete this certification course, and I recommend handing it out to all your students or creating your own version. When you complete this course you will also receive handouts describing each exercise, and I strongly recommend either giving them to your students (*only after you have taught them each exercise*) or creating your own. Your students will not remember everything you teach them in a class or session; in fact, they will forget most of it by the time they get home! You must give them tools so that they can practice the exercises correctly on their own.

HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF PRACTICING CLINICAL SOMATICS EXERCISES

- 1. Set aside time and space to practice the exercises so that you don't feel rushed or distracted.** You should practice the exercises in a quiet, private space, especially while you are first learning them. If you live with people, ask them to not interrupt you while you are practicing the exercises. Focused attention is very important to the Clinical Somatics learning process.
- 2. Any amount of time is better than nothing.** If you only have five minutes, take the five minutes to focus completely on just one or two exercises. Ideally, you should spend at least twenty to thirty minutes every day doing the exercises. Some days you will have more time than others. Make the most of the time that you have by moving slowly and focusing completely on the movements that you have chosen to practice that day.
- 3. Find space in your home where you can lie on the floor, on a carpet or an exercise mat.** You need to be comfortable, but you also need to be able to get sensory feedback from a fairly firm surface. A bed is too soft, and a bare hardwood floor is too hard. Make sure you can stretch out your arms and legs without restriction.

4. Close your eyes and have no background noise while practicing the exercises. Closing your eyes removes all the visual information that your eyes automatically take in. Keeping your eyes closed allows your brain to focus completely on your internal sensations, making the learning process more effective. Likewise, practicing the exercises in silence removes all of the auditory information that your brain would otherwise have to process.

5. Clinical Somatics exercises should be performed as slowly as possible. The magic of these movements is in the slowness. The slower you move, the more effectively you can retrain your nervous system to release chronic muscle contraction and stand and move in a new way. Since the movements are so slow and gentle, you may not feel like you're doing very much – but when you stand up at the end of your practice, you'll feel the effects of what you've learned.

6. Remember that Clinical Somatics exercises are not stretches. You will be gently contracting and then very slowly releasing your muscles. It's important to remember that Clinical Somatics exercises are not stretches, and you should not be feeling the sensation of pulling in your muscles as you practice them.

7. Clinical Somatics exercises should be relaxing and comfortable, and they should not increase your pain. The movements are very slow and gentle. If you do experience any pain or discomfort, you can make the movement smaller, or you can adjust your position, or you can choose not to do the movement at all.

8. You're in charge! Pay attention to what you're feeling as you practice the exercises, and don't overdo it. Even though Clinical Somatics exercises are extremely slow and gentle, it is possible to do too much.

9. Don't do any intense or vigorous exercise right after practicing Clinical Somatics exercises. If you wish, you can take a slow, gentle walk afterward, and it will help you integrate everything you've just learned. But do not do any intense or vigorous exercise, because it will probably bring you right back into your old muscular habits.

10. Be aware of how other physical activities and therapies may be affecting you. You may want to cut back on or stop practices such as stretching, chiropractic, rolfing, deep tissue massage, and any other manipulative therapy while practicing Clinical Somatics. These therapies do not retrain the nervous system and can often cause muscles to become tighter, interfering with the Clinical Somatics learning process. Also, any intense workout will likely bring you back into your old muscular habits, undoing the learning you have gained through your Clinical Somatics practice. Slower, less intense workouts can give you the opportunity to integrate what you've learned from your Clinical Somatics exercises.

11. Always approach Clinical Somatics exercises in an exploratory manner. You will learn more effectively and make more progress if you do each movement as if it is the first time you have done it. Take the time to notice what you feel as you do each movement. Notice how it might feel different than it did the day before. If you do several repetitions, notice how each repetition feels different.

12. Enjoy the learning process – the journey – rather than focusing on the end goal. This can be the most difficult aspect of practicing Clinical Somatics. Improving the use of your body with Clinical Somatics is a life-long learning process. Some people feel the improvements that they seek very quickly, and for others it takes a longer time. The more chronic muscular tension you have, the longer it will take you to work through it. The process is much like peeling an onion. You will work through many “layers” – patterns of tension – along the way. You will have good days and bad days. Try to relax and enjoy the process!