Using our touchstones for

empathic good

RELATIONSHIPS

- Relationships give life - but can also destroy
- Humans are creative in relating - and not relating
- ‘the therapy relationship...makes substantial and consistent contributions to psychotherapy outcome, independent of the specific type of treatment.”

(American Psychological Association Steering Committee, 2002: 441)

Working at Relational Depth in Counselling & Psychotherapy - Mearns & Cooper, 2005

RELATIONAL DEPTH

"A form of encounter in which therapist and client experience profound feelings of contact and engagement with each other, and in which the client has an opportunity to explore whatever is experienced as fundamental to her or his existence." - Mearns & Cooper, 2005

Working at Relational Depth in Counselling & Psychotherapy - Mearns & Cooper, 2005

Facilitating a meeting at relational depth

- Encounter, not invasion (knocking on the door)
- Letting go of aims, theories, techniques
- ‘Holistic’ listening that ‘breathes in the client’s totality’
- True safety (appropriate boundaries but also checking for incongruence, especially in cultures where it’s the norm)
- Core conditions: **Empathy**, Unconditional Positive Regard (valuing, non-judgemental, accepting), Congruence (real, genuine, open)

Working at Relational Depth in Counselling & Psychotherapy - Mearns & Cooper, 2005

EMPATHY & TOUCHSTONES

- One way to enhance our capacity to relate at depth is to **identify and reflect** on our own 'existential touchstones' (Mearns & Cooper, 2005)

- Experiences in life which have been highly significant for each of us and have deeply affected us in some way (good, bad or otherwise)

- These experiences help us to form a wider range of relationships, with a deeper empathic quality - we enter our own ‘depths’ to meet clients in theirs (empathic ‘fuel’)

Working at Relational Depth in Counselling & Psychotherapy - Mearns & Cooper, 2005

WHAT IS EMPATHY?

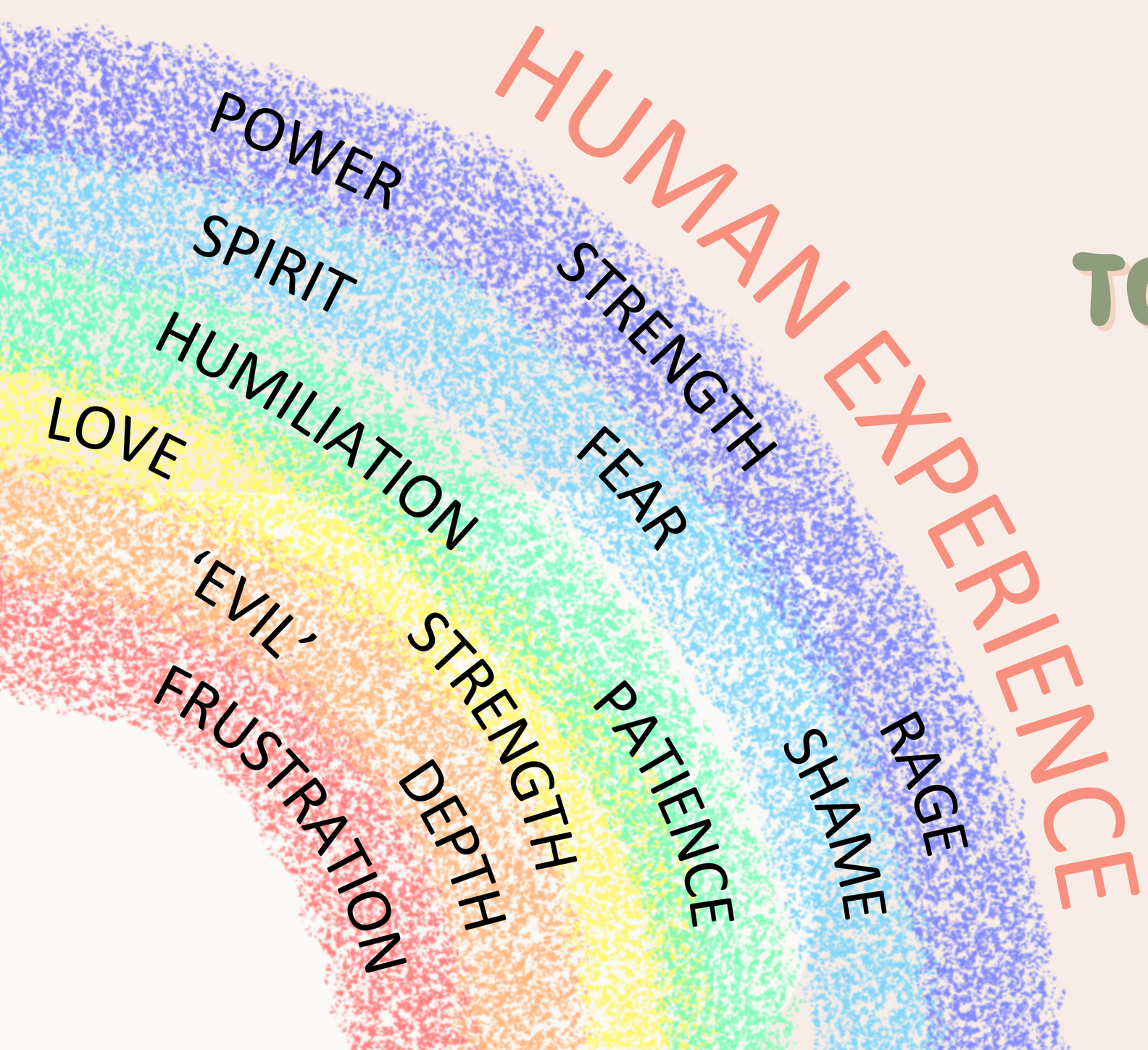
“To sense the client’s private world as if it were your own, but without ever losing the “as if” quality — this is empathy, and this seems essential to therapy. To sense the client’s anger, fear, or confusion **as if were your own**, yet without your own anger, fear, or confusion getting bound up in it, is the condition we are endeavouring to describe.” (emphasis mine)

Carl Rogers, Significant Learnings in Therapy and Education, Page 284

WHAT IS EMPATHY CONT..

- Seeing into the windows of the client's soul
- Walking into the same room as the client and really knowing that you are both in the same place, even though you have walked in through different doors
- Responding to 'the core of the client from the core of oneself' (Peter Schmid 2002)

Working at Relational Depth in Counselling & Psychotherapy - Mearns & Cooper, 2005



LESLEY'S TOUCHSTONES

from Working at Relational
Depth in Counselling
& Psychotherapy
- Mearns & Cooper, 2005

"What is most personal is most universal."
Carl Rogers - On Becoming a Person

Confusion

Misunderstood

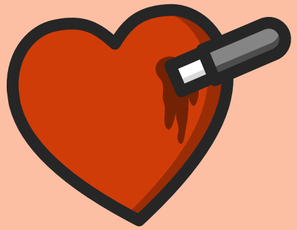
Broken heart

Resilience
& growth

Love

Willing to fight

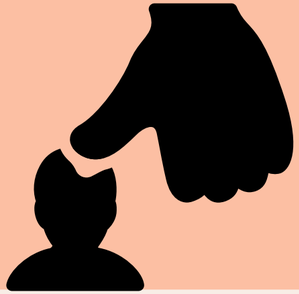
Death &
Death wish



Betrayed

Body
turns on you

Trapped



Injustice

Horror/terror

Self loathing/ disgust

Defeated

Fatigue

Endurance

Rage

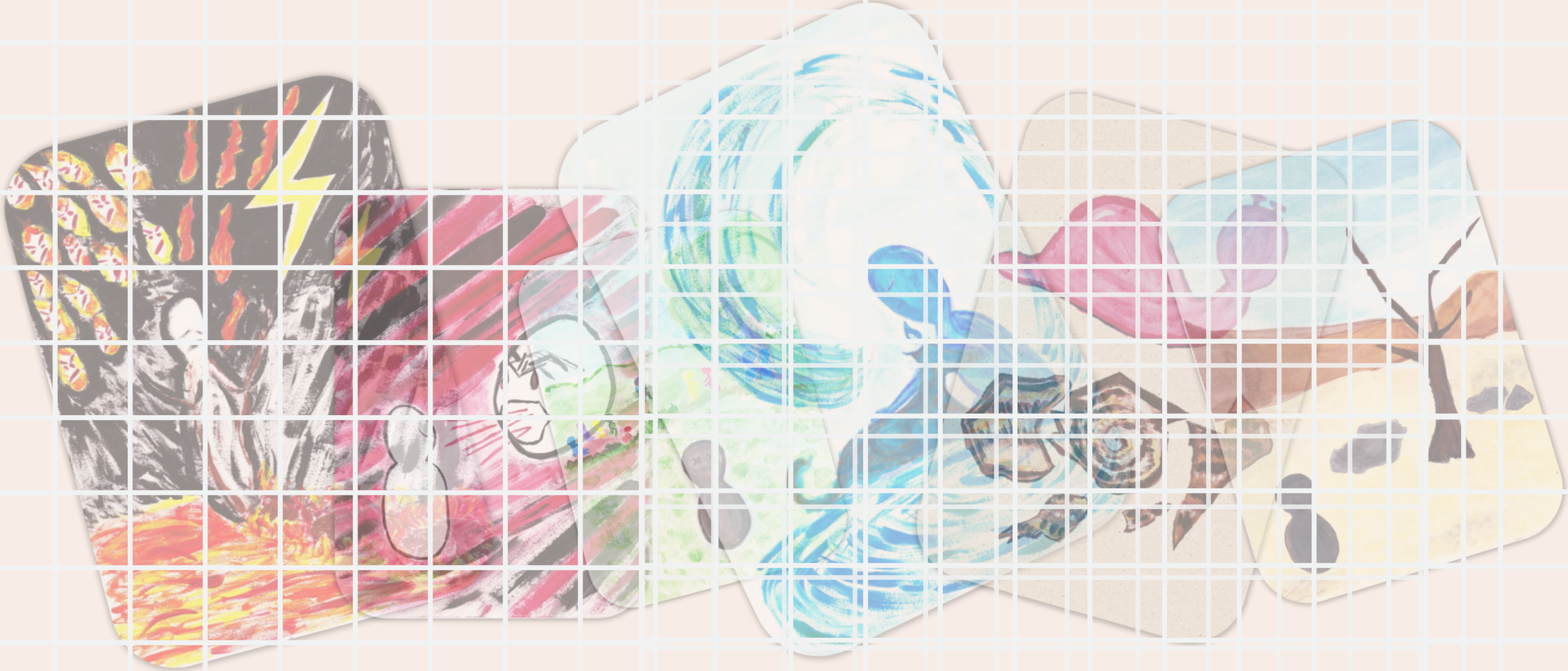
Patience

Grief

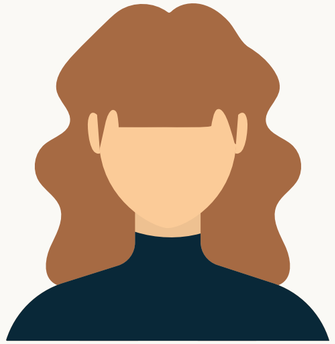
Self doubt

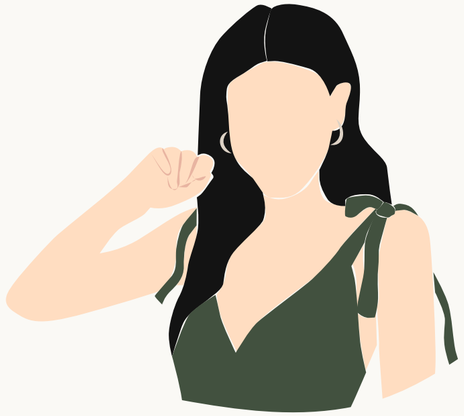
Loyalty

?



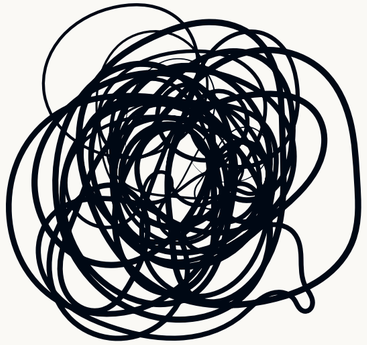
EXPRESSING TOUCHSTONES WITH CLIENTS

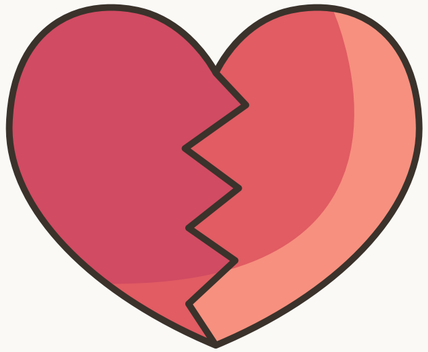




What Do I Disclose?

TOUCHSTONES & CLIENTS

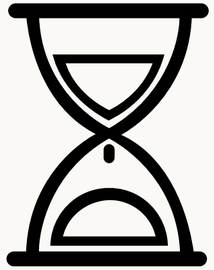


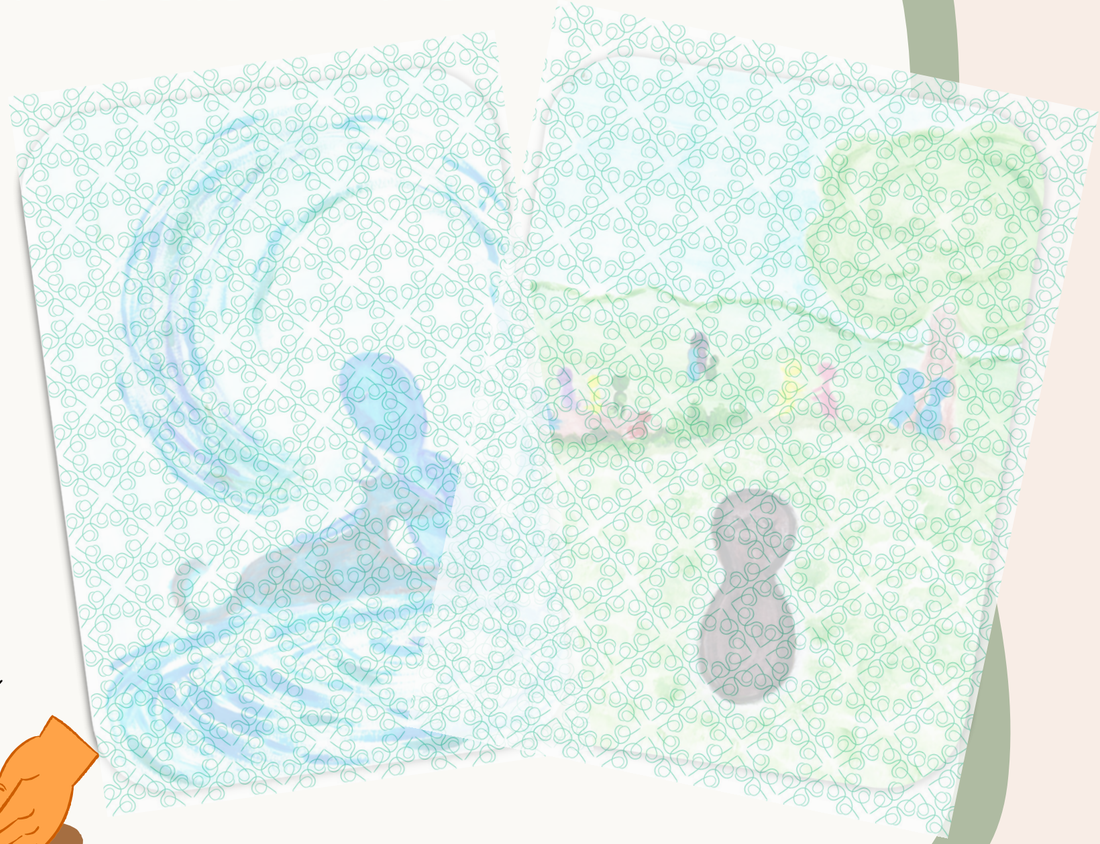


TOUCHSTONES & CLIENTS

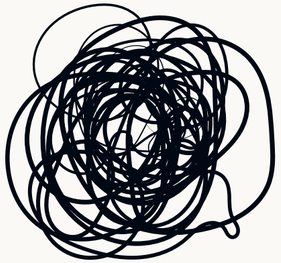
TOUCHSTONES & CLIENTS

'Rick'





TOUCHSTONES & CLIENTS



REFLECTING ON OWN TOUCHSTONES

- talk in 2s or 3s, sharing touchstones perhaps!
- journal/draw your touchstones
- reflect on them in a way that's good for you

DISCUSSION/JOURNAL PROMPTS:

Consider moments of relational depth, could you feel your own touchstones?

which touchstones are in easy reach/strongest?

which touchstones are difficult to find/go to?

Which touchstones have you gained through your clients?