

21 Day Tune-Up: Day 1 - Introduction to Basic Orienting

Hello everyone. It's Irene here, and welcome to this introductory audio for basic orienting. This is something that forms, in many ways, the bedrock, the foundation of this work, of nervous system health restoring more regulation to our nervous system growing capacity. In a pure definition sense, orienting, orienting is to connect with that which is outside of us. And typically, it's used to mean visual connections. So, to see, to look, to orient over there, or down there, or up over there. We can also orient with other senses. If you've ever walked down a street around dinnertime, you might smell someone cooking something in their kitchen, the waft of cooking onions or the cake being baked or something yummy. And you know when you have that sensory input it can make you hungry, it might make you salivate. Our orienting can also be auditory. Again, I'll use the example of being outside. You might hear cars, you might hear people talking, you might hear birds chirping and singing. You might hear the rain falling on your umbrella.

And then there would be a tactile or a kinesthetic capacity you sense, to feel the texture of your pants, or the texture of a bar of soap. Many, many ways that we can find examples of orienting to the outside world with all of our senses. And you will explore some of the lessons, because there's more than one for this basic orienting introduction, but for the sake of this introductory audio, I'm going to speak more specifically to orienting with our visual senses, with our eyes. And also know that our other senses can blend in with this.

The two types of orienting that I will bring to your attention. One is exploratory, to explore, to see, to take in maybe what is around you. This is the way in which you will learn through the neurosensory exercises of orienting. I will be inviting you to take in the environment with curiosity, with interest. That's exploratory orienting. The other type of orienting is defensive orienting, and it means what it sounds like. So, to defend obviously means to protect, it also might mean to go into these survival impulses that you will be learning about. We might orient and defend

such that we go into fight mode. We might protect, we might raise our arms up over our head to protect our head from say a ball coming at us, but we do that because we orient and we see the ball coming at us, for example.

So, we defend, we orient and there's a defensive action to it, which is protective. We want to cover our head if that's coming at us. We could bring in a little bit of this auditory orienting, just to give you an example. We might be walking down the street and we hear really loud sirens from maybe an ambulance, or a police car coming down, and I know my preference when I start to hear those coming closer, my defensive orienting strategy to that sound is to cover my ears, or if I'm driving in my car, I will roll up the windows if they're open. So defensive orienting is also protective. It's protecting us from something that could potentially be harmful. And I'll just give you one more example, of maybe the scent. This is why we need our senses.

There might be a propane leak or a gas leak, or maybe we've spilled something that's not very good for us, a chemical, paint thinner, whatever it might be. And that scent gives us a defensive reaction that something is not right. So we need these defensive orienting responses. No doubt you're here, because you know you want to heal stuff from the past. And you might have memory, or maybe you don't, doesn't matter, of, you might know that there are moments in your past where there was a defense, there was a defensive orienting response, and that's good. And we don't want to stay stuck in those defensive orienting responses. They're important when we need them, just like I gave you the examples, but sometimes our system will keep them and they'll be our way of just being, and our system might be over reactive, or it might be overly vigilant to the external world in a way that takes up a lot of energy.

There is sometimes a constant defense in a person's system looking for danger. That would be defensive orienting that is there 24/7, and it changes when we know we're in a safer environment, for example, and our system comes down, but I'm going to keep it simple for now. So that bit is about the defensive orienting

strategies that our system has and needs for protection, but we don't want to keep them on when the threat, the stress is no longer present. As we know, as I just mentioned, we can keep those defenses on for years, decades.

And so, one of the ways we work with those defensive orienting responses is to bring a little bit of counter to that, which would be exploratory orienting, to find ways to explore our environment. To have interest in things that might even be very, very neutral. It could be a box of Kleenex on the table. It could be just looking out the window and seeing the wind in the trees. It could be orienting to the smells as I mentioned, that are coming from the cup of tea that we have in our hands. That would be more of a sensory smell called olfactory orienting.

Music, we might orient to some music that is beautiful and soothes us. That is exploratory. And then, of course, visual, we might see our pets or something funny that's happening on a show that we're watching, or maybe it is looking at the sky or being at the beach or being in nature. So, there's really no rules to what we orient to and what is exploratory orienting. And as I mentioned, it can be as simple as seeing something and seeing that it's neutral. That glass of water is just sitting there, and I'm seeing it, I'm being interested in the curves of it, the clear water, the rim of the glass. I say that because I have a glass of water right next to me, it's in a Mason jar.

And interestingly enough, I use this jar every day usually to drink water or tea out of, and I'm actually seeing a little bit of a pattern that I've never actually seen, and I'm being completely honest here as I say this, and it's drawing me in a little bit and I'm wondering what is that? It looks like a pattern of grapes, because these jars are usually used for making preserves, jam, canning, tomatoes, et cetera. So, I give you that little idea just to let you know that exploratory orienting can be really neutral and it can actually be the neutral orienting strategies of exploration that can be the most powerful.

And as soon as we have that curiosity driving our brain and our nervous system, and soon you will experience how that might come into the body and how you feel that internally, this helps to bring the nervous system out of the defensive orienting pieces. It helps to co-opt us out of the defense and into exploratory. So, with that said, I invite you to start the lessons for basic orienting and go into them with a very beginner's mind. Go into them with a sense of curiosity and that you're really trying something for the first time. And also know that there can be, as we start to orient with exploration, it can bring us into feeling our patterns of defensive orienting, and that's good, because sometimes we don't know they're there.

So, by practicing with exploratory, it can help us find the patterns, how we're wired maybe to not explore, but to put ourselves into a defensive style. And then, of course, that is an entry way into sensing our old trapped survival stresses. And then as we work through the remainder of these lessons in this course, you will learn other exercises, other strategies, other tools to be with those pieces that start to arise, if they do. Keep learning, keep noticing, and enjoy learning how to orient and noticing what comes of it.