



Dawn Bennett

✉ Dawn@touchremedies.com

☎ +1-651-401-6131

Strategizing Your Intention and Safety

(From Chapter Two of *The Touch Crisis: Navigating the Tricky Terrain of Bringing Healthy Touch Back To Our Culture* by Dawn Bennett)

As a reminder, safety is often experienced on a spectrum, rather than just existing or not. We experience it in physical, mental, and emotional spheres, and we often use our conditioning, observations, and gut feelings to determine where on the spectrum we are—from life-threatening danger to complete safety.

The point is, safety is not static. It is subject to change based on a multitude of factors. These exercises are intended to help you find your own sense of intention and safety around touch. After all, the more we understand what we enjoy and what makes us feel safe in our own world, we have an easier time finding boundaries and communicating to others.

Exercises to Develop Your Safety and Intention

Exercise 1: Self-hugs

Hug yourself. Right now. Wrap your arms around yourself, and hold them there. How does that feel to give yourself comfort and touch? How can you sink into it and make it feel better for you? If you relax your shoulders, allow your arms to soften, sit in a different position—how can this moment of self-care and self-love nurture you?

If you resist giving yourself a hug, why? Some people have learned it's wrong to love and nurture self. Or that it's weak to nurture oneself. Perhaps there's an underlying sense that we don't deserve to love ourselves, or that love comes only from the outside.

In my opinion, we must be able to respect and care for, and even love ourselves before we can truly accept care and love from others. If we don't appreciate ourselves, outside affection will only be a band-aid, temporary relief, for what we need as humans, including a sense of belonging. Self-love is a lifelong process for some, but taking the first steps, at least to self-respect and acceptance, can bring us a long way in creating safety for ourselves in the world.

Exercise 2: Inanimate Objects

Grab an inanimate object nearby that you can hold in your hand, preferably one with multiple textures or surfaces (i.e. a pencil, a rock, a calculator, your watch, etc.). Get relaxed and



Dawn Bennett

✉ Dawn@touchremedies.com

☎ +1-651-401-6131

comfortable, close your eyes, and really feel the object in your hand. Notice its temperature, texture, weight. How does it feel when you touch it? Notice the sensations in your hands and in your body. Do you feel more safe or comfortable using one object over another? For example, does working with something soft or hard, or something light or heavy, create more of a sensation of safety or comfort for you?

Can you tune into the sensations of the clothes you are wearing? What does the fabric feel like on your skin? Is it rough, soft, tight, tickling, or comforting?

Now play with feeling something larger. Perhaps an object you can cuddle with, put on your lap, or wrap around you. Ideas include a stone, a book, a blanket, a pillow, a warm cup of tea, or a laptop case. Can you really tune into the sensation in your body as it contacts this object?

Exercise 3: Animals

For many people, animals are a great transition into the world of touch. If you are not ready to expand your touch with people (or even if you are), start by finding an animal you can touch, whether it be a dog, cat, or bird. If you don't have one, connect with a friend's pet or find a nearby shelter and find an animal you would like to interact with. Often you can take them into rooms or take them for walks. Not only can it be great for the animals who are lacking in touch, but it is a safer way for you to have time to be in tune with your own needs, quality of touch, and to play with different intentions of touch.

Most domestic pets, unless they have a history of abuse or have been trained to tolerate more than they desire, are also masters of consent. No matter what kind of unconditional love they have for you, if they don't want you to touch them, they will stay out of reach. If you aren't touching them attentively or as they desire, they will either nudge you to get your attention, start moving around to help you find "the spot," or just get up and leave.

Once you have your animal with you, observe him/her, as well as how you feel in your own body. When you are clear, move yourself in to a position where you can interact with and touch him/her. Some animals may not give you time to tune in, and will instead bombard you with a demand for attention, but feel into that as well. What is it like for you in your mind and body when the animal demands a certain type of touch from you? What feels safe for you? What positions or interactions with the animal feel better for both you and the animal? For example, if you were to put your face in its face, would that feel okay for you and the animal?

If the animal doesn't want touch, you get to practice honoring that the animal is doing what it needs for itself in that moment. Maybe it is scared, tired, hungry, overstimulated, or lonely. Maybe it hasn't had a lot of touch and doesn't know what to make of it yet. Maybe it has some trust issues. Be patient and observe your own internal sensations and feelings, as well as what your brain is telling you. This alone can teach you a lot about your own fears, concerns, self-



Dawn Bennett

✉ *Dawn@touchremedies.com*

☎ *+1-651-401-6131*

judgments, and patterns of being. Do these feelings and sensations resonate with other situations in the past?

The level of awareness you build through these exercises will help you begin to find your own sense of safety and begin setting intentions for more healthy touch in your life.