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Working with Gestalt in the Counselling Room – Training Video

deeprelease.org.uk

Deep Release training counselling

Conference: The Healing Dance: TA & Gestalt Together

April 24 @ 4:00 pm - April 26 @ 3:00 pm

Gestalt recognises that we can become caught in familiar ways of thinking and being that no longer serve us.

Gestalt therapy supports us to bring these patterns into awareness, so that we can loosen their grip and choose to live a freer, more authentic life.

Organismic Self-Regulation

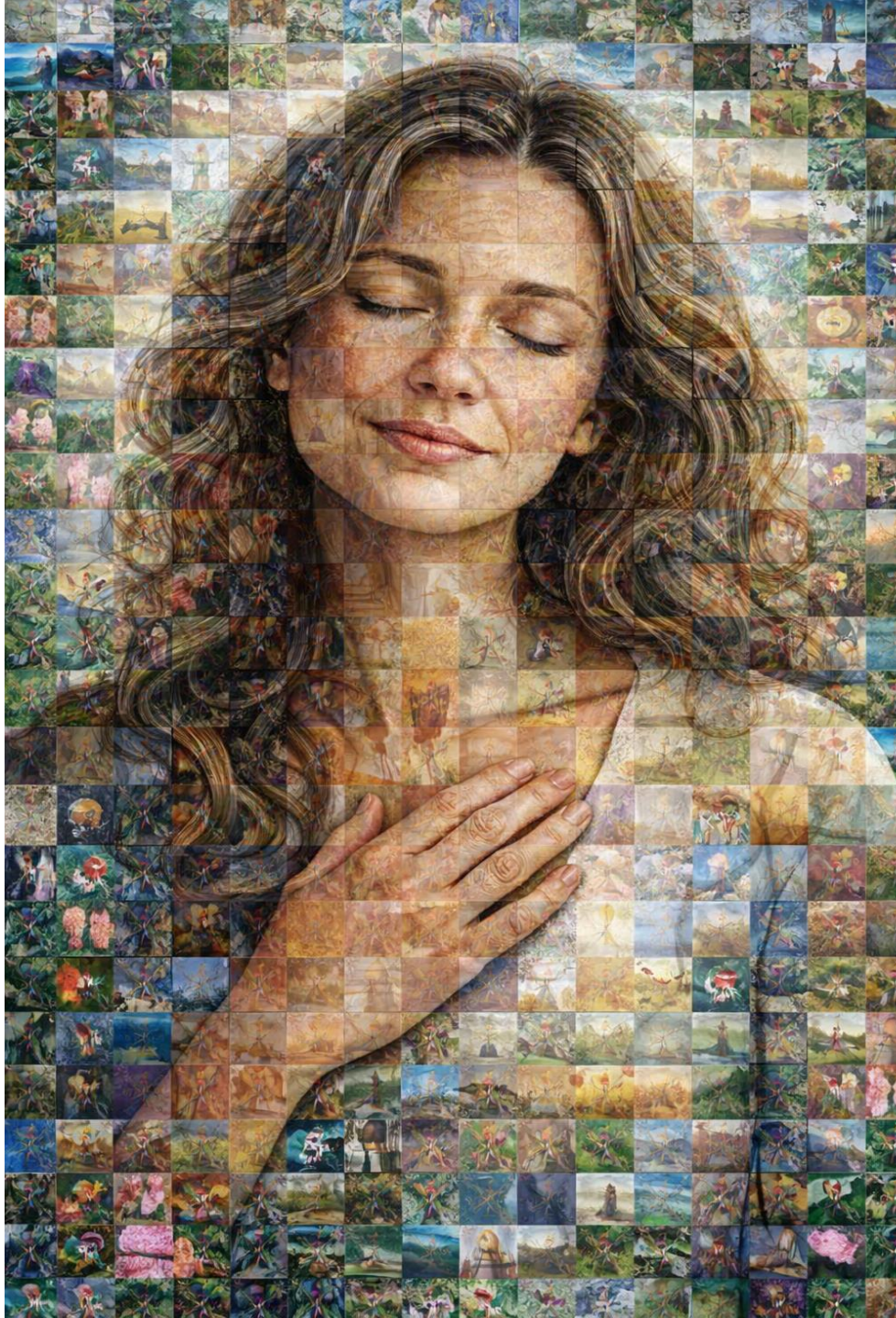
Change happens when we make sense of what we need, and respond to it.

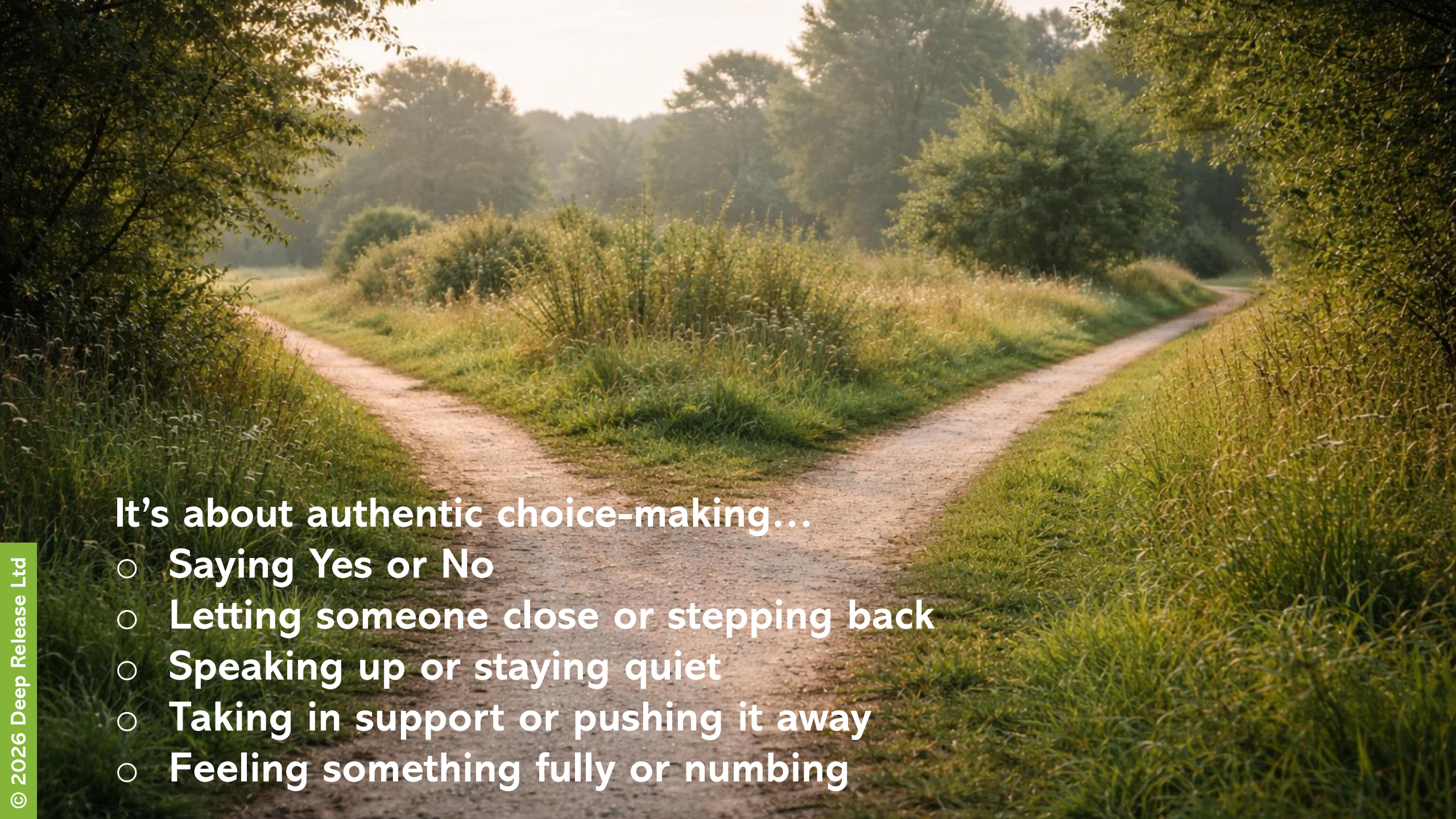
Key Gestalt concepts:

- Your Body
- Your Environment
- The Here and Now / I and Thou

Gestalt helps us look at…

- How we connect with others
- How we express our needs and feelings
- How we protect ourselves





It’s about authentic choice-making…

- Saying Yes or No
- Letting someone close or stepping back
- Speaking up or staying quiet
- Taking in support or pushing it away
- Feeling something fully or numbing

Many counsellors are already working in a Gestalt way, even if they don’t call it that.

You’re working with Gestalt when you:

- work in the here and now
- name what’s happening in the room (immediacy)
- pay attention to the body
- notice boundaries and contact
- use your own experience carefully
- slow things down
- trust awareness rather than explanation

Gestalt is less about technique and more about how we’re present.

Noticing the small stuff

Slowing down and paying close attention to slight, moment-by-moment changes in the client's experience, in their body, feelings and thoughts, so that awareness can deepen and something new can emerge.

Similarity

Our brain groups together elements that look the same; where there are gaps, it wants to close them.

Anomaly

Something that stands out, that ‘doesn’t’ fit in.
It catches our eye - or our ear!

Each component is a part of a system of dynamic relationships

Your Body is Ahead of your Mind

We notice… a sigh …a pause …a laugh at the “wrong” moment …a bodily shift… eyes, hands, feet

Key Pointers:
Noticing the Small Stuff *(Microprocessing awareness)*

Do more of this:
- Slow things down: *"What are you noticing right now?"*
- Notice shifts in body, tone, pace, and energy: *"What just changed?"*
- Follow what stands out or feels 'odd'
- Stay curious about small changes: *"What happens as you say that?"*
- Trust what catches your attention

Do less of this:
- Rushing to understand or interpret
- Ignoring pauses, silences, or gestures
- Focusing only on story or content
- Assuming you already know what matters

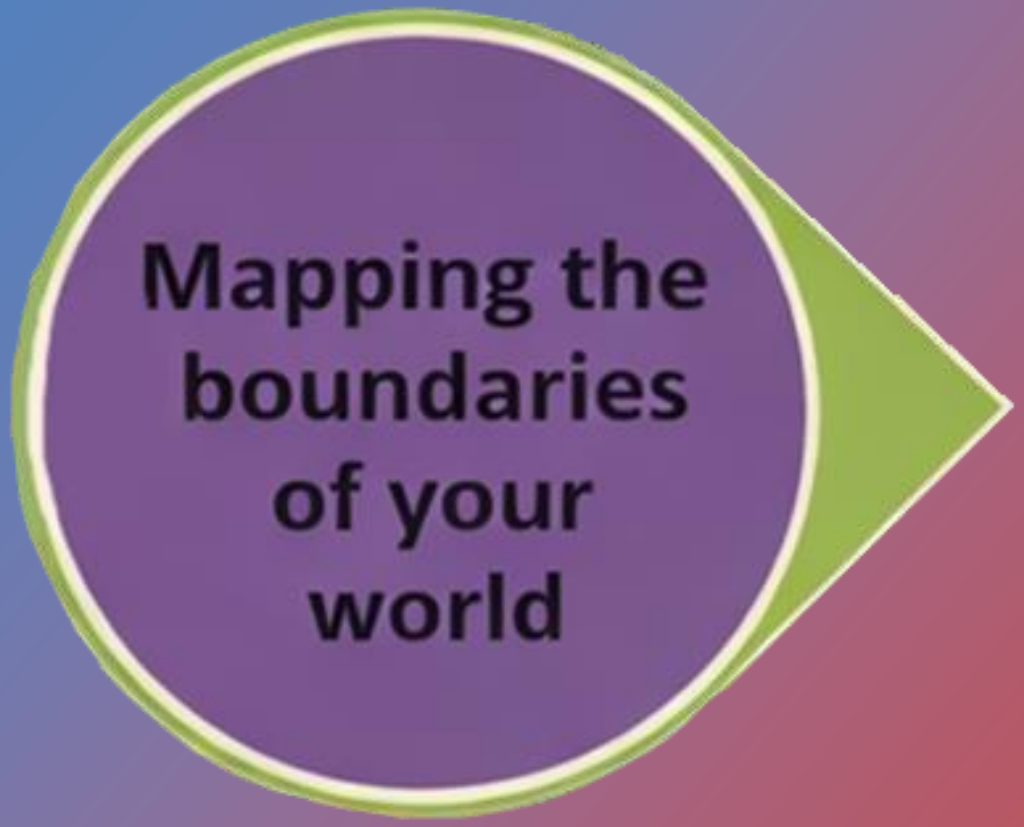
The small details often carry the biggest meaning.

Possible Ideas to share in Buddy Groups

- How many anomalies were you able to identify in the video?
- What did we miss?
- When/how might we pick up on these in the therapy?

15 minutes


TAKE A
BREAK
5:00



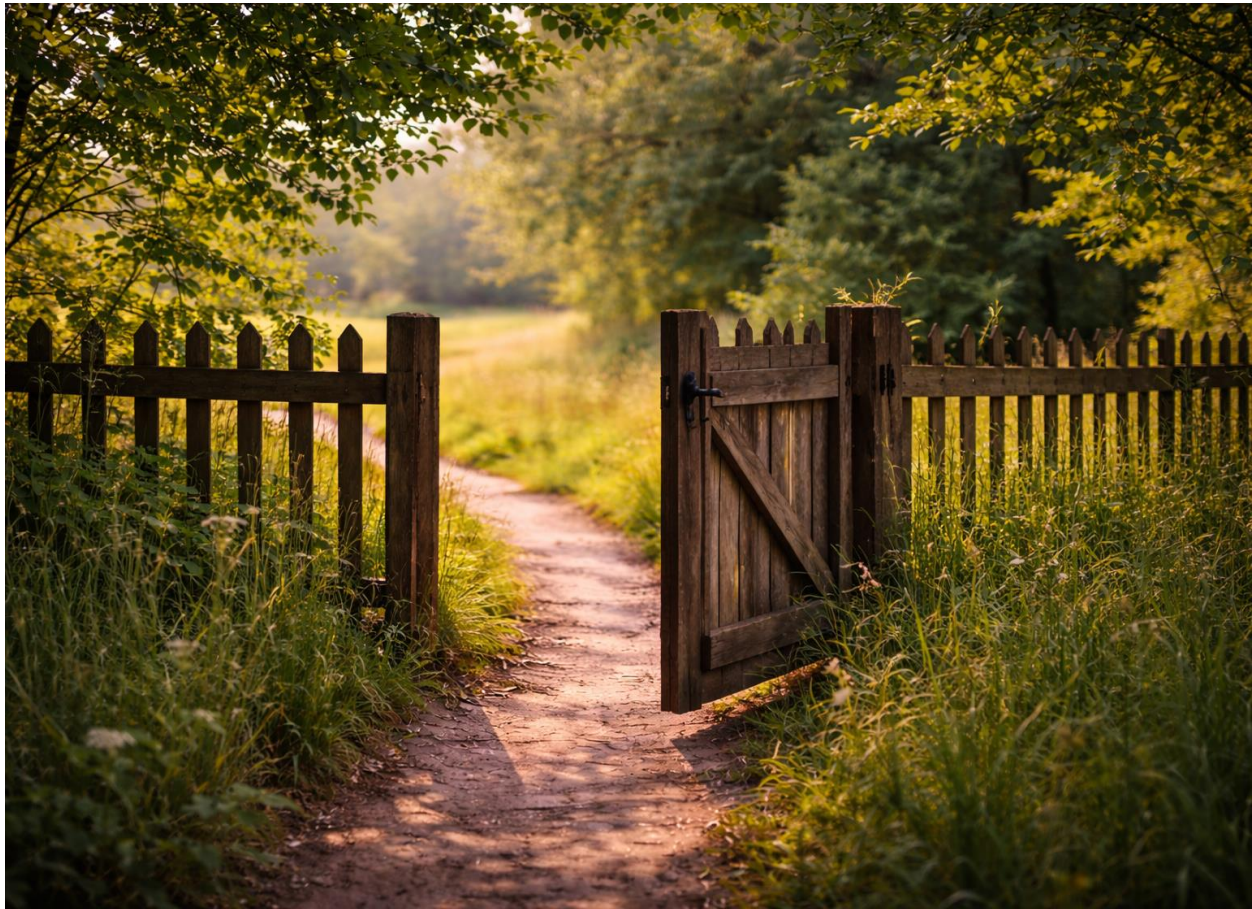
How I let the world in…
(and keep myself safe)

Mapping the contact boundaries of my world is about noticing where and how I encounter and relate to other people; how I meet and relate to myself; and how I meet life.

Contact boundaries show us:

- where we form relationships easily
- where we pull back when meeting someone new
- where we disappear… fight… avoid… or turn things inward
- where it's hard for us to take in support

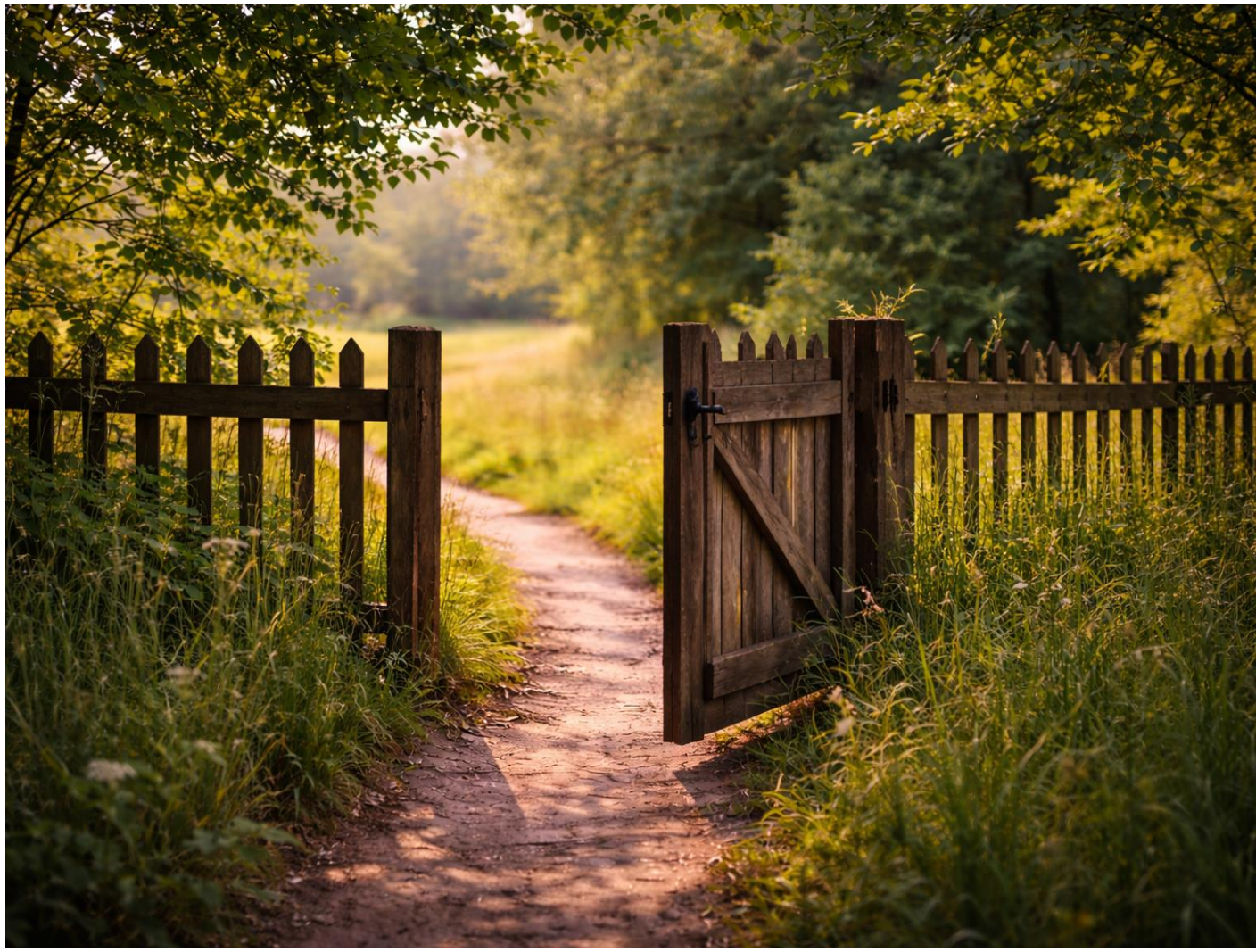
- **It's where relationship and self-protection meet**
- **It's where we decide how close is safe…**
- **… is the gate wide open? Ajar? Closed?**



Healthy Contact Boundaries are:

- Flexible
- Responsive
- Aware
- Choiceful

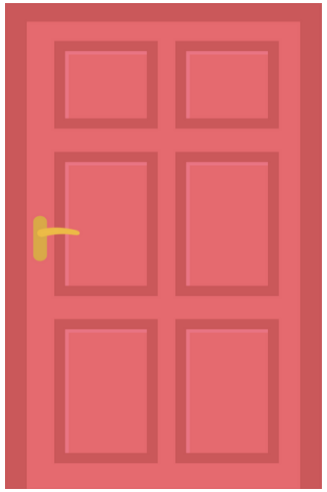
Not rigid walls, and not wide open with no protection.



The Contact Boundary
is like a door.
Sometimes it's open
Sometimes it's closed
Sometimes it's ajar

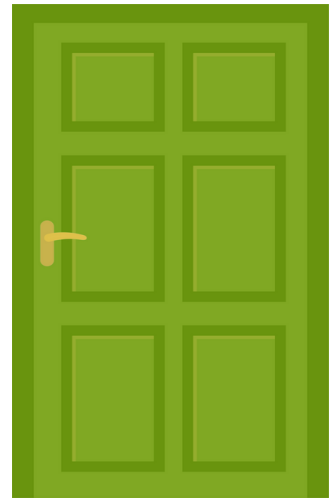
YOU GET TO
CHOOSE

Body



Think about an encounter you found difficult

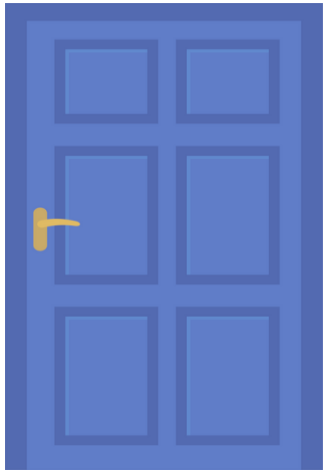
Needs



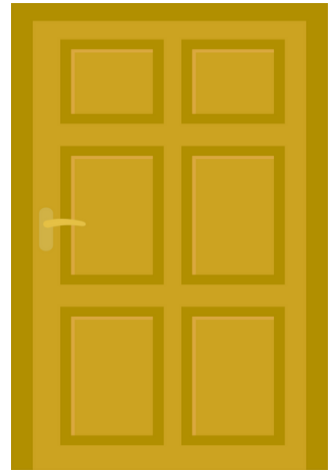
The doors represent your responses and how you felt in the situation.

- Let's go back: how were you feeling before this encounter happened? Explore each door.
- Explore each door again, *as if the event is happening now*
  - What happens to your body?
  - What are you feeling?
  - What do you need/want?
  - Who feels present/close/far away?
- How does it feel right now, right here, to tell me?

Feelings



Others



Key Pointers:

Mapping the Boundaries of your World

(How I let the world in…and keep myself safe)

Do more of this:

- Notice when relationships feel easy or difficult
- Track moments of withdrawal or toughening up:
  "Where do I notice that in my body?"
- Stay curious about safety:
  "What am I protecting?"
- Treat boundaries as flexible and moving

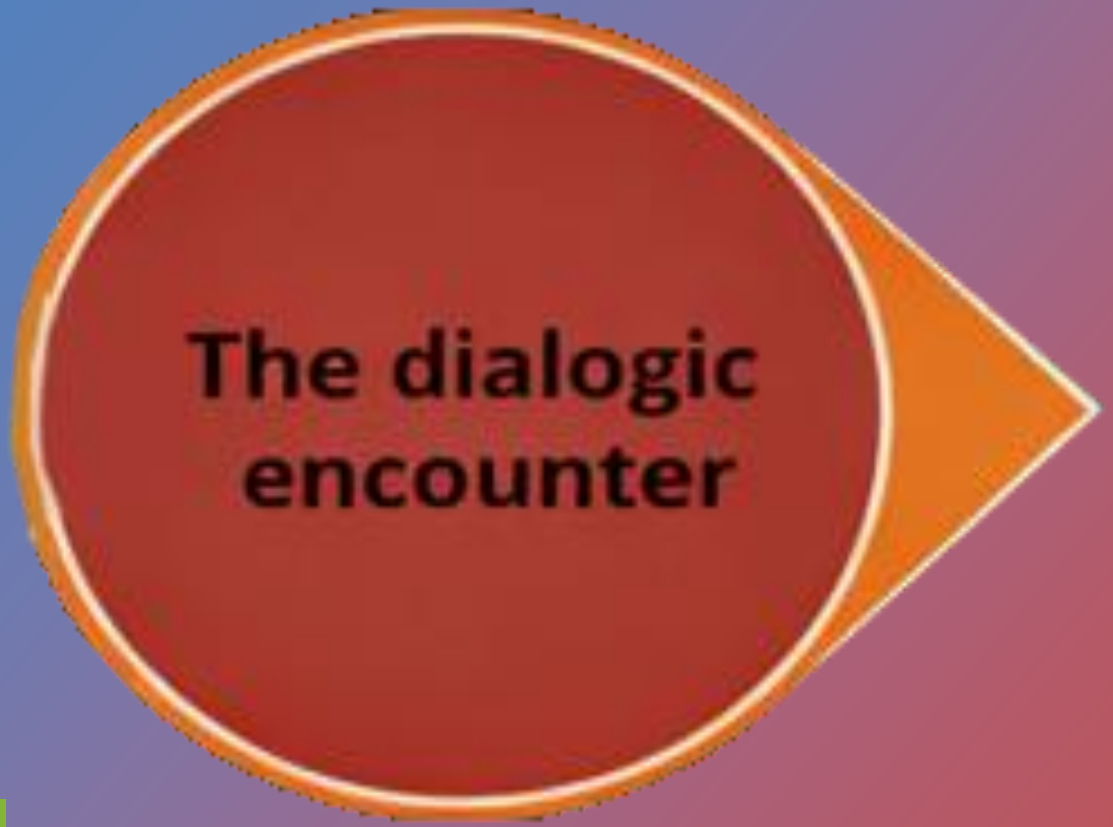
Boundaries are doorways, not blocks

Do less of this:

- Forcing clients to be open with us
- Interpreting protection as resistance
- Promising 'you're safe with me' – *what does safety mean for the client?*


TAKE A
BREAK
5:00

Questions
Comments
Discussion



Being with the Client

A way of being where the counsellor meets them as a real person in the present moment, with openness, honesty and respect, so that genuine contact and change can happen.

The Dialogic Relationship: Here and Now, I-Thou

Presence

I am fully present with you, in the here-and-now, in an honest, authentic relationship

Confirmation

I accept you unconditionally

I value you and fully receive you

Inclusion

I enter your world with embodiment, feeling and thought, and my own perspective

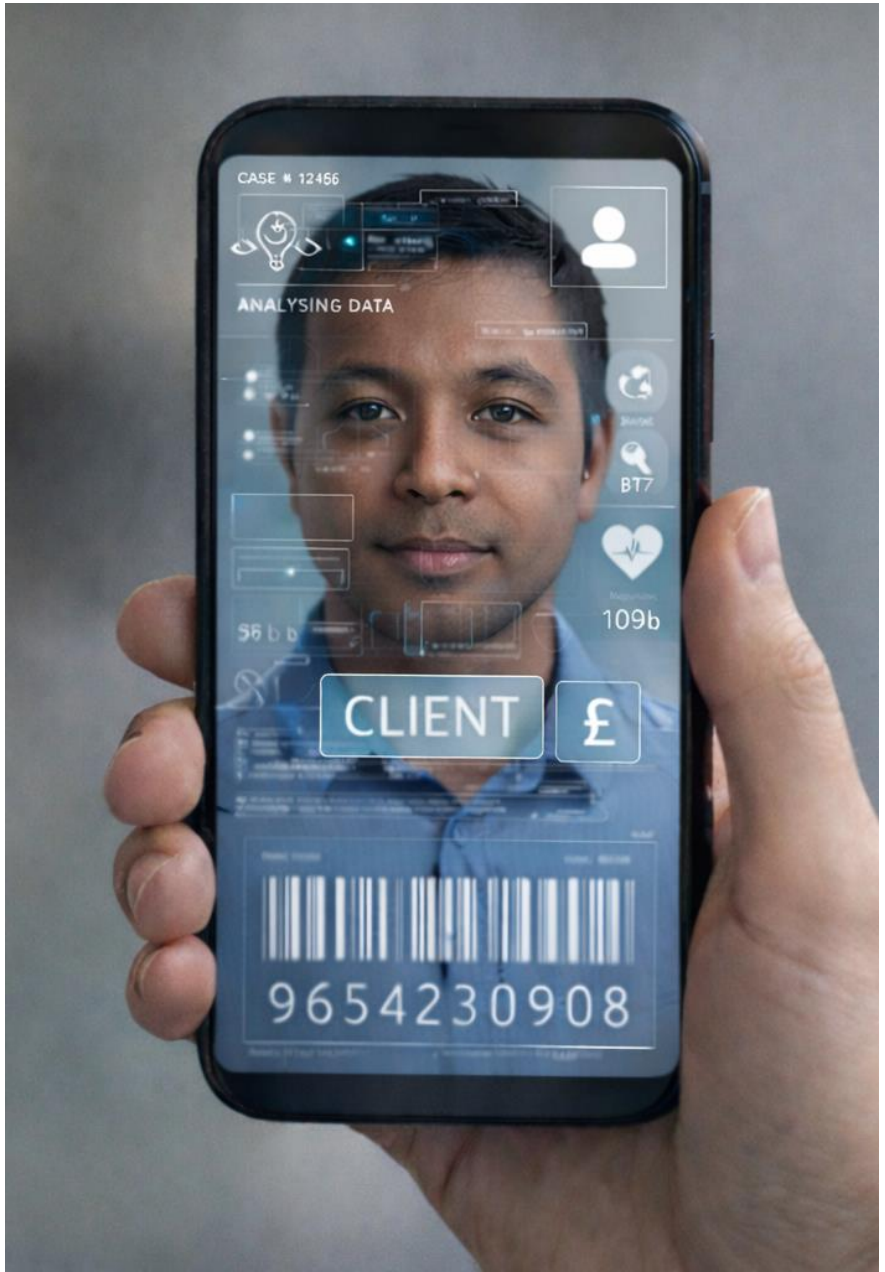
Open communication

We build the road as we travel, discovering together, each of us sharing and experiencing

The I-IT Relationship

- The I-IT relationship is when we see someone as an object, rather than a human being
- We may find ourselves relating to a client as a *project, a task, a case, a problem, a source of income,* rather than a fully present, living "other"
- We may find ourselves trying to manage them, analyse or control them

- In some relationships an I-IT relationship is appropriate: for example, the relationship with our doctor or dentist!
- When this is our main way of relating to people generally it can lead to distance and disconnection, where empathy fades and people feel unseen or unheard



Awareness : I-I

The I-I relationship

The dialogue between

GUT HEART MIND

Awareness grows when we allow a respectful dialogue between our own gut, heart, and mind. Each has its own intelligence: the gut senses, the heart feels, and the mind makes meaning.

https://www.trainingjournal.com/articles/features/self-awareness-indispensable-tool-when-it-comes-innovation

Key Pointers:
The Dialogic Encounter *(Being with the client)*

Do more of this:

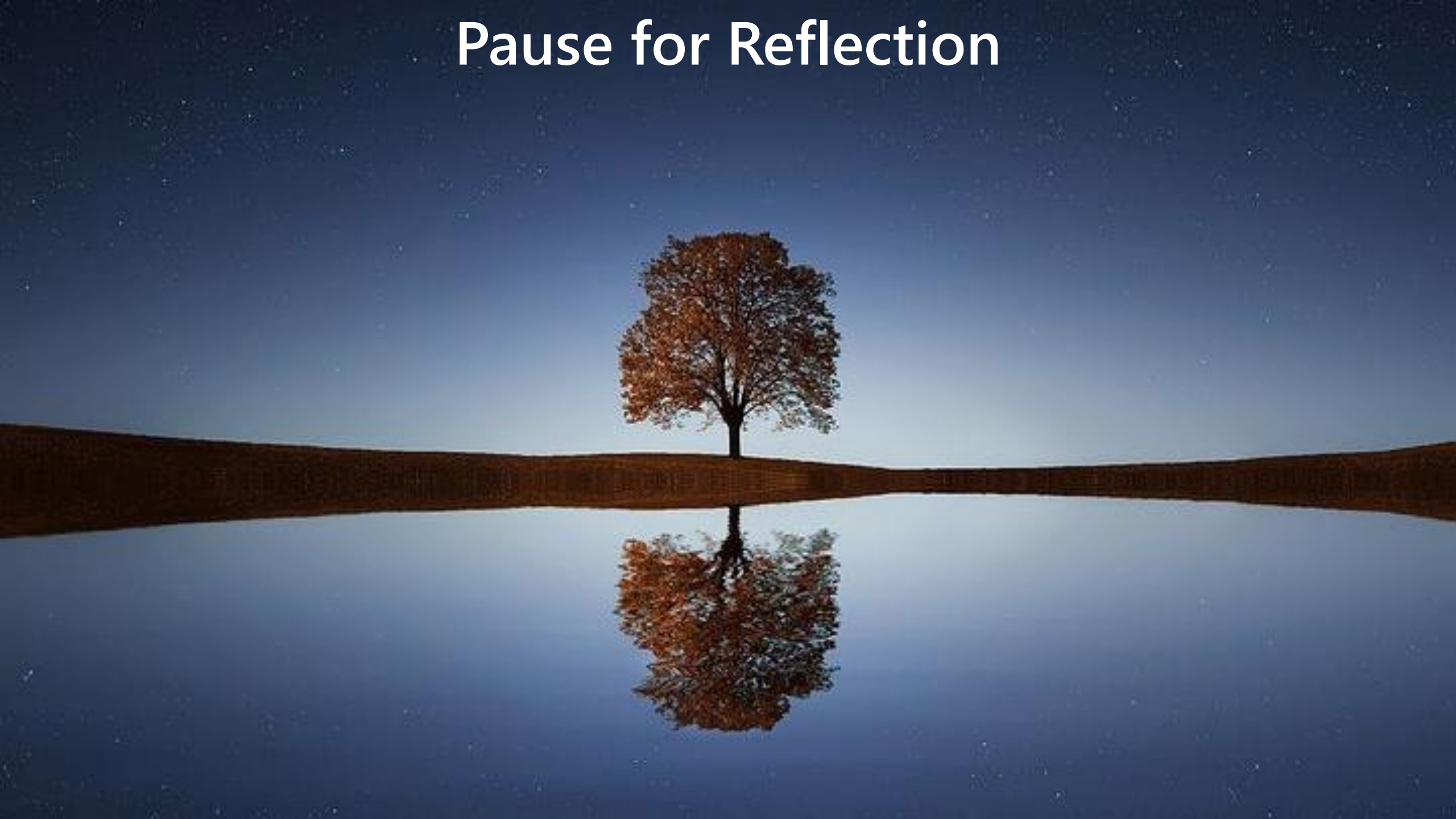
- Speak from what you're experiencing: ***"I notice..."***
- Stay with what's happening between you:
  "What's happening between us right now?"
- Let yourself be affected
- Respond rather than plan: ***"What's it like to say that to me?"***
- Work in the present moment (the here-and-now)

Do less of this:

- Analysing the client/relying on technique
- Talking about the relationship instead of being in it

We don't step out of the relationship to work - we stay inside it

Pause for Reflection



ANGIE AND 2-CHAIR WORK

Possible Ideas to share in Buddy Groups

- Share your thinking on Boundaries
- Reflect on Angie's chair work
- How many of the topics we have discussed are already part of the way you work?

15 minutes


TAKE A
BREAK
5:00

What hasn't had a chance to be completed yet…

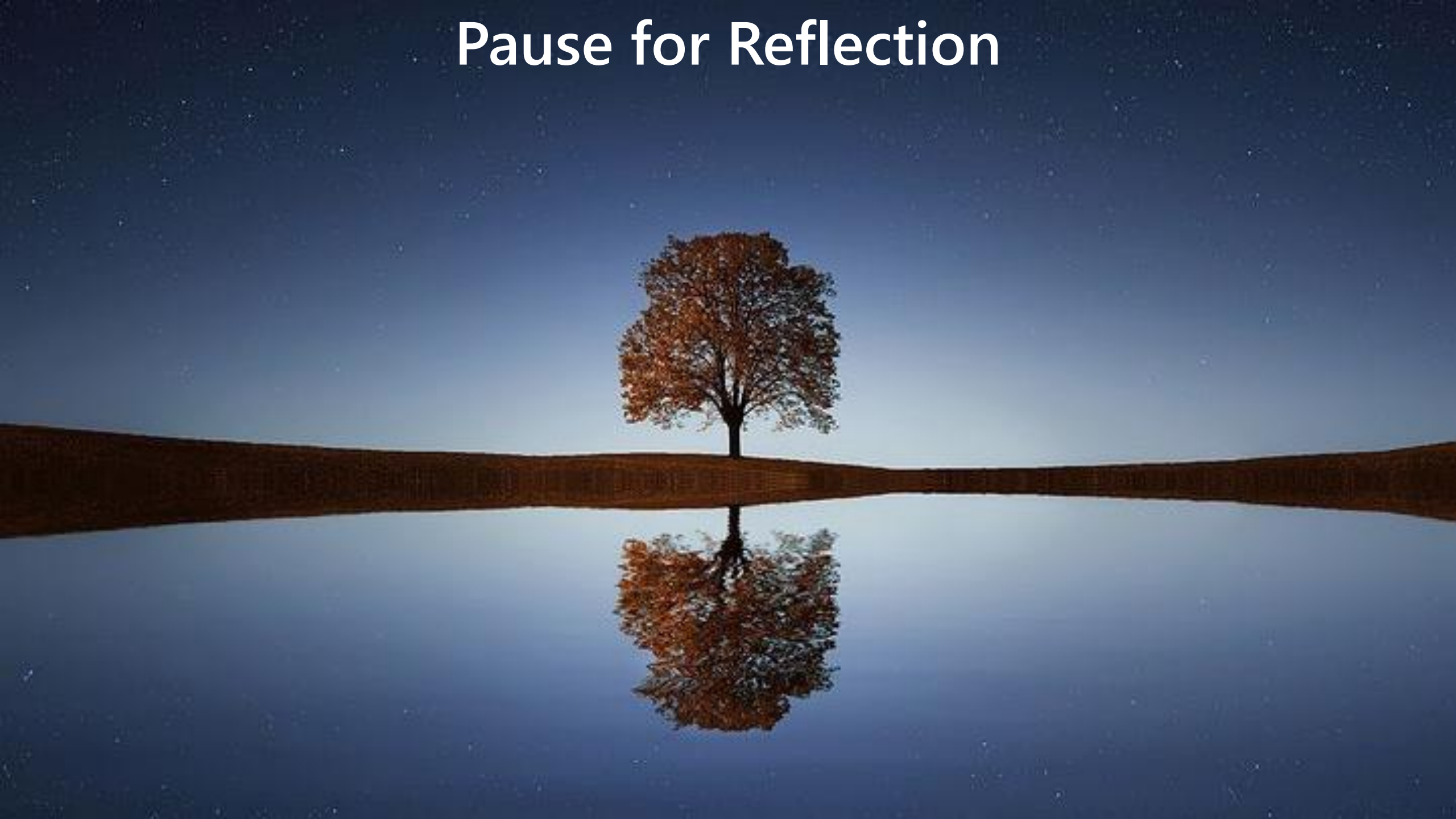
When past experiences or relationships haven't been fully expressed, processed or resolved, so the feelings stay 'alive' in the present and continue to affect how we think, feel and relate.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Noticing What's Unfinished

A guided meditation

Pause for Reflection



Key Pointers:

Unfinished Business *(What hasn't had a chance to be completed yet)*

Do more of this:

- Notice what comes up frequently, and/or carries strong emotion
- Create a sense of space and timelessness
- Work gently: ***"Stay with that… if it feels safe…"***

Do less of this:

- Digging for details
- Forcing emotional release
- Assuming something must be "unfinished"
- Rushing towards closure

Unfinished business doesn't ask to be solved, it asks to be met

Staying with both sides

The opposite parts of ourselves that we experience in tension, like two sides pulling in different directions.

Gestalt work helps us notice, understand and integrate both sides, rather than choosing one and rejecting the other.

- The more we fight or reject parts of ourselves, the more stuck we tend to become

- Change doesn't come from choosing one side *("I must be strong")* and rejecting/ denying the other *("I mustn't be vulnerable")*

- Carl Rogers/Brian Thorne: *The Liberating Paradox*
  "The more I can accept myself as I am, the more I can change"

THE GOOD CHILD

THE REBEL

THE GOLDEN CHILD

THE ESCAPE ARTIST

SILENT

AFTER ALL I'VE DONE FOR YOU

HAPPY

TEARS

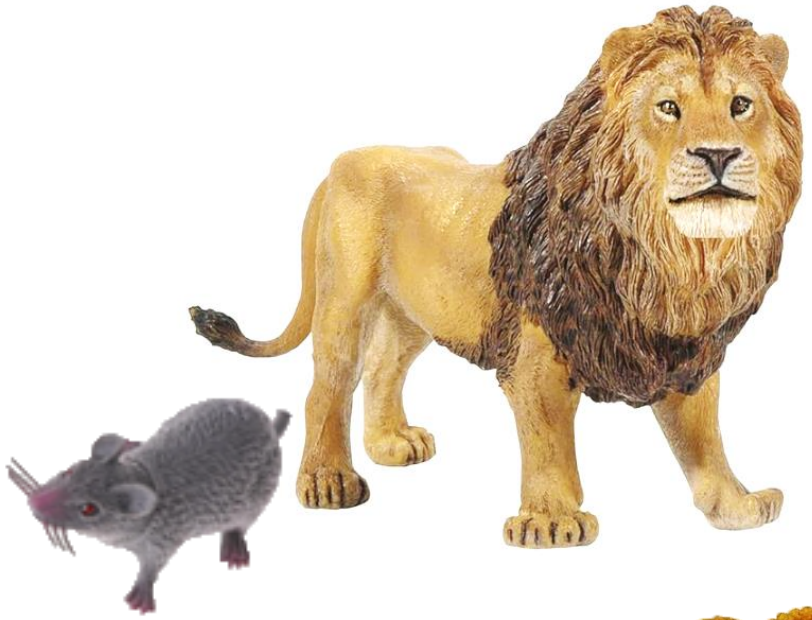
DO-IT-ALL

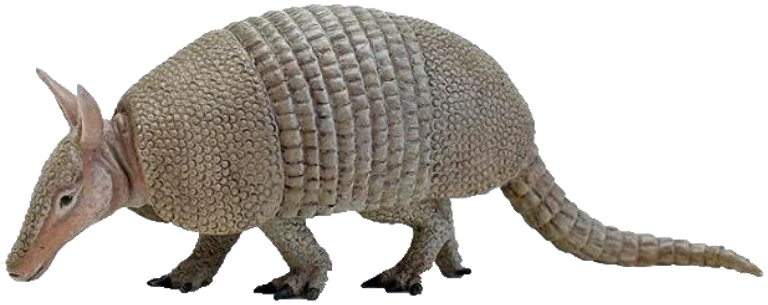
INVISIBLE

THE HERO

THE BABY

What's underneath?





It's a complete nightmare!

Key Pointers:
Working with Polarities *(Staying with both sides)*

Do more of this:

- Name both sides of the experience and allow movement between them: ***"What happens when both are given space?"***
- Stay with the tension between opposites: "***What do you notice as you allow the tension to be here?"***
- Hold curiosity about each pole: **"*Where do you notice each one - in your body or feelings?"***

Do less of this:

- Dismissing one side as "wrong" (but....)
- Pushing for resolution
- Treating opposites as problems

Growth happens through holding and understanding both sides, not just eliminating one.

Possible Ideas to share in Buddy Groups

- What happened in the Unfinished Business Meditation?
- How easy do you find it to accept contradictory parts of yourself?

15 minutes


TAKE A
BREAK
5:00

Questions
Comments
Discussion

Final Buddy Group

- Say goodbye
- Share details if you wish to

5 minutes

FEB
13

9:30 am - 1:00 pm

5 Ways of Working with Transactional Analysis

FEB
26

9:30 am - 1:00 pm

Extreme Reactions: Working with Clients who Self-Injure

MAR
12

9:30 am - 1:00 pm

When Dreams Speak: Meeting the Self in Night-Time Stories

MAR
21

9:30 am - 1:00 pm

Spiritual Wounds and Spiritual Dimensions in the Counselling Room

APR
24

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The Healing Dance: TA & Gestalt Together

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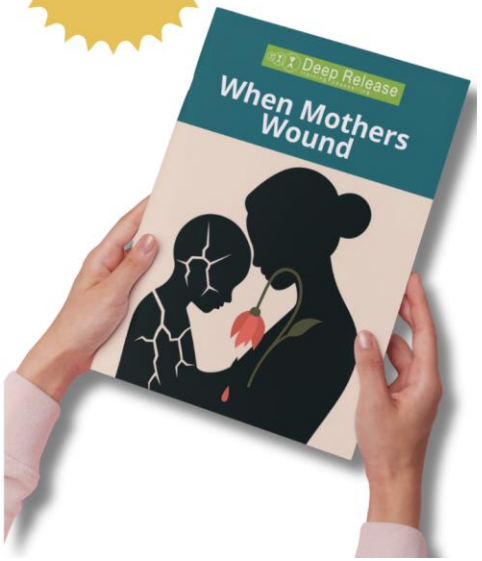

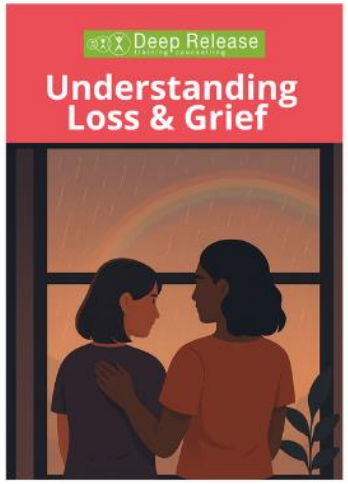

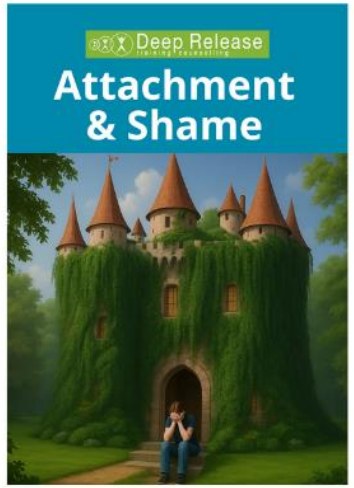

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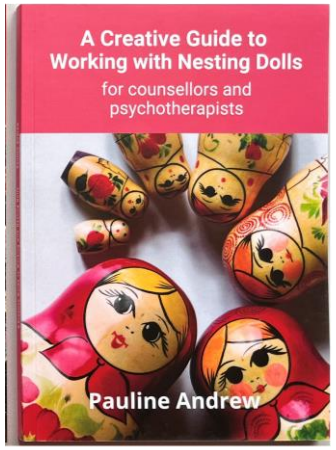

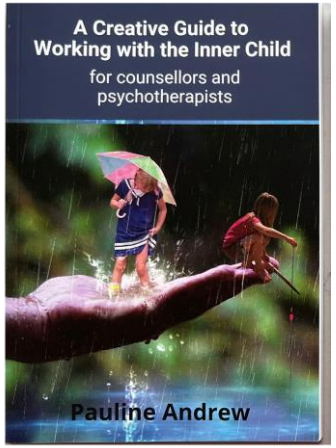

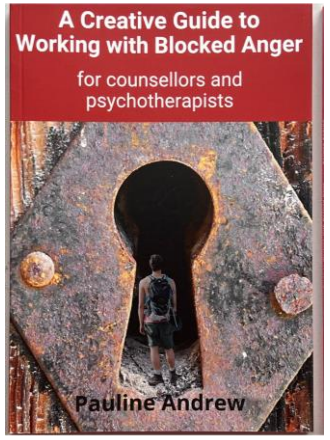

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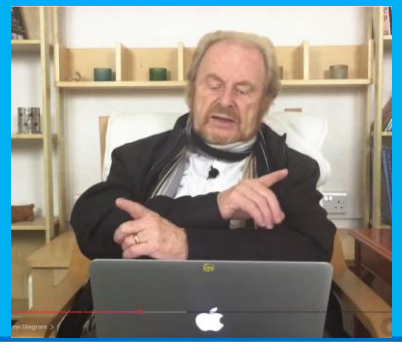
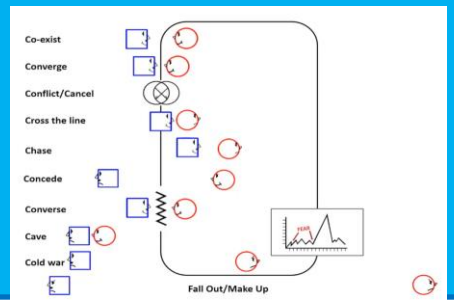
Quantitative		Qualitative
Zoom in		Zoom out

The Warzone



Fixing Broken Relationships Part 1



Fixing Broken Relationships Part 2

YouTube

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Thank you so much for joining us and supporting our work! If you have found the day helpful, please would like leave some feedback in the Deep Release Facebook group, or send us an email at info@deeprelease.org.uk. It would mean so much to us! ☺

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