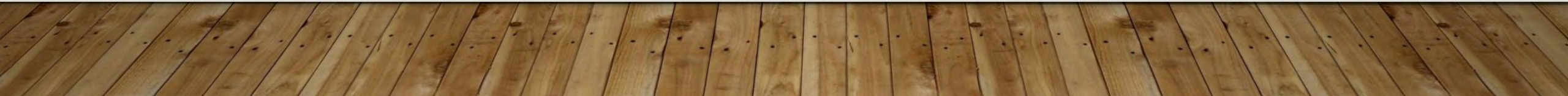


CREATIVE APPROACHES TO TRAUMA RECOVERY: EXPRESSIVE ARTS TECHNIQUES

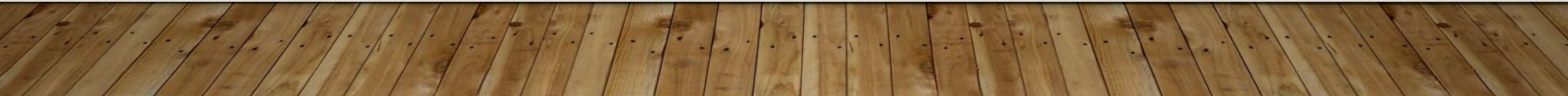
PRESENTED BY DREYA BLUME, LCSW (SHE/HER)



Objectives

- Define expressive arts techniques
- Identify the ways in which expressive arts techniques aid in trauma work
- Implement a variety of expressive arts techniques with clients

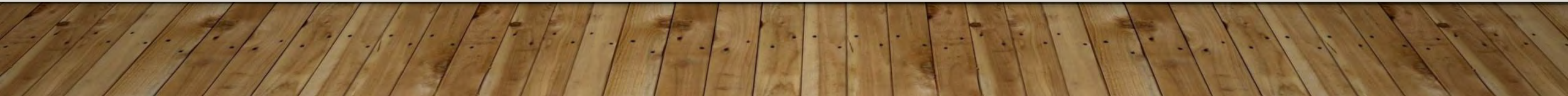
Expressive arts techniques refer to the use of various creative modalities—such as visual art, music, movement, drama, poetry, and creative writing—as tools for emotional expression, exploration, and healing.



Video

The Kelly Clarkson Show

<https://youtu.be/lkbTj828jAg?si=f5pkp8jobgoA5TOr>

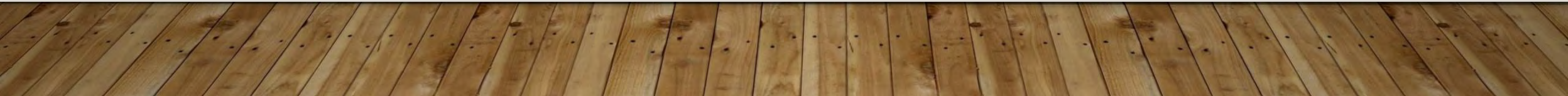




Video

Inside Edition

https://youtu.be/RZOcos9cS9w?si=RZ9_v42EWaZF17Cm





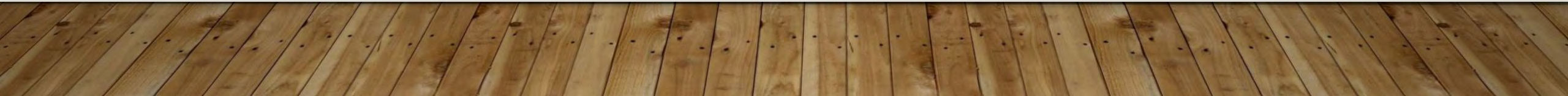
Rationale for using creativity and expressive arts in trauma-focused psychotherapy

Neurobiological Rationale

Bypasses verbal limitations: Trauma is often stored in the body and limbic system, making it hard to express with words. Creative expression engages non-verbal, sensory-based pathways.

Engages both hemispheres: Art-making integrates left (logical) and right (emotional/visual) brain functions, promoting whole-brain healing.

Regulates the nervous system: Repetitive, rhythmic activities (drawing, drumming, movement) soothe the fight-flight-freeze response and support self-regulation.



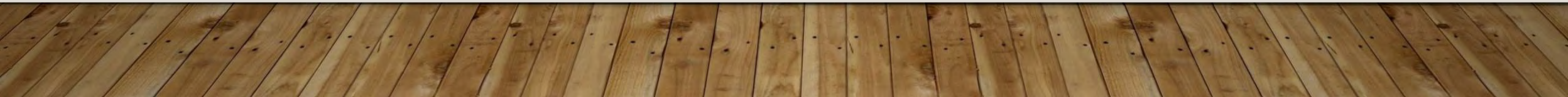
Psychological & Emotional Rationale

Externalizes internal experiences: Art provides a safe way to project, contain, and examine painful memories, emotions, or parts of the self.

Reduces avoidance: Creative tasks allow clients to approach traumatic material indirectly, reducing overwhelm and resistance.

Facilitates emotional expression: Colors, shapes, movement, and symbols can access deep emotions that are otherwise hard to articulate.

Builds narrative coherence: Storytelling through images, metaphors, or sequential art helps clients construct a meaningful, integrated trauma narrative.



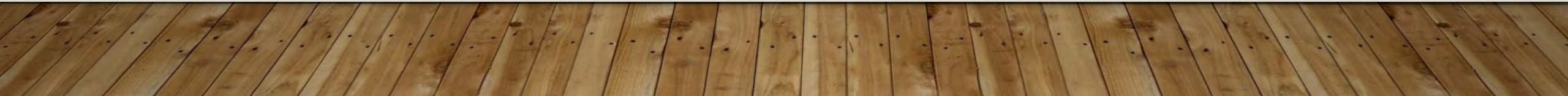
Therapeutic Process Rationale

Increases client agency: Creative work fosters choice, control, and self-expression, key elements for trauma recovery.

Supports parts work and identity exploration: Different media can represent dissociated parts, roles, or time periods of the self.

Creates distance and containment: Artistic mediums offer a symbolic buffer, allowing clients to revisit trauma without re-experiencing it fully.

Encourages mindfulness and presence: The creative process fosters a here-and-now focus, helping clients anchor in the present.

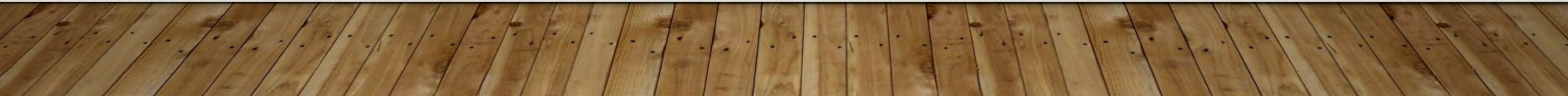


Resilience & Post-Traumatic Growth Rationale

Affirms strengths and resilience: Art can highlight survival, growth, and internal resources, not just wounds.

Rebuilds trust and attachment: Co-creating in therapy fosters connection, attunement, and relational repair.

Promotes play and imagination: Reintroduces joy, curiosity, and hope, qualities often lost to trauma.

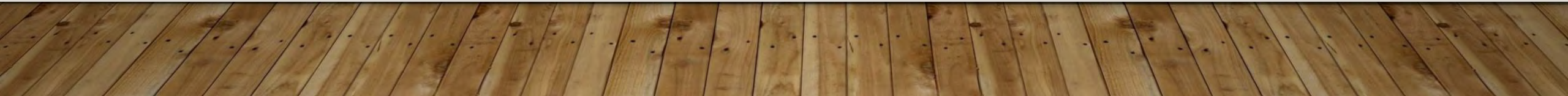


Visual Arts-Based Techniques

Use of drawing, painting, collage, sculpture, or other forms of visual art to express and process trauma.

Applications:

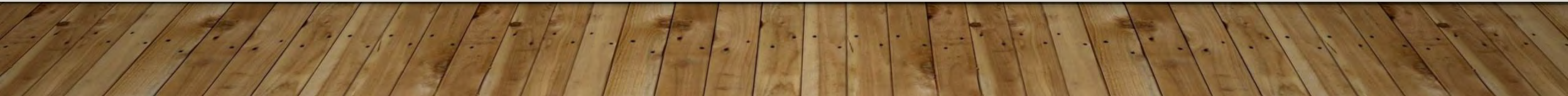
- Creating trauma narratives visually
 - Exploring symbolic imagery
- Externalizing overwhelming emotions



Mandala Drawing

Description: Creating circular, often symmetrical drawings to foster calm, integration, and reflection.

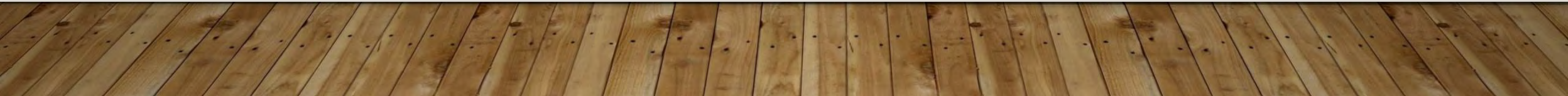
Trauma Benefit: Helps organize chaotic internal states and create a sense of containment.



Mask Making

Description: Creating masks to represent different parts of the self (e.g., inner child, protector, perpetrator).

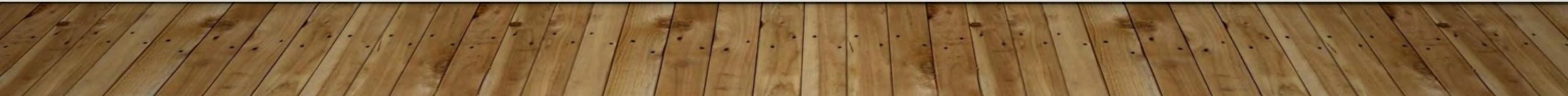
Trauma Benefit: Facilitates identity exploration and parts work (often used with dissociation or complex trauma).



Trauma Timeline (Art-Based)

Description: Drawing or creating a visual timeline of significant life events.

Trauma Benefit: Aids in narrative coherence and identifying resilience and pain points.

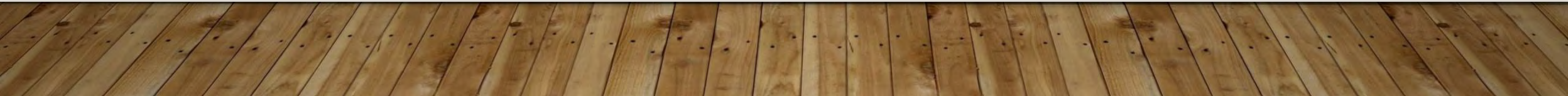


Video

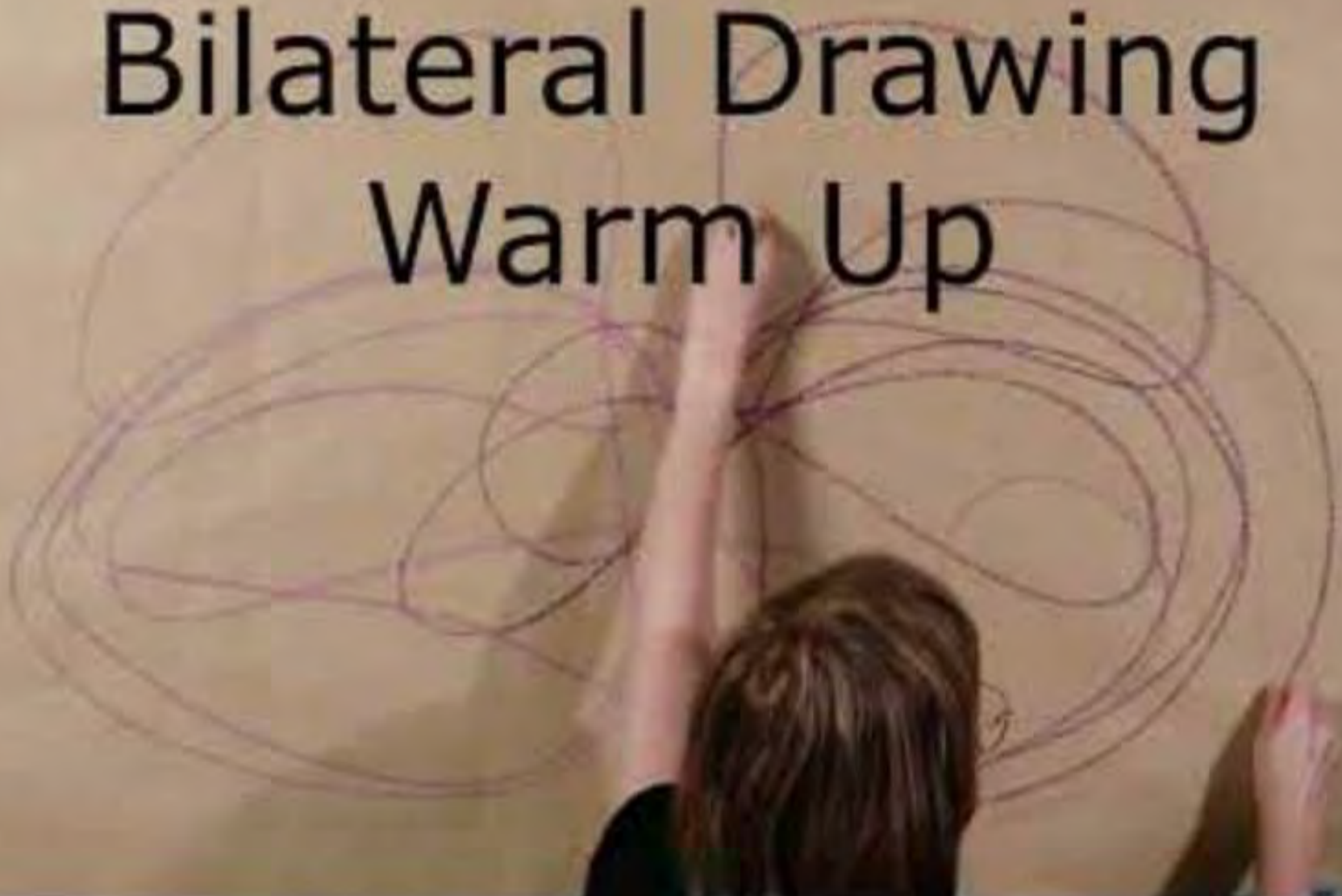
GRC Bilateral Drawing Warm Up

From the Mark and Movement YouTube Channel

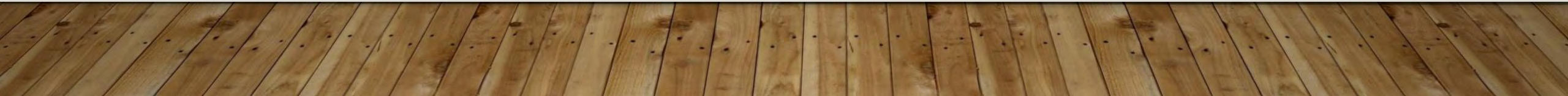
<https://youtu.be/v5asXxB4BCQ?si=3UcfqPD4CmuaM2Et>



Bilateral Drawing Warm Up



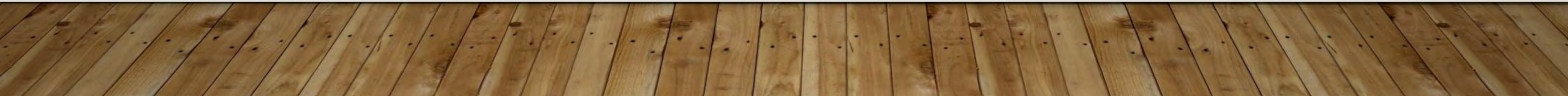
Bilateral Drawing Activity



Writing & Storytelling Techniques

Narrative Therapy

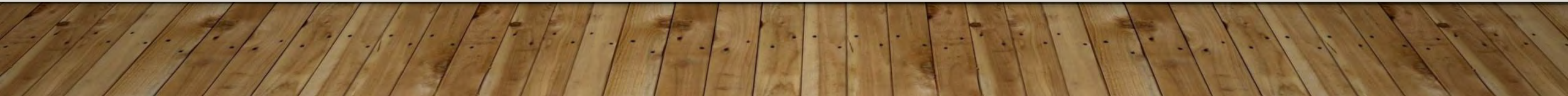
Description: Clients re-author their life stories, separating themselves from the trauma.



- What is a story you've been telling yourself about what happened to you?**

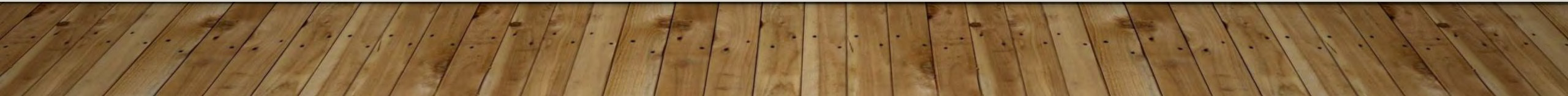
- In what ways has this experience shaped how you see yourself, others, and the world?**

- What parts of you had to emerge to survive? What did they do for you?**
(This honors coping strategies, even those you're now ready to outgrow.)



•When in your life have you felt powerful, even in small ways? What strengths were present in you then?

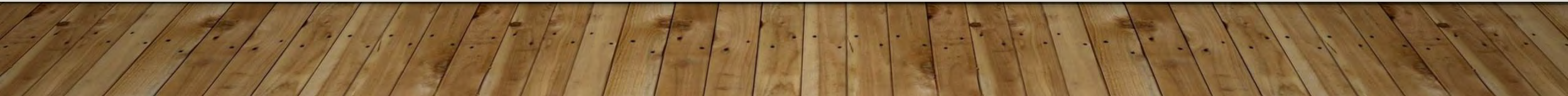
•What moments of resistance, courage, or agency—however subtle—can you remember from the time of trauma or after?



•What does the part of you that is tired of suffering want to say? What does it hope for?

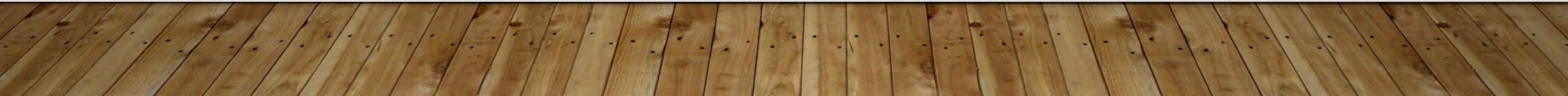
•Whose voice(s) are you carrying that don't belong to you? How would you speak to yourself if those voices were gone?

•If your life were a book, what chapter are you in now? What would you like the next chapter to be called?



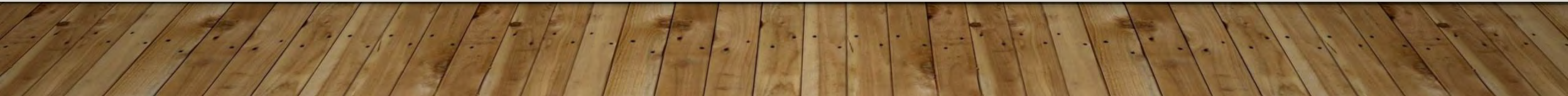
•Who or what helps you feel safe, even briefly? How can you invite more of that into your life right now?

•What values, dreams, or identities were never destroyed by what happened—only buried? What would reclaiming them look like?



Expressive Tools

Letter writing (e.g., to their trauma, younger self), journaling, story crafting.



Letter to the Person Who Hurt Me

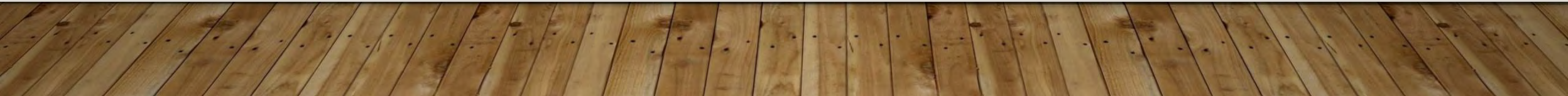
To name the harm, express the unsaid, and reclaim power through voice—without fear of retaliation.

Letter to My Younger Self at the Time of Trauma

To offer compassion, validation, protection, and a new narrative of worthiness and survival.

Letter to the Part of Me That Took Over to Survive

To thank or renegotiate with protective parts (e.g., the fighter, the dissociator, the pleaser, etc.).



Letter to the Witness Who Didn't Step In

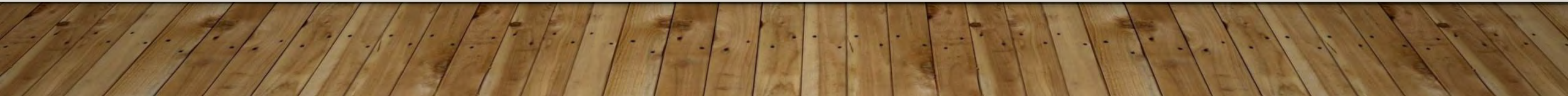
To express the pain of betrayal, neglect, or abandonment by people who should have protected you.

Letter from My Future Self Who Has Healed

To imagine a grounded, hopeful self and borrow strength from that vision.

Letter to the Body

To acknowledge what the body held, how it protected you, and begin a relationship of trust and repair.



Letter to the System That Failed Me

Whether it's family, religious institutions, the medical system, or society—this gives space to speak truth to systemic neglect, injustice, or oppression.

Letter to Someone Who Believed in Me or Showed Kindness

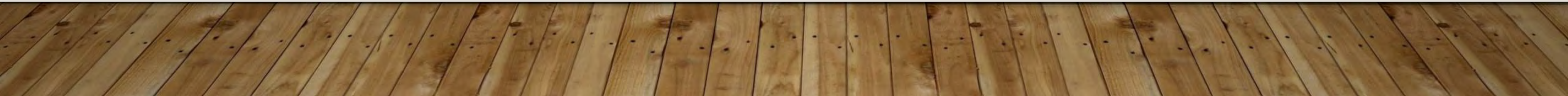
To remember resilience is often sparked by human connection and to reclaim moments of safety.

Letter to the Emotions I've Tried to Avoid

To create a dialogue with anger, fear, shame, or grief—externalizing and humanizing them.

Letter to the Life I Thought I Lost

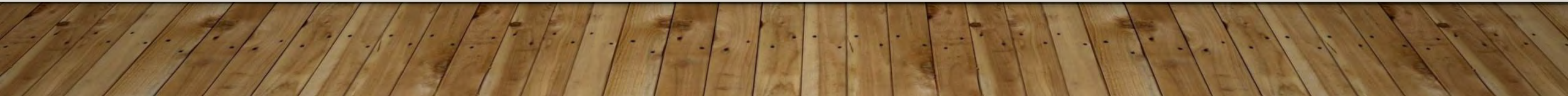
To grieve what could have been, while gently making space for what *still could be*.



Expressive Writing

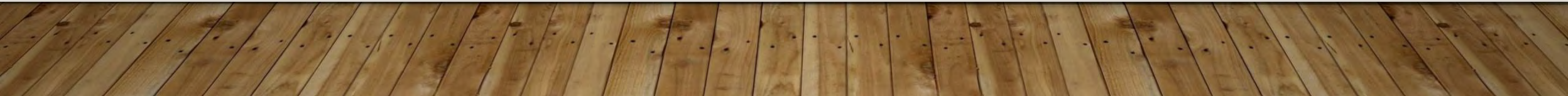
Description: Writing freely about traumatic experiences, emotions, and reflections.

Trauma Benefit: Helps with emotional processing, coherence, and reducing physiological symptoms of trauma.



Reauthoring Practices (Narrative Therapy)

- Invite clients to write a preferred story: a story of survival, strength, or transformation.
 - Highlight values, commitments, and relationships that sustained them.
 - Use story titles, chapter breaks, or mythic framing (“the heroine’s journey”).



Live learners, according to the approving body, it is time for you to take a quick 15-minute break!

For our online learners, we have provided a video for you to watch to continue your learning through the breaktime. Live learners, enjoy your break!

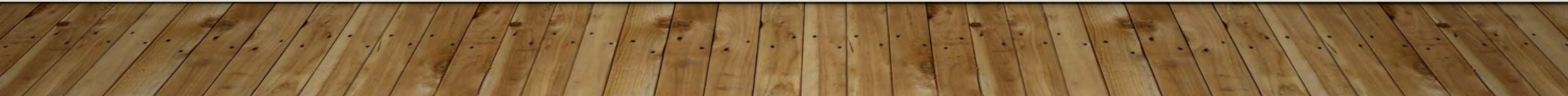


Video

Exploring Emotional Needs

IABET – Jungian Art

<https://youtu.be/TcGPc80f2VM?si=9AkHP8TafO08CjpE>



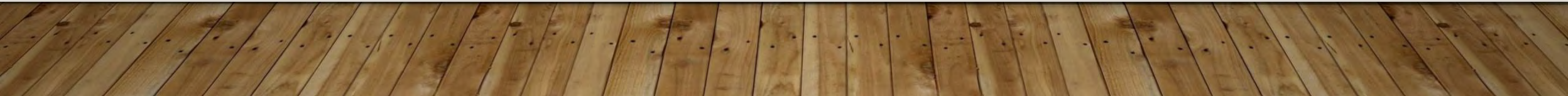
EXPLORING YOUR EMOTIONAL NEEDS



Poetry Therapy

Description: Reading, writing, or analyzing poetry to express and understand emotions.

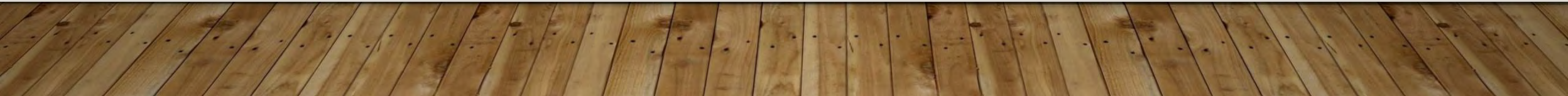
Trauma Benefit: Allows symbolic processing and emotional release.



Safety and Grounding

“Where I Feel Safe” – Write a poem describing a place (real or imagined) where you feel completely safe and at ease. What does it smell, sound, and feel like?

“The Ground Beneath Me” – Describe the ground that holds you now. What kind of support do you need it to offer?

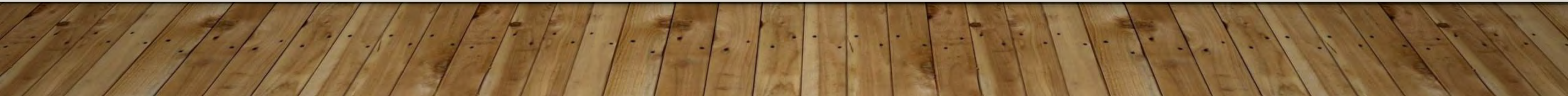


Voice and Witnessing

“If My Body Could Speak” – What would it say? What story would it tell? What does it need you to hear?

“A Letter I Never Sent” – Write a poem as a letter to someone from your past, whether you send it or not. You choose what’s said or unsaid.

“This Is What Happened” – Without going into triggering detail, allow your poem to tell your story—honoring the parts you’re ready to name.

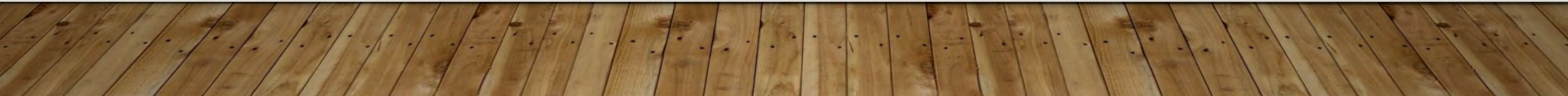


Reclaiming Power and Identity

“I Am Still Here” – A declaration poem affirming survival, presence, and persistence.

“The Day I Took My Power Back” – Imagine or recall a moment where you reclaimed agency. What did it look or feel like?

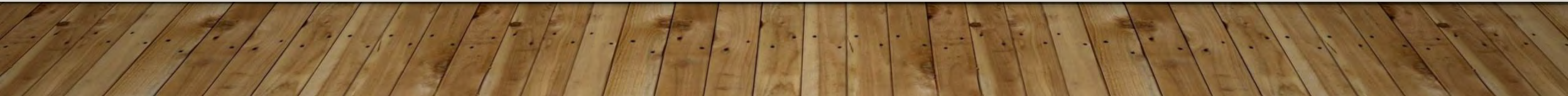
“The Name I Give Myself Now” – Trauma often robs us of identity. What name, title, or symbol could you write into existence to honor your wholeness?



Inner Strength and Parts Work

“The Warrior Inside Me” – Describe the part of you that kept going. Give it form, shape, or voice.

“A Conversation Between Two Parts of Me” – Let your poem explore a dialogue between a scared part and a wise part. What do they need from each other?

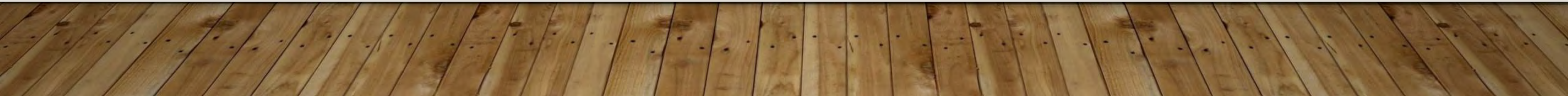


Hope, Compassion, and Integration

“To the Me Who Survived” – Write a poem of gratitude or encouragement to your past self.

“What Healing Feels Like” – Envision a moment of healing. What sensations, images, or metaphors come to mind?

“The Garden I Am Growing” – Use gardening as a metaphor for slow, steady growth after pain. What’s blooming?



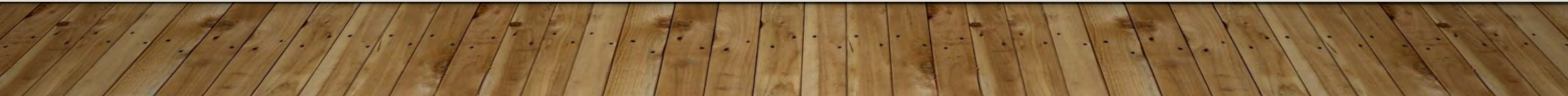
Drama & Role-Play Techniques

Psychodrama

Description: Enacting scenes from past trauma, imagined futures, or internal conflicts.

Core Elements: Role reversal, doubling, mirroring.

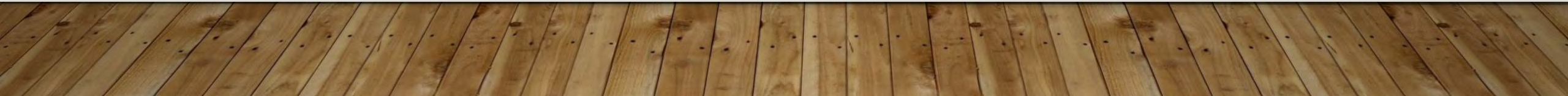
Trauma Benefit: Revisiting trauma in a controlled way for catharsis, insight, and integration.



Role-Playing Inner Parts

Description: Acting out parts of the self (e.g., wounded child, inner critic, protector).

Trauma Benefit: Supports Internal Family Systems (IFS)-style healing and self-integration.

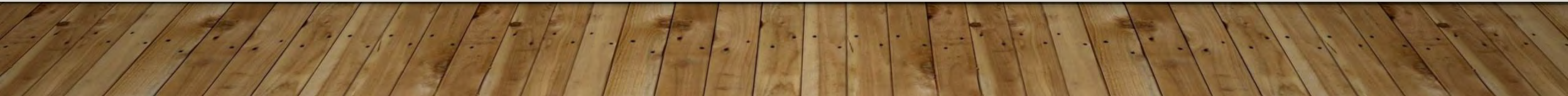


Video

Jason's Story

FdtnforArtandHealing

<https://youtu.be/Ulybfdb7YvM?si=qR68MfLBXlHgzZlk>



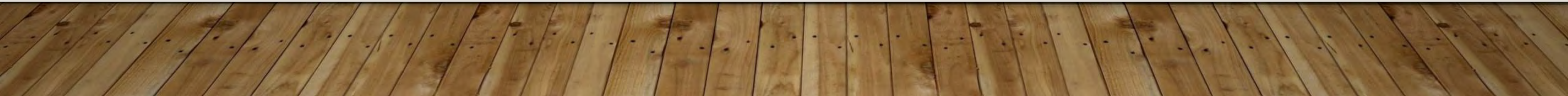


Movement & Somatic-Based Creative Techniques

Dance/Movement Therapy (DMT)

Description: Using spontaneous or structured movement to express and process emotions.

Key Focus: Body awareness, grounding, releasing somatic tension from trauma.



Music & Sound-Based Techniques

Music Therapy

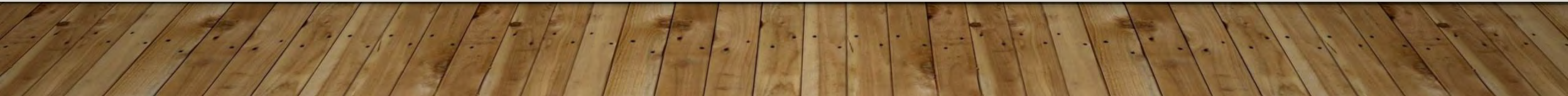
Description: Creating, listening to, or responding to music as a form of healing.

Methods:

Lyric analysis

Instrumental improvisation

Songwriting

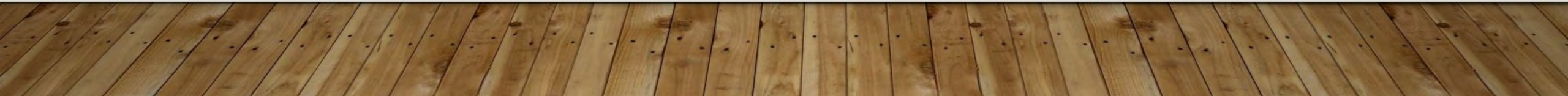


Symbolic & Imaginal Techniques

Sandtray/Sandplay Therapy

Description: Using figurines and miniatures in a sandbox to create symbolic worlds.

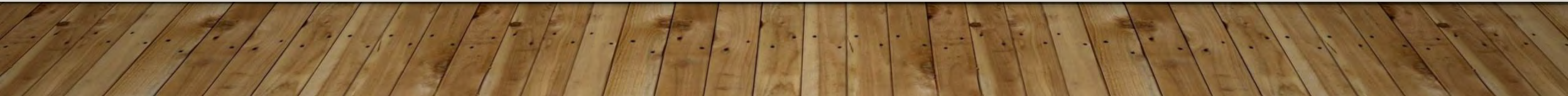
Trauma Benefit: Offers distance from the trauma while accessing deep unconscious material.



Sandplay therapy and sandtray therapy both involve using miniature figures and sand to create scenes in a tray, but they differ in theoretical orientation and depth.

Sandplay therapy, rooted in Jungian psychology and developed by Dora Kalff, emphasizes nonverbal, symbolic expression and deep unconscious processes; it is typically non-directive and allows for the natural emergence of archetypal themes as part of a healing journey.

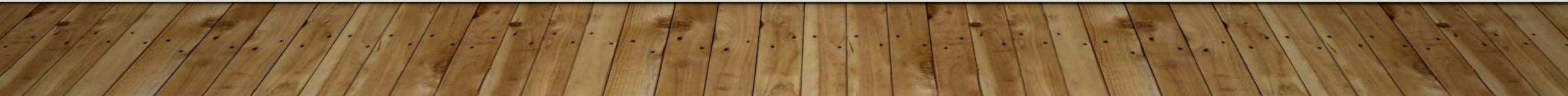
In contrast, **sandtray therapy** is more eclectic and can be either directive or non-directive, used across various therapeutic modalities (e.g., cognitive-behavioral, humanistic) with a stronger focus on conscious problem-solving, storytelling, and therapeutic dialogue.



Video

YouTube Channel: *Sandtray Chat with Host Fiona Werle*

<https://youtu.be/5qkaOYngIJU?si=TCWfuT3tW7EUzbk2>

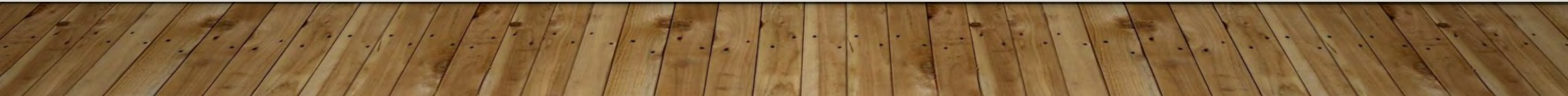




Guided Imagery & Creative Visualization

Description: Therapist-led imaginative journeys (e.g., inner safe place, meeting parts of self).

Trauma Benefit: Supports affect regulation, inner resourcing, and rewriting traumatic scripts.

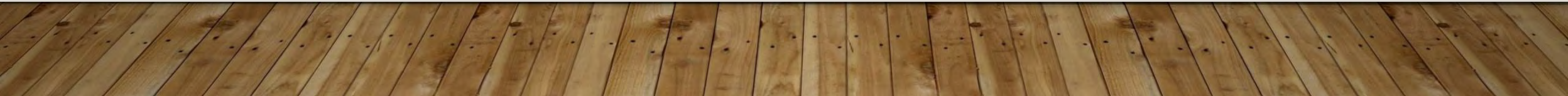


Ritual & Ceremony

Description: Creating personal rituals (e.g., burning letters, symbolic cleansing) for trauma release and closure.

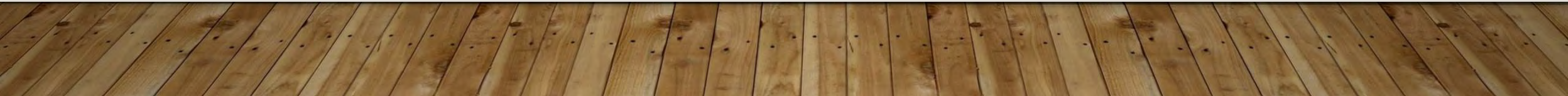
Ritual & Ceremony

Description: Creating personal rituals for trauma release and closure.



Reclaiming Voice Ceremony

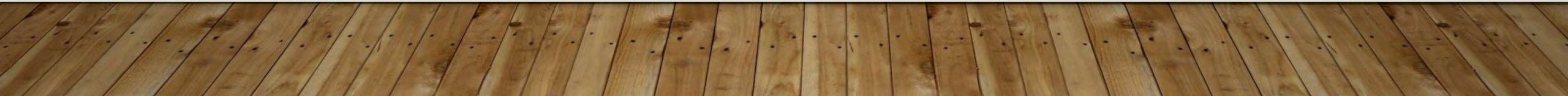
Speak out loud (in a private, safe place or therapeutic setting) words that were silenced during the trauma. This can be accompanied by drumming, chanting, or singing to embody empowerment and voice reclamation.



Letter Burning Ceremony

Write a letter to someone involved in the trauma or to a younger self, expressing all thoughts and emotions. In a safe environment, burn the letter as a symbolic act of release and transformation.

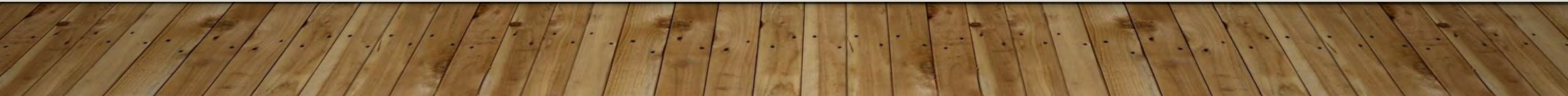
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Grief Water Ritual

In a quiet space, pour water into a bowl with each emotion named (e.g., grief, anger, betrayal). After acknowledging them, pour the water into the earth or a plant to symbolize the natural processing of those feelings.

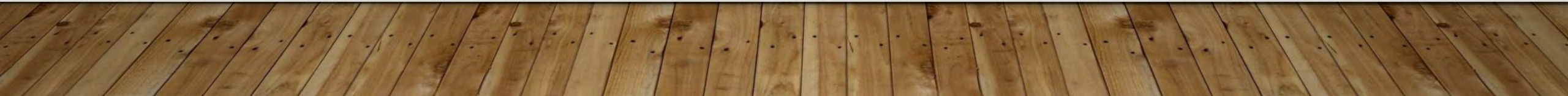
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Cleansing Movement Ritual

Use dance, shaking, or expressive movement to “shake off” trauma residue. End the session with slow, grounding movements and self-holding to bring safety back to the body.

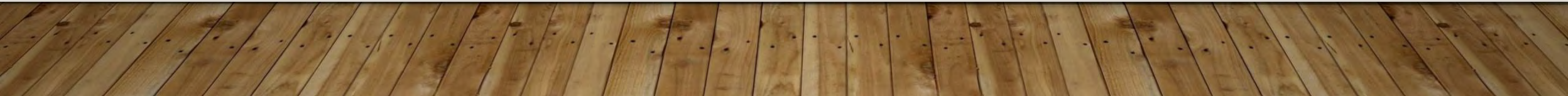
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Naming and Reclaiming Ceremony

Name the part(s) of yourself that were wounded or lost (e.g., Inner Child, Protector, Artist). Create a small ritual (e.g., lighting a candle, offering flowers or affirmations) to welcome and reintegrate them.

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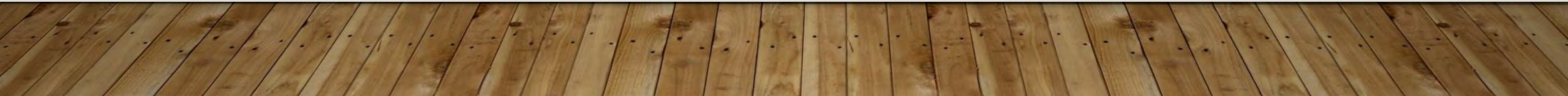


Nature-Based Release

Go to a forest, ocean, or natural space. Speak your burdens to a tree, stone, or stream.

Leave behind an offering (e.g., a biodegradable token) as a symbol of your release and intention to heal.

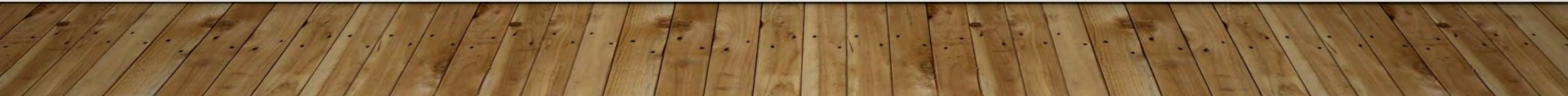
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Anniversary Transformation Ritual

On the anniversary of a traumatic event, perform a ritual of transformation. This might involve creating art, lighting a candle, or engaging in an act of service that reclaims the date as a symbol of resilience and meaning-making.

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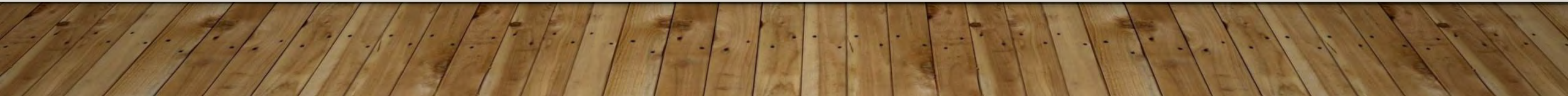


Video

How to Paint Your Feelings

From the Draw to Grow YouTube Channel

https://youtu.be/-lvzMwqeq2M?si=UC8Yk_DsSaAprUYC





Detailed Examples of Therapeutic Activities

"Safe Place" Collage

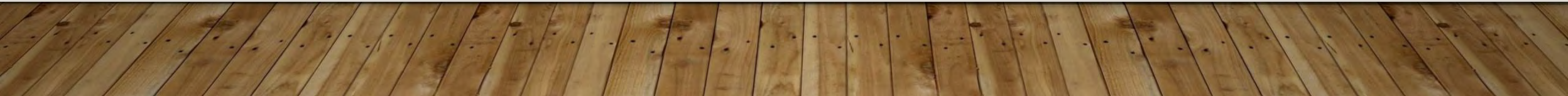
Purpose: To create a visual representation of a personal internal or imagined place of safety, calm, or refuge.

Materials: Magazines, scissors, glue, paper, markers, stickers, fabric

Steps:

- Invite the client to reflect on what “safety” feels or looks like.
- Ask them to find and cut out images, words, or colors that evoke safety.
- Have them arrange and glue their selections onto a sheet, creating a collage.
- Optionally, they can draw or add embellishments to personalize it.
- Discuss the collage and how they can mentally access this place when triggered.

Therapeutic Rationale: Helps establish internal resourcing, a foundational step in trauma recovery. Grounding and calming through visual and sensory engagement.



"Body Map of Trauma & Healing"

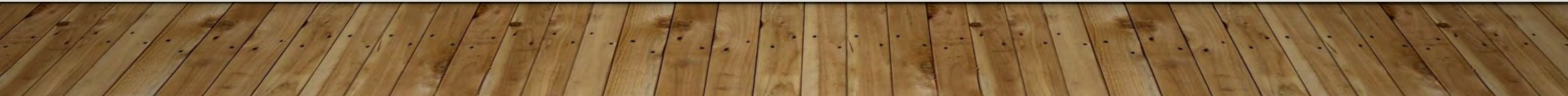
Purpose: To externalize and explore somatic experiences of trauma and healing.

Materials: Large paper (butcher paper), markers, pastels, crayons

Steps:

- Trace the client's body (or have them draw a body outline).
- Ask them to mark areas where they feel tension, pain, numbness (using colors or symbols).
- Next, invite them to mark places of strength, resilience, or comfort.
- Reflect together on body-based sensations, patterns, or themes.

Therapeutic Rationale: Trauma is stored in the body. This activity facilitates interoceptive awareness and bridges the gap between mind and body.



"Parts of Me" Mask Making

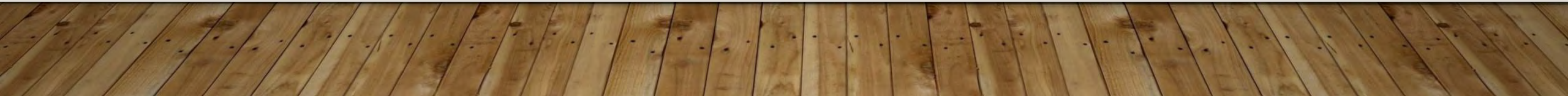
Purpose: To explore different “parts” of the self, particularly those shaped by trauma.

Materials: Paper masks or mask forms, paint, feathers, fabric, glue, sequins

Steps:

- Have the client create a mask representing a part of themselves (e.g., the survivor, protector, wounded child).
- Encourage the use of color and texture to reflect feelings and roles.
- Optionally, create a second mask to represent another part (e.g., the authentic self).
- Discuss the roles these parts play in their life and how they relate to the trauma.

Therapeutic Rationale: Supports identity exploration and internal family systems (IFS) approaches. Externalizing internal parts can reduce shame and build understanding.



"Trauma Timeline Art"

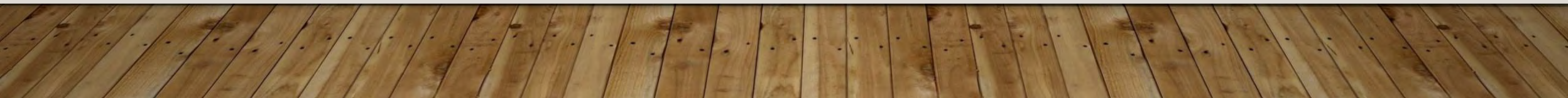
Purpose: To build narrative coherence and reflect on both painful and resilient moments.

Materials: Large paper, markers, colored pencils, stickers

Steps:

- Draw a horizontal line representing the client's life.
- Ask them to place key traumatic and meaningful events along the timeline.
- Invite them to illustrate or color-code moments of pain, healing, and support.
- Reflect on patterns, turning points, and coping.

Therapeutic Rationale: Organizing one's trauma story fosters meaning-making and post-traumatic growth. Visual timelines allow for symbolic distancing and control.



"Letter to the Trauma" or "Letter to the Younger Self"

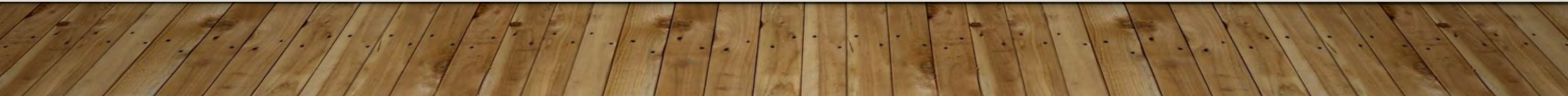
Purpose: To process unresolved feelings and offer compassion or closure.

Materials: Paper, pens, optional art supplies to decorate the letter

Steps:

- Guide the client to write a letter *to* the trauma, a perpetrator, or their younger self.
- Encourage them to be honest and expressive, with no need to share unless they choose.
- Optionally, decorate the letter, tear it up, burn it (ritual), or keep it.
- Reflect on what came up emotionally during the process.

Therapeutic Rationale: Letter writing accesses the emotional and narrative brain; it supports expression, release, and reclaiming agency.



"Clay Emotions Sculptures"

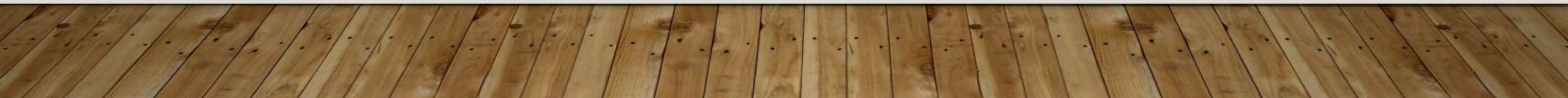
Purpose: To give physical form to abstract or suppressed emotions related to trauma.

Materials: Clay or modeling compound

Steps:

- Provide clients with clay and invite them to create shapes that represent specific emotions (e.g., fear, rage, numbness).
- After sculpting, ask them to name or describe each piece.
- Optionally, create a separate sculpture for "hope" or "healing."
- Discuss how these emotions manifest in their life.

Therapeutic Rationale: Working with hands is grounding and sensory-rich. Sculpting difficult emotions can safely externalize them for reflection and integration.



"Movement Through Emotion" (Somatic/Dance-Based)

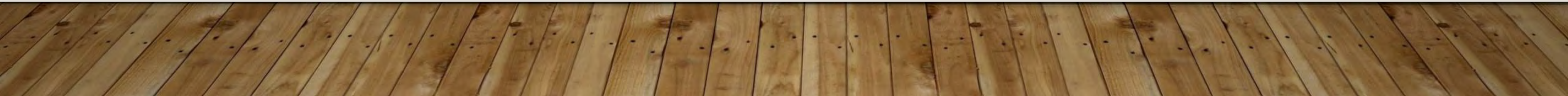
Purpose: To express and move through stuck emotions somatically.

Materials: Open space, music (optional)

Steps:

- Invite the client to identify an emotion they are currently experiencing or have difficulty expressing.
- Ask them to explore how that emotion moves in the body (e.g., tension, flow, gesture).
- Encourage them to move freely with the emotion—no choreography or judgment.
- End with grounding (e.g., stillness, breath, touching a solid surface).

Therapeutic Rationale: Trauma often disrupts the body's ability to move and feel safely. Movement reclaims agency, fosters regulation, and supports expressive release.



"Soundtrack of My Healing"

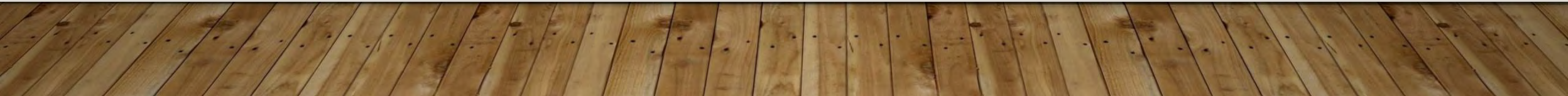
Purpose: To use music to process past and present experiences related to trauma and healing.

Materials: Music player, access to music, writing tools

Steps:

- Invite the client to choose 3–5 songs that represent different stages of their healing journey (e.g., pain, survival, hope, transformation).
- Listen together or have them journal about each song.
- Optionally, create a playlist they can use for different emotional states.
- Reflect on lyrics, memories, and emotional shifts.

Therapeutic Rationale: Music activates emotional and memory networks, helping clients express experiences that are difficult to articulate verbally.



"Visual Storyboarding of a Healing Journey"

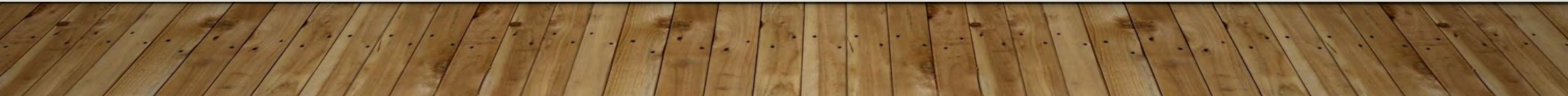
Purpose: To create a symbolic or literal visual story of the client's trauma and healing process.

Materials: Paper, markers, colored pencils, collage materials

Steps:

- Divide a large sheet into several panels like a comic or storyboard.
- In each panel, have the client depict a significant "chapter" in their trauma and healing journey.
- Encourage metaphors or symbols (e.g., storms, animals, paths).
- Discuss the arc of the story and the desired future panels.

Therapeutic Rationale: Offers narrative structure in a symbolic, low-pressure way. Encourages re-authoring the trauma story and envisioning a hopeful future.



"Tear & Repair" Collage

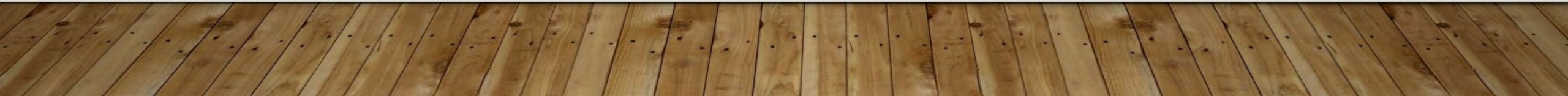
Goal: To symbolically process damage and healing, ruptures and mending.

Materials: Paper, glue, scissors, colored paper, magazines, tape, fabric scraps, optional stitching materials

Steps:

- Invite the client to create an image or use a piece of paper to represent their life before trauma.
- Have them physically tear, crumple, or cut the piece.
- Then, ask them to creatively "repair" it—using glue, stitching, or layering.
- Reflect on how destruction and reconstruction relate to their trauma and healing.

Trauma-Informed Rationale: Trauma often involves feelings of brokenness. This activity externalizes rupture and models the capacity for reintegration, strength, and creativity in repair.



"Visual Metaphor for Triggers"

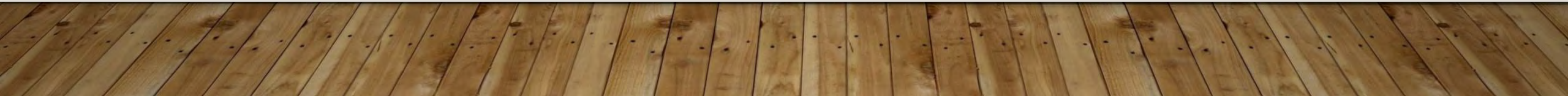
Goal: To create symbolic representation of trauma triggers and develop emotional distance and mastery.

Materials: Drawing materials, paper

Steps:

- Help the client identify a frequent trigger.
- Ask them to represent the trigger metaphorically (e.g., as a storm, shadow, animal).
- In a second drawing, depict how they want to relate to it (e.g., shielding, shrinking it, befriending it).
- Discuss strategies for managing the trigger in real life.

Trauma-Informed Rationale: Symbolic distancing helps clients view triggers with curiosity rather than fear, empowering them to respond instead of react.



"Movement Drawing" (Kinesthetic Art)

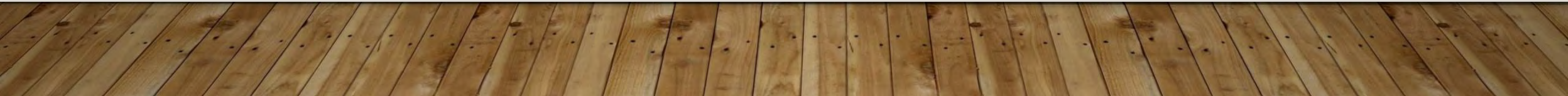
Goal: To integrate body-based sensations and emotional expression through physical movement and art.

Materials: Large paper on the floor or wall, charcoal or oil pastels

Steps:

- Invite the client to move/dance with an emotion (fear, sadness, anger, etc.).
- Transition from movement into large, expressive drawing using whole-body gestures.
- Let the client observe the shapes and marks and reflect on what they expressed.

Trauma-Informed Rationale: Integrates kinesthetic awareness and creative expression. Activates both the sensorimotor and symbolic systems, important for trauma release and integration.



"Empowerment Symbols Shield"

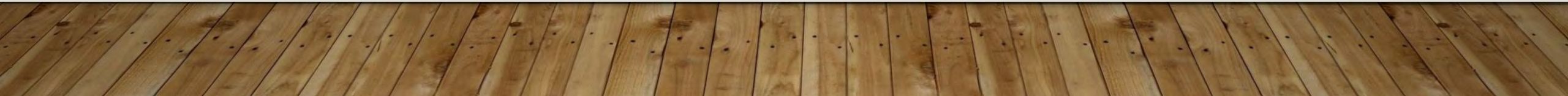
Goal: To cultivate internal protection, boundaries, and strength.

Materials: Large paper cut into a shield shape, drawing/collage materials

Steps:

- Invite the client to decorate a “shield” with colors, animals, words, or symbols of strength and protection.
- Divide the shield into areas that represent specific protective traits (e.g., courage, boundaries, wisdom).
- Reflect on when these strengths have shown up in their life.

Trauma-Informed Rationale: Especially useful for clients with boundary ruptures (e.g., sexual abuse survivors). Promotes inner safety and access to protective self-states.



"Grief Stones"

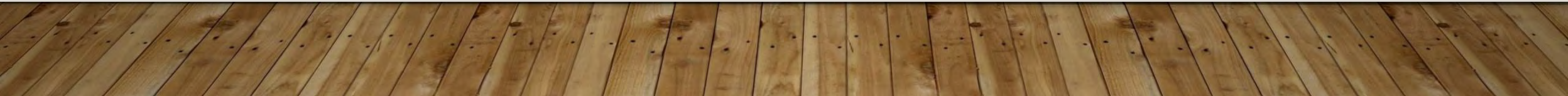
Goal: To honor loss (e.g., of safety, time, relationships) through tactile, symbolic art.

Materials: Stones, paint, markers, mod podge, pens

Steps:

- Ask the client to choose a few stones that represent aspects of their loss.
- Paint or decorate them with words, images, or symbols.
- Optionally, create a small ritual of placement, burying, or releasing the stones.

Trauma-Informed Rationale: Tangible ritual and symbolic expression of grief can foster mourning, closure, and transformation.



"Artful Affirmation Cards"

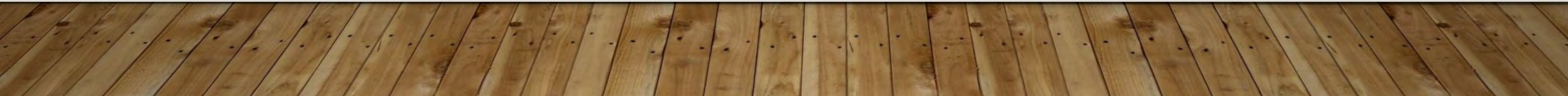
Goal: To create a collection of supportive self-statements rooted in visual imagery.

Materials: Index cards or cardstock, art supplies, affirmations (can be co-written)

Steps:

- Have the client write one affirmation on each card (e.g., "I am safe," "I am healing").
- Decorate each with colors, shapes, or images that evoke the affirmation's feeling.
- Create a ritual or practice where they draw one each day or when triggered.

Trauma-Informed Rationale: Helps rewire negative beliefs installed by trauma. Repetition of affirmation combined with art deepens emotional impact and neural integration.



Ethical Considerations When Using Creative Techniques in Trauma Therapy

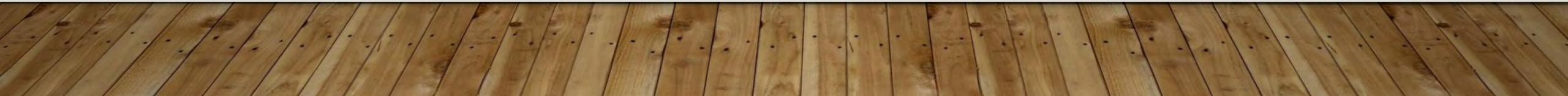
Safety First: Ensure emotional regulation and a safe therapeutic alliance before deep processing.

Informed Consent: Clients should understand the purpose and process of expressive work.

Cultural Sensitivity: Techniques must be adapted to the client's cultural background and beliefs.

Client-Led Pacing: Clients choose how much and when to engage in expressive processes.

Integration: Reflection and discussion are key to integrating insights into daily life.

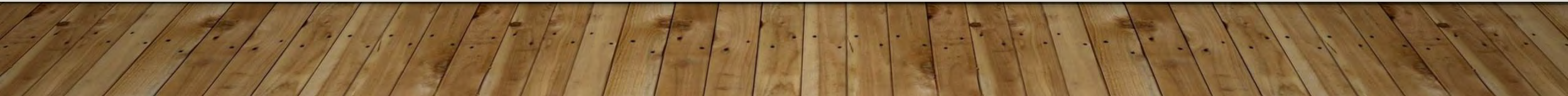


Progress Note Clinical Language

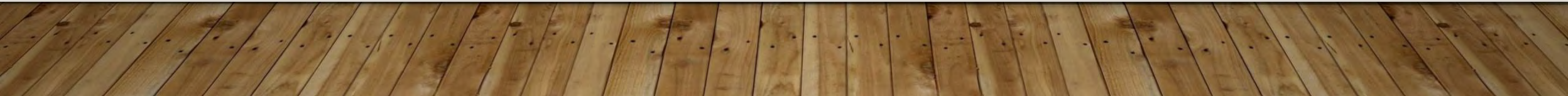
Make clear the clinical intent and observed outcomes

Client engaged in an expressive arts intervention involving drawing as a means to externalize and explore internal emotional states.

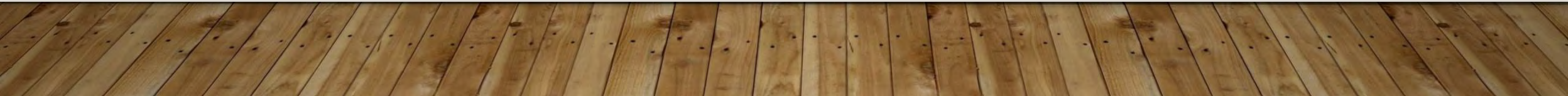
Therapist guided the client in reflecting on symbolic meaning within the imagery. Intervention supported emotional regulation and increased self-awareness.



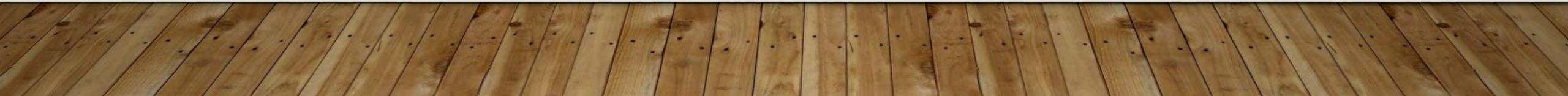
Client participated in a role-play exercise to explore interpersonal boundaries and assertiveness. Therapist facilitated the activity to help the client rehearse new behaviors and gain insight into relational dynamics. Intervention contributed to increased empowerment and perspective-taking.



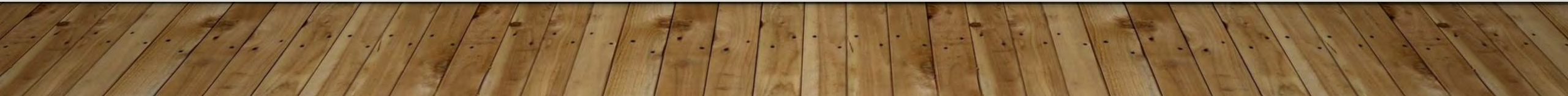
Client created a collage representing their current emotional landscape. Therapist supported client in narrating the meaning of chosen images and colors. Intervention appeared to deepen emotional processing and facilitate expression of previously unarticulated feelings.



Client engaged in therapeutic journaling focused on a recent triggering event. Client was then invited to reframe the narrative through a short poem. Therapist and client explored shifts in meaning and emotional tone. Intervention supported cognitive flexibility and emotional integration.



Client used colored pencils to represent different “parts” of self as identified through IFS-based language. Therapist facilitated dialogue among parts using Gestalt chair work. Intervention enhanced self-compassion and internal coherence.



Client created a visual timeline using markers and symbols to externalize their life story. Therapist supported re-authoring of a dominant problem-saturated narrative. Intervention fostered insight, resilience, and sense of agency.

SOAP Format (Drawing/Art Therapy Example)

S (Subjective):

Client reported feeling "confused and overwhelmed" about recent life transitions. Expressed difficulty verbalizing emotions.

O (Objective):

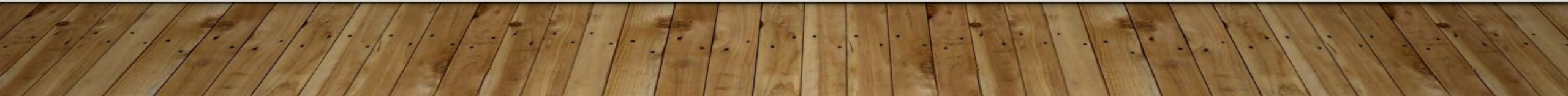
Client engaged in an art-based intervention using pastels to depict their emotional state. The artwork featured fragmented images and dark tones. Client appeared focused and emotionally engaged during the process. Tearfulness observed mid-activity.

A (Assessment):

The expressive art process appeared to support emotional expression and uncover underlying feelings of grief and uncertainty. Client demonstrated increased insight when discussing symbolism in the drawing.

P (Plan):

Continue integrating expressive arts to facilitate emotional processing. Next session will include exploration of inner resources through visual imagery.



Template 2 – DAP Format (Creative Writing Example)

D (Data):

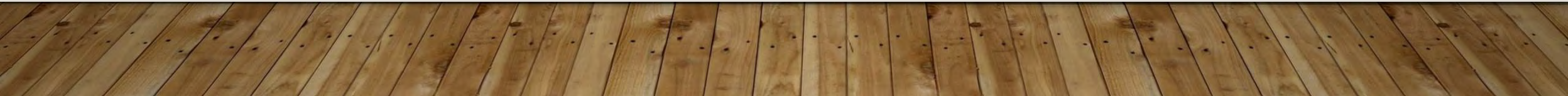
Client participated in a narrative therapy intervention using creative writing. Prompt: “If your anxiety had a voice, what would it say?” Client wrote a short story describing a character “trapped in a tower” and shared feelings of helplessness and fear. Therapist facilitated discussion around metaphors.

A (Assessment):

Client appeared emotionally engaged and demonstrated insight into patterns of avoidance and self-criticism. The use of metaphor allowed for externalization of difficult emotions, reducing shame.

P (Plan):

Build on metaphor work to explore self-compassion. Introduce visual mapping of story characters/parts next session.



Template 3 – SOAP Format (Music & Movement Example)

S (Subjective):

Client stated feeling “shut down” and disconnected at session start.

O (Objective):

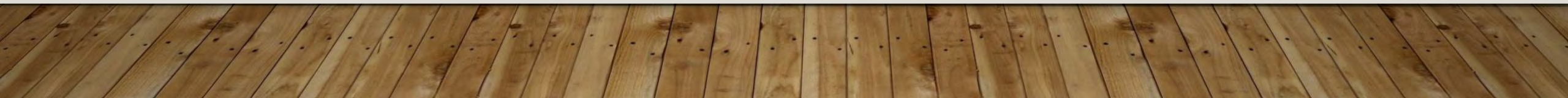
Client participated in a music-and-movement activity (gentle drumming and free movement). Client initially hesitant, then gradually engaged in rhythmic tapping. Energy level visibly increased; facial expression softened. Client described feeling “more alive” afterward.

A (Assessment):

Somatic and rhythmic expression appeared to help regulate client’s affect and reconnect with present-moment experience. Intervention supported nervous system regulation.

P (Plan):

Continue incorporating body-based expressive modalities. Consider integrating breathwork next session to deepen mind-body integration.



FINAL QUESTIONS



Resources

Impact Therapy: The Courage to Counsel, by Ed Jacobs and Christine Schimmel

200 More Brief, Creative & Practical Art Therapy Techniques: A Guide for Clinicians & Clients, by Susan Buchalter

Handbook of Expressive Arts Therapy, by Cathy Malchiodi

Trauma and Expressive Arts Therapy: Brain, Body, and Imagination in the Healing Process, by Cathy Malchiodi

