

THE WALKABOUT THERAPIST

Beyond the Gate

A Workbook for Walking Together

*The therapist enters
another person's world
as a guest.*

A Temporary Manuscript

*The workbook follows the walk.
The walk does not follow the workbook.*



A TEMPORARY MANUSCRIPT

This book is temporary.

That does not mean it is unimportant.

It means that, like the people who enter therapy and the therapists who accompany them, it is allowed to change.

There may be pages that eventually disappear. There may be questions that lead somewhere unexpected. There may be places we have not yet imagined.

There may even be a time when we discover that some of the questions in this book should never have been asked.

That is part of the walk.

This workbook is not intended to tell a person where to go.

It is an invitation for two people to begin walking together.

BEFORE WE BEGIN

The Garden and the Gate

This book began in a garden.

Not a perfect garden.

An imperfect garden.

A garden of trees and weeds, boundaries and gates, light and darkness, growth and loss.

A garden where attempts to control nature gradually became opportunities to listen to it.

Something important was discovered there.

Perhaps therapy could be understood in a similar way.

But an important distinction had to be made.

The therapist is not the gardener of another person's life.

The therapist does not decide what should grow. The therapist does not determine which plants are beautiful. The therapist does not automatically pull what appears to be a weed.

The therapist does not redesign the landscape according to a professional image of what a healthy garden ought to look like.

The therapist enters another person's world as a guest.

And so we arrive at the gate.

Beyond it is not simply another garden.

Beyond the gate is a life.

AN INVITATION TO THE PERSON WALKING

You may have arrived here because something hurts.

Perhaps something has happened. Perhaps something keeps happening. Perhaps you feel lost. Perhaps someone else believes you are lost.

Perhaps you are searching for something but cannot yet name what it is.

Or perhaps you simply know that the way you have been walking is no longer working.

You do not need to know where this journey is going before we begin.

Neither does the therapist.

There will be questions in this book. They are invitations, not demands.

You may answer them with words. You may draw. You may make a map. You may bring a photograph. You may write a poem.

You may cross out the question and replace it with a better one.

You may say: I don't know.

You may say: I don't want to go there today.

You may leave the page empty.

Silence is also part of a conversation.

AN INVITATION TO THE WALKABOUT THERAPIST

Before entering, remember:

This is not your landscape.

You have been invited into the lived world of another human being.

Enter carefully.

Bring your knowledge, experience and professional responsibility with you.

But do not confuse knowledge with knowing the person before you.

Notice your desire to explain. Notice your desire to solve. Notice when you begin looking for pathology before hearing story.

Notice when your map becomes more important than the landscape.

Notice when you are walking ahead.

And remain willing to ask:

Whose journey has this become?

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This is not a book to be completed.

You do not have to begin at the beginning. You do not have to visit every place.

You may return to somewhere you have already been. You may remain somewhere longer than expected.

You may discover a path that is not represented here. Add it.

The workbook follows the walk.

The walk does not follow the workbook.

MOVEMENT ONE

AT THE GATE

1. Before We Enter

Every therapeutic relationship has a gate. Sometimes it is obvious. Sometimes we discover later that we entered somewhere before permission had truly been given.

So our first task is not exploration. It is invitation.

For the Person Walking

What has brought you here?

What would you like me to know before we begin?

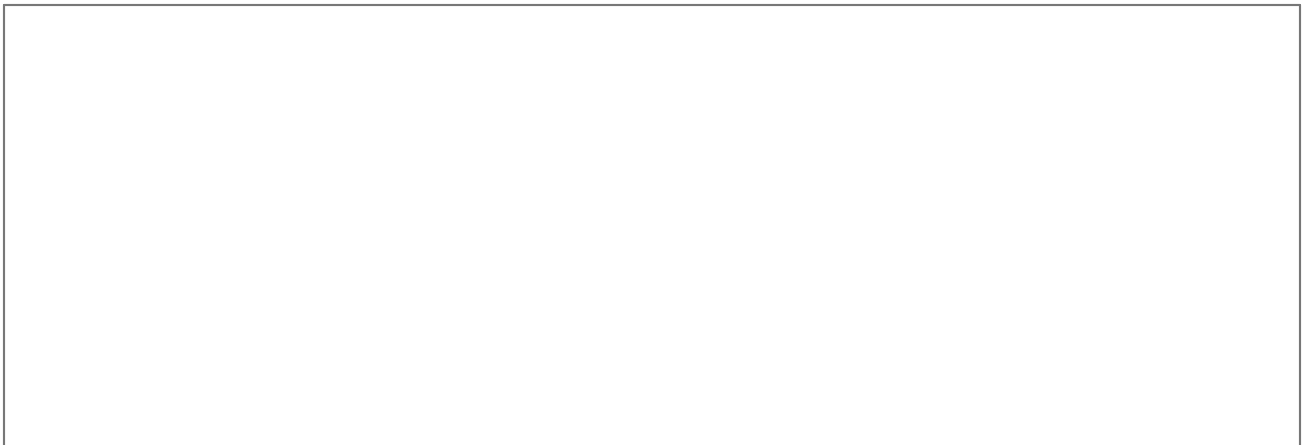
What do you hope might happen?

What are you afraid might happen?

What would help this feel like a place where you can speak?

What would you like me not to assume about you?

Open Space



For the WalkAbout Therapist

What assumptions have I already made?

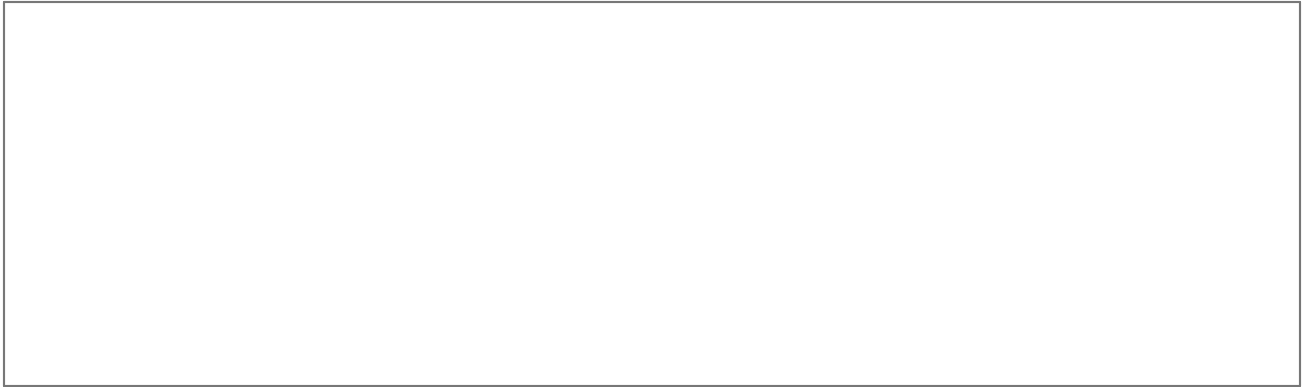
What am I expecting to find?

Am I already constructing a story about this person?

What would it mean to wait?

Between Us

What might we need from one another if we are going to walk together?

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a person to write their response to the question above it.

2. Permission

An invitation into one part of someone's life is not permission to enter every part.

There will be gates within gates.

A memory may have a gate. A relationship may have a gate. Grief may have a gate. The body may have a gate. Trauma may have a gate. Faith may have a gate. Even hope may have a gate.

Something to Wonder About

Where are you comfortable walking today?

Is there somewhere you do not want us to go?

For the Therapist

Can I respect the closed gate without interpreting the person's reluctance as resistance?

MOVEMENT TWO

LEARNING TO WALK

3. No Map Yet

Therapy often begins with an understandable desire for a map.

Where am I? What is wrong? How did I get here? How do I get out?

Maps can be useful. But a map is not the landscape.

Perhaps before deciding where we should go, we might notice where we are.

What is here right now?



If Your Life Were a Landscape Today...

Where would you place yourself? What surrounds you? Where is there light? Where is it difficult to see? Where are other people? Is anything changing?

Draw it, describe it, photograph something that represents it, or simply sit with the question.

Open space for words, drawings, photographs, maps, or silence.

4. What Are We Calling a Problem?

In a garden, the word weed seems simple until we begin asking questions.

Who decided this plant does not belong?

Why is it growing here?

What conditions allowed it to flourish?

Does it protect anything?

Does it prevent something else from growing?

What happens if we simply pull it out?

Human lives deserve even greater care.

For the Person Walking

What have you been told is the problem?

What do you believe the problem is?

Has this "problem" ever protected you, helped you survive, or served another purpose?

For the WalkAbout Therapist

Am I trying to remove the weed before understanding the soil?

5. The Soil Beneath Us

Nothing grows without context. Neither do human stories.

We are shaped by families, histories, relationships, losses, communities, cultures, opportunities, accidents, love, exclusion, belonging and events we never chose.

Understanding the person without understanding something of the soil may leave us with only part of the story.

What has shaped the ground beneath your feet?

People Who Have Been Part of My Landscape

Places That Have Shaped Me

Things I Inherited but Did Not Choose

Things I Want to Carry Forward

MOVEMENT THREE

THE LANDSCAPE OPENS

6. Paths

Some paths are chosen. Some are inherited. Some are made because there appeared to be no other way. Some become so familiar that we stop noticing we are walking them.

A Path I Keep Returning To



Where does it seem to lead? What keeps bringing you back?



For Both of Us

Are we trying to change the path too quickly? What might happen if we became curious about it first?



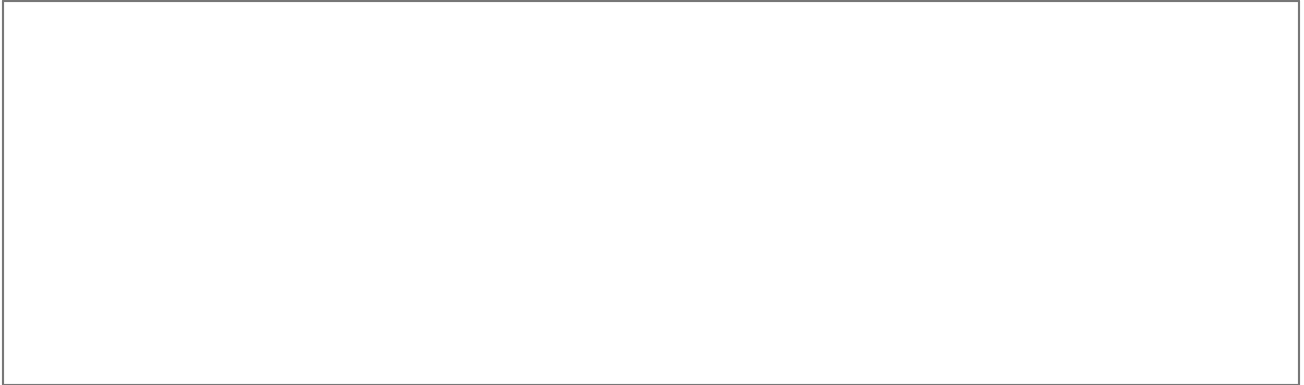
7. Crossroads

There are times when the familiar path divides. Neither direction is certain.

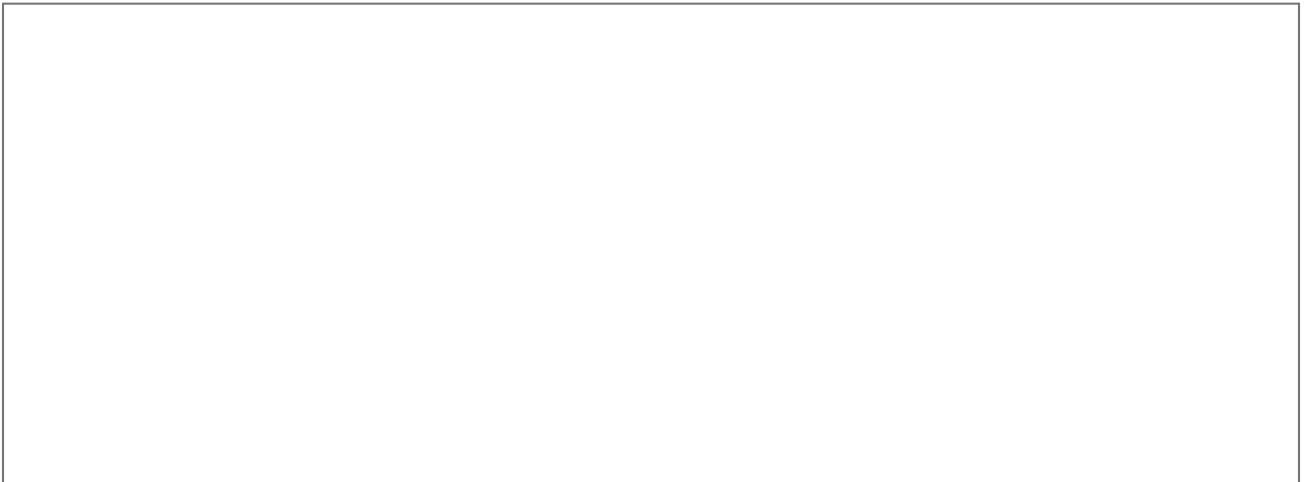
Sometimes therapy cannot tell us which path is correct.

Perhaps its task is to help us stand at the crossroads long enough to see what each direction asks of us.

A Crossroad in My Life



What might be lost if you choose one direction? What might become possible? What are you afraid of leaving behind? What are you afraid of meeting?



8. Weather

Not everything that happens to us originates within us.

Sometimes the weather changes.

A death. Illness. Economic hardship. A relationship ending. A new beginning. Conflict. Loneliness. A world that becomes frightening.

Some circumstances cannot simply be thought away.

What weather are you walking through?

What Helps Provide Shelter?

Therapist's Reflection

Am I locating inside this person something that may also belong to the world around them?



9. What We Carry

Every traveller carries something.

Memories. Responsibilities. Stories. Shame. Love. Expectations. Secrets. Hope.
Things other people handed us. Things we once needed but may no longer need.

My Backpack

Draw a backpack. Place inside it whatever you believe you are carrying.

Open space for words, drawings, photographs, maps, or silence.

Then wonder:

Which of these things are mine?

Which were given to me?

Which do I still need?

Which am I not ready to put down?

No one else decides what you should carry.

MOVEMENT FOUR

PLACES WE MAY ENCOUNTER

10. Family

Who has walked with you? Who has walked away? Who walks too closely? Whose footsteps can you still hear?

Open space for words, drawings, photographs, maps, or silence.

11. Belonging

Where have you experienced: I belong here.

Where have you experienced: There is no place for me here.

What would belonging feel like now?

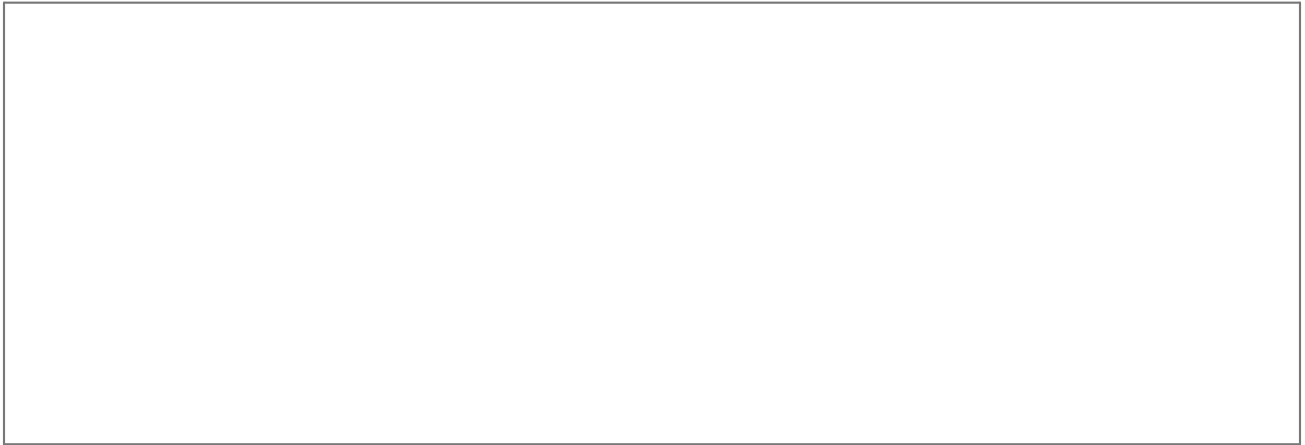
12. Loss

Some landscapes contain places where something once stood.

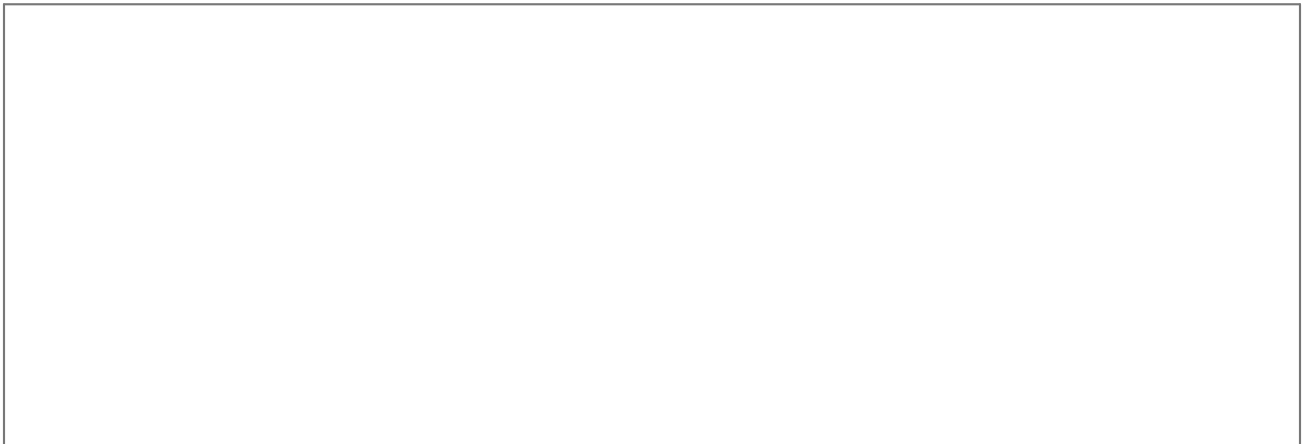
A person. A relationship. A dream. A home. A way of understanding ourselves.

We do not have to fill every empty place. Sometimes we sit beside it.

Someone or Something Missing



What remains?



13. The Body

Our bodies travel every path with us. Sometimes the body speaks before words arrive.

Where do you experience fear? Where do you experience safety? Where do you experience exhaustion? Where do you experience aliveness?

You may use words or simply make marks on the page.

Open space for words, drawings, photographs, maps, or silence.

14. Mystery

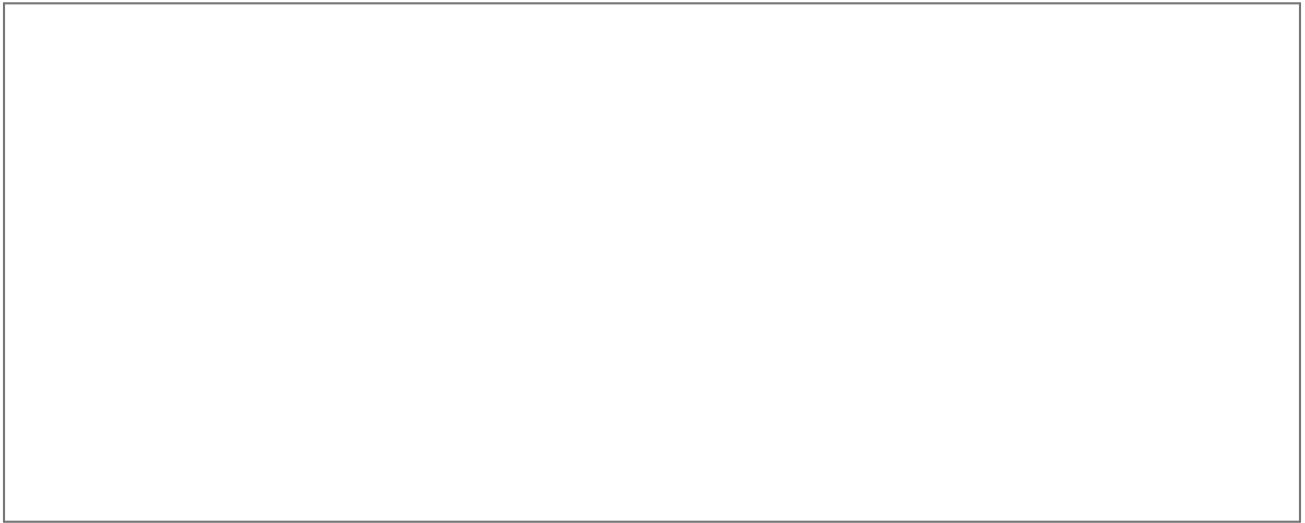
There may be parts of ourselves that cannot be completely explained.

Therapy can illuminate. It can interpret. It can connect.

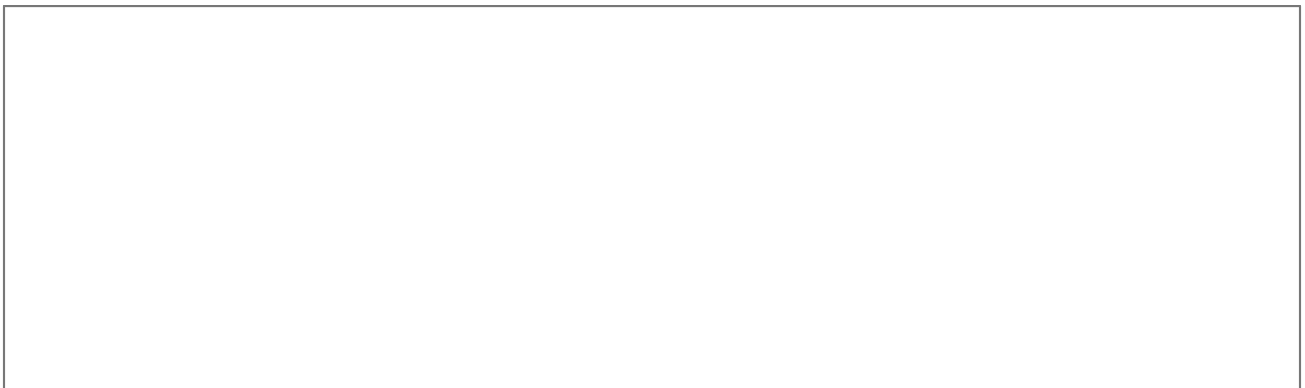
But perhaps understanding a human life does not require reducing it to an explanation.

Some things remain mysterious.

Something About Myself I Do Not Understand



What would happen if, for a moment, we did not try to solve it?



MOVEMENT FIVE

STOPPING

15. A Place to Sit

Not every session needs a destination. Not every silence needs a question. Not every discovery needs an interpretation.

Today perhaps we simply stop.

What are we noticing here?

Open space for words, drawings, photographs, maps, or silence.

16. Looking Back

We have been walking for a while.

Look behind you. Not to measure progress. Just to notice.

What looks different from here?

What keeps returning?

What have we misunderstood?

What have you taught me about your world that I could not have known when we began?



MOVEMENT SIX

THE WALKABOUT THERAPIST

17. Am I Still a Guest?

This page belongs primarily to the therapist.

Have I become too comfortable in another person's world?

Have I begun deciding what their progress should look like?

Am I listening for what the person is saying or for confirmation of what I already believe?

Have I mistaken my interpretation for their truth?

Have I used my professional knowledge to open possibilities - or to close them?

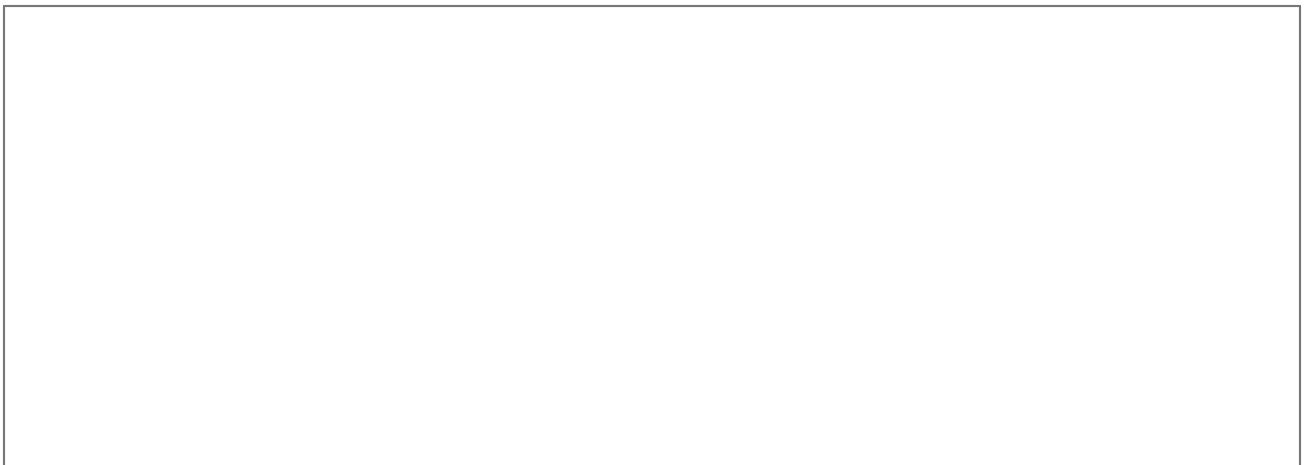
Where is power present between us?

Have I remained attentive to safety and boundaries?

Can this person disagree with me?

Can this person surprise me?

Can I be wrong?



18. The Hermeneutic Walk

We understand a story differently after hearing another part of it.

And then, strangely, the new understanding changes how we hear the first story.

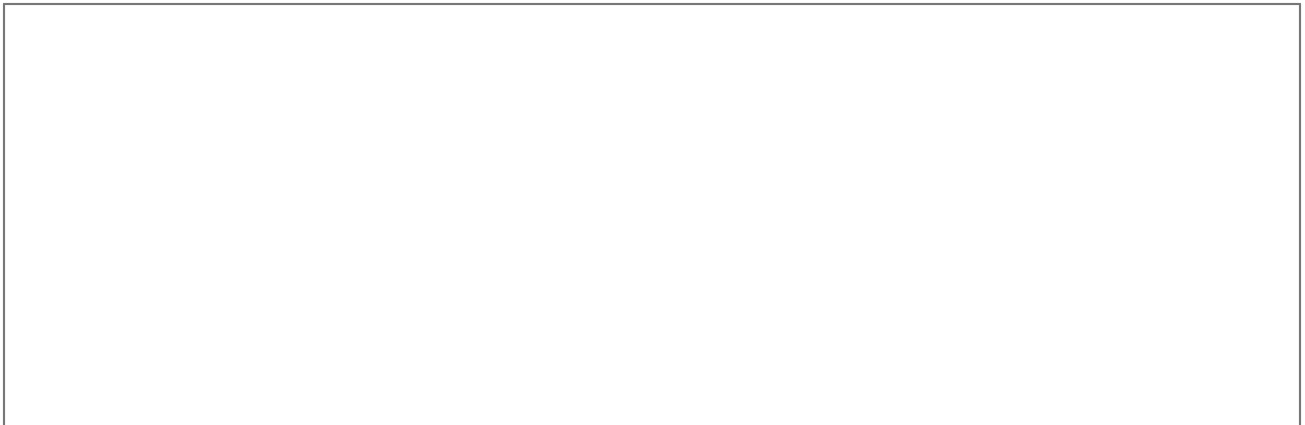
We walk forward. We circle back. We see again.

The same tree looks different in another season. The same memory may carry another meaning when encountered later.

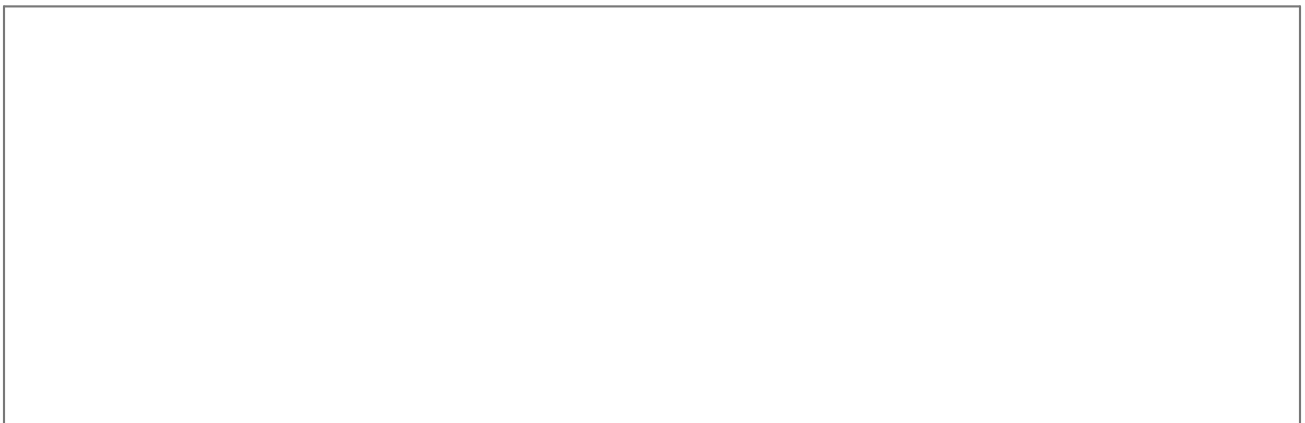
Perhaps understanding is not reaching the final interpretation.

Perhaps understanding is becoming willing to return and see again.

Something I Understand Differently Now



Something We Need to Revisit



MOVEMENT SEVEN

BEYOND THE GATE

19. The World Outside Therapy

Eventually we must ask: What happens when our conversation ends and you walk back into your life?

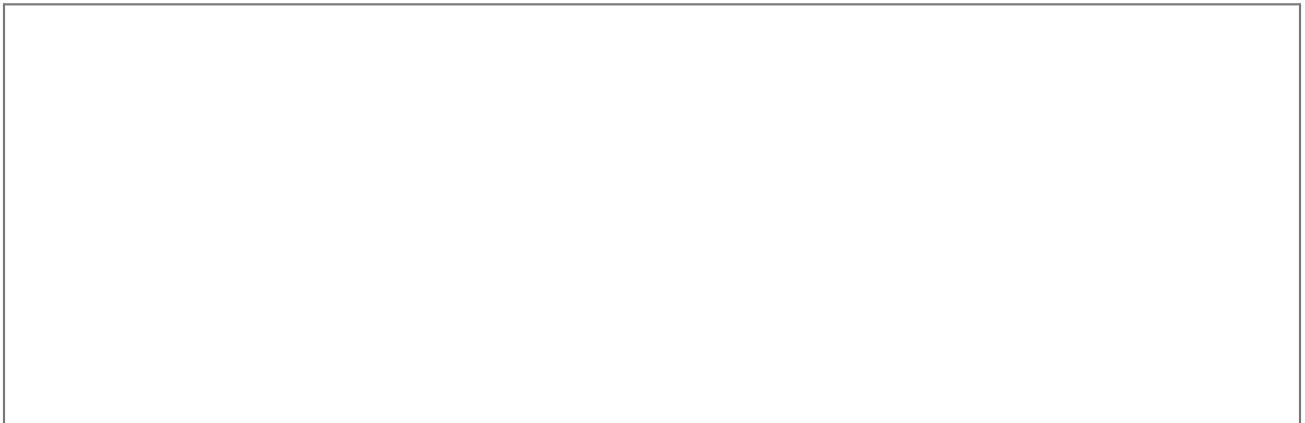
Therapy cannot become the person's permanent landscape.

There are relationships to enter. Choices to make. Mornings to wake into. Conflicts to face. Ordinary Tuesdays to live.

There may still be weeds. There will certainly still be uncertainty.

An imperfect life does not suddenly become perfect because it has been examined.

What is waiting for me outside this room?

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a person to write their response to the question "What is waiting for me outside this room?".

Where might I walk differently?

Where do I want to walk exactly as I already do?

20. Hope

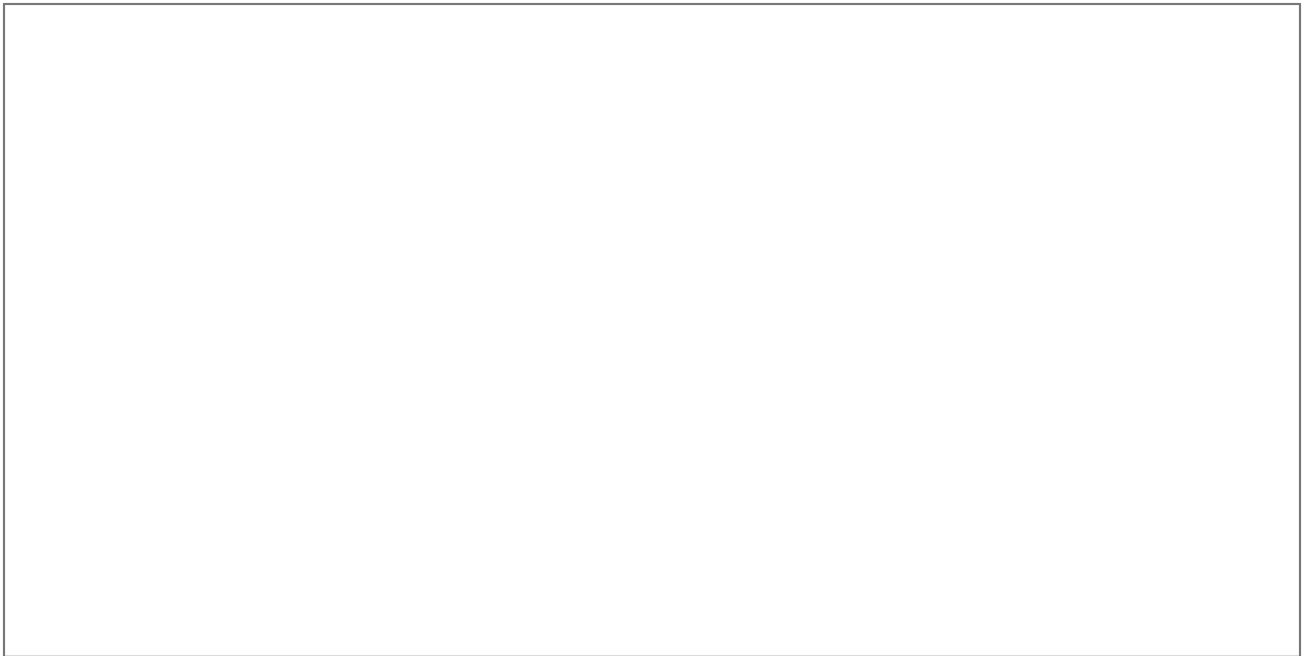
Hope does not have to mean that everything will turn out as we want.

Perhaps hope can sometimes be smaller.

A possibility. A direction. A person. A morning. A willingness to try again.

A tiny green shoot appearing somewhere we had stopped looking.

Where is hope appearing?

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a user to write their response to the question 'Where is hope appearing?'.

If you cannot see it today, the page may remain empty.

MOVEMENT EIGHT

WALKING ON

21. When the Therapist Leaves

There was always something important about the therapist being a guest.

Guests eventually leave.

The therapeutic relationship matters precisely because it is real and because it has boundaries.

The therapist does not take possession of the person's garden.

The therapist does not become the destination.

Perhaps successful walking together eventually makes another kind of walking possible.

For the Person Walking

What have you discovered about yourself?

What remains mysterious?

What do you trust yourself to notice now?

Where might you go next?

22. For the Therapist

Before leaving the gate, ask:

What did this person teach me?

Where was I changed by our encounter?

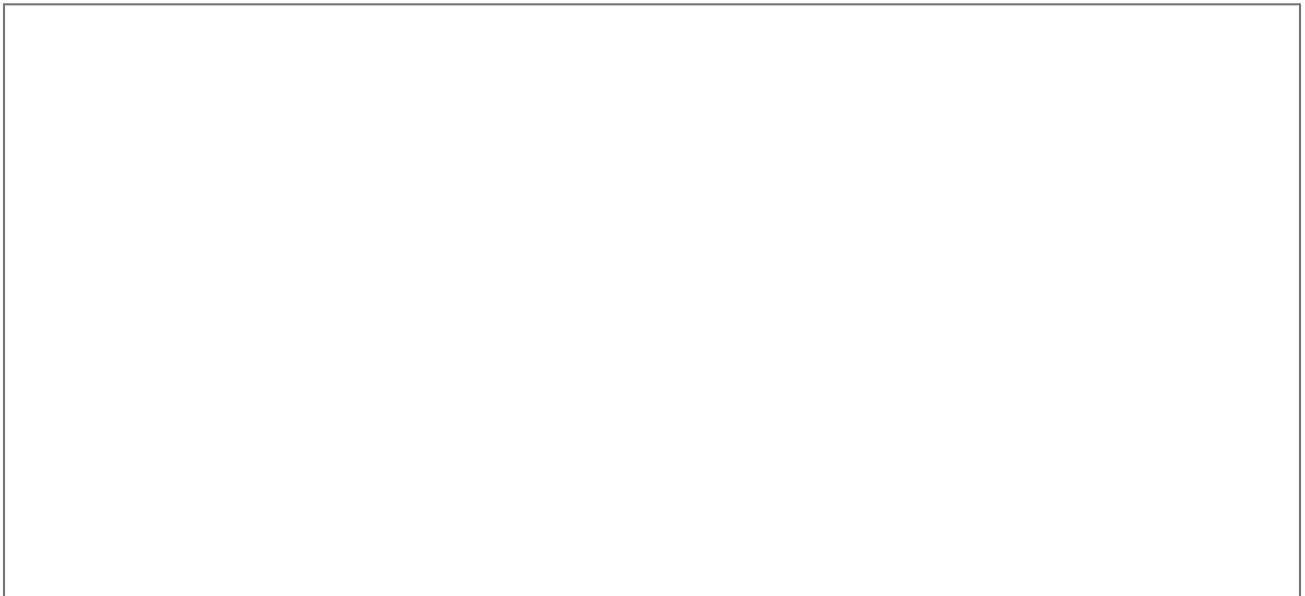
Where did I lead when I should have followed?

Where did I remain silent when perhaps I should have spoken?

Where did professional responsibility require me to act?

Did I honour both the person's autonomy and my responsibility for ethical care?

What will I carry from this walk without claiming what does not belong to me?

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the therapist to write their reflections on the questions listed above.

THE LAST PAGE

There is no final question.

There is no score.

There is no certificate saying that the journey has been completed.

There is simply another gate.

Perhaps you know what lies beyond it. Perhaps you do not.

You may walk through. You may wait. You may return to somewhere you have already been. You may discover another path altogether.

The therapist has accompanied you for part of the journey.

But the landscape remains yours.

And perhaps something has changed.

Not because someone showed you the correct way to live.

But because, for a while,

someone walked with you.

A FINAL EMPTY PAGE

What belongs here that we did not know to ask?

This space is yours.