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Fall 2025



RELATIONAL THEORY

Week 08 for SOWK 581

AGENDA

- The third space and relational theory in general
- Self-disclosure
- Teaching mindfulness

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Describe the concept of the third space and evaluate its use in building therapeutic alliance.
- Reflect on the role and boundaries of self-disclosure in relational clinical practice.
- Practice teaching using mindfulness or grounding strategies

WEEK EIGHT PLAN



Relational theory and practice is a postmodern psychodynamic perspective that calls for active engagement between client and clinician. The therapeutic relationship is an interactive, alive process— **empathic, authentic, and mutually growth enhancing.**

— *Cooper and Granucci Lesser, 2022, p. 132*

**underline and bold added*

(Cooper & Granucci Lesser, 2022)

THE THIRD SPACE

Client

Clinician

The interactional field created when the subjectivities of the therapist and the client come together. The entire range of racial, sociocultural, and political identities become topics for therapeutic conversation.

THIRD SPACE

MAPPING ACTIVITY

Identifying
Subjectivity and
How it Interacts

Client

Identity
Experience
Emotions

What Goes Into Their
Shared Reflections
(Third Space)

Identity
Power/Privilege
Cultural Lens

Clinician

1. **Individually** brainstorm examples of what might be included in the clinician and client spaces
2. **Small Groups** share your example, come up with potential interactions that might happen in the third space we could look out for. Try to represent your thoughts graphically
3. **Whole Class** share back with the class your reflections

(Cooper & Granucci Lesser, 2022)

THERAPEUTIC TRIPARTITE AWARENESS

Allows a patient to remain
emotionally present with
difficult feelings.

SELF

Clinician

FLOW OF RELATIONSHIP

Client

OTHER

Mindful practitioners listen deeply,
attentively, and empathically.

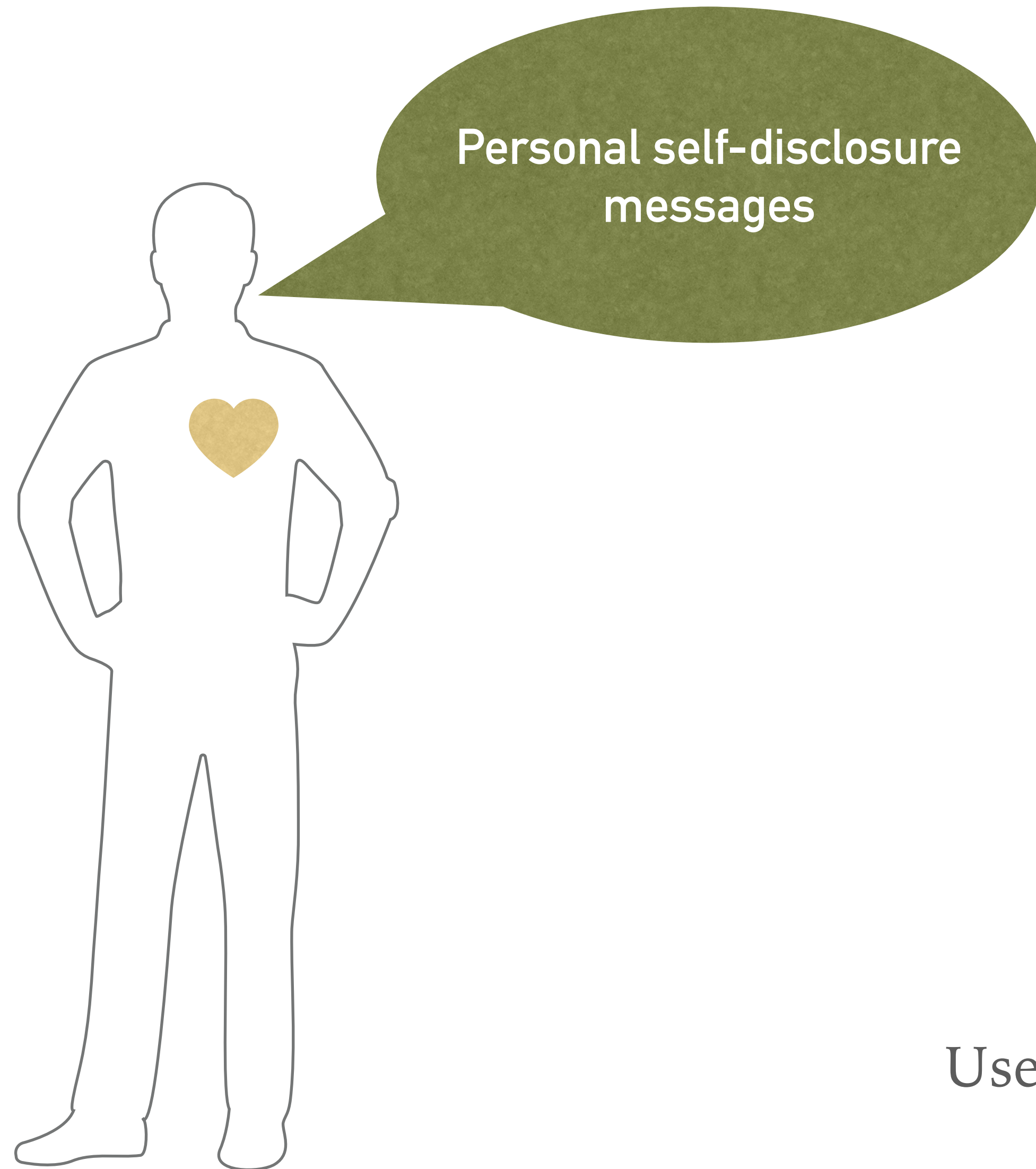
FUNCTION OF SELF-DISCLOSURE

Developing a therapeutic relationship with the client especially in the early stages of treatment

- Conveying the therapist's presence and empathy through transparency, attentiveness, and responsiveness to the client
- Engaging the client in meaningful therapeutic work
- Cross-cultural and cross-racial counseling to establish trust
- Creating a third space for conversations that provide mutual exchange and growth.

(Cooper & Granucci Lesser, 2022)

INTERSUBJECTIVE SELF-DISCLOSURE



Personal self-disclosure
messages

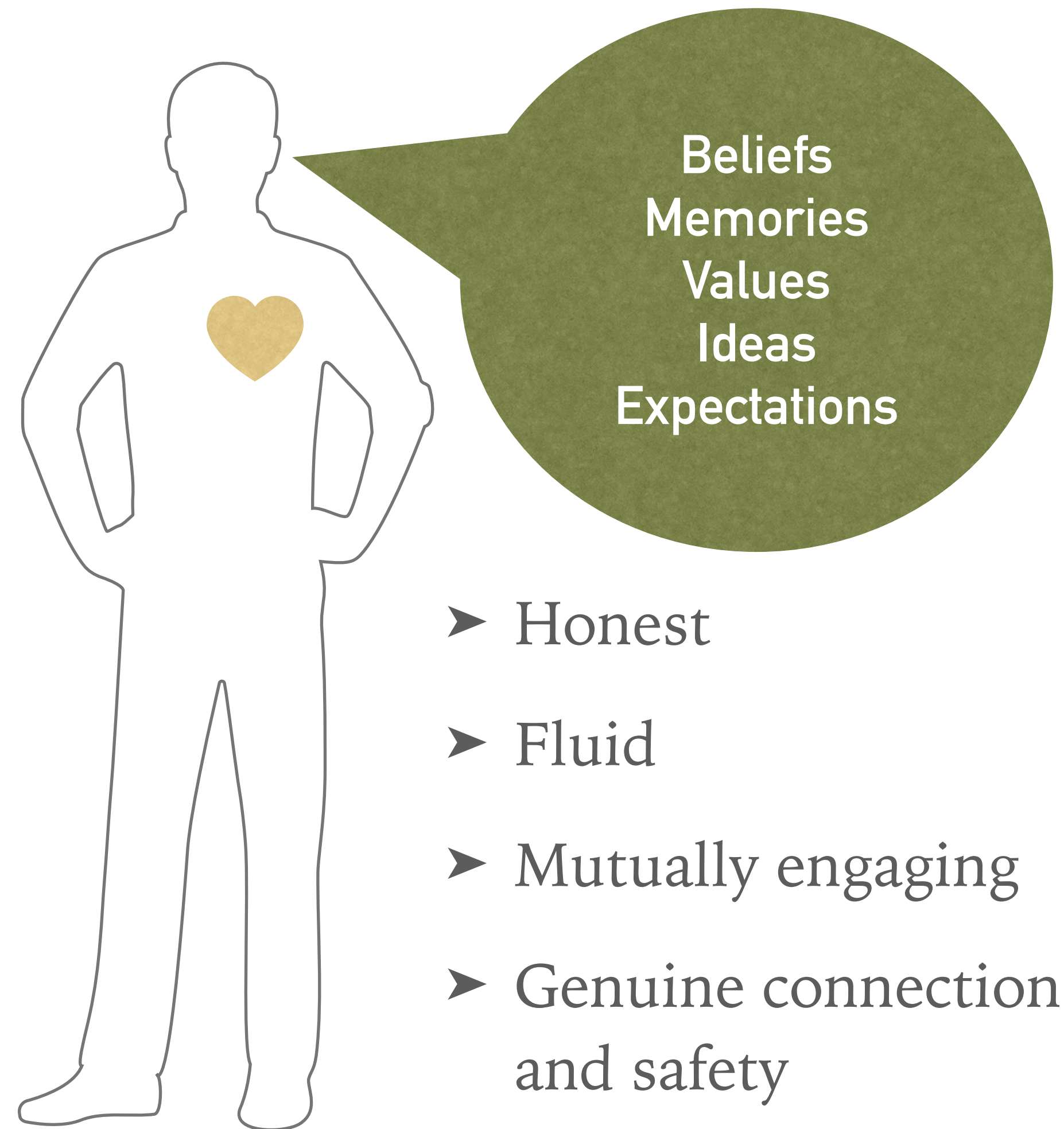
Done for the client, purposefully
Enough details to provide
connection and understanding, but
limited

Focus on other forms to
demonstrate authenticity, use
sparingly

Use it judiciously to enhance the therapeutic relationship

(Cooper & Granucci Lesser, 2022)

INTERSUBJECTIVE SELF-DISCLOSURE



(Cooper & Granucci Lesser, 2022)

SOCIAL WORKERS DECISION TO SHARE PERCEPTIONS AND REACTIONS THEY BELIEVE WILL BE HELPFUL

- Requests for social worker's opinions, views, and feelings
- Disclosing personal past experiences
- Providing Feedback
- Experiencing discomfort in session
- Shareing feelings of frustration, anger, and hurt
- Responding to positive feedback
- Giving positive feedback
- Saying no and setting limits

(Hepworth, et al. 2023)

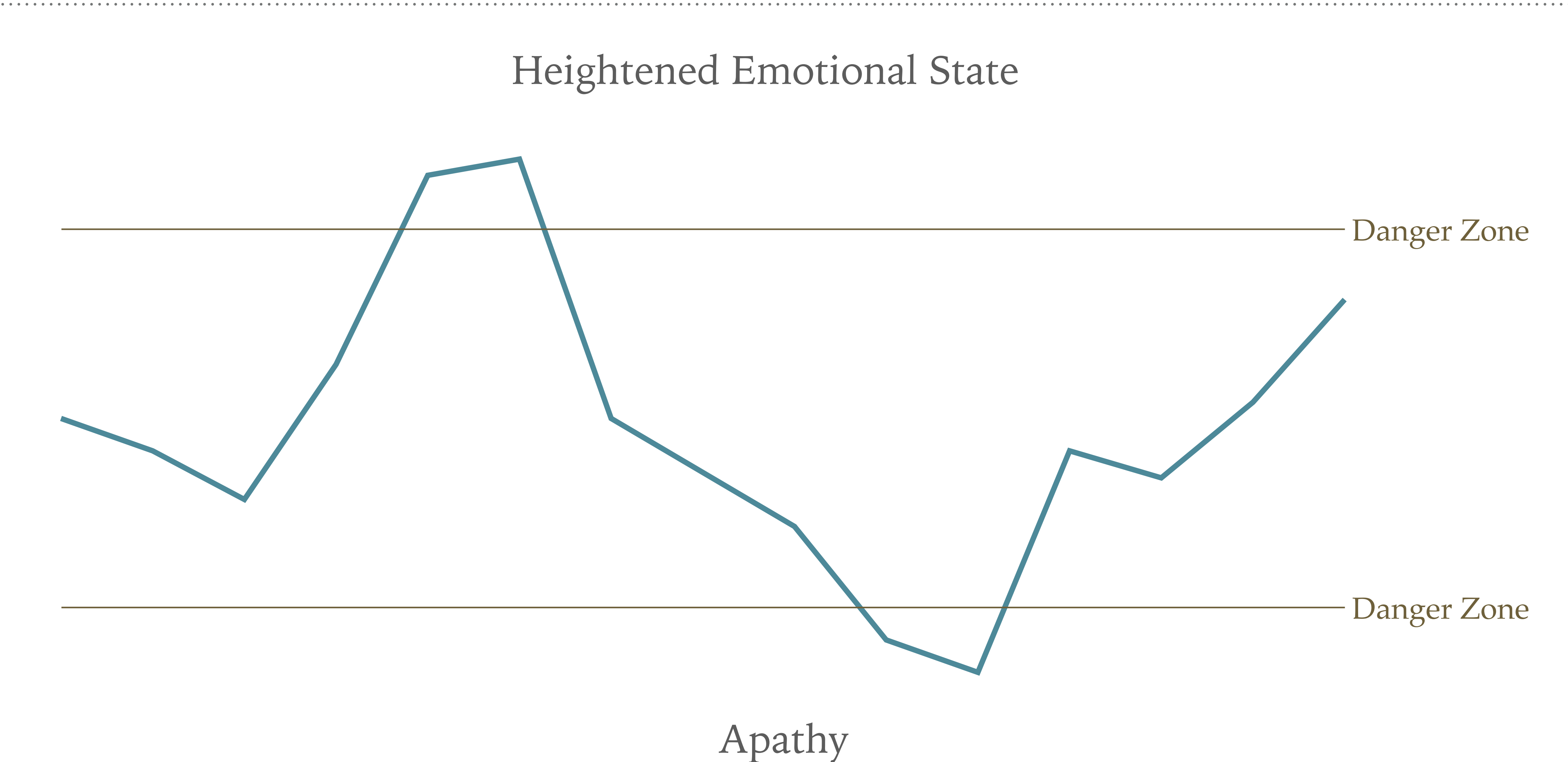
BRIEF RELATIONAL THEORY

Countertransference and disclosure which facilitates exploration of third space

- Beginning collaboration with setting structure and identifying goals for treatment
- Developing a mutual rationale for treatment tasks
- Different exercises demonstrating mindfulness
- Clarifying goals and expectations

(Cooper & Granucci Lesser, 2022)

TIMES TO CONSIDER USING GROUNDING



A large, ancient tree with a thick trunk and dense green foliage stands on a rocky, layered cliff face. Its roots are exposed and spread out across the rock surface, some reaching down towards the ground. The background shows more trees and a clear sky, suggesting a natural, forested environment. The overall tone is earthy and serene, emphasizing the connection between the tree and the ground.

Grounding Techniques

- Mental Grounding Techniques
- Physical Grounding Techniques
- Soothing Grounding Techniques

BRIEF RELATIONAL THEORY

Countertransference and disclosure which facilitates exploration of third space

- Beginning collaboration with setting structure and identifying goals for treatment
- Developing a mutual rationale for treatment tasks
- **Different exercises demonstrating mindfulness**
- Clarifying goals and expectations

Work with a partner to demonstrate and teach them to use some of the mindfulness exercises, or grounding techniques.

(Cooper & Granucci Lesser, 2022)

MIDCOURSE FEEDBACK

Please complete for
all of your classes,
but especially for
mine...

