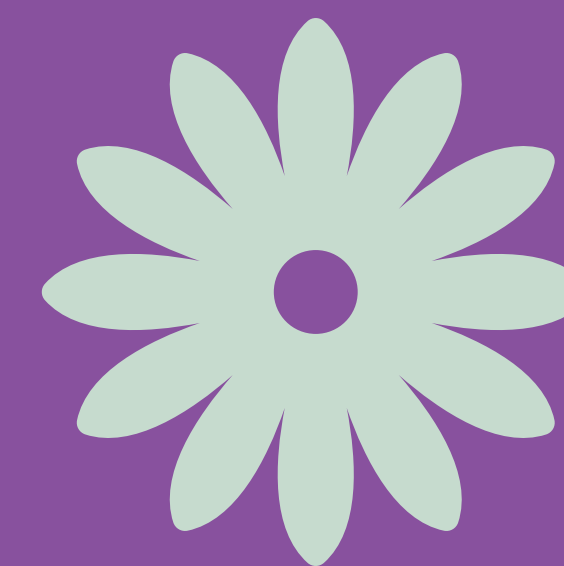




Gentle Teaching



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
REGINA 2024

nurturing cultures of gentleness



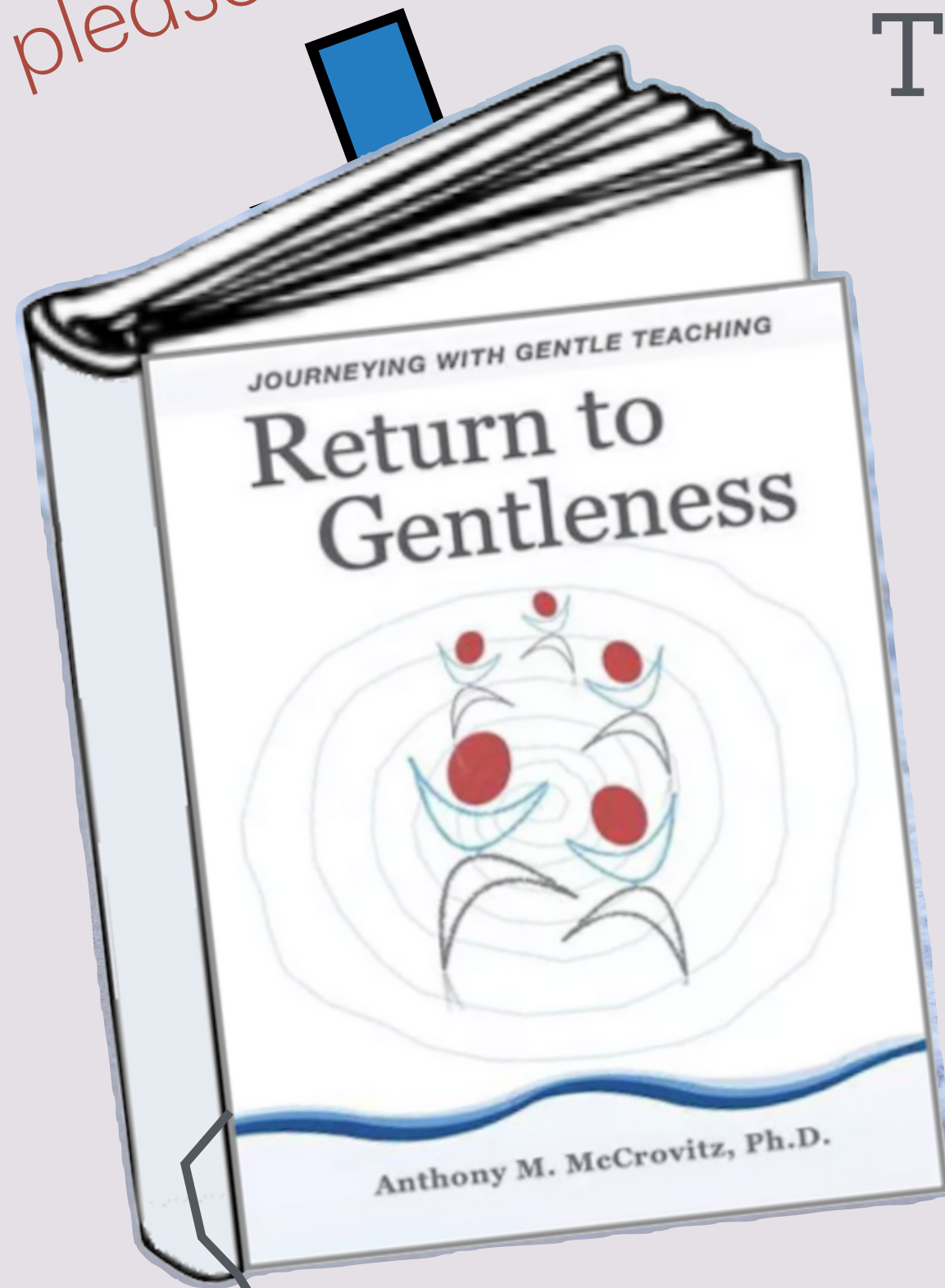
A Sense of Belonging

a universal, human longing that needs a human connection

Anthony M. McCrovitz, Ph.D, LMHC, HSPP, BCPC, IMH-E® (II), DAPA

Produced by Quality of Life Institute, Inc., ©2024

please read!



Today's topic, **A SENSE OF BELONGING** relates to foundational knowledge about Gentle Teaching

Emotions one might be vulnerable to or chronically experiencing, primarily stem from the deeply rooted, social-emotional human need for a sense of belonging.

Balancing social-emotional development in human beings requires opportunities for interacting with others and forming meaningful connections one can relate to that value and support the unique, unfolding narrative of one's life.

A basic principle of Gentle Teaching is to not let the valuing of others be contingent on conditions. Valuing without conditions (unconditional love) is practiced in addressing social-emotional barriers that tend to define existence.



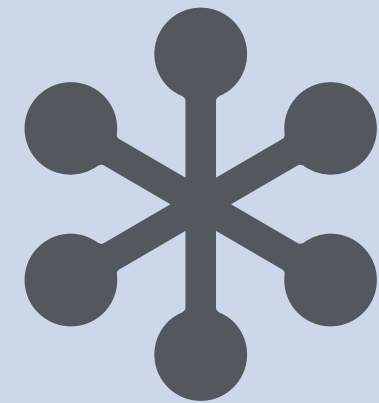
Journeying with Gentle Teaching



JOURNEYING WITH GENTLE TEACHING

Return to Gentleness

Anthony M. McCrovitz, Ph.D.



The model weaves together three key concepts:

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <p>LESSON 4: ENGAGED</p> <p>"Learn that it is good to be with others, to do things with others, and even to do things for others."</p> | <p>LESSON 1: SAFE</p> <p>"My friend, when you are with us, you are safe. These hands will never hurt you. These words will not put you down. These eyes will look warmly and lovingly at you."</p> | <p>LESSON 2: LOVED</p> <p>"My friend, you are not only safe with us, you are loved. Love is unconditional!"</p> |
| <p>LESSON 3: LOVING</p> <p>"Learn to be loving toward others."
 <i>Safe, loved, loving, and engaged create the four cornerstones of service."</i></p> | | |
| <p>4 PILLARS of GENTLE TEACHING</p> <p>four life-lessons to learn and live by</p> | | |

sense of belonging

having a life of structure

feeling self-worth

feeling safe

bodily integrity

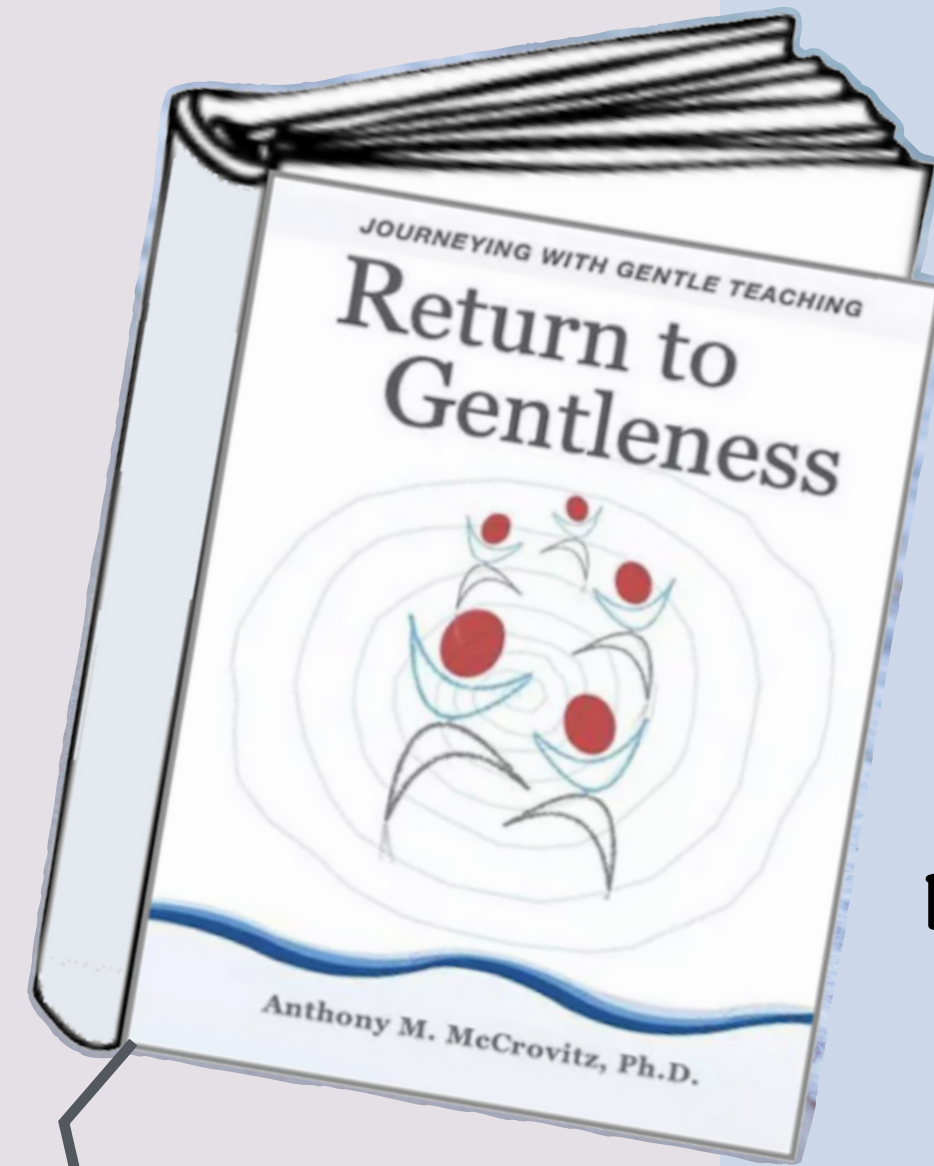
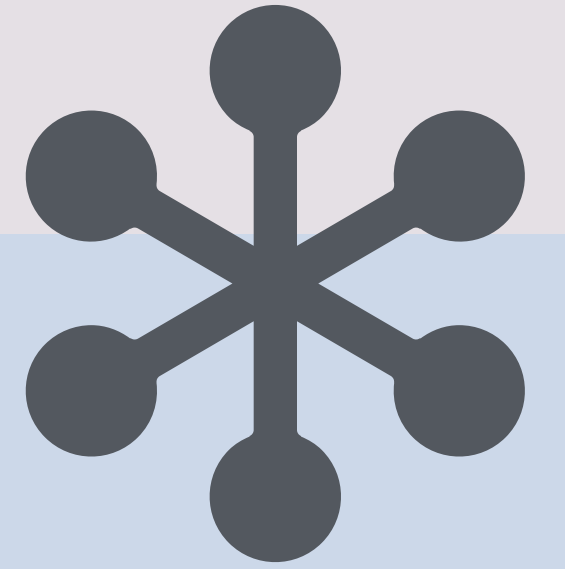
inner contentment

meaningful daily activities

social participation

Elements of Companionship

Presenter / Author NOTE:



This model guides therapists in nurturing the mental, emotional, and social well-being of their clients.

NINE therapeutic **DESTINATIONS** and 'field notes' for each one are introduced that can be used for mapping out a course of dialogue (verbal and non-verbal) that sets the sails for experiential learning and journeying with Gentle Teaching.



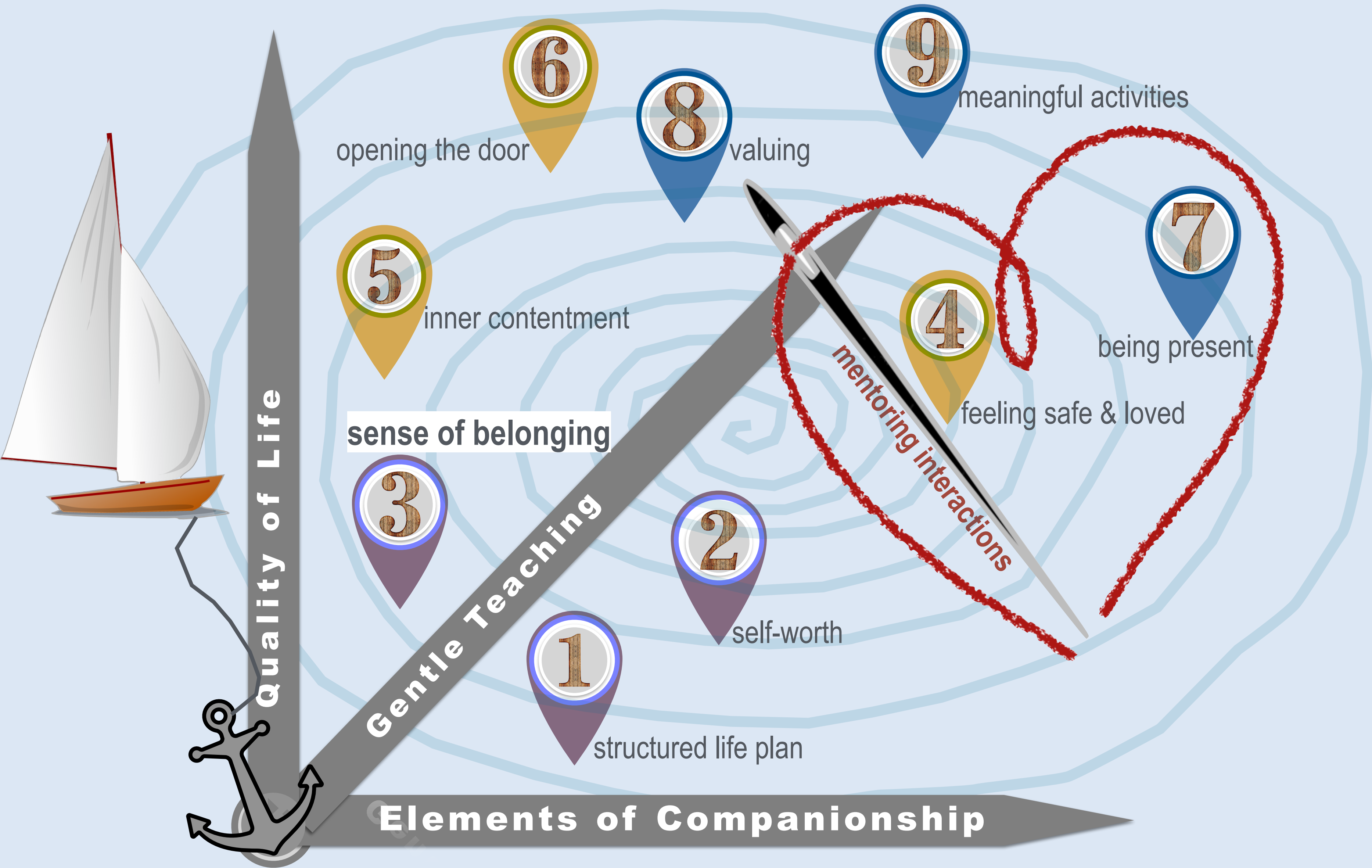
Each theoretical destination creates a therapeutic setting for meaningful dialogue, working with the key concepts of the model. Relationship-building creates connections, paving social-emotional paths with new moral memory, cultivating a renewed sense of self-worth; anchoring one's sense of being 'safe and loved' toward that which it's seeking — a **sense of belonging**.



The framework is a social-emotional and bio-psychological model designed to deepen the professional understanding of human interdependence and the healing power of relationships. Overall, it gives the direction and process for how to mentor a culture of gentleness; valuing, protecting, teaching, and reciprocating, cultivating values that invite engagement and accessibility to feeling **safe and loved**.



RETURN TO GENTLENESS: Creating the Social Fabric



DESTINATIONS
1, 2, 3

Laying the Foundation

of companionship, of feeling safe and unconditionally accepted/loved. Quality of life relates to eight basic, human values, and one must be actively involved with daily activities, to give one a sense of self-worth.

DESTINATIONS
4, 5, 6

Build on the Foundation

that becomes grounded in the first three through the growing of mutual trust. With the eight values, one can build to engage with others and to communicate in shared activities to give a sense of belongingness.

With this foundation in place, skills can be applied to new settings.

DESTINATIONS
7, 8, 9

Expand the Foundation

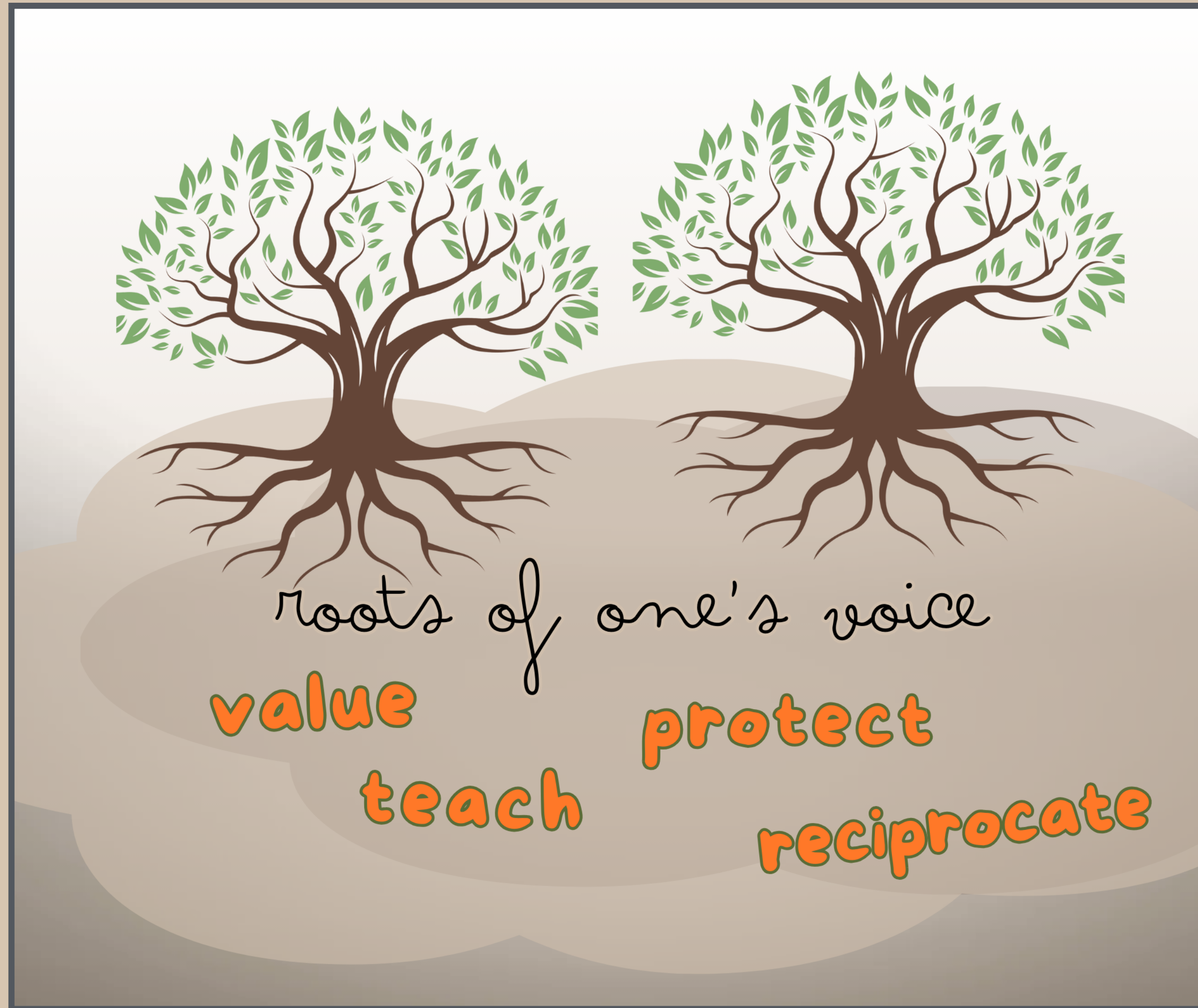
as we learn, together, to doing things with and for others. These destinations support growth, based on one's ability to problem-solve, to connect ideas together and to take initiative with ideas.

➡ **WORLD-VIEWS** form and frame ‘self’ concepts, self-awareness, and *a sense of belonging*



“WORLD-VIEWS” stem from intercultural variables that are held by the inner landscape, the social-emotional processing center that is one’s foundation for developing self-awareness and **a sense of belonging.**

➡ Creating a Relationship Venue for One's Voice



- The work of counseling is about **human connections** that form a therapeutic alliance and build trust for creating a relationship venue for the authentic development of one's voice.
- How do we cultivate a safe, trusted space for initiating and advancing meaningful dialogue? How is the **dialogue designed to nurture the narrative** and cultivate one's **foundation of awareness**?
- Awareness relates to how one experiences and processes feelings and emotions, and this becomes integrated and grounded with one's voice (verbal and non-verbal).

➡ Building Companionship and Community

A framework of Gentle Teaching supports this foundation. Interactions focus on relationship-building dialogue that creates companionship and a sense of community—a supportive scaffolding for one’s inner landscape, where social-emotional experience is processed and where “self” concepts are formed.



➔ Acknowledging the Space Between Us



No words can adequately describe this landscape, but awareness of 'the space between us' and ourselves is a place of stillness where 'our presence' is welcoming the unconscious state, the un-informed potential awareness and horizon of promise

➔ **'the WHY'** of Gentle Teaching.

The invitation
to trust and engage
in this space of counseling processes is created with companionship and a sense of community that cultivate the relationship-building.

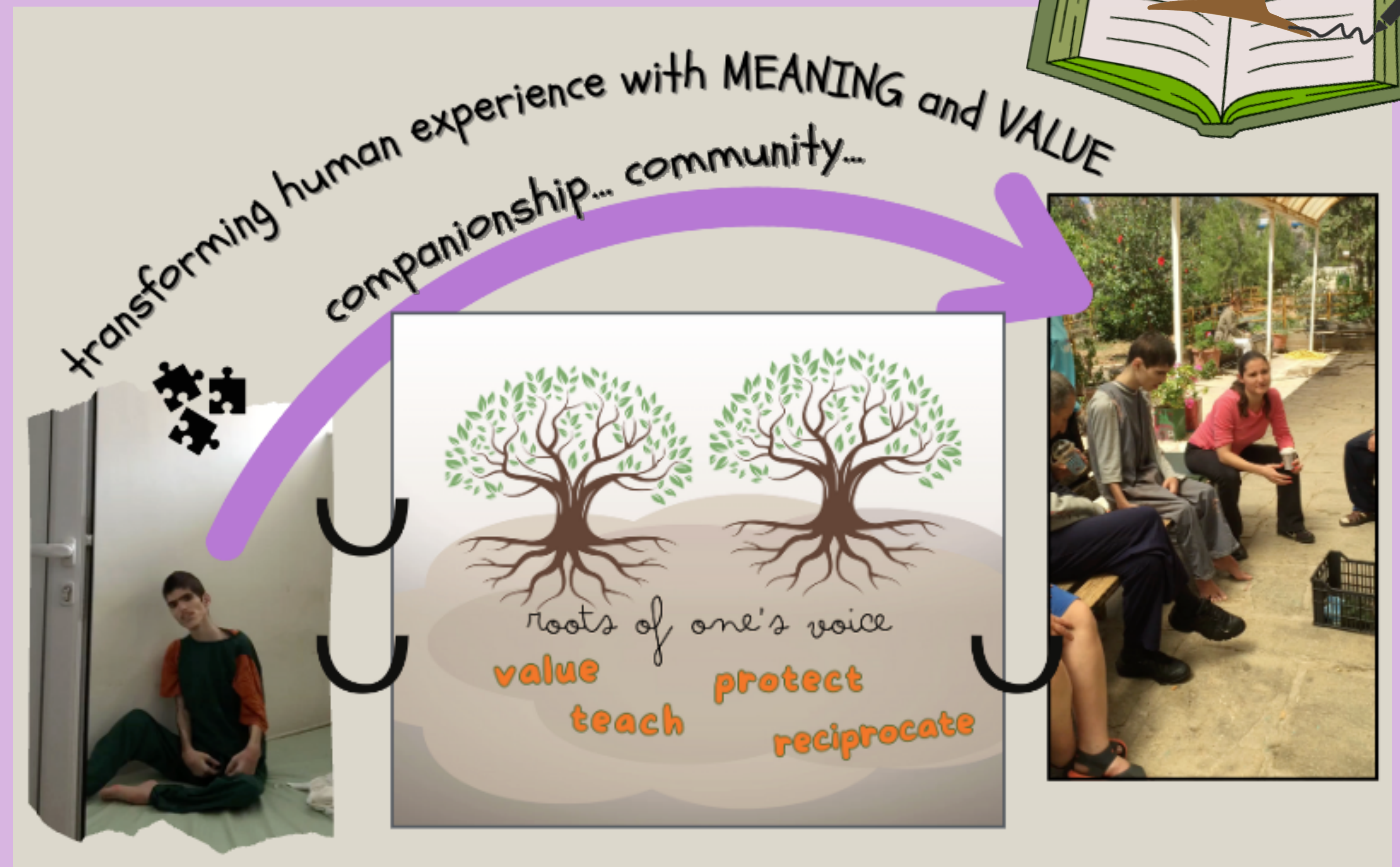
The horizon of 'promise' connects the landscape with a culture of gentleness, anchoring
➔ **'the HOW'** of hope, illustrating a 'safe and loved' direction for the journey.

➔ Rediscovering Meaning and Value

addressing the universal, human longing that needs a human connection



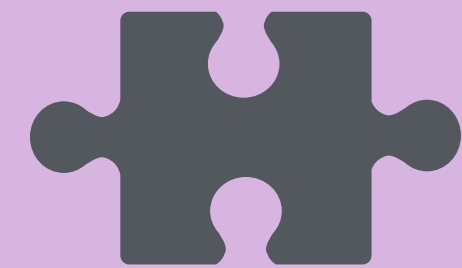
Working together to reveal and rediscover meaning and value, to establish coherent mirroring of one's interior life (emotional sense and experience) with their exterior life (social sense and experience).



➡ Rediscovering Meaning and Value (cont.)

Connections can invite self-reflection for experiencing one's identity with greater clarity and value...

Integration of a Gentle Teaching framework bridges the dichotomy, the contrast of human experience with meaning and value.



A sense of belonging is rooted in a universal longing for connection.



➡ The Psychology of Interdependence



The philosophy and principles of Gentle Teaching are rooted in **a psychology of interdependence**, a word from the Latin root *inter*, meaning 'among' or 'between.' The main idea about interdependence recognizes **the web of human existence as an inseparable, social fabric** through which unifying connections and forms emerge through the affirming and cultivating of relationships.

➡ **The fabric** of interdependence
is woven with a Gentle Teaching **framework**,
forming coherent connections that expand support for both the inner and outer landscape

“



**The principles of Gentle Teaching
are rooted in a psychology of interdependence,
focused on the whole being — mind, body, spirit;
not just the observable, but also
the inner nature of the human condition.**



”

~A.M. MCCROVITZ

A practice of Gentle Teaching plants, prepares,
builds upon and expands the inner, social-
emotional landscape with a dynamic that stems
from intrinsic valuing and meaningful moments
➡ (developing 'self' concepts).

When a Gentle Teaching Framework supports
this foundation, receptivity leans toward to
the invitation to engage in authentic learning
and the shaping of self-concepts
that blossom with companionship.
➡ A sense of belonging is the outcome.

➡ PRESENCE is a Therapeutic Tool

'Presence' is one of "Our Tools" in a practice of Gentle Teaching. In the counseling process, the language of our hands, our eyes, our words, and our presence is potentially and instinctively picked up and interpreted at **an organic level of human connection**. How does unspoken communication convey our valuing of this person and protect their dignity and sense of identity?



➔ Fostering Belonging and Inclusion

Regardless of circumstances, ability, identity or cultural differences, without **a sense of belonging** in a social environment, one can experience disconnect from companionship and from having any sense of community. Companionship and a sense of community are socially vital elements for an experience of inclusion. In the role of counseling, innovation and inclusivity need to be our focus from the first step— creating **a meaningful, human connection** that supports one's well-being by inviting one's **unique voice and views** into the dialogue.

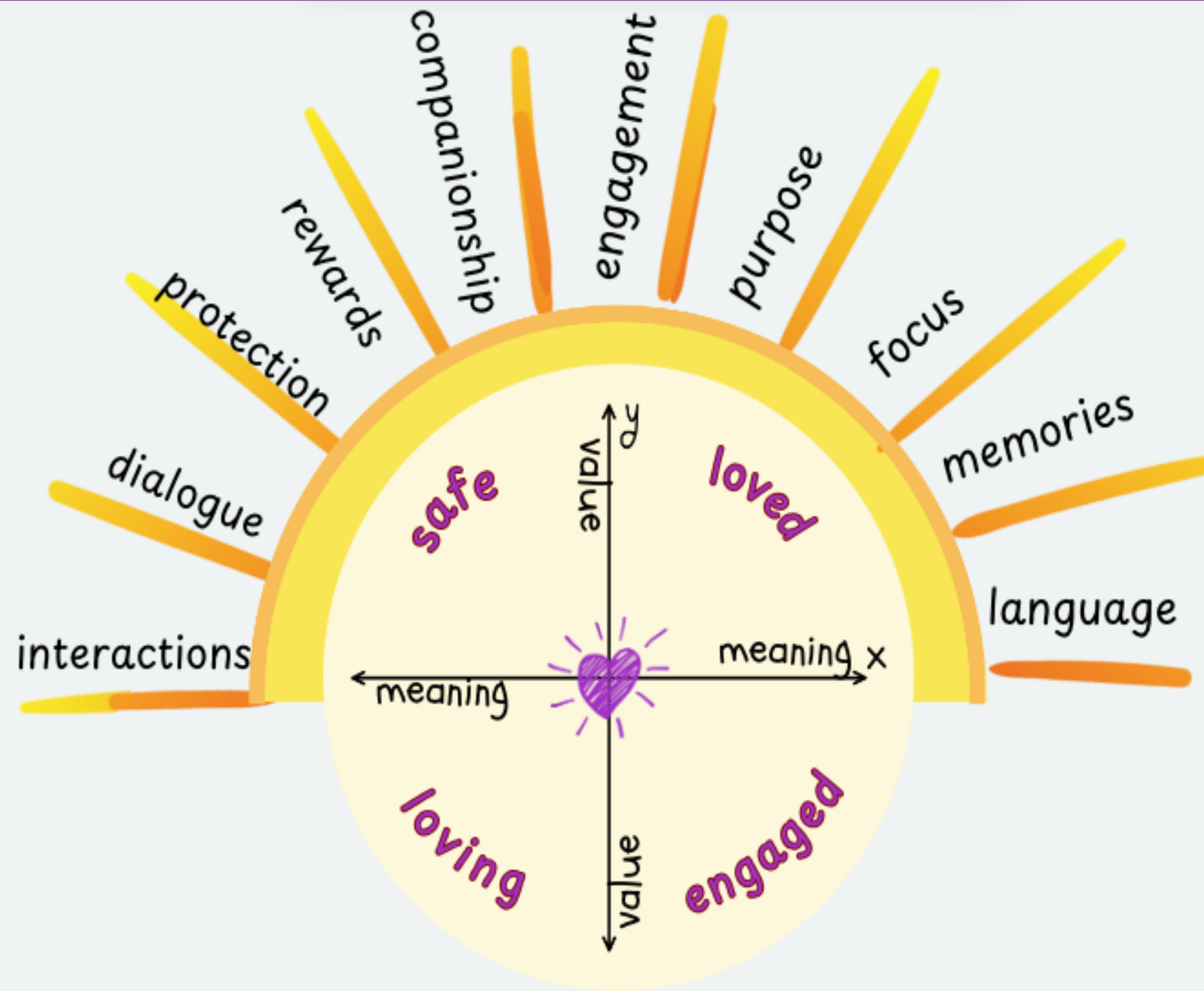


➡ Creating Meaningful Moments

With an understanding of how to use “Our Tools” for communicating and **cultivating connections**, we can build and expand our practice of relationship-building, by creating meaningful moments with the Individual.



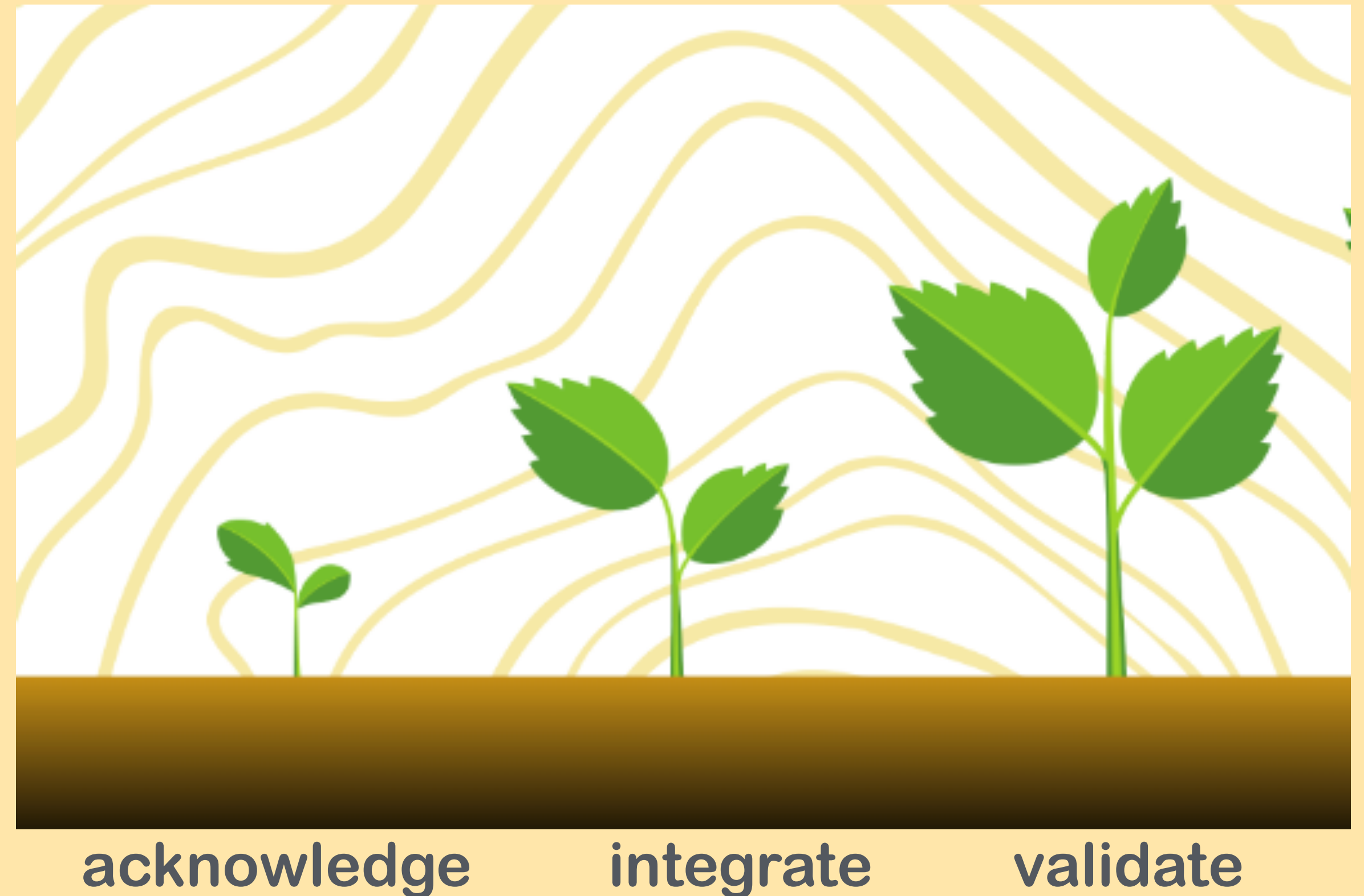
➡ Elements of Companionship



Elements of Companionship support therapeutic goals, incorporating experiential learning that acknowledges and affirms one's value and builds trust. The dictionary defines element as "a small but significant presence of a feeling or abstract quality." Each of the ten elements that are woven into relationship-building dialogue offer a small, but significant presence of a feeling that relates to the four pillars or lessons learned with Gentle Teaching: how to feel safe; how to feel loved; how to feel and be loving; how to feel and become engaged. **The social-emotional self can thrive when these fundamental, foundational lessons are integrated.** Each lesson is interdependently whole for coherent and lifelong learning.

➡ The Importance of a Healthy Relational Dynamic

A healthy relational dynamic (dyad) is critical for meaningful dialogue (verbal and non-verbal). While this dynamic can naturally occur in families and other social structures, its accessibility is often out of reach for marginalized and/or traumatized individuals. In counseling and/or working in the field of social services, it is essential that the social-emotional aspect of human awareness and growth is acknowledged, integrated, and validated.



➡ Interactions as the Foundation for Learning

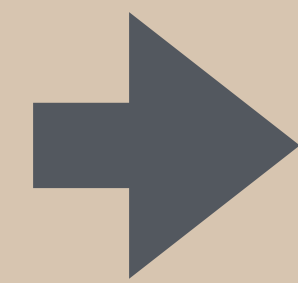


Interactions are central to an Individual and their quality of life and also to their qualitative learning experience. Whether, for example, teaching a skill, or learning how to relax or processing an irrational thought, **the meaningful moment is like rain for a garden.** Each aspect of potential awareness absorbs and reserves what is needed and enriching for its natural existence and growth. In other words, **experiential learning** is not contained in the learning environment; experiential learning is reflected internally; mirrored intrinsically, and continues to impress one's foundation of social-emotional awareness.

➡ Concrete Learning Through Sense-Perception, *(gathering information through the senses, emotion, and movement...)*

Within the counseling role, abstract concepts can transform into **concrete learning through sense-perception**, especially about what feelings feel like, what dialogue about feelings sounds like, and what trust and companionship look like, demonstrating, time and again, how **feeling safe and loved is the path of integration**.





Coherent Relational Connections and Social-Emotional Development

transformational aspects of the counseling processes



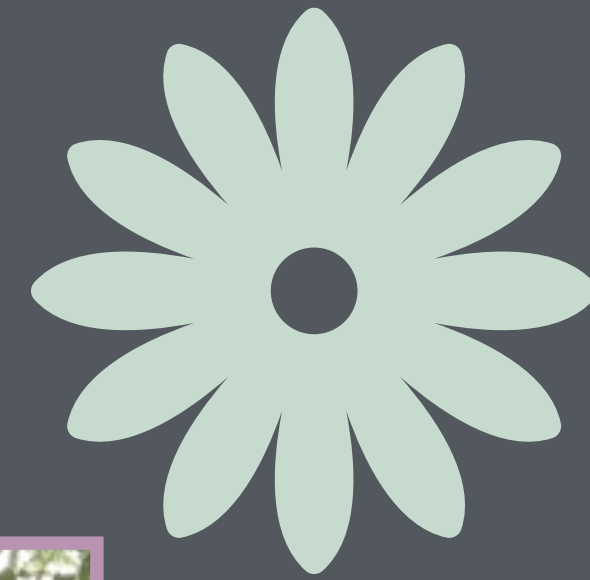
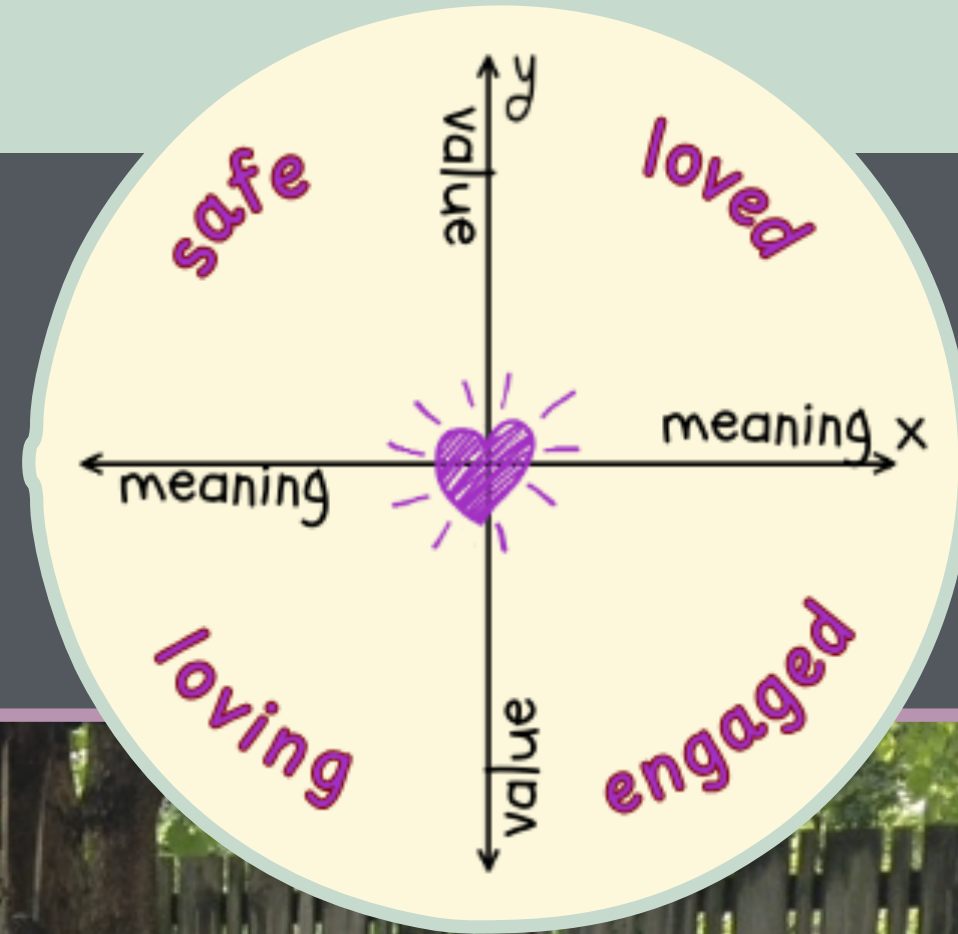
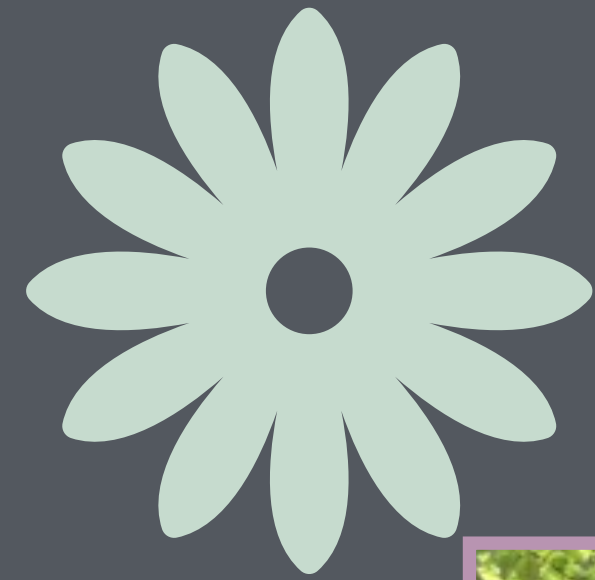
With a coherent modeling of the relational connections formed by the framework, an intrinsic alignment with elementary processes of social-emotional development becomes possible.

➡ An Innovative and Inclusive Environment



An innovative and **inclusive environment**, whether with one individual, couples or families/groups, is one in which each person can feel valued and experience **a sense of belonging**; where they can feel that the social space respects their voice and views, and where sharing is encouraged.

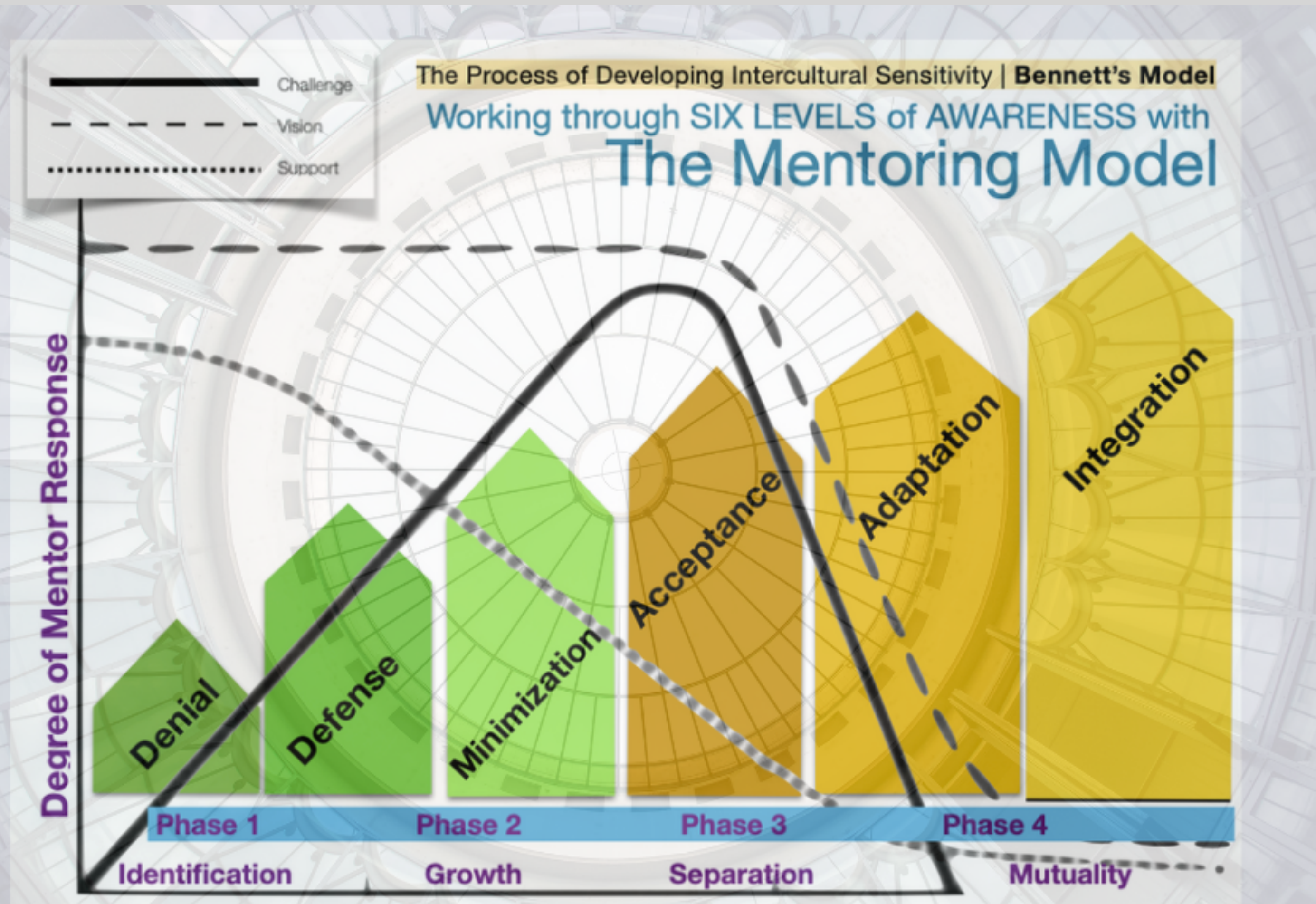
➔ Holding 'The Space Between Us'



Relationship-building means holding 'the space between us' with our presence and having respect for where one is on their journey, **conveying unconditional acceptance** of who they are and where they are.

Engaging in the counseling processes together, however, doesn't mandate personal acceptance of one's voice and views.

➡ Bennett's Model of Intercultural Sensitivity



Bennett's model of intercultural sensitivity shows how important it is for all of us to understand about full integration and what this can look like for our own quality of services. It's not about right or wrong with a culture or with one's identity of self, but what we can learn about ourselves in relation to another's feeling of identity and how we can effectively engage and offer guidance with the therapeutic processes. The intrinsic movement toward engagement can only emerge from within, through the nurturing and unfolding of one's awareness. Is it safe to step out? What is useful and what is useless?

add 2nd par idea to creating venue - early slide

➡ Integrating Bennett's Model into Relationship-Building



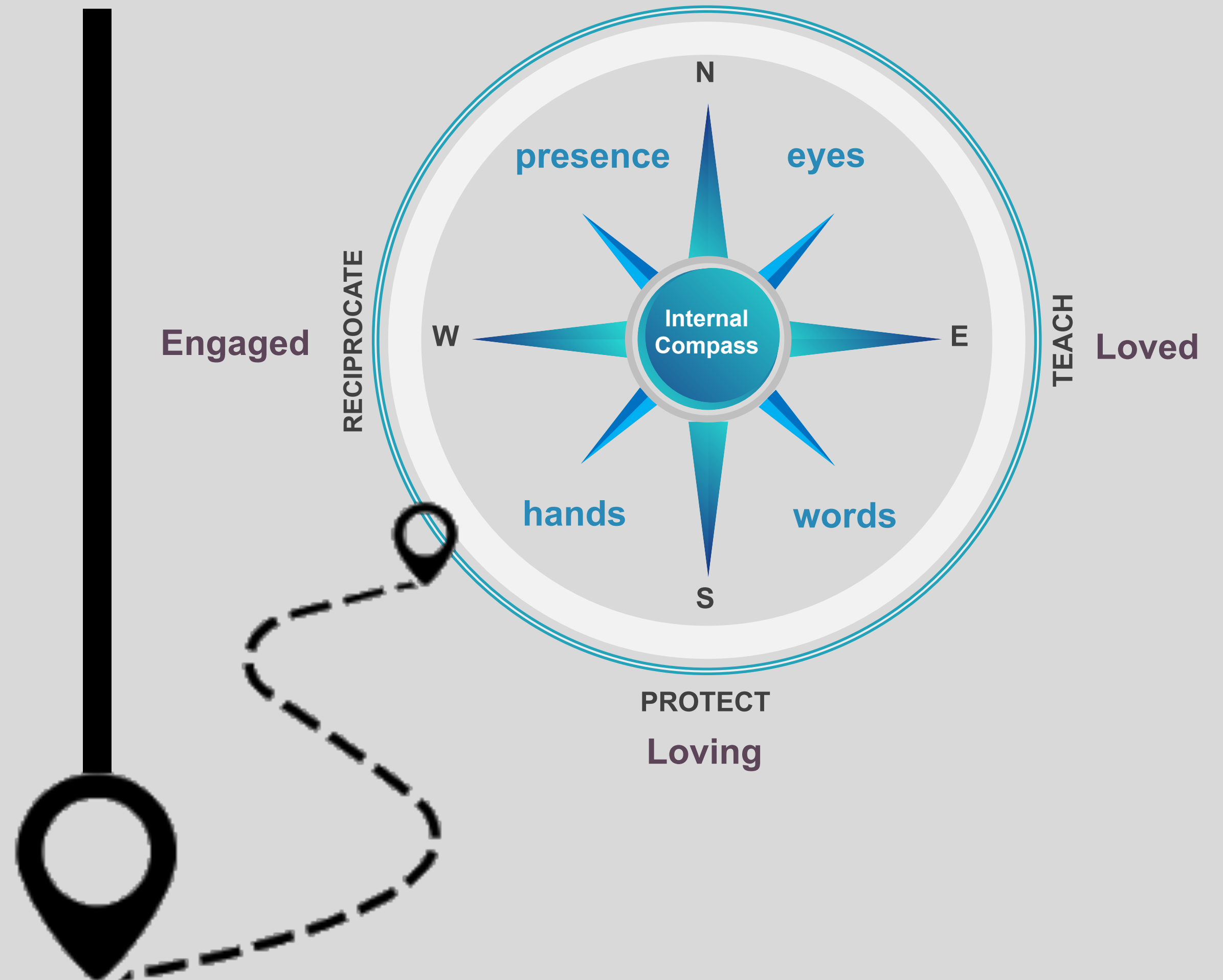
Adding Bennett's Model to the relationship-building structure of **a Gentle Teaching framework** takes a "culture-centered" approach and works through six levels of awareness to fully integrate the process of developing intercultural sensitivity. Cultivating an inclusive and innovative counseling environment requires cultural competence.

Our professional role cannot be justly effective without awareness and **knowledge of intercultural world views** and developing a sensitivity toward this.



➔ Mapping the Interior Landscape

Like a compass, the counseling dialogue provides direction, requiring some mapping of the interior landscape; where one has been, where one is at present, and where one is going, with or without intention. Together with a framework of Gentle Teaching, incorporating Bennett's Model supports the successful navigation of one's journey.



➡ Intercultural Sensitivity and Interaction

Intercultural Sensitivity is about appreciating the deeper impact of cultural differences and how we interact with others.

Intercultural Competence is a measure of one's effectiveness in such interactions with other people.



➡ Addressing Social-Emotional Structures



Bennett's Model most completely addresses the social-emotional structures of deeper value and meaning that are embedded in one's identity ➡ and **sense of belonging**.

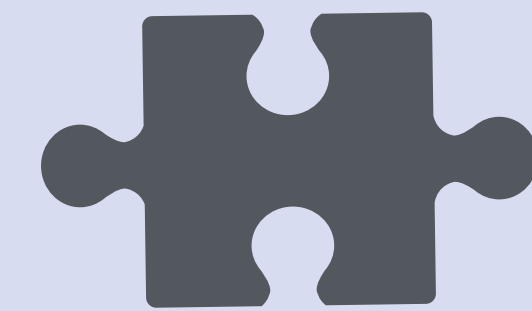
These "world-views" stem from intercultural variables that are held by the inner landscape, the social-emotional processing center that is one's foundation for true learning, awareness, growth, and change.



➡ Companionship and Learning Together



The counseling role invites companionship and learning together.



This collaborative approach gives value to interactions, with the opportunity for meaningful moments to be created and for valued connections to be made.

➡ Building Relationships for a Sense of Belonging

Within the area of integration, we are building a relationship, so our question is not 'where does this person belong,' ie. in what class, group, level, etc., but how can I support this person in teaching me about what (s)he needs to feel a sense of belonging? How can a connection be made? Where are they in the processes of integration and intercultural sensitivity? What style(s) of communication and learning might appeal to this person? As we teach, we learn; as we learn, we teach.



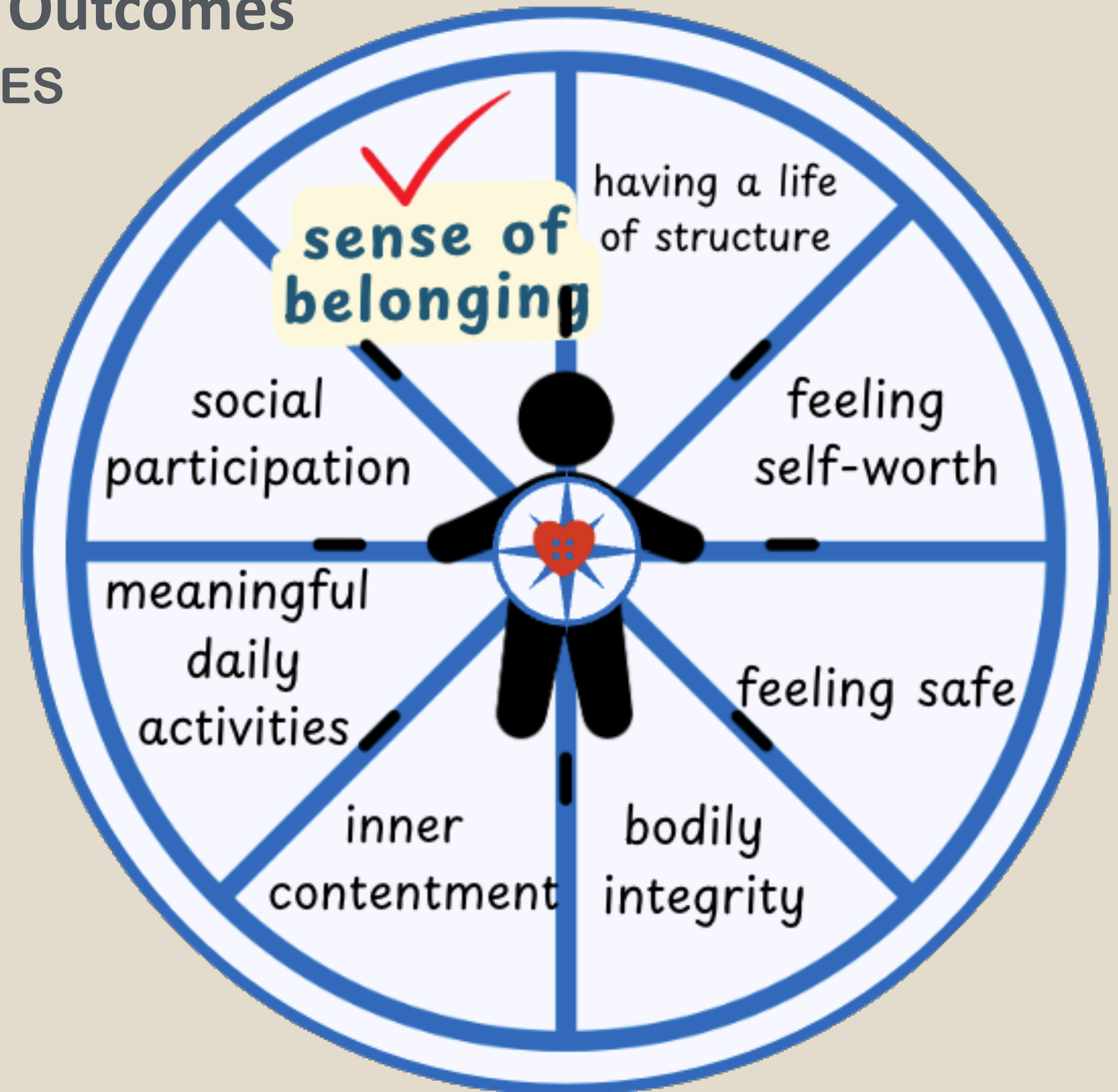
➔ Valuing and Protecting to Build Trust



In the role of counseling, valuing and protecting help in paving paths of accessibility for the expansion of possibility for each one's unknown capacity for experiencing trust and a sense of belonging. Here is the sanctuary of safe and loved. Initially, it is the responsiveness and affirming of this 'space between us' and the gentle opening of this door that welcomes one into a sense of companionship (doing things together), and a sense of community (doing things with others).

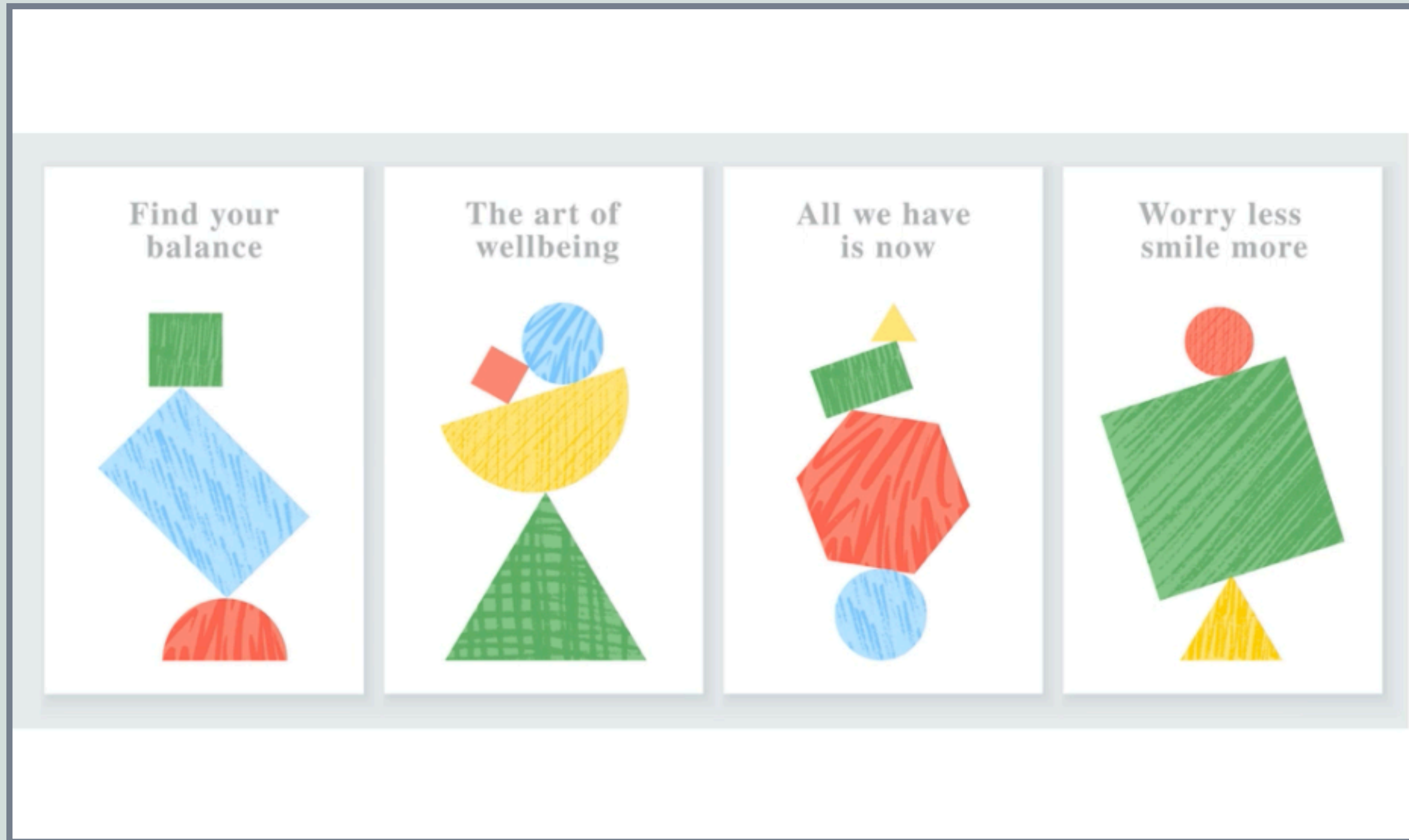
➡ Cultivating Quality-of-Life Outcomes with 8 Quality of Life VALUES

Integrating a relationship-building framework of Gentle Teaching cultivates quality-of-life outcomes and addresses marginalization and its deeper dimensions of **social justice**.



???

➡ Exploring Meaning for Quality of Life



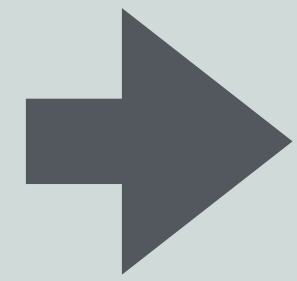
The engaged therapeutic relationship invites curiosity for exploring meaning and identifying its related value for one's learning **a sense of belonging**. Together we are creating connections that stem from the unconditional acceptance of one's **interdependent**, unified self, strengthening and mending the **social fabric** of human existence.

➡ Creating Shared Meaningful Moments

Within shared moments are the meaningful moments we create, along with integrating meaningful rituals.

These cultivate self-worth and deepen one's sense of belonging, supporting one in becoming able to experience a true 'knowing' feeling of safe and loved.





Defining Meaning and Value

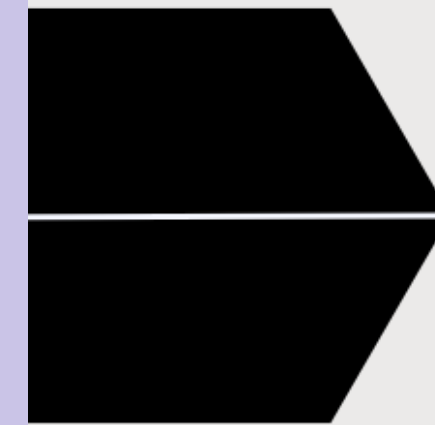
delivering an unconditional invitation to trust and engage



This approach defines meaning and value with a clear voice and vision for counseling. Again, the innovative path of **intercultural integration begins with “presence,”** the sensory script (experiential learning) that delivers an **unconditional invitation to trust and engage,** creating accessible means and ways for self-discovery and the unfolding of self-determination.

➡ Social Justice and Inclusion

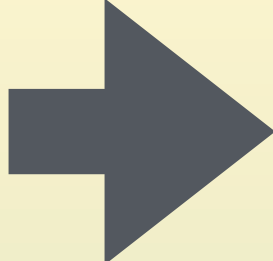
Social justice isn't just about acceptance and inclusion; it's about making adjustments within the developmental structure, for integrating what is being learned. Meaningful moments can be created, regardless of intercultural sensitivity.



Life's most
persistent
and urgent
question is,
'What are you
doing for others?'

~Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.





Creating Meaningful Moments (CMM)



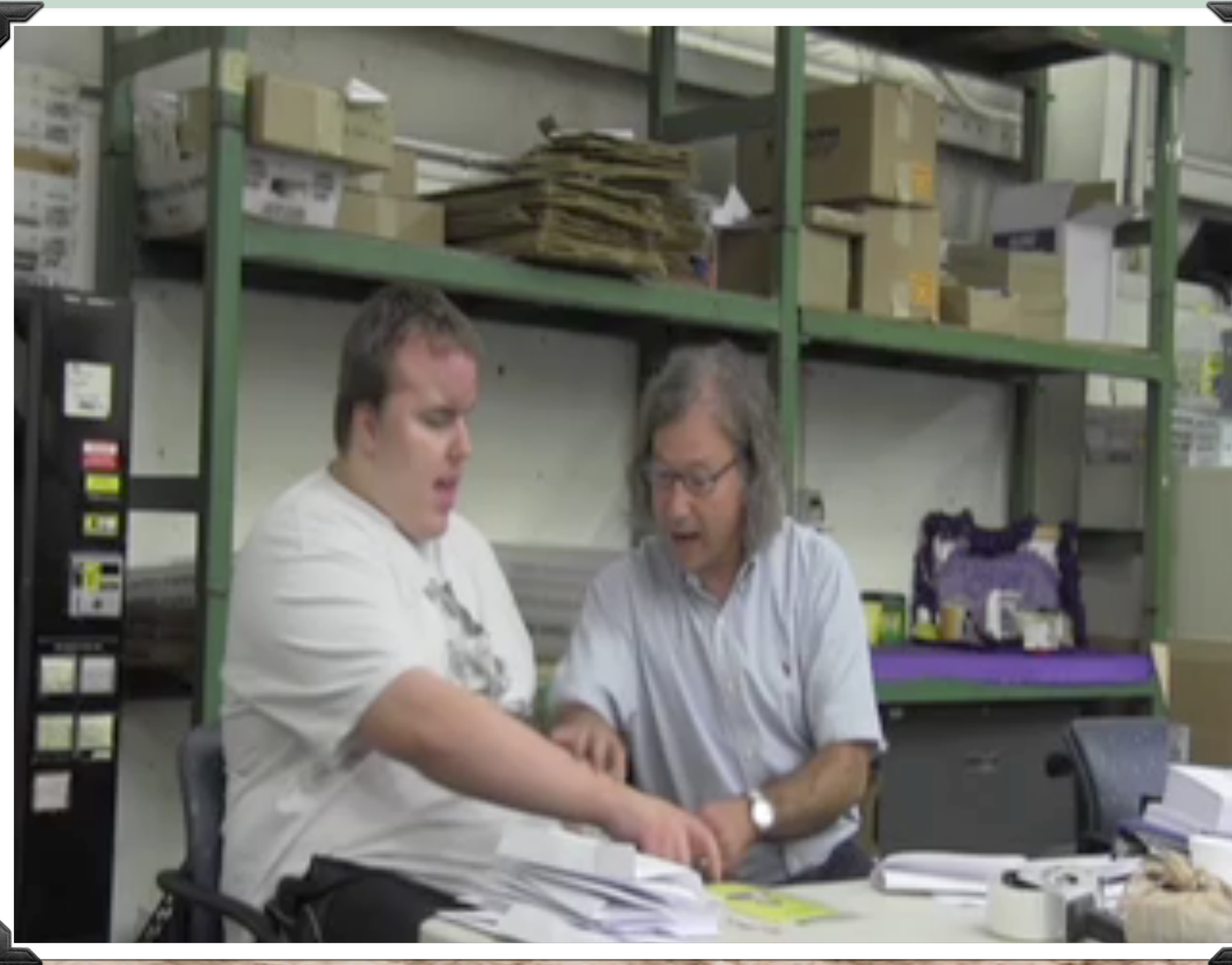
Creating Meaningful Moments (CMM) is the purpose and outcome of counseling interactions, with impressions of discovery and experiential learning that can continue outside of the counseling environment.

➔ Creating New Moral Memory

Meaning for one's life is not 'found' as much as it is created with moments that create new moral memory and create the space within our awareness for a meaningful existence.



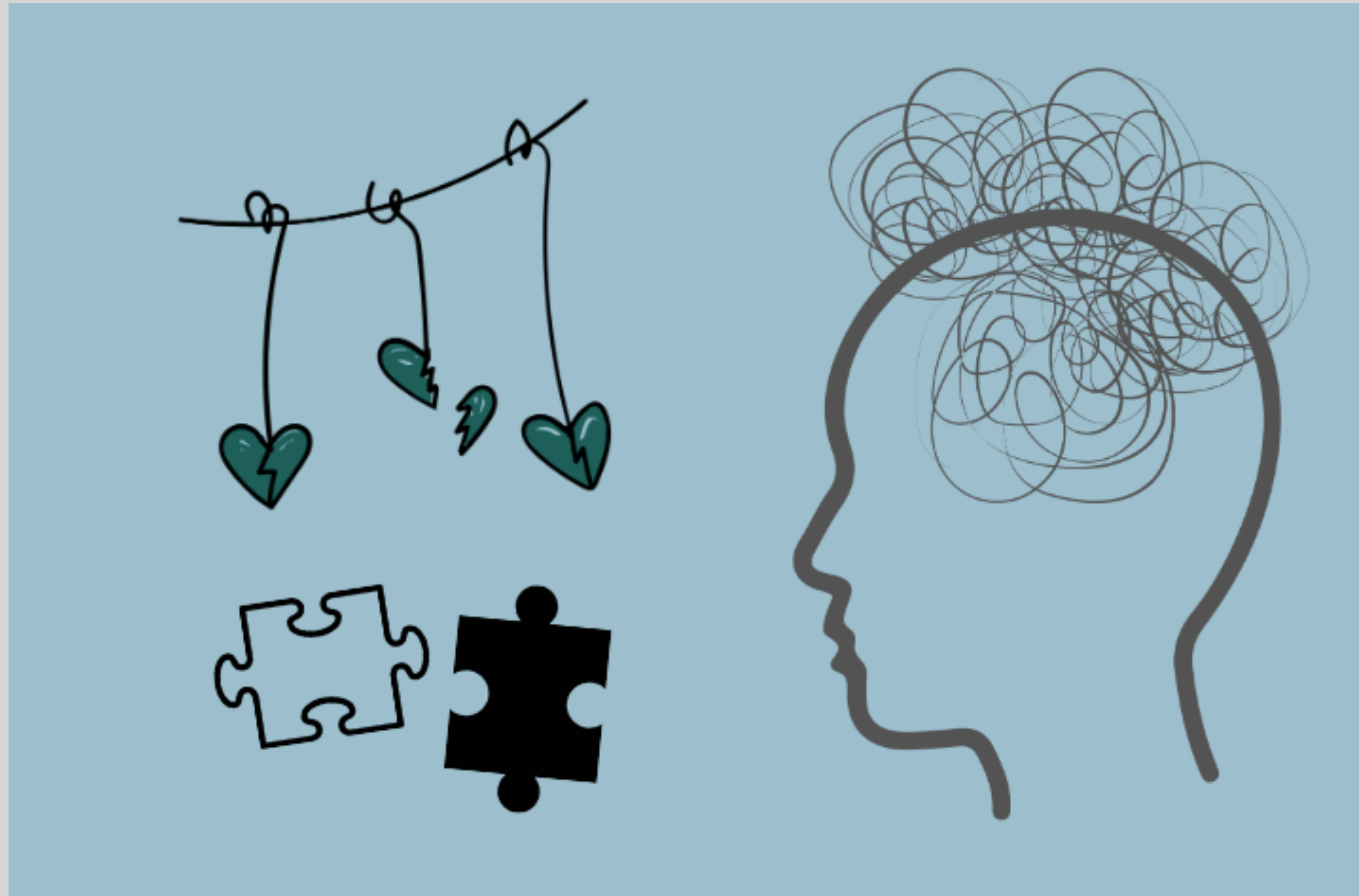
➡ Repeating New Patterns for Integration



New moral memory can develop when a new pattern is learned for the social-emotional processing of information. Much like practice of a new skill, the repetition of the new pattern is what allows for this integration.



➡ Trauma and New Moral Memory



Especially in working with trauma-informed expressions, a shift in awareness evolves as new moral memory is being created and becoming rooted in the “feeling/sense” foundation of self-concepts.

➡ Inviting Relationship-Building

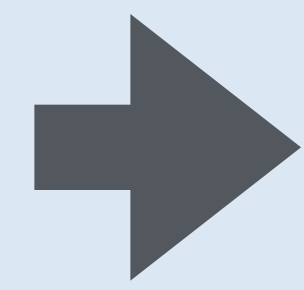
A Gentle Teaching framework invites relationship-building potential, the invitational space 'between' all interconnecting points, where the mirroring of meaning and value exists for human connection; for creating new moral memory; for returning to the interdependent roots of our relational existence.



➡ New Moral Memory and Self-Perception

New moral memory relates to rearranging past experience in a new light of value and meaning. This is foundational work—the groundwork of how one learns, processes, is aware, perceives and constructs the Self.





Navigating and Narrating

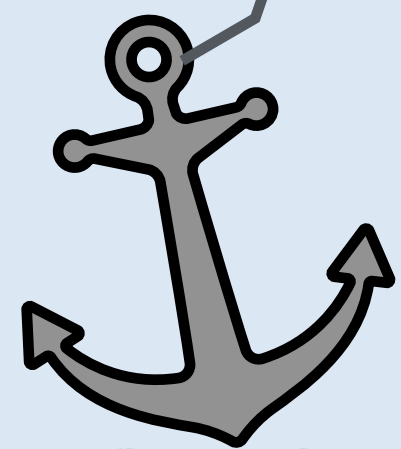
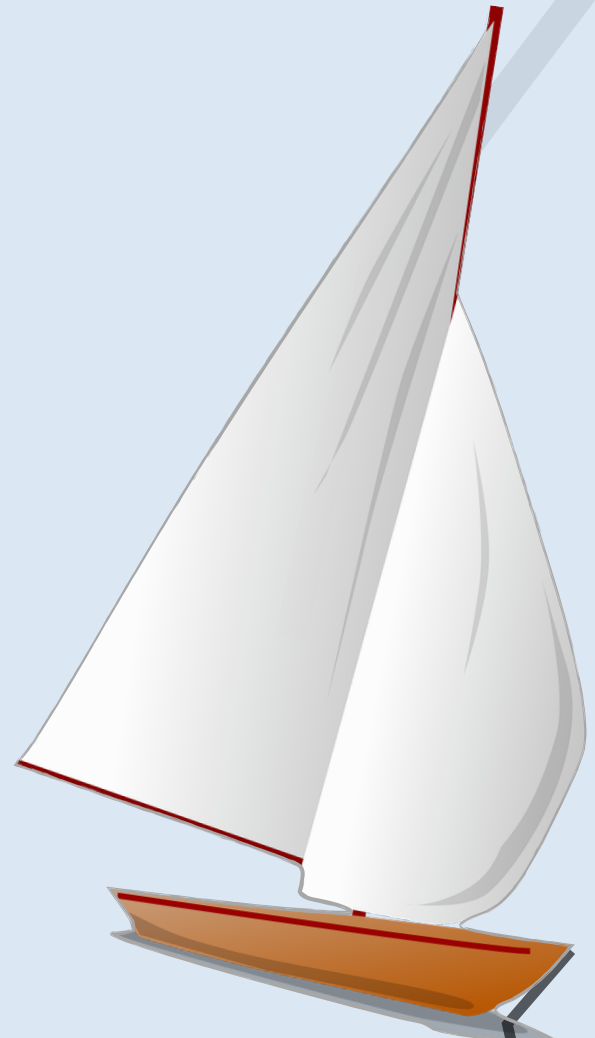
Journeying with Gentle Teaching...



A framework of Gentle Teaching is ideal for cultivating **a sense of belonging**, creating meaningful moments that give **value, vision, and direction** for mapping destinations for a culture of gentleness, and navigating one's journey of discovery.

Collaborative discovery about the authentic Self unfolds with a clearer voice and imagination for dreaming and informing the potential Self.

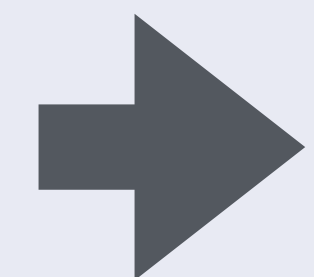
Relationship-building aspects prepare the foundation and the invitation for accessibility (through companionship) to experiential learning and levels of engagement. Like a revolving door, social-emotional experience circles around a central axis of awareness, shifting and adjusting the lens of self-perception with depth of value and perceived meaning.



Produced by Quality of Life Institute, Inc. ©2024. All rights reserved.



A Sense of Belonging



“Quality of Life begins with feeling safe and loved.”

qualityoflifeinstitute.org

about your presenter...

Dr. Anthony (“Tony”) M. McCrovitz



Anthony (Tony) M. McCrovitz, Ph.D., is the executive director for Quality of Life Institute, Inc., and Globe Star, an Indiana agency that he co-founded in 1996. Globe Star provides accredited, quality-of-life services for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.

Dr. McCrovitz developed a Quality-of-Life Model™ of direct services, based on the relationship-building, person-centered philosophy of Gentle Teaching. He serves as a consultant, mentor, and provider of training and support with this model of services. Tony is a licensed mental health counselor and psychologist, with clinical training and specialization in child development and the integration of approaches that are rooted in holistic, bio-psychosocial models.

In addition to training and mentoring professionals, he has held numerous, adjunct faculty positions to take on the teaching of developmental psychology and lifespan coursework to both undergraduate and graduate students, at local colleges and universities.

Since the start of his career, Tony’s work has revolved around advocating for individuals with disabilities in overcoming cultural and/or community barriers, creating plans, solutions, and support services to improve their overall quality of life.

He holds a doctorate in I/O Psychology from Walden University, a respecialization in Clinical Psychology from Adler Professional School of Psychology, an MBA from Indiana Wesleyan University, and a master’s degree in pastoral counseling from Loyola University of Chicago. He is the co-author of Anthony’s Backpack, A Child’s Journey into Gentleness (2010), and author of Return to Gentleness, Journeying with Gentle Teaching (2022).

Anthony is dedicated to the sharing of knowledge and solutions, for the sustainable development of inclusive, learning communities and resources, and to supporting processes of self-awareness and growth that have value and meaning for life and learning, or for professional development and practice.

In addition to providing leadership for local and state associations, Tony serves as President of the Indiana Professional Counseling Foundation and is a current board member and past president of the Indiana Counseling Association. He’s an active member of international governing boards that include both Gentle Teaching and the International Snoezelen™ Association (ISNA-MSE).

On occasion, he joins his colleagues in different cultural settings, to participate in training opportunities that benefit both professional competence and quality of life for Individuals. Most recent (pre-Covid) workshops presented together were in the Czech Republic, Italy, and at the Rehabilitation Forum in Saudi Arabia.