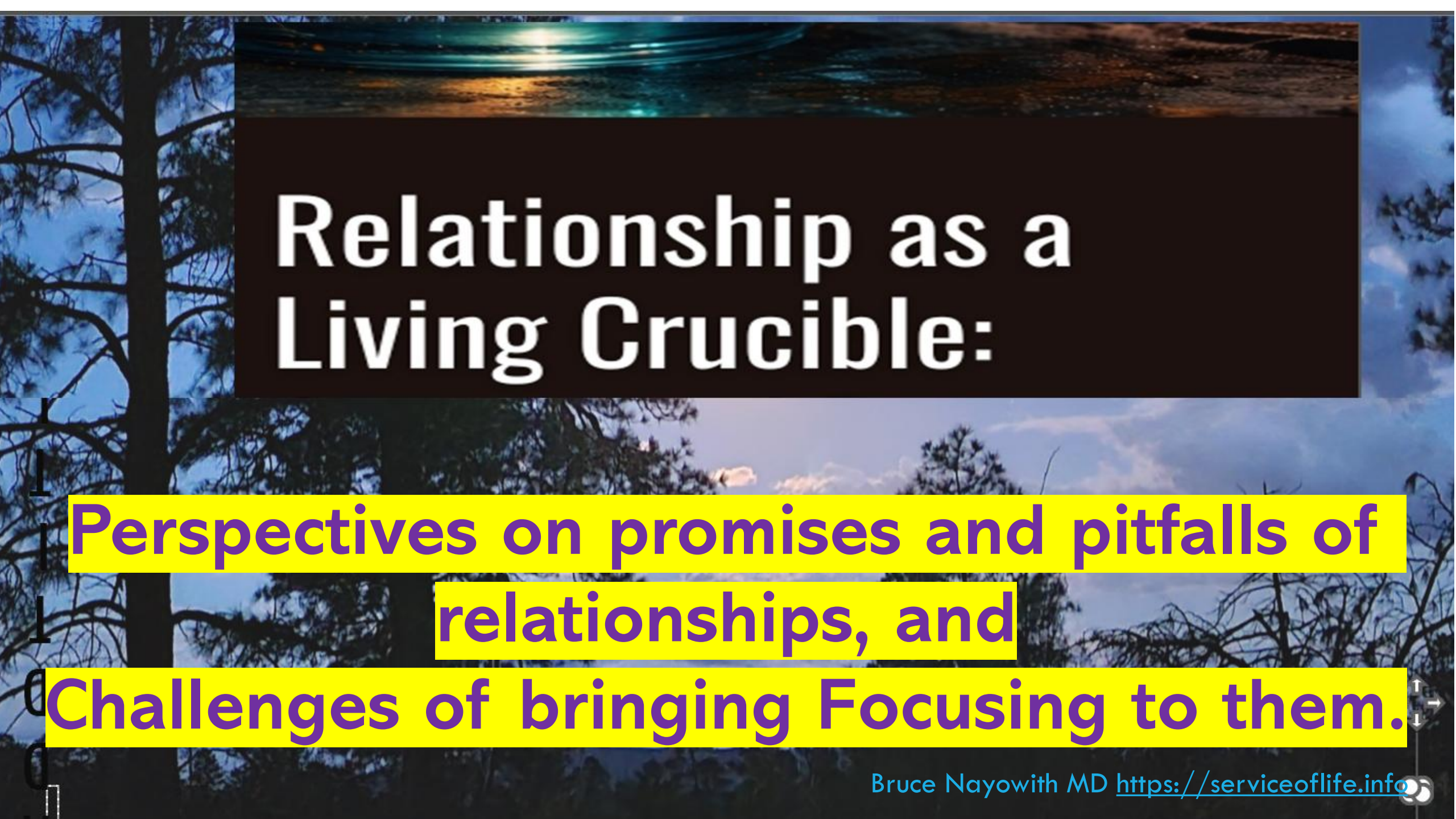




Relationship as a Living Crucible:

**Perspectives on promises and pitfalls of
relationships, and
Challenges of bringing Focusing to them.**

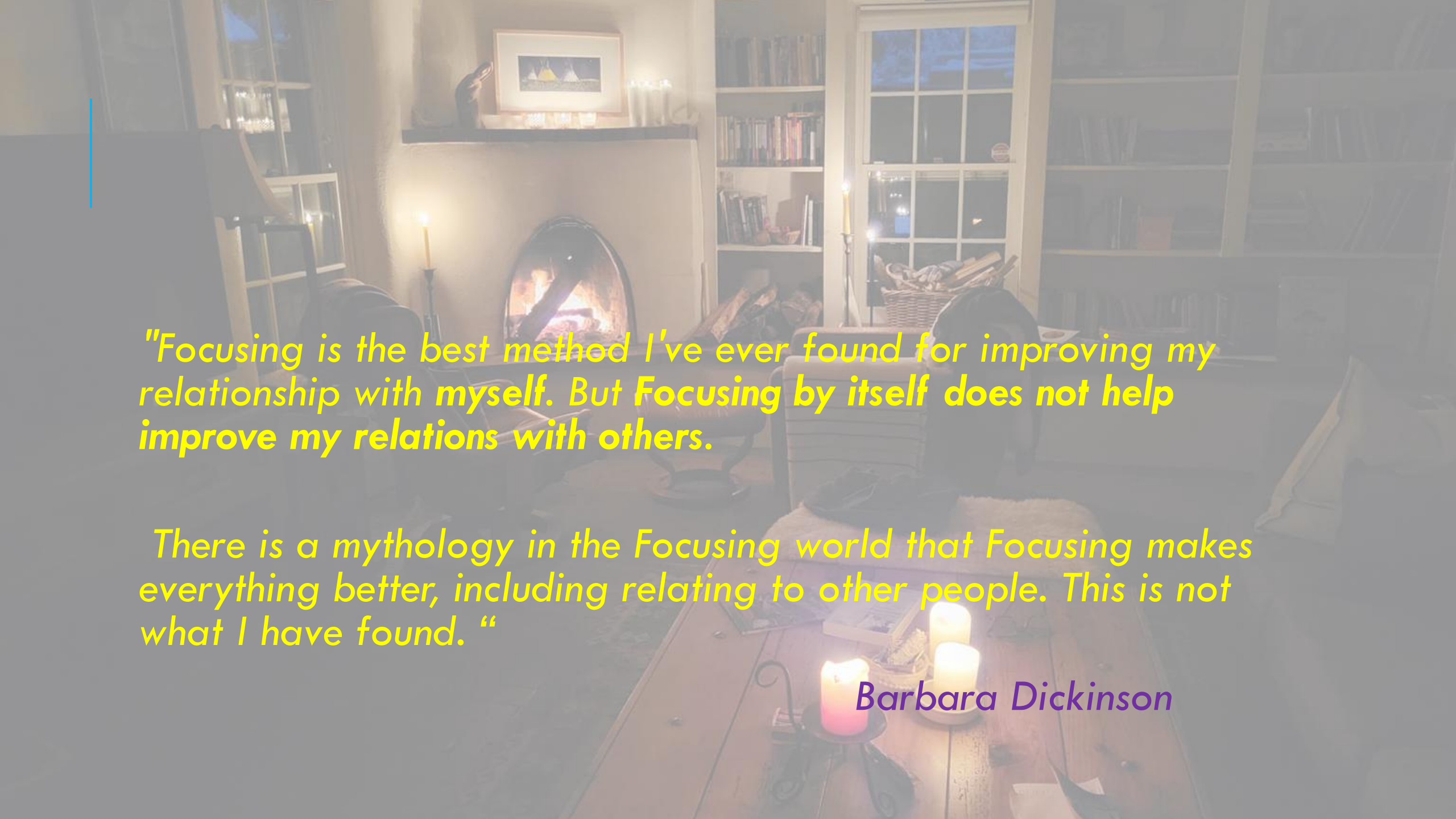
Focusing offers new possibilities for intimacy

- Sense of Connection
- Sense of Intimacy
- Being Heard
- Feeling Felt

“Love is me feeling you, feeling me”

Focusing also raises expectations

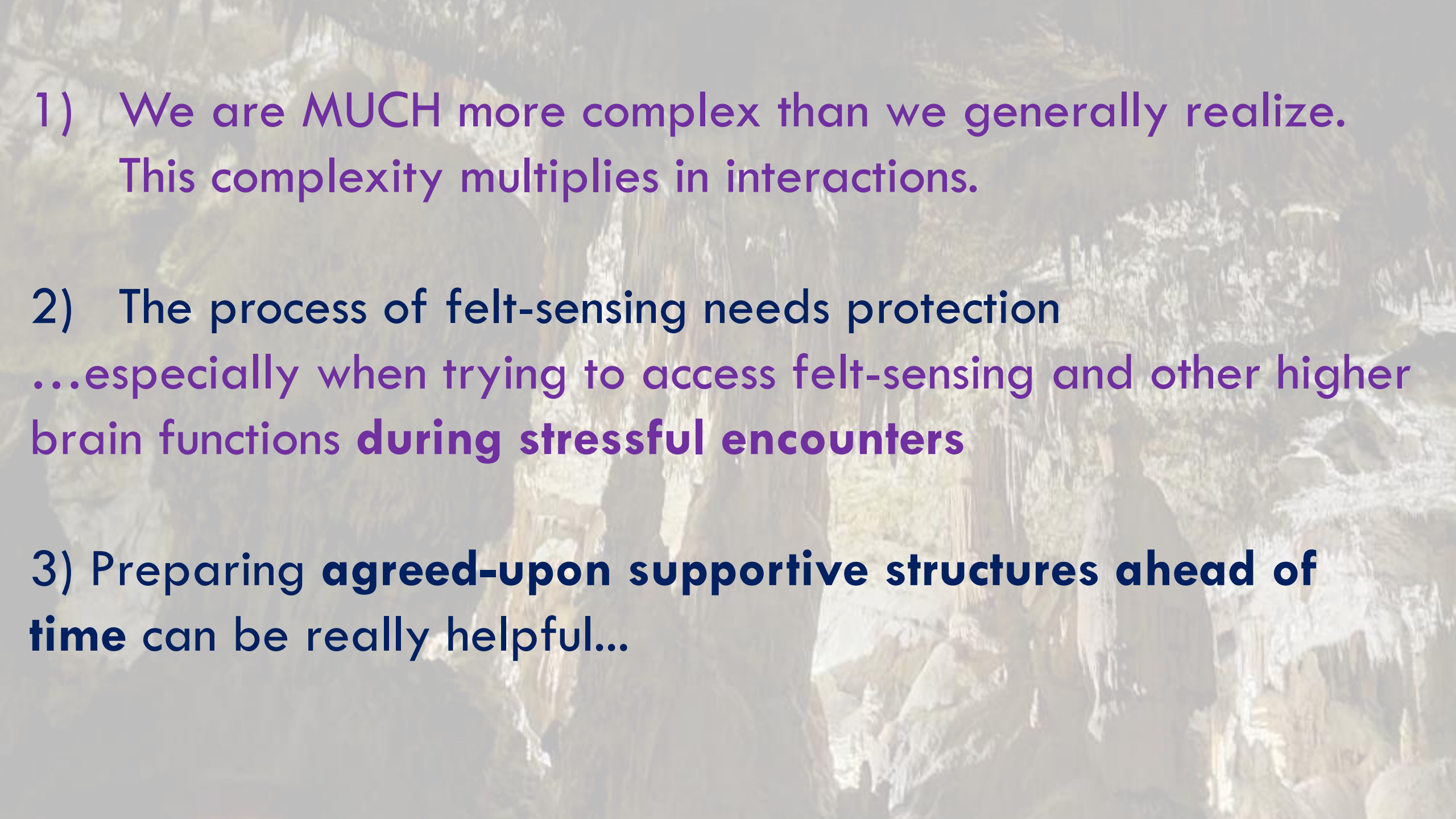


A dimly lit, cozy living room at night. In the background, a fireplace with a warm fire burning inside. Above the fireplace is a mantel with a small framed picture and some decorative items. To the right, a large window looks out onto a dark night. Bookshelves filled with books line the walls. In the foreground, a wooden table holds several lit candles in holders, creating a warm, intimate atmosphere.

"Focusing is the best method I've ever found for improving my relationship with myself. But Focusing by itself does not help improve my relations with others."

There is a mythology in the Focusing world that Focusing makes everything better, including relating to other people. This is not what I have found. "

Barbara Dickinson

A person wearing a dark, hooded cloak stands in a misty, rocky landscape. The person is facing away from the camera, looking towards a distant, hazy horizon. The ground is covered in large, light-colored rocks and patches of moss. The background is a dense, misty forest of tall, thin trees. The overall atmosphere is mysterious and somber.

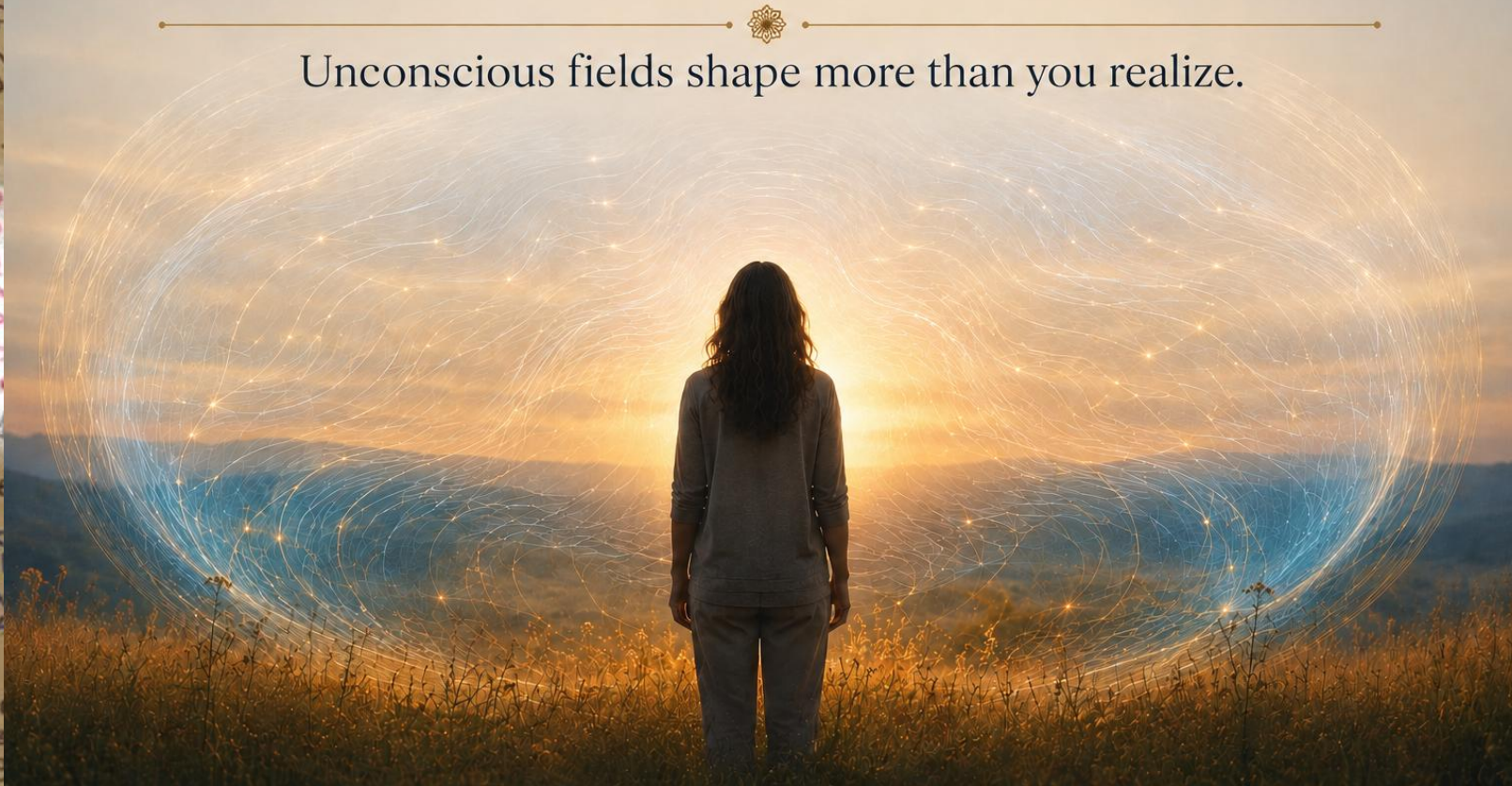
1) We are MUCH more complex than we generally realize.
This complexity multiplies in interactions.

2) The process of felt-sensing needs protection
...especially when trying to access felt-sensing and other higher
brain functions **during stressful encounters**

3) Preparing **agreed-upon supportive structures ahead of
time** can be really helpful...

What's in our field?

Unconscious fields shape more than you realize.



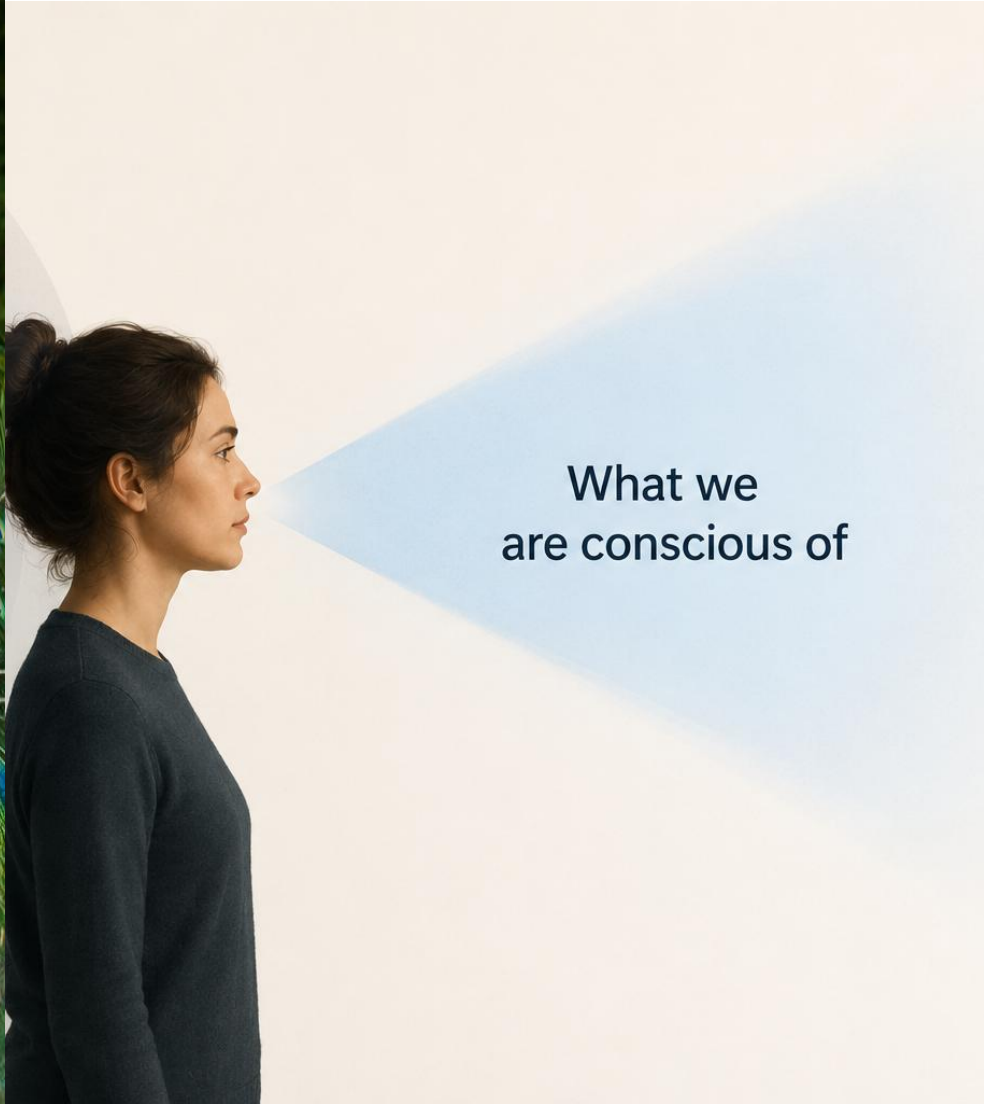
In each relationship are explicit elements, people, and things.

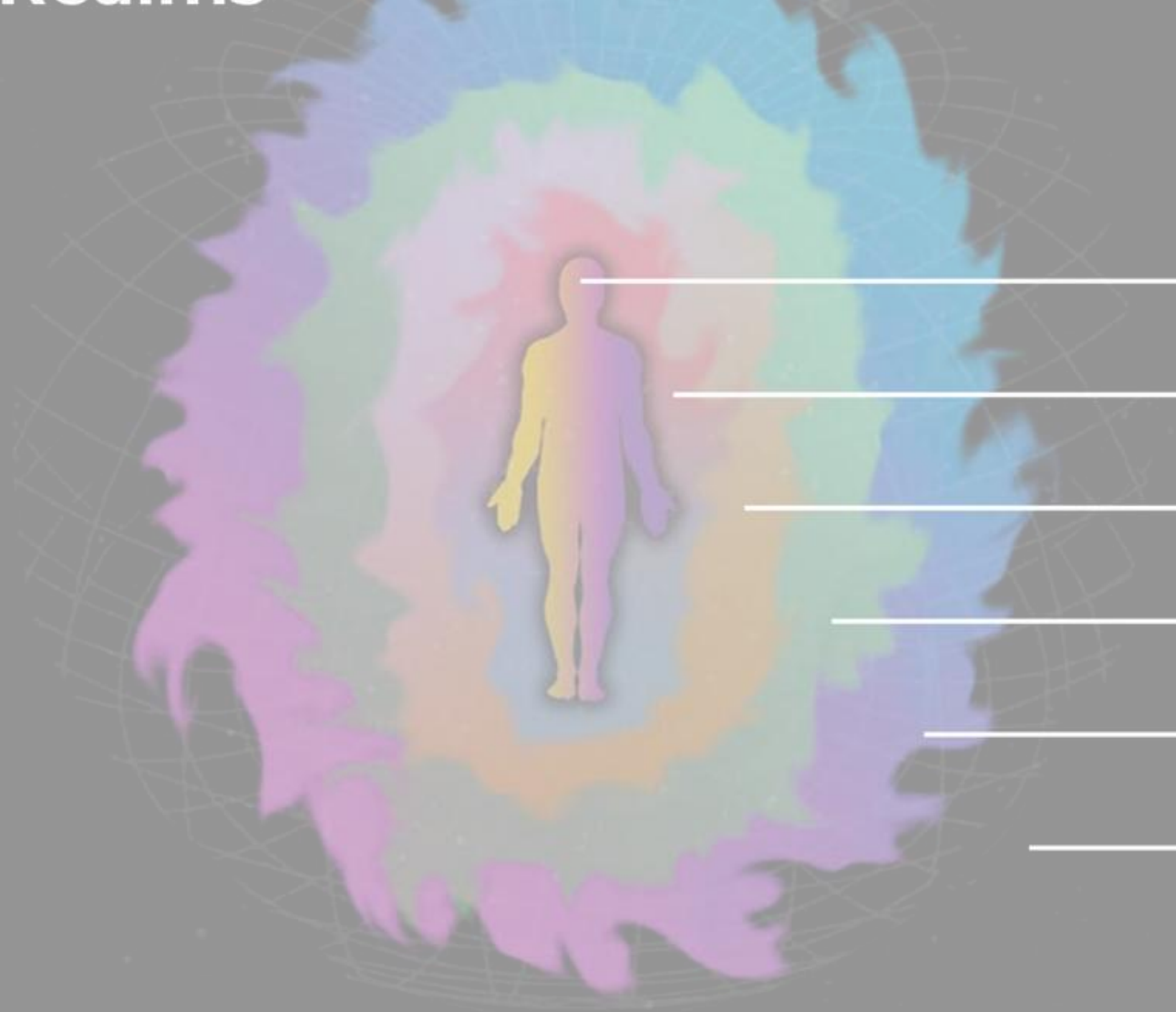


Underneath those parts are implicit, hidden, invisible dynamics.

We may have to intentionally seek them to become aware of them...

Together, the explicit and the implicit create a field – a dynamic field of energy and information.





Body

Emotional

Systemic

Disincarnate

Archetypal

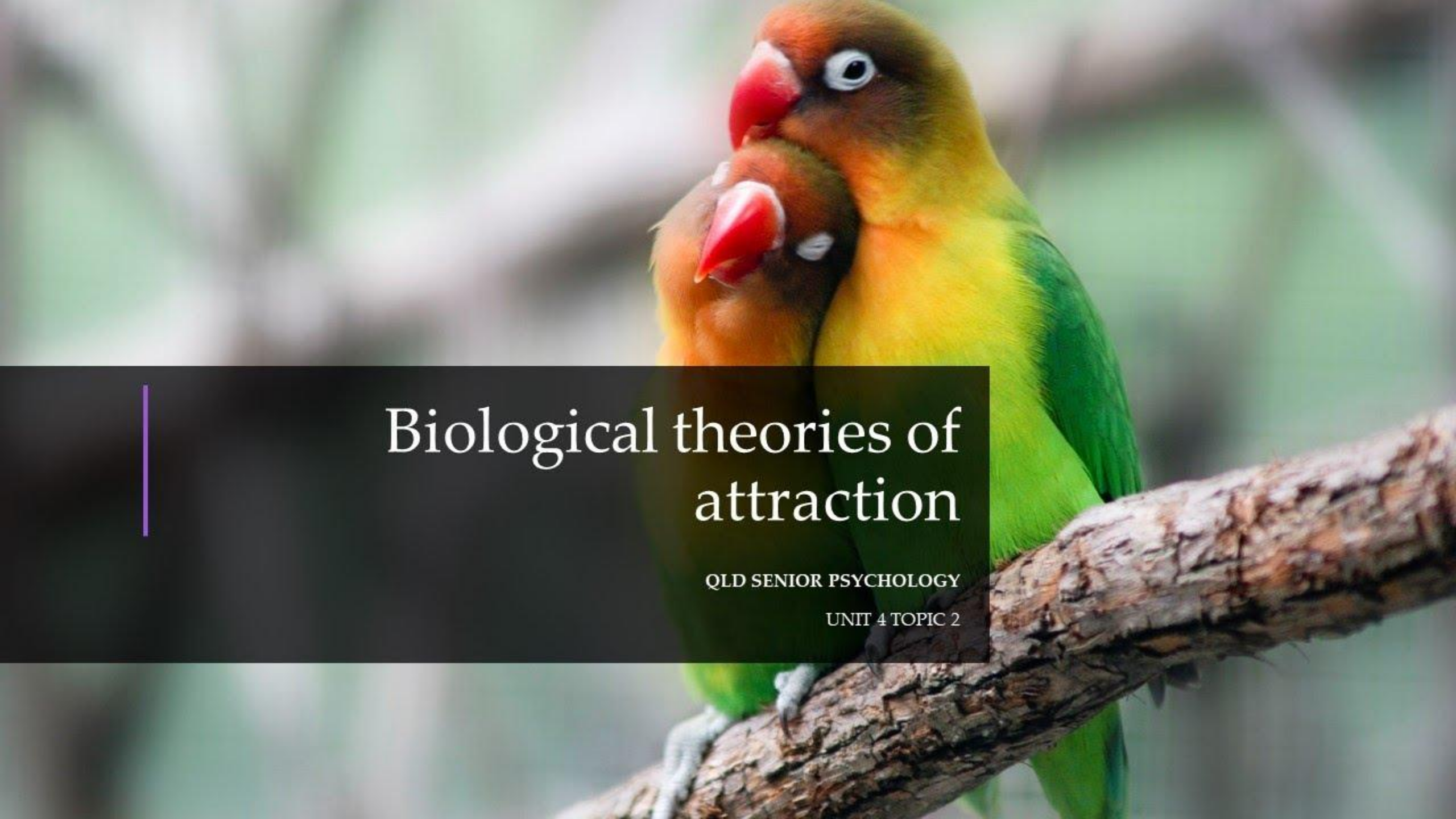
Source



BIOLOGICAL FORCES

Biological drive for coupling



A close-up photograph of two lovebirds perched on a thick, textured tree branch. The bird in the foreground is a male, with a bright green body and a yellow-orange head and neck. It has a large, bright red beak and a white ring around its eye. It is looking slightly to the left. The second bird is partially visible behind it, also with a red beak. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green, suggesting a natural habitat. A dark, semi-transparent rectangular box is overlaid on the lower half of the image, containing white text. To the left of this box, there is a thin vertical purple line.

Biological theories of attraction

QLD SENIOR PSYCHOLOGY

UNIT 4 TOPIC 2



**BIOGRAPHICAL
and
PSYCHOLOGICAL
INFLUENCES**
enter into implicit
memory
in Relationships

**HER FATHER'S
INFLUENCE**

She experienced warmth, consistency, and being cherished by her dad.

Now she's drawn to a partner who feels safe, steady, and devoted.

**HIS MOTHER'S
INFLUENCE**

He experienced deep emotional connection, openness, and feeling truly seen by his mom.

Now he's drawn to a partner who is warm, expressive, and emotionally present.

**SYSTEMIC
FORCES
Familial
And
Ancestral**

INFLUENCES BEING PASSED DOWN THE GENERATIONS



SYSTEMIC FORCES

Familial and Ancestral

The field of our family contains

-multiple cross-generational dynamics,

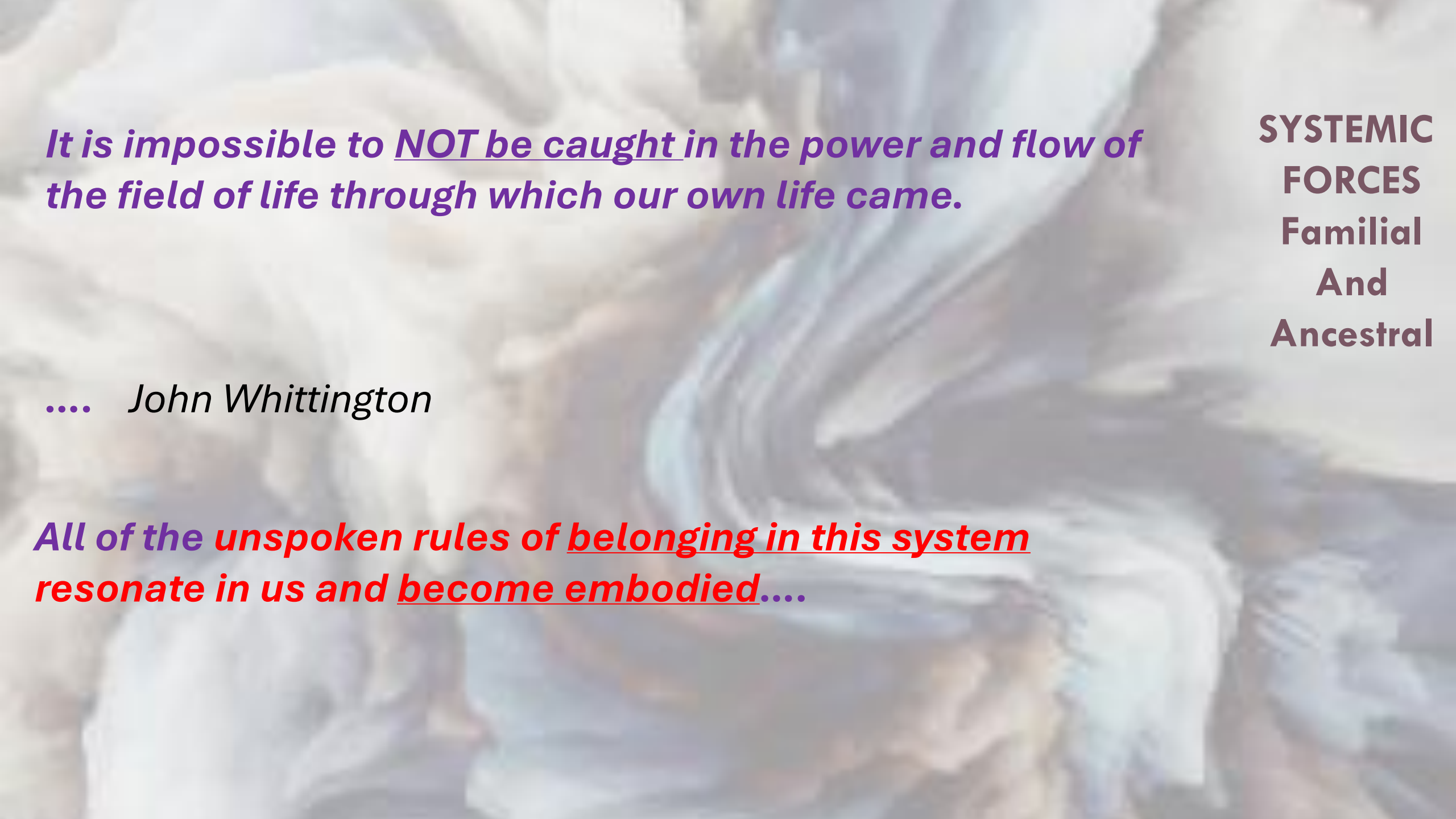
-covert repeating patterns,

-hidden loyalties,

-deep resources

as well as ***the flow of life and love particular to our family.***

John Whittington



It is impossible to NOT be caught in the power and flow of the field of life through which our own life came.

**SYSTEMIC
FORCES
Familial
And
Ancestral**

.... John Whittington

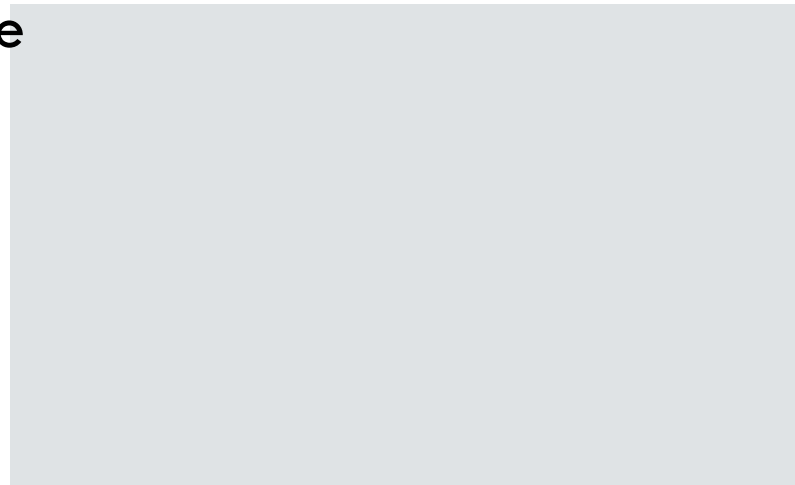
All of the unspoken rules of belonging in this system resonate in us and become embodied....

ARCHETYPAL FORCES

By William-Adolphe Bouguereau -
Unknown source, Public Domain,
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=432856>

-Universal symbols responsible for who you are, how the world sees you, and what you believe about yourself and your life's purpose.

This realm is filled with powerful symbols that drive your thoughts, behaviors, and actions--often without your knowledge.



“Do you want to see HER?”



•
•
Top Row:

Demeter, Hera, Zeus, Poseidon

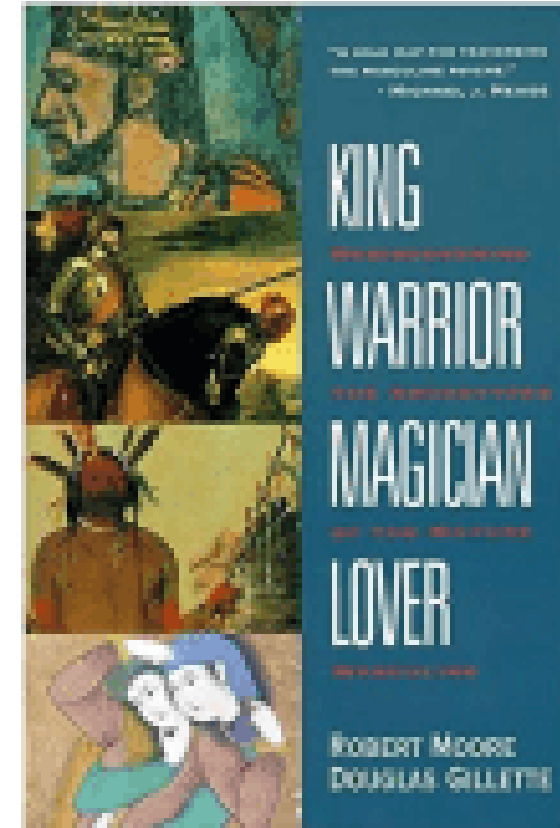
Middle Row: Hestia, Athena, Apollo, Artemis, Aphrodite

• **Lower row: Ares, Hephaestus, Hermes, Dionysus, Persephone, Hades**

The 7 *Feminine* Archetypes



King, Warrior, Magician, Lover: Rediscovering the Archetypes of the Mature Masculine by Douglas Gillette



Copy Paste Link Below to Get The Book!

<https://bookandpdf.com/King,-Warrior,-Magic-0962506064.html>

People come together with
their projections, cultural
myths, shadow, ancestral
material, and archetypal
influences.





Sensing into Layers of Your Field - Groups of 3

Options for Each Person during their turn:

1- A **Standard Focusing Turn**: What comes for you around all of this?

2- Gently direct your attention to **sensing-into what you notice in your own field**, and notice what arises

[2A – if you wish, you can invite the other two Companions to also sense into your field, and **share what they notice** realizing that it is laced with their own projections!!!

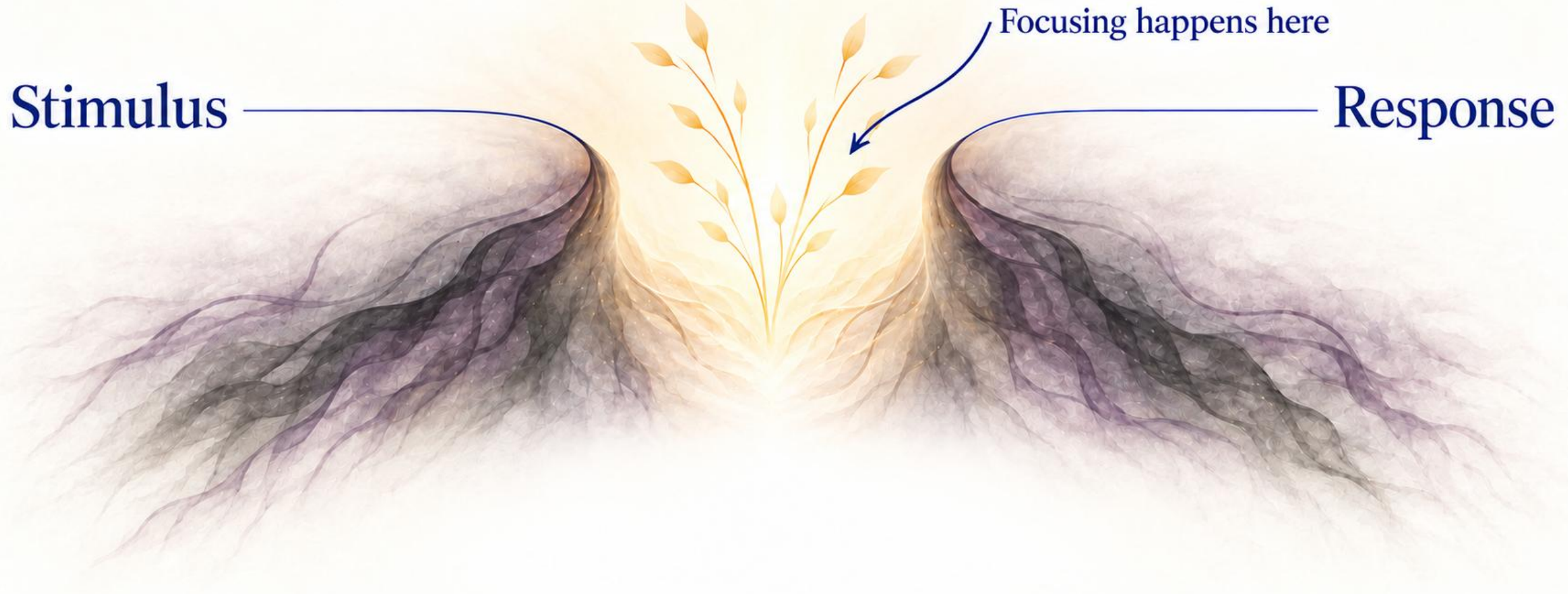
The original Focuser can respond in three ways

- Yes, they got me
- No, wrong. *That is probably their stuff*
- Interesting.... *Opens something to explore*

3- Ask the other two to **Represent a layer of your field**. Notice what happens, and see how what they describe resonates for you.



Opening a Space for a Vibrant/Emergent Future



Three Streams of the Future

The Patterned Future

2. Habit

Comfort · Repetition
· Routine

3. Trauma

Wounds · Fear
· Stuckness

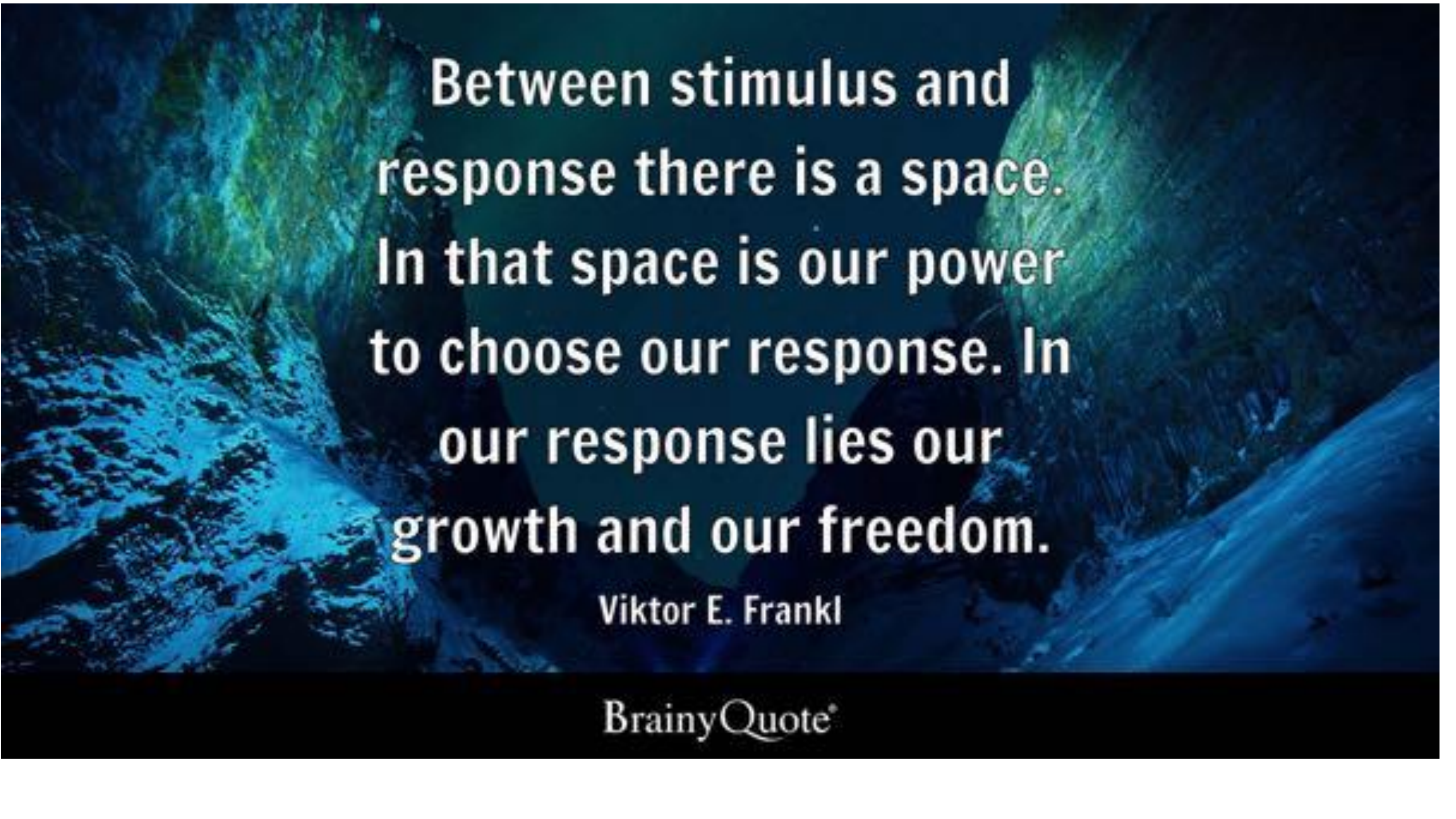
1. Emerging Future

Creativity · Possibility · Growth

2. Habit

· Comfort
· Repetition · Routine



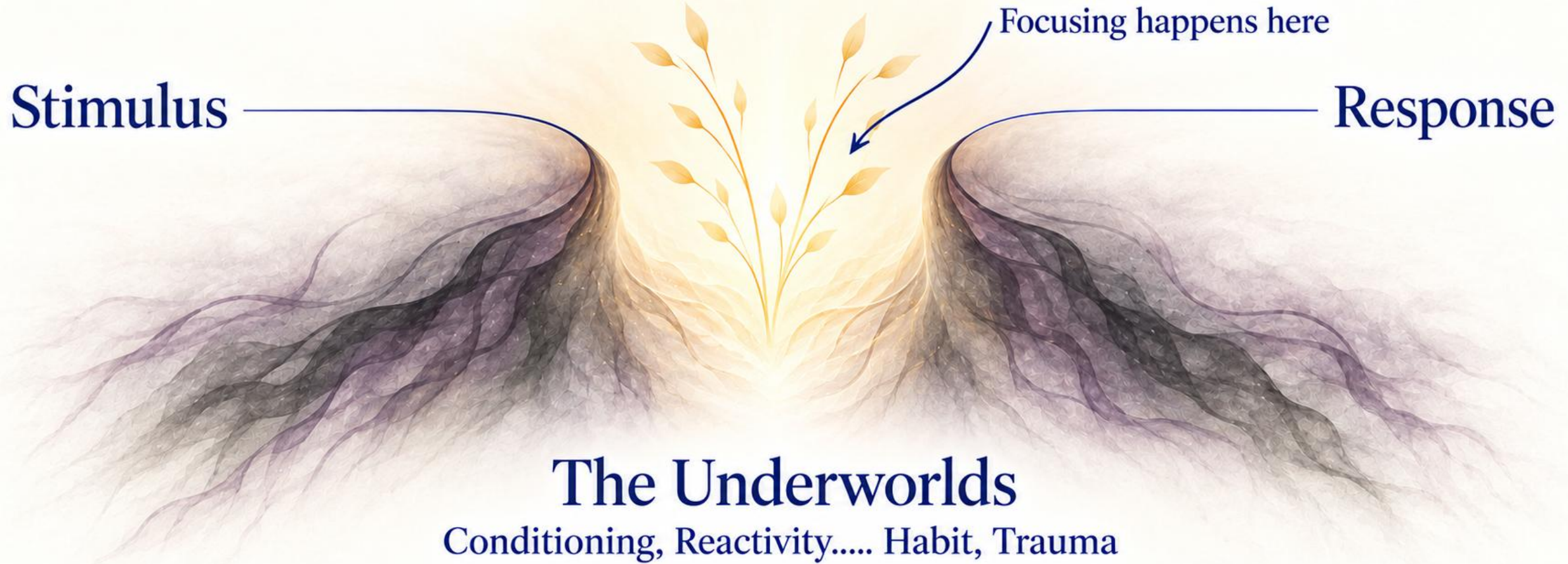


Between stimulus and
response there is a space.
In that space is our power
to choose our response. In
our response lies our
growth and our freedom.

Viktor E. Frankl

BrainyQuote®

Opening a Space for a Vibrant/Emergent Future



The Patterned Future

Stimulus

Response



The Underworlds

Conditioning, Reactivity.... Habit, Trauma

A NEUROBIOLOGICAL DEFINITION OF TRAUMA:

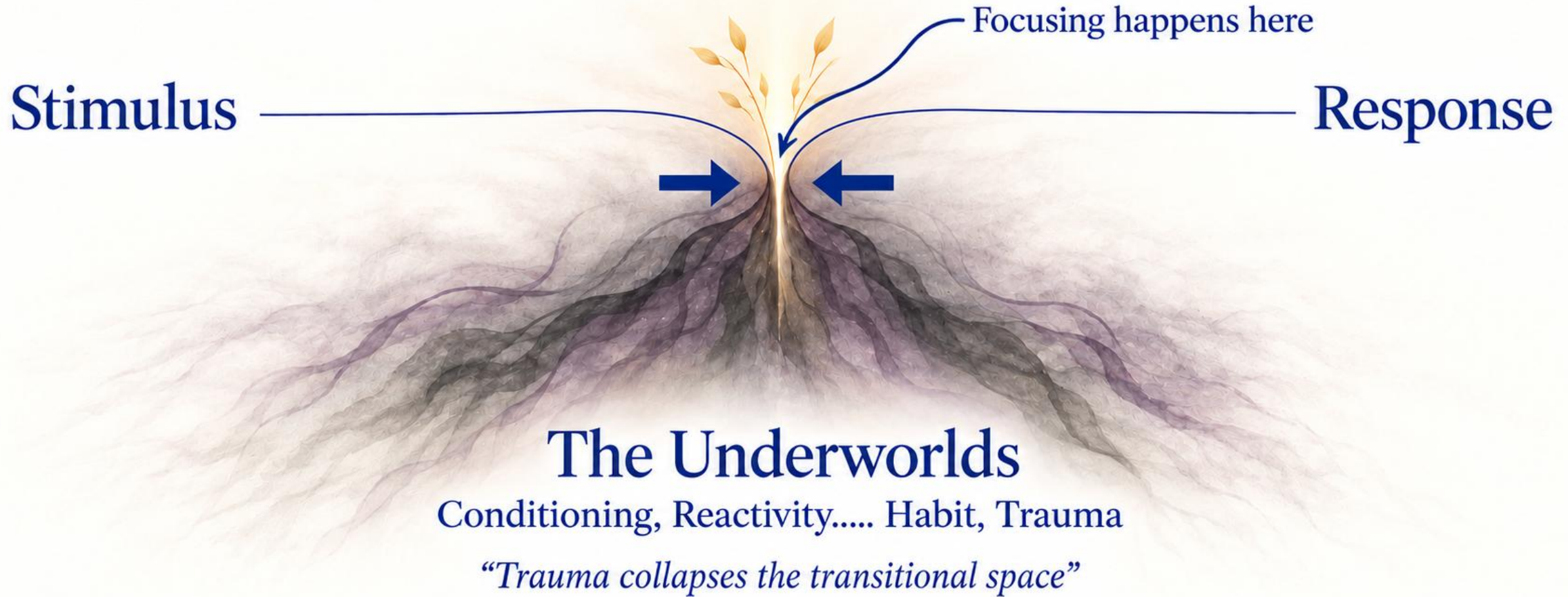
TRAUMA IS **UNINTEGRATED MATERIAL** CHARACTERIZED BY
EXCESSIVE **RIGIDITY**, **CHAOS**, OR BOTH

DAN SIEGEL MD

“Trauma collapses the transitional space”



Opening a Space for a Vibrant/Emergent Future



Trauma

Wounds · Fear
· Stuckness

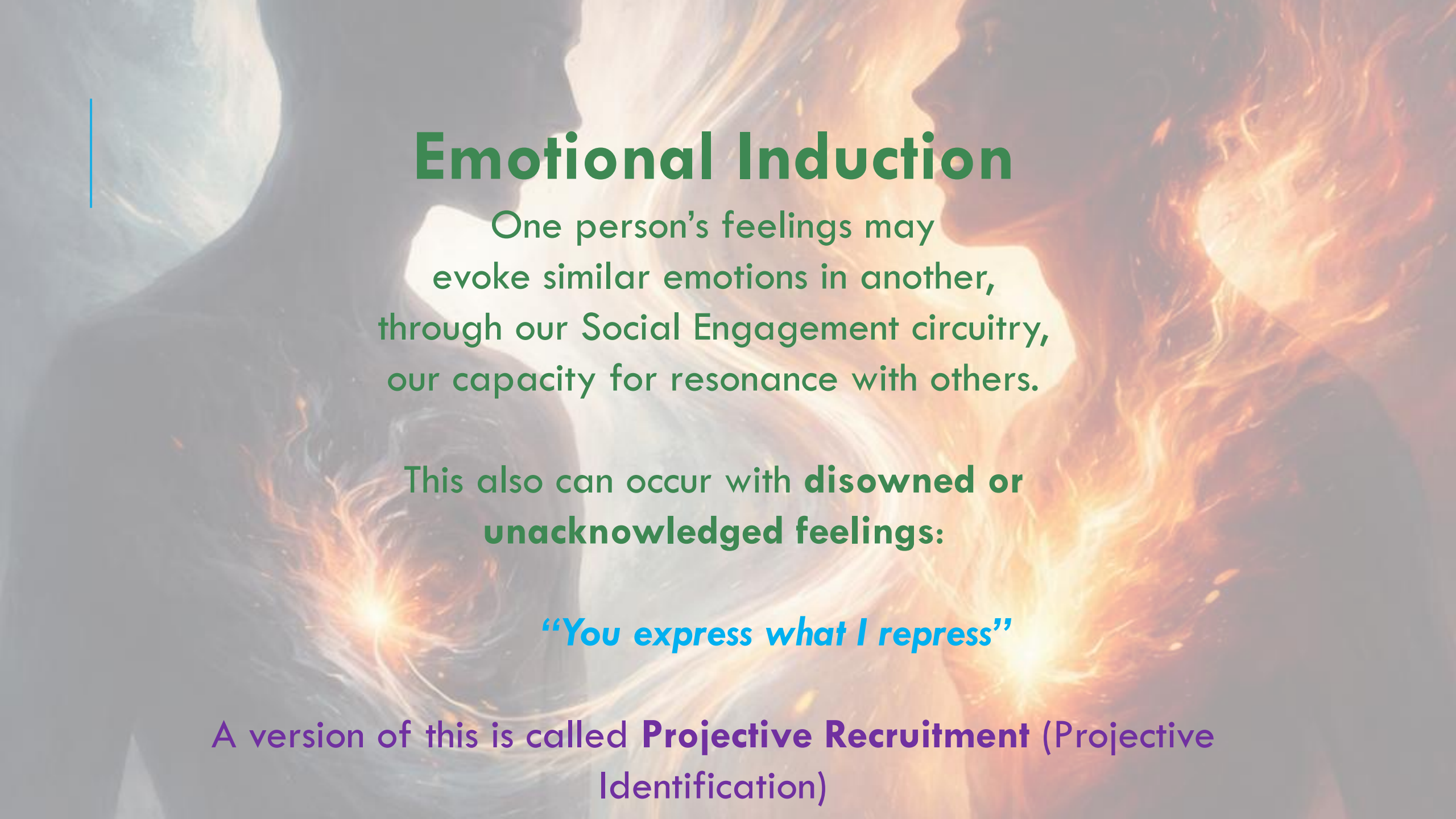
Emerging Future

Habit

Comfort · Repetition
· Routine

The image features two human silhouettes standing back-to-back, holding hands. They are positioned in the center, with their bodies glowing from a bright, multi-colored energy source. Surrounding each silhouette is a large, concentric, rainbow-colored energy field that resembles a vortex or a portal. The background is a deep space filled with stars and nebulae. The overall color palette is dominated by purples, blues, and oranges, creating a mystical and ethereal atmosphere.

As intimacy deepens, the relationship may
descend into states of confusion, conflict,
disillusionment, and suffering.

The background of the slide features a soft-focus image of two people's profiles facing each other. Between them, there are vibrant, swirling patterns of light and energy in shades of orange, yellow, and white, suggesting a connection or emotional exchange. A thin blue vertical line is positioned on the left side of the frame.

Emotional Induction

One person's feelings may evoke similar emotions in another, through our Social Engagement circuitry, our capacity for resonance with others.

This also can occur with **disowned or unacknowledged feelings**:

“You express what I repress”

A version of this is called **Projective Recruitment** (Projective Identification)

Levels of Activation in Relationship

SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

connected • curious • responsive



FIGHT / FLIGHT

mobilized • reactive • defensive



COLLAPSE / SHUTDOWN

immobilized • disconnected • withdrawn



INCREASING LEVEL OF PERCEIVED THREAT





**The crucible of relationship can allow our Trauma
and Limiting Habits to be transformed**



ALCHEMY: REORGANIZING THE PATTERNED PAST

How can we stay in our 'best selves' in relationship,
given all of these forces?

Relational Mindfulness

Right Distance

Right Relational Stance

“Designated Adult”



SUPPORTING EMERGENT PROCESS

Intention – What do you want from the relationship?

Container – how strong are the commitments/agreements?

Stance – How are you in relation to each other – looking away, looking at each other (positive or negative), looking together

Caring Restraint – Refraining from harsh/harmful words and actions

Caring Expression – Expressing love, appreciation, support



Too little



Sustained energy



Too much



SUPPORT THE BONDING

DEFUSE THE VOLATILITY

Work with the patterns

BECAUSE **CONDITIONING** PLAYS SUCH A KEY ROLE IN DISHARMONY, ITS ROLE IN RELATIONSHIPS REQUIRES SPECIAL ATTENTION.

This may feel 'unnatural' for Focusers.... this involves using more objective/thinking processes, more attention to structures....

-Some processes focus on increasing attraction and expressions of care. This is often helpful short-term, but it does not address the reactive patterns that generate distress.

A limitation of 'teaching skills', is that **we usually are unable to access skills during times of excessive nervous system activation!**

-Stepping back, OUT OF the felt field, can often be a healing movement through noticing and shifting the patterns that lead to conflict.

This also allows us to regain our best selves/optimal processing capacities.

VARIOUS APPROACHES TO COUPLES' WORK

	Gestalt	EFT	Gottman	IFS	Perel
Core question	What is happening here and now?	How do we rebuild secure attachment?	What behaviours predict success?	How do we heal wounded parts?	How do we keep desire alive?
Change theory	Paradoxical: acceptance catalyses change	Structured: 9-step corrective experience	Skills-based: replace destructive patterns	Unburdening: release exiles' burdens	Narrative: reframe the story of desire
Therapist	Field participant	Empathic choreographer	Expert coach	Guide to internal landscape	Cultural provocateur
Difference	Connective tissue	Attachment injury	69% perpetual problems	Parts triggering parts	Fuel for desire
Shame	Pathos of the field	Secondary emotion	Reduced via less contempt	Burden on exiles	Cultural constraint
Trauma	Present-moment phenomenon	Attachment injury protocol	Aftermath processing	Accessing exiles	Narrative integration
Evidence	Case studies	35+ years RCTs	40+ years research	NREPP-listed; growing	Clinical case studies
Culture	Inherently emic	Developing cross-cultural	Primarily etic	Primarily Western	Strong multicultural lens

STANCE + STANCE -----> DANCE

The More (you do X), the More (I do Y)

Wise Adult -

Self-in-Presence

Self

Adaptive Child

?? Critic, Protector

Manager/Firefighter Parts

Wounded Child

Felt-Sense, Young Parts

Exile Parts

The **Wounded Child** carries the original pain and vulnerability;
the **Adaptive Child** develops strategies to protect against that pain.

The **Wise Adult** is grounded, centered 'best self'

From Relational Life Therapy

'As a RLT therapist, **THE ADAPTIVE CHILD** is our focus, by and large, because that is the part that shows up in relationships. Shifting out of Adaptive Child and into Wise Adult is the work of the first two phases of RLT.'

The Patterned Future

Stimulus

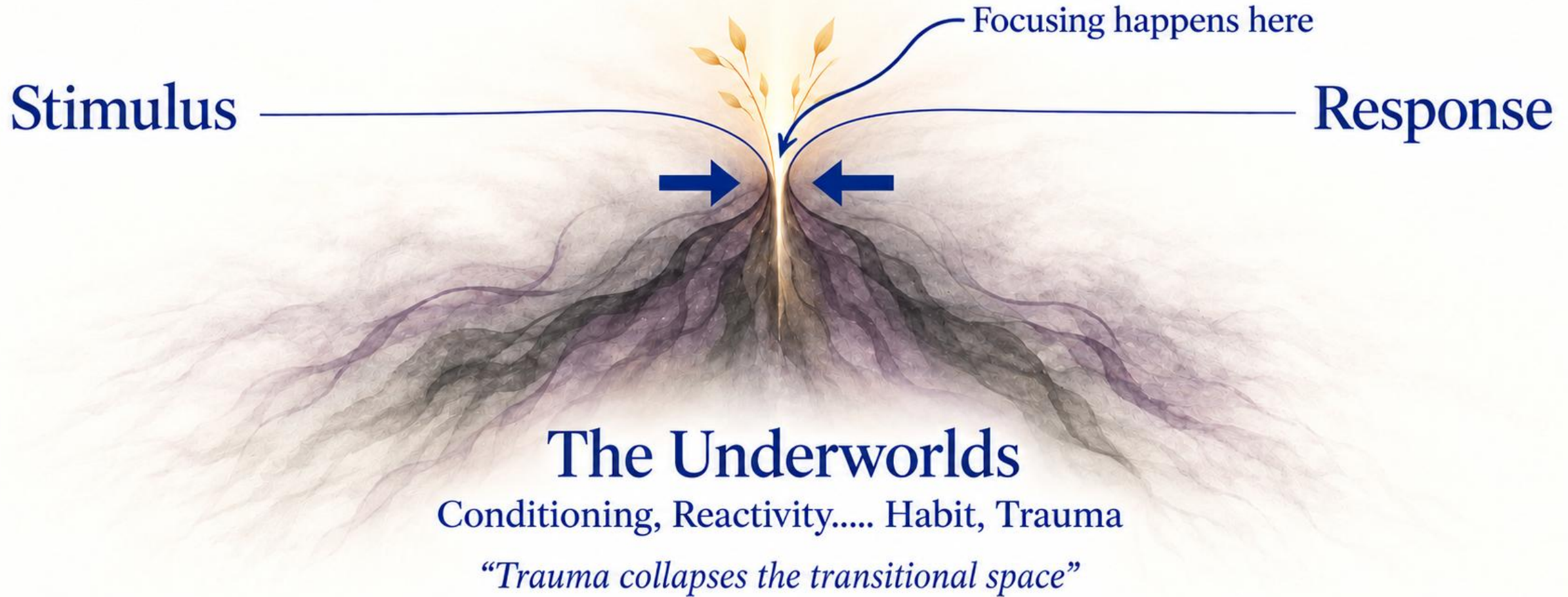
Response



The Underworlds

Conditioning, Reactivity.... Habit, Trauma

Opening a Space for a Vibrant/Emergent Future





ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

These images may only be shared or reproduced with full acknowledgment of Terry Real and the Relational Life Institute as the creators.

<https://relationallife.com/>

RELATIONSHIP GRID



“Have Troubles”
GRANDIOSITY

WALLED OFF
(LOVE AVOIDANT)

WALLED OFF AND ONE UP

- INDIFFERENCE
- PASSIVE-AGGRESSION
- “YOU’RE NOT WORTHY”

BOUNDARYLESS AND ONE UP

- CONTROL
- ANGER

BOUNDARYLESS
(LOVE DEPENDENT)

HEALTH

- RESIGNATION
- WITHDRAWAL
- DEPRESSED

WALLED OFF AND ONE DOWN

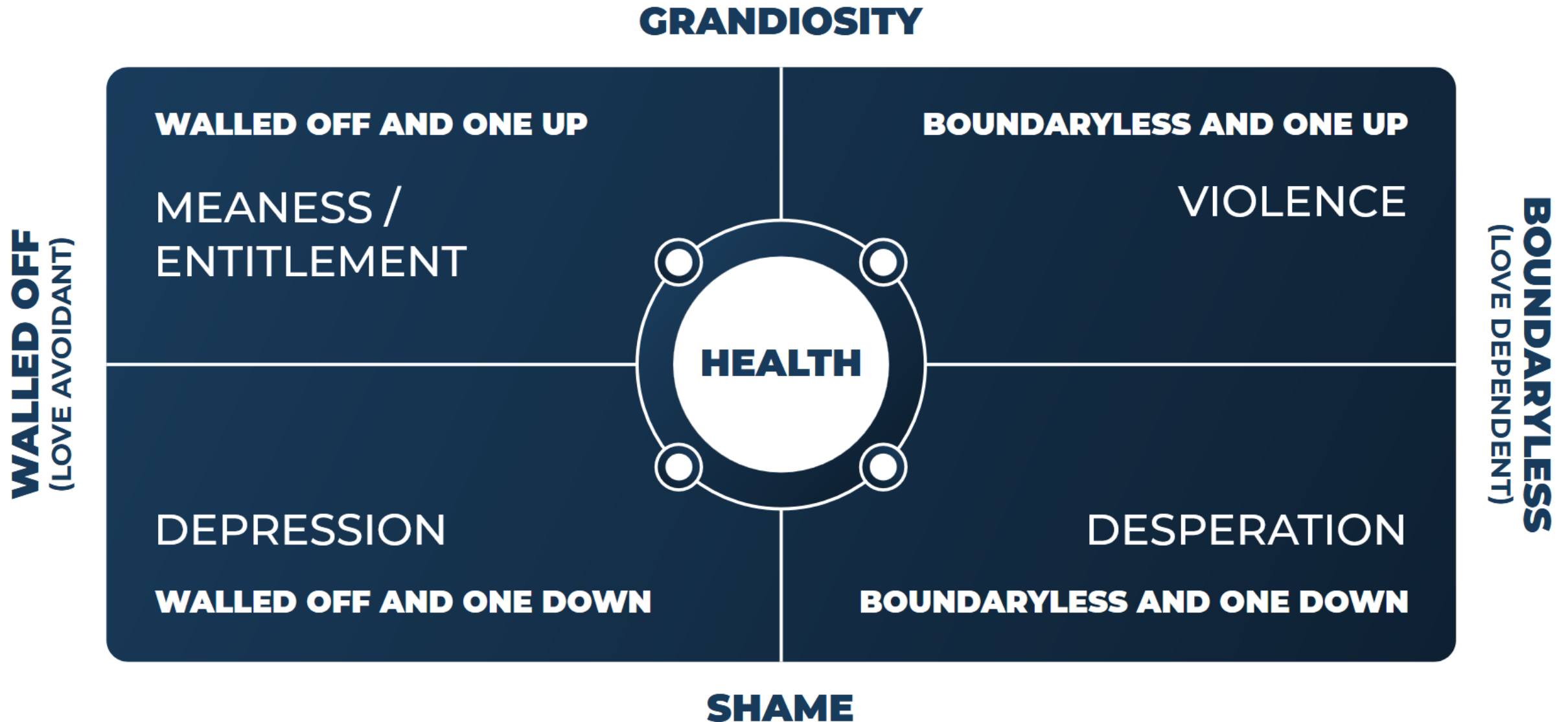
- DESPERATION
- MANIPULATION

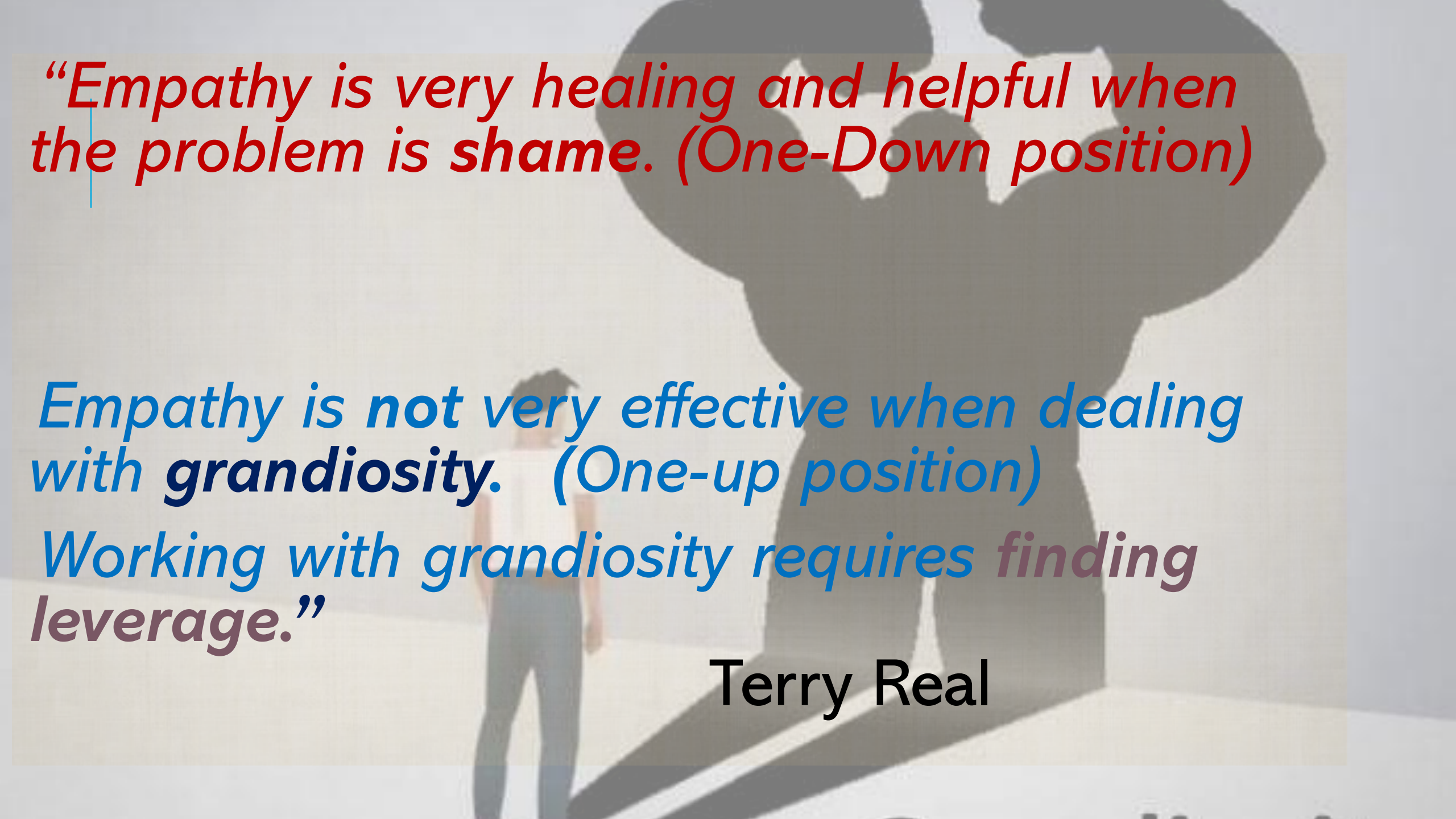
BOUNDARYLESS AND ONE DOWN

SHAME

“Have Issues”

RELATIONSHIP GRID



A person in a white tank top and dark pants stands in a large, dark shadow of a giant hand reaching down from above. The scene is set against a light-colored wall and floor.

“Empathy is very healing and helpful when the problem is shame. (One-Down position)”

*Empathy is not very effective when dealing with **grandiosity**. (One-up position)*

*Working with grandiosity requires **finding leverage.**”*

Terry Real

05 Losing Strategies that push love away

When conflict arises, most of us fall back into old habits that keep us stuck in disconnection:



Being Right

Arguing over the "truth" and turning your partner into your opponent rather than your teammate. The relational answer to the question "*Who's right?*" is "*Who cares?*"



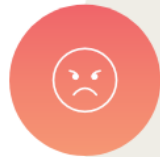
Controlling

Trying to manage your partner's behavior through demands or manipulation. It might get you what you want in the short term, but you'll pay for it in resentment and distance.



Unbridled Self-Expression

Venting your feelings and speaking in absolutes like "*you always*" or "*you never*." This isn't honesty, it's harshness and boundaryless — and it leaves no room for connection.



Retaliation

"I'm entitled to hurt you because you hurt me first." Getting even through rage, insults, sarcasm, or passive-aggression will not heal you. It will only make the wounds deeper.



Withdrawal

Pulling back from parts of the relationship, or checking out entirely. It may feel safer in the moment, but it starves your partner and the relationship of intimacy and connection.



Sensing into Protective Patterns

Options for Each Person during their turn:

1- A **Standard Focusing Turn**: What comes for you around all of this? Or anything else

2- Gently direct your attention to sensing-into **one or more of your own protective patterns**, and notice what arises. Does it have something that it would like you to know about it?

[2A – if you wish, you may want to sense into one or more protective patterns of someone that you are/were in relationship with. Notice what arises. What is underneath that? Does it have something that it would like you to know about it?

3- if you wish, see if you can get a sense of **both your protective pattern/stance, and, that of someone you are/were in relationship with**. What do you notice? What opens as you spend time with this?



Further resources and information:

<https://serviceoflife.info/constellations/2026RelationalCrucibleNightSea.html> 2026 Resonant Healing Summit presentation by Camille and Bruce on this topic **from an alchemical perspective**, and including two constellation processes. PDF of slides also available. **90 minutes**

<https://serviceoflife.info/constellations/relationalcrucible.html> Supplement to above video, with some specifics regarding various couples' therapy insights and processes. It is a helpful tour of some key insights. PDF of slides also available. **35 minutes**

<https://serviceoflife.info/constellations/WRGRstamps.html> 2025 Resonance Healing Summit presentation by Bruce on challenges of excessive or uncontained resonance (Relates to 'Boundariless' in Terry Real's RLT model). PDF of slides also available. **90 minutes**

VARIOUS APPROACHES TO COUPLES' WORK

Approach	Starting Question
EFT (Sue Johnson)	How do we rebuild a secure attachment bond?
Gottman Method	What behaviours predict relationship success or failure?
IFS (Richard Schwartz)	How do we heal wounded parts and restore Self-leadership?
Esther Perel	How do we keep desire alive within the security of love?
Gestalt (Chew-Helbig)	What is happening between these two people, here and now?

VARIOUS APPROACHES TO COUPLES' WORK

	Gestalt	EFT	Gottman	IFS	Perel
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Evidence	Case studies	35+ years RCTs	40+ years research	NREPP-listed; growing	Clinical case studies
Culture	Inherently emic	Developing cross-cultural	Primarily etic	Primarily Western	Strong multicultural lens

A couple is walking on a sandy beach. The woman is on the left, wearing a floral dress, and the man is on the right, wearing a white poncho and dark shorts. They are walking away from the camera towards the ocean. Waves are breaking in the background under a cloudy sky.

The central idea of Imago Relationship Therapy is that romantic relationships can bring unfinished childhood needs into view—and give partners a chance to respond to each other more consciously.

Imago calls the unconscious picture of familiar love that we carry from early relationships an *imago*.

Why these particular people?

In Imago theory, attraction is partly a recognition of traits associated with our early caregivers, including **both qualities we cherished and qualities that hurt or disappointed us.**

Positions in working with couples – by Dan Wile

Family Of Origin Position –

When one partner reacts in an overly intense way, you show how the problem is really with that person's parent long ago, and get the pressure off of the couple and have them both empathizing with what that person had to deal with in childhood.

Information and Skills Deficit Position – Psychoeducation.

You attribute the problem to a lack of information (which you provide them with), or to a lack of skills (communication)

Unconscious Purpose – partners hanging onto their symptoms because of the unconscious purposes that they serve. You make them conscious so that the partners can possibly choose to do something better

Positions in working with couples – by Dan Wile

Character Defects Position –

You attribute the problem to a character defect in one or both partners, the intermeshing of these, and you do your best to repair these, often with help of individual therapy

Lack of Boundaries/Differentiation –

The problem is attributed to people put all of the blame on their partners instead of taking personal responsibility. Or, them taking too much responsibility for their partner.

Loss of Voice –

The problem is the partners' inability to figure out and express what they need to say. When you lose your voice, you cannot figure out what you need to say, you are stuck with fallback ->blaming (turns your partner into an enemy)
-> or getting quiet (turns your partner into a stranger)

Attack

Avoid

Confide

Support For Relational Process

Intention — what do you want from the relationship?

Container — strong enough commitments/agreements

Stance — Working together rather than against each other

Caring Restraint (not harming, not 'dumping')

Caring Expressions (supporting, expressing, growing love)

Emerging Future

Creativity · Possibility · Growth



<https://womenlovepower.com/an-explanation-of-the-7-basic-feminine-archetypes/>

<https://atlasofsoul.com/blogs/feminine-archetypes/style>



The resonance of love is
a vibration that harmonizes
heart-to-heart.

-Harold W. Becker/www.thelovefoundation.com



Caring Expressions – Positivity Resonance

The micro-movements of connection, of feeling felt –
“**Positivity Resonance**” registers in many people as love,
activating bonding and attachment circuits.

Love 2.0 - Barbara Fredrickson