



Professional Standards of Clinical Somatic Education

SCOPE OF PRACTICE

The purpose of Clinical Somatic Education is to empower students to assess and improve their musculoskeletal functioning. This is achieved through:

- Assessment of posture and movement, by both the instructor and the student.
- Exploration of learned muscular patterns through movement and proprioceptive exercises.
- Retraining of learned muscular patterns using pandiculation, integrative movements, and proprioceptive exercises.
- Verbal communication with and guidance from the instructor; touch and visual demonstration are used sparingly in order to allow students to have their own experience of the movements.

These methods allow students to become aware of their deeply learned muscular patterns, and to engage in the process of changing them. SMC® Certified Exercise Instructors teach students how to become the experts in their own musculoskeletal functioning.

Clinical Somatic Education is often used to relieve chronic musculoskeletal pain, but it can also be used to:

- release chronic muscle tension
- improve posture
- enhance athletic performance
- improve flexibility and range of motion
- prevent injuries
- improve balance
- reduce stress
- improve sleep
- improve breathing

Clinical Somatic Education can be taught in individual sessions and in group class settings. It is always practiced fully clothed.

The professional practice of Clinical Somatic Education involves coaching students on how their daily activities and habits may be contributing to their pain or dysfunction. However, Clinical Somatic Education does *not* include:

- psychotherapy (when appropriate, a Clinical Somatics instructor may recommend that a student seek out talk therapy to address issues related to their bodily pain)
- physical therapy
- massage therapy
- diagnosis of medical conditions (when appropriate, a Clinical Somatics instructor may recommend that a student visit their doctor to pursue a diagnosis or treatment)
- prescription of medications or advice on taking medications

CORE COMPETENCIES

SMC® Certified Exercise Instructors must demonstrate the following professional competencies:

1. Describe and demonstrate the movement principles of Clinical Somatic Education.
2. Articulate observations of their student's posture and movement.
3. Teach their student movements that allow them to explore and retrain their own muscular patterns.
4. Guide the student through proprioceptive explorations in order to improve their internal awareness and ability to assess and teach themselves.
5. Teach the student how to approach and develop their own regular home practice of Clinical Somatics exercises.
6. Demonstrate skillful use of verbal instruction in order to clearly guide their student through a private session or group class.
7. Demonstrate the ability to use touch or visual demonstration only when needed.

STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

Standard 1: Education and Training

In the interest of the public and the profession of somatic education as a whole, SMC® Certified Exercise Instructors only practice what they have been trained and certified to teach.

Standard 2: Practitioner Responsibilities

In their professional role, SMC® Certified Exercise Instructors shall:

1. Be knowledgeable of the Scope of Practice and practice within those limitations.
2. Develop a clear agreement with their students about the nature and scope of their work together, particularly when they have professional practices outside of Clinical Somatic Education.
3. Obtain informed written consent from students prior to providing services.
4. Display and/or discuss schedule of fees in advance of the session, to ensure that the student clearly understands the cost of services.
5. Recognize their personal limitations as practitioners and make referrals to other professionals when appropriate.
6. Seek professional supervision or mentoring when needed.
7. Engage in ongoing professional development.
8. Maintain adequate and confidential notes for each student session.
9. Recognize the value of constructive feedback from students in sessions and classes, and strive to work professionally, self-critically, and creatively.
10. Provide a safe physical setting for student sessions and classes that meets all applicable legal requirements for health and safety.
11. Use standard precautions to ensure professional hygienic practices, and maintain an appropriate level of personal hygiene.
12. Maintain adequate and customary liability insurance.

Standard 3: Self-representation as a Professional

To accurately represent their professional work, SMC® Certified Exercise Instructors shall:

1. Honestly represent all professional qualifications and affiliations.
2. Promote their business with integrity and avoid potential and actual conflicts of interest.
3. Accurately and truthfully inform the public of the types of services provided in advertising and marketing, and refrain from misrepresenting their fees, credentials, training, skillset, or results.
4. Not use sensational, sexual, culturally-appropriated or provocative language or images to promote their business.

Standard 4: Professional Relationships with Clients

SMC® Certified Exercise Instructors are responsible for maintaining an appropriate professional relationship with students. This includes awareness of power dynamics, emotional and sexual boundaries, and creating and maintaining safety. In their professional practice, SMC® Certified Exercise Instructors shall:

1. Respect that a student's experience of living in their body may vary dramatically from the practitioner's.
2. Refrain from being discriminatory toward students.
3. Avoid the exploitation of the trust and dependency of students.
4. Refrain from any behavior that demeans or disempowers students.
5. Understand that sexual intimacy is inappropriate, as is the use of touch on any part of the student's body for which they do not provide consent.
6. Refrain from sexual involvement with current students, even if the student initiates or consents to the involvement.
7. Comply with all local, regional, and national laws regarding sexual harassment.

Standard 5: Student – Practitioner Confidentiality

SMC® Certified Exercise Instructors shall respect the confidentiality of student information and safeguard all records. In their professional role, the instructor shall:

1. Protect the student's identity and pertinent information in conversations, written communications, and all other contexts unless requested by the student in writing, medically necessary, or mandated by law.
2. Protect the interests of students who are minors or who are unable to give voluntary consent by securing permission from an appropriate third party or guardian.
3. Solicit only information that is relevant to the professional student/practitioner relationship.

CODE OF ETHICS

A certified SMC® Certified Exercise Instructors should adhere to the following principles:

- Demonstrate a commitment to professional excellence and the highest quality of services.
- Present a professional and honest image when dealing with the public.
- Accept responsibility for creating the conditions that promote and protect the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of clients and students.
- Respect that the body, mind, emotions, and spirit are interrelated, and that explorations of the physical body using Clinical Somatics exercises may cause students to experience thoughts and emotions that are closely tied to their patterns of muscle tension.
- Value the inherent dignity and worth of each person by not discriminating or behaving in any prejudicial manner with clients and/or colleagues.