A SOMATIC HANDBOOK

# PLEASURE IS THE MEASURE

Sexual confidence and desire are not skills you push toward, they are what returns when the body feels safe enough to feel. These are somatic practices for building that safety, first alone, then with a partner if you have one.

## THREE PRINCIPLES

These hold across every practice on the next page, and if you skip them, the practices just become another performance demand.

### 01 Sensation before performance

The goal of every practice here is felt experience, and arousal, orgasm, and desire are byproducts of a body that trusts what is happening, never the target.

### 02 Slowness as sovereignty

Every practice is done more slowly than feels natural at first, because slowness is the treatment, and rushing only recreates the pattern the practices are undoing.

### 03 Numbness is data

If a part of the body goes quiet during a practice, that is information about where care and attention are needed, a message that deserves listening.

## BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- Go only as far as feels genuinely okay. If a practice brings up panic, numbness, or flooding, stop and come back to something grounding.
- There is no timeline. Some of these take weeks to feel different, and that slowness is the practice working, not you failing.
- If your body keeps saying no, that is worth exploring with a therapist rather than pushing past.

DRAWN FROM

A somatic, decolonial frame: Kelsey Blackwell's ***Decolonizing the Body***, Audre Lorde's ***Uses of the Erotic***, and the work of Emily Nagoski, Lori Brotto, and adrienne maree brown. The through-line is simple, pleasure is the reliable signal your body was built to send you.

## PRACTICES YOU CAN DO ALONE

Start here. Solo practice restores the pleasure signal before any partnered work has to hold it.

### The Pleasure Inventory (7 days)

Each day, write down three moments of pleasure that had nothing to do with sex, like warm water, sunlight on skin, food temperature, a favorite fabric, a song, a stretch. This rebuilds the general pleasure signal before you apply it to anything erotic.

### 20-minute body scan, no goal

Lie down, breathe, and move your attention slowly from feet to head, noticing temperature, tension, the texture of clothing on skin, the movement of breath. When the mind pulls toward "am I doing this right," return to the next body location.

### Erotic mapping in the wild

For two weeks, notice where anything like aliveness, charge, or erotic attention shows up unprompted, in a song, a memory, a stranger, a phrase in a book. Write down what you noticed and where in the body you felt it, with no pressure to act on any of it.

### Solo body time, no orgasm goal

Twenty minutes touching your own body, skin, hair, arms, belly, thighs, with the explicit rule that it does not lead anywhere. Notice what wants more attention and what stays quiet, and let both be welcome.

### Map your brakes

Journal three prompts: What voices tell me I shouldn't want what I want? What did I inherit about pleasure, silence, and permission? What situations put my body on guard, even in safe company? Seeing the brakes clearly is often the biggest single shift.

## PRACTICES WITH A PARTNER

Introduce these once the solo practices have started to settle. Bring them in one at a time.

### Yes / Maybe / No, done separately first

Each partner fills out an intimacy menu privately before comparing notes. Doing it alone lets honest answers surface before the conversation, and prevents shaping your answers around what you sense the other person wants.

### Non-goal touch, 20 minutes

Take turns as toucher and receiver, with three rules: no genital touch, no performance feedback, no goal. Every minute or so, the receiver names one specific sensation out loud ("warm hands," "my shoulder just softened"), then you switch.

### Regulate together before sexual contact

Two to five minutes of shared regulation before any erotic contact, like breathing together, a hand resting on the other's back, eye contact if that feels right. The body reads the nervous system of the partner it is with, so anchor together first.

### One-sensation practice during erotic contact

Agree that either of you can pause every few minutes to name one specific sensation you are having. This trains staying with the body instead of monitoring performance, and the pause itself often deepens what comes next.

### Aftercare check-in (two minutes)

After the encounter, whatever it was, each of you names one thing that felt good and one thing you would want more or less of next time. This turns each encounter into information, so nothing has to be a verdict.

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**Coming home to the body is not a technique.** It is a long practice of showing up for what your body is telling you, again and again. If a practice above does not fit, listen to what your body is saying about that too, since that message is part of the work.

*Draws on Kelsey Blackwell (Decolonizing the Body), Audre Lorde's writing on the erotic, Dr. Emily Nagoski, and Dr. Lori Brotto. My Mental Climb is not affiliated with these authors.*

Educational only, not therapy.