

hawthorn heart

magical femme boundary spells

part 1: containing

this lesson contains:

course overview

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what is a boundary

what makes an effective boundary

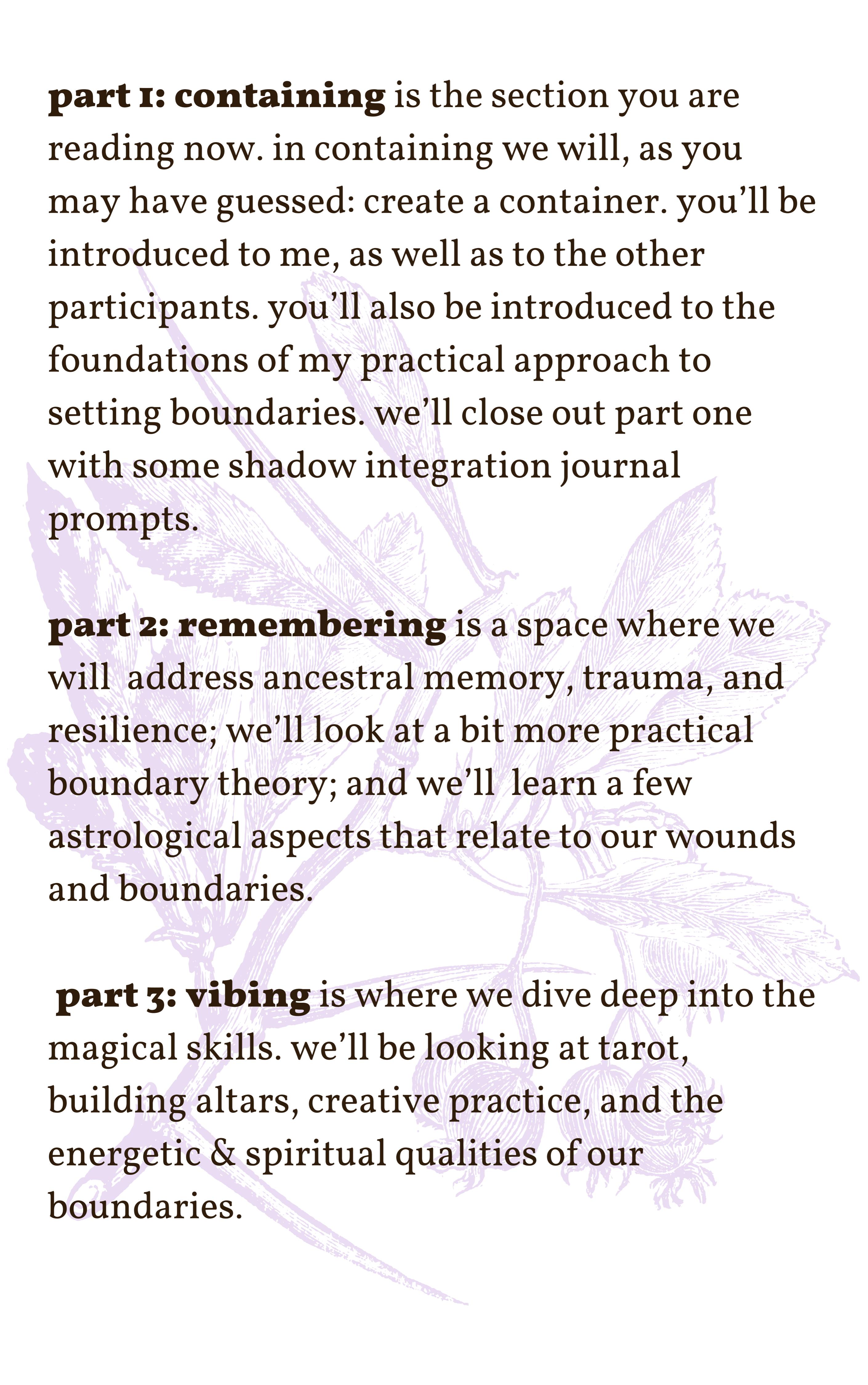
choosing an area of focus for this workshop

shadow integration journal prompts

course overview

welcome to hawthorn heart! in this space we'll be gathering together to learn practical and magical skills to set life transforming boundaries. we will be able to grow our own magical tool box, and if we choose we can support and witness each other, as a community, to do the same.

this course will be shared with you in 4 parts. each part will contain a mix of theory, skill building, creative prompts and suggestions for gathering. there is a lot offered in each lesson. I would encourage you to step into and work with the pieces that resonate with you. please don't feel pressure to do activities or work with prompts that don't feel healing and resonate with you. that to be said, if you hit a block and are craving support i'd suggest connecting with the [facebook group](#).



part 1: containing is the section you are reading now. in containing we will, as you may have guessed: create a container. you'll be introduced to me, as well as to the other participants. you'll also be introduced to the foundations of my practical approach to setting boundaries. we'll close out part one with some shadow integration journal prompts.

part 2: remembering is a space where we will address ancestral memory, trauma, and resilience; we'll look at a bit more practical boundary theory; and we'll learn a few astrological aspects that relate to our wounds and boundaries.

part 3: vibing is where we dive deep into the magical skills. we'll be looking at tarot, building altars, creative practice, and the energetic & spiritual qualities of our boundaries.

part 4: planting is where we will look at plants and how they can act as allies in setting boundaries that can transform your life and relationships.

introduction: who am i

there are lots of ways i could answer how i came to practice and share boundary skills. professionally, i used to teach youth about boundaries in schools. i taught classes full of girls and young queer folks how to set boundaries in ways that could help protect them from the impacts of sexual assault. i feel a lot of gratitude for the program i worked for, although it was nestled in somewhat of a second-wave-influenced approach, which isn't really my jam.

when i left the city i grew up in, i shifted from teaching youth about boundaries with



someone else's curriculum to learning from teachers who resonated more with my personal philosophy. i took a course on boundaries with the brilliant pavini moray. i gained mentorship from my dear friend and teacher rain crowe. i fell madly in love with the chai chats podcast, which has some amazing episodes on boundaries. i read cristien storm's book living in liberation which i highly recommend. i spent time in places like the Unistoten camp and onunceded Sinixt territory. i also gained mentorship and listened to stories from wise and powerful folks like Mel Bazil and Marilyn James. i spent time on the land with the plants in unceded sinixt and coast salish territories. and i got to know yarrow, nettles, & roses - all of whom will be introduced to you as this course unfolds.

with all this new information, i started teaching the first versions of hawthorn heart at the local women's center, online, and back

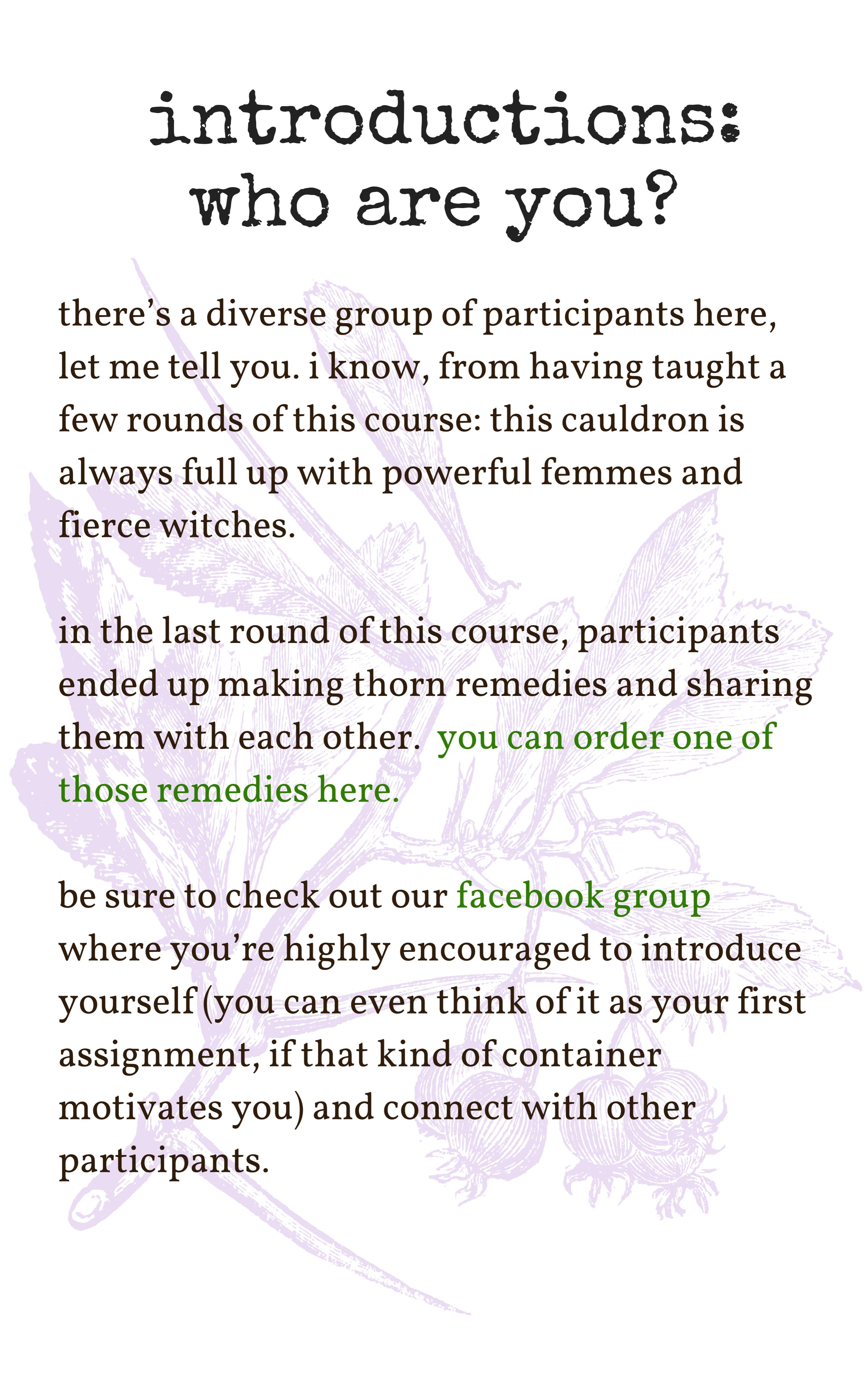
in my home town. i gained some incredibly valuable feedback from students (i'm always open to feedback, as long as it's offered in a constructive and consensual manner), which i've integrated into the present incarnation of this course.

perhaps most importantly, over the last 3 years i came into and out of an abusive relationship with someone i loved dearly; someone who is a wonderful person, who inspired me every day. in our relationship, we both struggled to navigate the much needed and deeply absent boundaries.

of our intimate connection. leaving that relationship, and the sacrifices required of me to change my life in such a drastic way, was by far my greatest teacher yet about boundaries and how much i need them to help keep my soul alive and thriving.

so that's me, and now I wonder - what about all of you?

introductions: who are you?



there's a diverse group of participants here, let me tell you. i know, from having taught a few rounds of this course: this cauldron is always full up with powerful femmes and fierce witches.

in the last round of this course, participants ended up making thorn remedies and sharing them with each other. you can order one of those remedies [here](#).

be sure to check out our [facebook group](#) where you're highly encouraged to introduce yourself (you can even think of it as your first assignment, if that kind of container motivates you) and connect with other participants.

you can include any info you think is relevant to your ability to connect authentically with others in the group. *what brings you to the group? what identities do you hold? what are you hoping to learn?*

and also: *what song/s do you jive on when you're getting inspired to set fierce boundaries?*

if you like, you can add your song to the hawthorn heart playlist.

lastly, the group also contains a document for gathering resources, which you can both refer to and add to.

what is a boundary?

boundaries are protection magic.

boundaries create a sense of differentiation between ourselves and others. sometimes this differentiation means we don't speak, we are separate, we are taking space.

sometimes the boundary happens within a deep intimate connection. in this case, the boundary allows us and others to understand our needs, cravings, limits, and what feels safe for us in the connection.

boundaries map what makes the connection feel healthy, nourishing and stable.

often times these two states (separate and intimate) are not polarized, though they may appear this way at first glance. *ideally a*

boundary creates BOTH safety AND intimacy.
sometimes taking space is the best way to
re/develop trust, mutual respect, and good
will towards ourselves & others.

boundaries need be neither static nor material.

boundaries can be broadly elemental or holistic. while i think it's possible to gather *practical* (one might say *earthy*) skills to establish our boundaries clearly - boundaries also exist in an ethereal sense, an emotional sense, a mental sense, a passionate sense, etc.

boundaries involve sensing and learning to communicate both our *edges* and our *cravings*.

boundaries are the embodied skill of living a life that is authentically tuned in to the buzz & pulse of these forces within our bodies.

what makes an effective boundary?

before getting into the magical practices (covered later in the course), we'll explore a few *mundane, foundational* qualities.

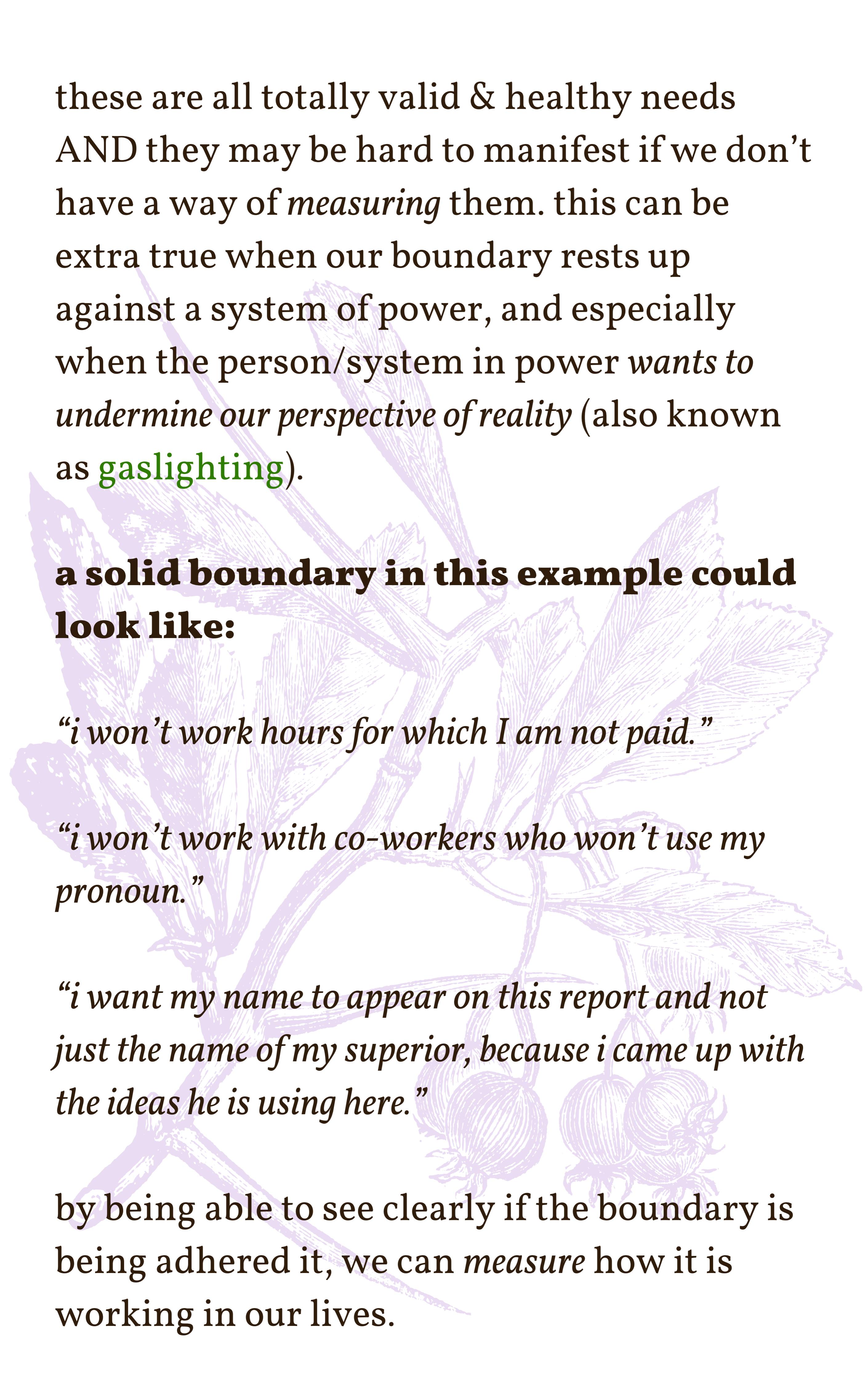
of all the boundaries i've enacted in my life, the most effective have been: measurable, accountable, negotiable, and communicable.

measurable

often when we are setting a boundary, the *need* for the it arises from an emotional experience. however, boundaries built around our emotional, subjective, or qualitative experience can be hard to maintain since they can be hard to measure in a concrete way.

this means the need for the boundary arises from an emotional experience, but the boundary itself will be more effective if it's nestled in a concrete way of measuring its effectiveness.

for example: when i've experienced burn-out or exhaustion in jobs i've worked in non-profit settings, i may crave *feeling* less tired, to have my labor and time be more acknowledged, or to be heard more clearly by the folks i work with/for.



these are all totally valid & healthy needs
AND they may be hard to manifest if we don't
have a way of *measuring* them. this can be
extra true when our boundary rests up
against a system of power, and especially
when the person/system in power *wants to*
undermine our perspective of reality (also known
as gaslighting).

**a solid boundary in this example could
look like:**

"i won't work hours for which I am not paid."

*"i won't work with co-workers who won't use my
pronoun."*

*"i want my name to appear on this report and not
just the name of my superior, because i came up with
the ideas he is using here."*

by being able to see clearly if the boundary is
being adhered it, we can *measure* how it is
working in our lives.

another example of a measurable boundary would be something like...

“i will only do the labour of explaining something about my experience to someone with more privilege than me, if they are willing to take me out for lunch or make me a nourishing meal in exchange for my time and wisdom.”

boundaries that are *measurable* are especially helpful for women and femmes, because so much of our exhaustion and feeling of being used or not appreciated has to do with an implicit (or sometimes explicit) expectation that we will provide endless *emotional labour*. this pressure only increases for femmes whose identities intersect with other experiences of oppression, such as racism or transphobia.

this labour is measured in how the feelings of the people around us shift based on the impacts of our time, wisdom, & attention and is often seen as a requirement. that is, this labour often goes entirely unnoticed until/unless we stop giving it – which is when people feel angry that we aren't, effortlessly and constantly, providing work that is perceived as a natural and necessary part of our being.

and so, being able to *measure*, for example, how long we are willing to listen to someone process a feeling with us, or what we deserve in return for this labour, makes *tangible and visible* the work we do that is often erased.

accountable

creating boundaries that *we are accountable for enforcing* is one of the best ways to guarantee the boundary will succeed.

when we rest the functionality and accountability of our boundaries in the hands of others, we give our power away in ways that make our boundaries much less likely to be successful.

often, boundaries that we expect others to hold on our behalf can lend themselves to co-dependent dynamics that are full of resentment.

for example, say i have a friend who likes to endlessly complain about a situation in their life - a situation which they could change if they were willing to make some sacrifices, confront a difficult conflict, or do much needed personal work.

(i would differentiate this from a persistent situation, held in place by daunting systems of power, which realistically cannot be changed by sheer will, work, or faith. this is about a problem my friend can change, if they are willing to do some hard work and: *be accountable.*)

this person likes to have me listen to them, but doesn't want to hear my feelings or ideas about how they could change the situation. in response, i could listen to my friend and passive aggressively judge them, make comments that make them feel unloved and uncomfortable, or talk about them behind their back while feigning niceness to their face.

i, like most of us, have tried many of these strategies and have had them done to me. *they hurt!* and i've learned that what i really need to do is take a deep breath, find my center, and communicate my limits to my friend.

because here's the thing: my friend is relying on me not to maintain the boundary.

even if they love and respect me, they get something that is very valuable to them when the boundary is not enforced: my seemingly endless availability to witness them, without judgment, advice, or requests around their behaviour – and to act as if the process does not affect me.

this dynamic could (and has) led to me feeling resentment towards my friend, which really doesn't feel good to either of us and could lead to our relationship collapsing under the weight of expectations regarding my labour and my weak boundaries.

let's say i go for lunch with this friend. i could communicate my boundary to them in advance:

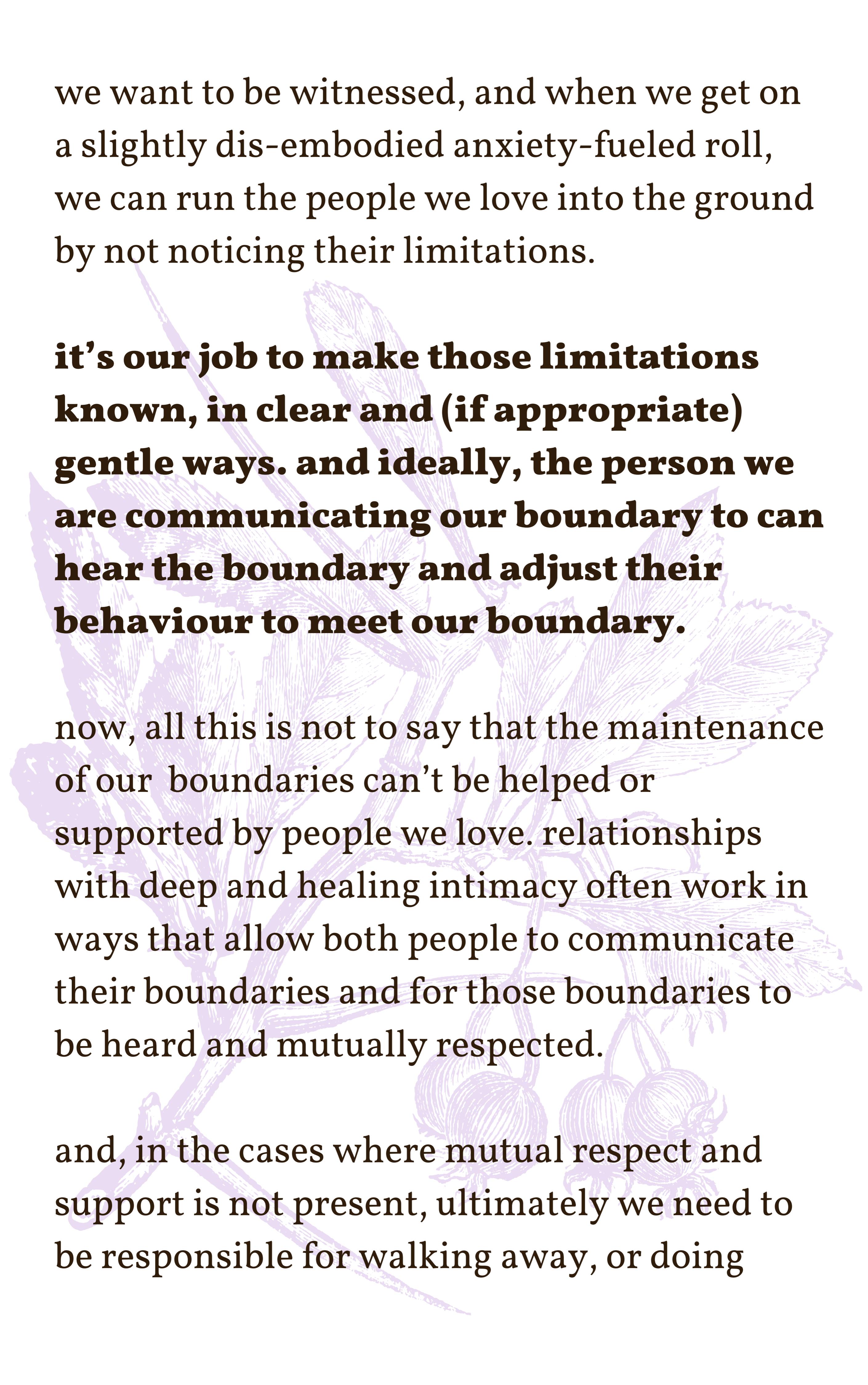
"i care about you. i see you are in a lot of pain in this situation. right now based on my energy/spoons/desire/trauma i can only listen to you talk about this for 15 minutes."

at the lunch i can set a timer for 15 minutes, and when it goes off **i need to be willing to walk away or change the topic if the conversation continues.**

if i make my friend responsible for my boundary, i am likely to not feel in control of how the conversation flows. i am likely to have my boundary steamrolled, as is the usual flow.

this type of steamrolling can happen even when we have good intentions. even when we love each other. i have done it. i think most people have been on both sides of this.

because the truth is: *all of us just want to be heard.*



we want to be witnessed, and when we get on a slightly dis-embodied anxiety-fueled roll, we can run the people we love into the ground by not noticing their limitations.

it's our job to make those limitations known, in clear and (if appropriate) gentle ways. and ideally, the person we are communicating our boundary to can hear the boundary and adjust their behaviour to meet our boundary.

now, all this is not to say that the maintenance of our boundaries can't be helped or supported by people we love. relationships with deep and healing intimacy often work in ways that allow both people to communicate their boundaries and for those boundaries to be heard and mutually respected.

and, in the cases where mutual respect and support is not present, ultimately we need to be responsible for walking away, or doing

whatever it is we need to do to be in our integrity.

and of course, *this can be really hard to do!*

sometimes it requires sacrifice, letting people down, or even receiving cruel feedback from the people we love, who are projecting their grief about losing our presence and emotional labour, back onto us, instead of digesting and processing their own feelings.

it can be really easy to sit in a position of power-under and complain about someone saying “*they didn’t respect my boundary*”

now i want to be clear here: it’s not to say that this didn’t happen. the person very well may have not respected your boundary.

AND *the reality is we need to do the action of enforcing the boundary for it to be accountable to our needs.*

we can’t make our boundary-work someone

else's responsibility, because if we do, it's likely to just lead to us feeling disappointed and burnt out as we give our power away over and over again.

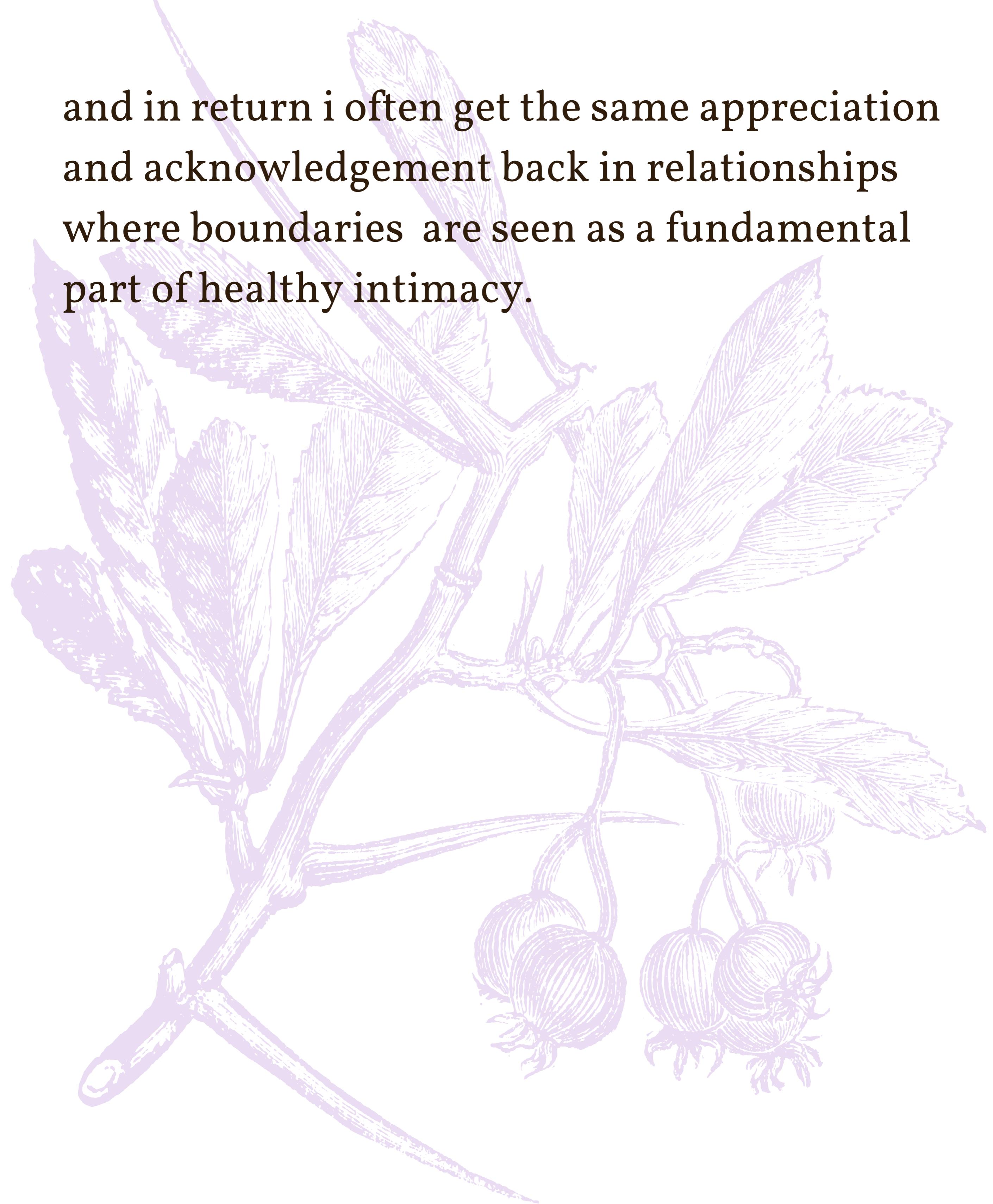
and because i know how hard this work is,
i love the practice of thanking someone for setting a clear boundary with me.

say i am having a hard time sleeping, because i'm spinning about something and my partner says to me, "*babe, i love you and i just can't talk about this right now. i'm going to sleep now. i want to talk about this tomorrow.*"

this might hurt my feelings initially, because on some level i feel entitled to the habit of my partner being available to me in this way. but i can learn to see this boundary as an expression of love, trust, and intimacy – even though (*or even especially because*) its hard to set.

so in response i say, “thanks for being clear with your boundary. i really appreciate the hard work you are doing there to have clarity with me on what your needs are”.

and in return i often get the same appreciation and acknowledgement back in relationships where boundaries are seen as a fundamental part of healthy intimacy.



negotiable

many of us come to perceive our boundaries as rigid and inflexible. and in a way, this makes sense - especially when you consider the colonial notions of borders, fences, private property, etc that our cultures are steeped in. (*we'll dive into this more deeply in the next lesson...*)

it is a common response to trauma to only be able to see things in black and white.

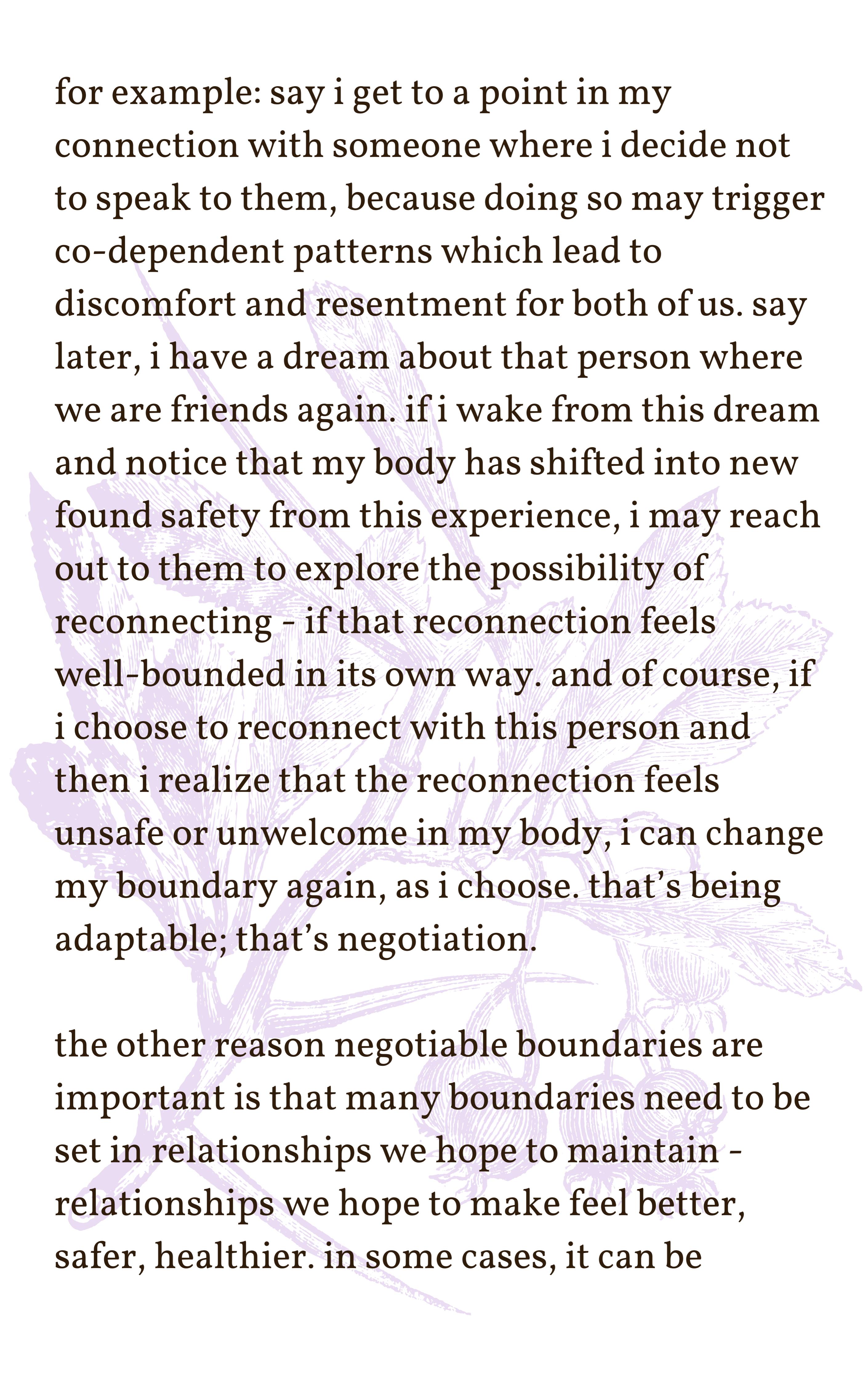
seeing one person as bad or dangerous and another person as safe, for example. this is not to say that it is unwise for us to consider some people unsafe, because ofcourse, some people are unsafe for us to share space with. *however*, many of the people we are setting boundaries with do not fall so neatly into this safe vs. unsafe categorization.

humans are dynamic creatures.

we change and evolve and grow, much like the seasons that are reflected in our bodies. and with that change and evolution and growth, times will arise when we may choose to adjust some quality – strength, tone, physical limits, etc - of a boundary we made previously. we may look to changing sensations in our bodies, changes in our different types of capacity (be it emotional, financial, spiritual, etc), or changes to our dream life to know when it's time to shift a boundary we may have previously perceived as relatively static.

in summary: boundaries can be sturdy, as well as fluid.

this does not mean that we give others, *especially* those who wish (often unconsciously) to take power from us, opportunities to dictate or shape our boundaries on our behalf, with their interests in mind.



for example: say i get to a point in my connection with someone where i decide not to speak to them, because doing so may trigger co-dependent patterns which lead to discomfort and resentment for both of us. say later, i have a dream about that person where we are friends again. if i wake from this dream and notice that my body has shifted into new found safety from this experience, i may reach out to them to explore the possibility of reconnecting - if that reconnection feels well-bounded in its own way. and of course, if i choose to reconnect with this person and then i realize that the reconnection feels unsafe or unwelcome in my body, i can change my boundary again, as i choose. that's being adaptable; that's negotiation.

the other reason negotiable boundaries are important is that many boundaries need to be set in relationships we hope to maintain - relationships we hope to make feel better, safer, healthier. in some cases, it can be

helpful to negotiate your boundary with whom you are setting it.

for example: if you are going through a break up with someone, you may actually *need* to speak with them - even if you *don't want to*, because you shared a life and you need to divvy up spaces, share child care, find ways to share space, or take turns in different spaces. you may choose to negotiate your boundaries together for the sake of your well-being or the well-being of your families, shared friends, etc.

you may also find if you communicate your craving for a boundary with someone you are in relationship with, that they too feel the pain or tension from your conflict, or crave a similar boundary to yours for their own reasons.

in essence: there isn't a 'right' way to set a boundary.

sometimes it makes sense for a boundary to be firm and completely non-negotiable - and often, a boundary that can fluctuate with the flow of the moment while maintaining integrity can serve to create a dynamic sense of safety and honesty in relationships.

the only person who can truly know which type of boundary makes sense for a given situation, is the person or people in that situation. and often experimentation is needed to see if the chosen boundary is a good fit.

communicable

an effective boundary is one that can easily and clearly be communicated to ourselves or others.

i often write my boundaries on mirrors with dry erase markers, to have them reflected back to me as reminders (this is, in it's own way, a kind of magic). the words hold a container and help shape neural pathways in my brain to think about myself and my life in new and more nourishing ways.

often, my boundaries are one sentence long. some examples might include:

“i will not do unpaid work at my job.”

“i will only do taxing emotional labour if i am paid for my time in money or food or some other kind of nourishment.”

"i do not need to explain myself in situations where i am being gaslit."

keeping boundaries short and clear is a good way to make them easy to repeat, which is especially helpful in conflict where you are feeling unheard.

that being said..

just because a boundary is communicable, does not necessarily means it needs to be acceptable or understandable to the person you are communicating it to. it is our responsibility to set a boundary in a clear, self responsible manner. it's not our responsibility to manage the response of the person hearing the boundary.

many times in my life i have communicated a very reasonable boundary only to be accused

of being unreasonable, unkind, or - even in extreme cases - told i was abandoning someone. these responses are not mine to hold, and very commonly involve shadow projection from the person hearing the boundary.

and at the same time, because i want my boundaries to be flexible, i may in some cases, listen to the feelings of the person hearing the boundary to understand *why* they are having the reaction they are having. i often wonder: are they simply reacting to the *content* of what i said, or did they genuinely misunderstand me?

i do this clarifying work more often in cases where i want increased intimacy with the person. there have been times where i communicated a boundary and the person really truly just misunderstood what i meant and wanted clarification and once that clarification was offered, the boundary landed just fine.

i would advise you, however, to be careful with taking in too much feedback about your boundaries, especially at first. while boundaries *can* be negotiable, they don't *need* to be - and if your body or heart or brain signal to you that you're being gaslit or manipulated, it's important to reflect on whether this is true and go from there.

this is where trusted friends can be helpful to call in. have someone who knows you and loves you and sees the good in you listen to your situation or even help you craft your boundary. and if you run into conflict, ask your trusted friend what they think, because often they will say you did nothing wrong and have your back to keep your boundary steady.

choosing a focus

for the sake of deepening the work we are embarking on here, *i'd suggest choosing one area of your life to focus on with regard to strengthening your boundaries.*

many people are tempted to choose more than one area, which is a craving i understand and resonate with as a triple fire sign. if you're willing though, i'd appreciate your sense of trust that focusing one one area of your life: your work, one relationship, etc, will in fact ripple out into other areas of your life. it's just easier to manage and measure the often tremendous impacts of this practice if we apply some level of meditative focus to the work unfolding here.

also, i would offer that while it may feel tempting to focus on an area of your life that feels painful or stressed regarding your boundaries, **you may want to try focusing on a relationship that feels healthy and**

nourishing - or as close to that as is alive in your life right now.

the reason for this is that, much like focusing on the parts of our body that carry vitality and bloom our capacity to heal from that vitality (which happens in practices like cranial sacral therapy), focusing on a nourishing relationship and fine-tuning it can actually uplift our overall resiliency to set effective boundaries in our life in general.

it's possible to have functional and healthy relationships that can act as a kind of *barometer* for what trust and safety feel like in our bodies. if those relationships are working well, we will be able to notice more clearly the areas in our lives that feel wounded, because of the differences we notice in our bodies in each situation. the absense of the feeling of safety typically present in our healthy relationships, acts as a kind of alarm bell for a boundary needing to be set.

healing is often a painful process and boundaries can sometimes lead to painful conflict. it's good to have a support network to witness and hold you as the changes and growth in your life unfold. both, folks who can give you constructive feedback and reality checks in times of strife, but also folks who see the deepest good in you and genuinely connect to joy when you succeed and heal.

you can also use the [facebook group](#) for this purpose. there are a lot of great folks taking this course, and if you choose, you can be there to support each other in boundaried and nourishing ways.

shadow integration prompts

before diving in, i want to acknowledge that much of my inspiration for this part of the course comes from carolyn elliott, whose course INFLUENCE i am currently taking. i really appreciate carolyn's perspective on shadow integration.

what i have learned from her material is that often the results we are seeking from our magic don't appear because some tender and profoundly powerful hidden part of ourselves is actually willing a different result from the result we claim to crave through our magic.

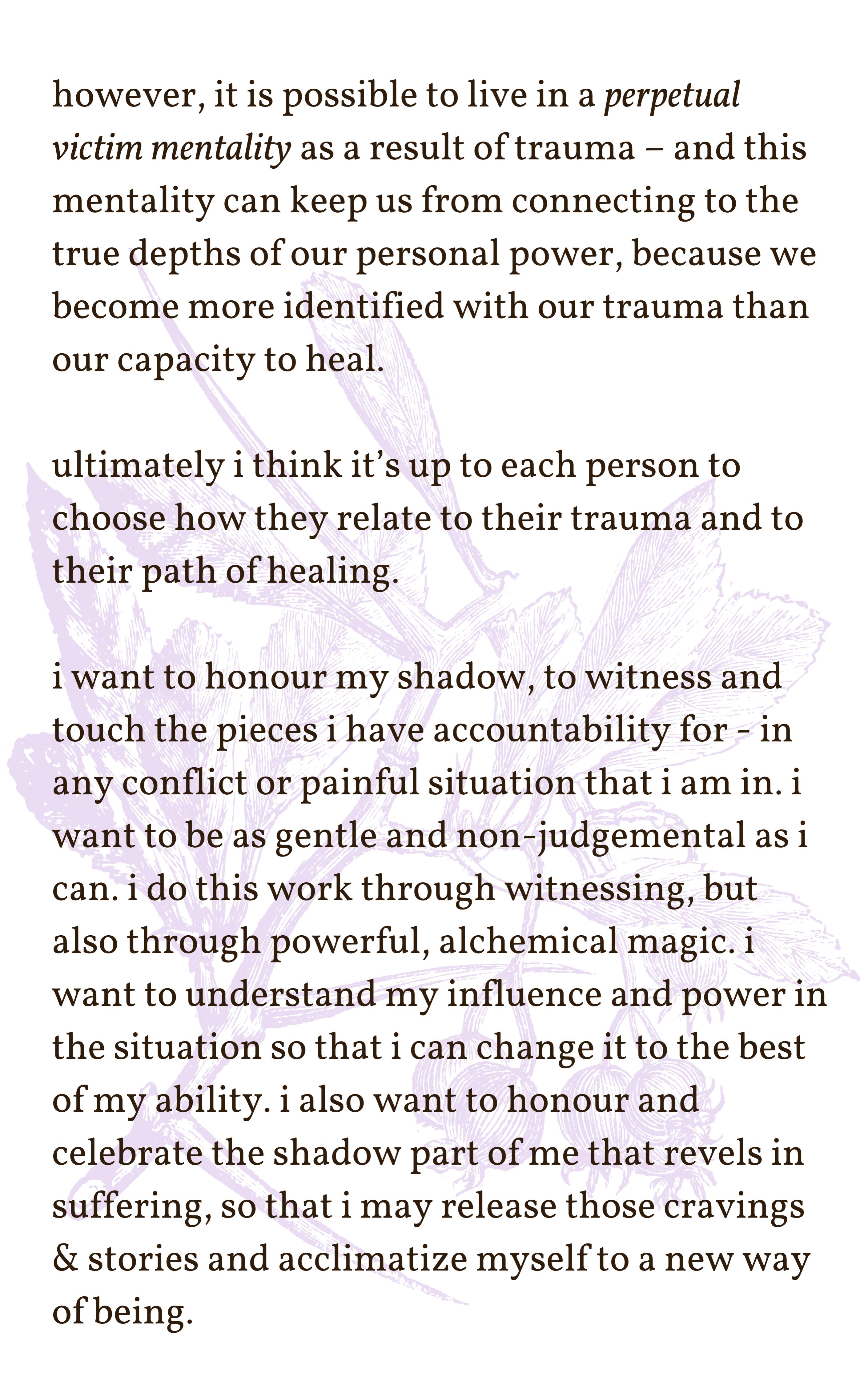
in order to have our magic do the incredible, powerful, magical work it's meant to do in our lives and in the world, we need to have a

‘united will’ with regards to our dreams, wishes, and cravings.

i’m not saying that if someone crosses our boundaries, then this person is simply a manifestation of our undivided will. there are powerful political systems that shape our lives in deep ways: racism, misogyny, colonization, homo- & transphobia, ableism, etc.

i believe that politically-grounded magic takes into account systems of power, as well as our personal experiences - and that radical magic reflects and interacts intentionally with the overlap and reflection of the two, one flowing from the other, round and round and round.

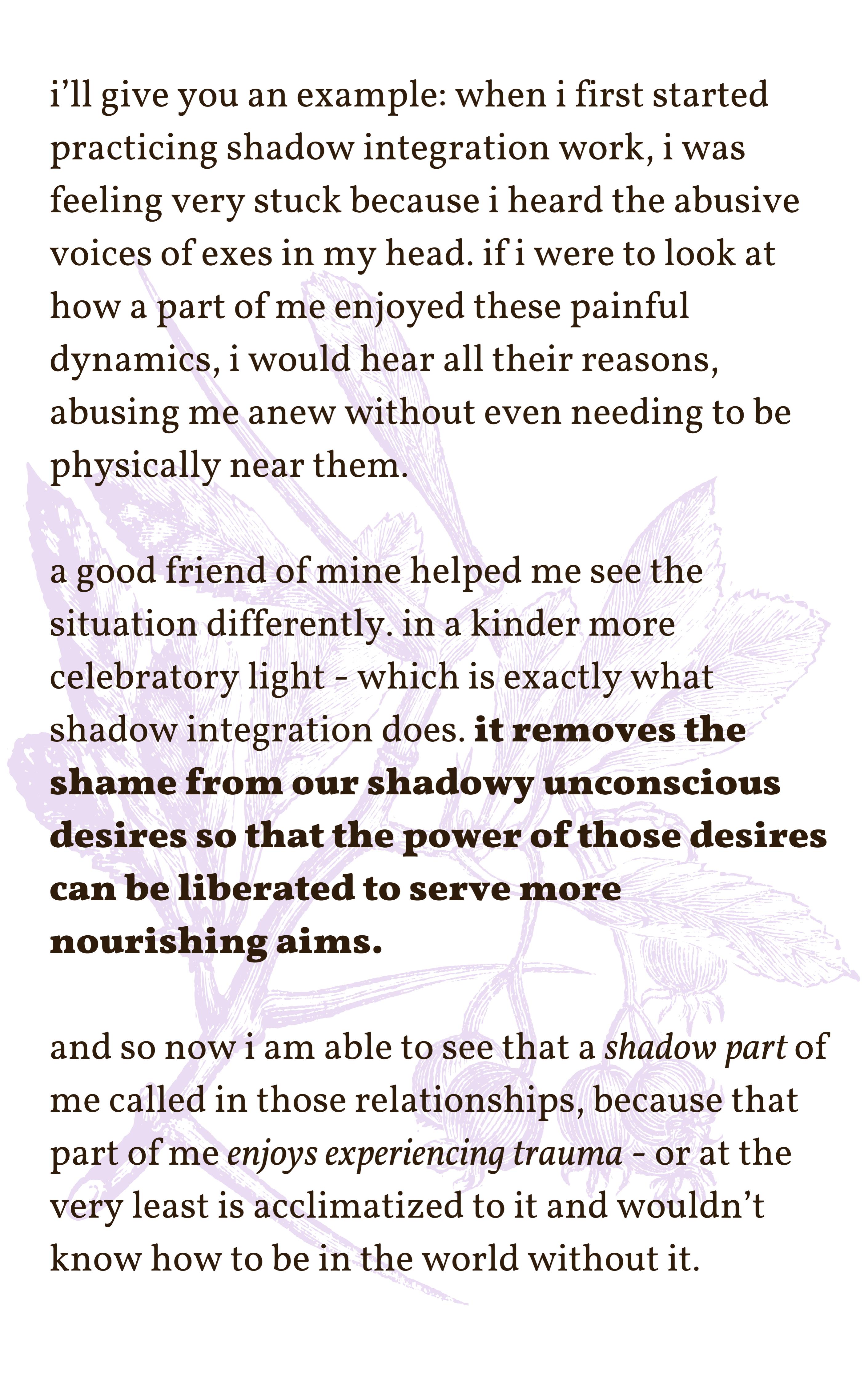
i don’t believe in shadow integration that blames victims for the terrible violence enacted upon them. sometimes *we are victims*. sometimes we are hurt and wounded and we deserve to stand in that identity as we choose.



however, it is possible to live in a *perpetual victim mentality* as a result of trauma – and this mentality can keep us from connecting to the true depths of our personal power, because we become more identified with our trauma than our capacity to heal.

ultimately i think it's up to each person to choose how they relate to their trauma and to their path of healing.

i want to honour my shadow, to witness and touch the pieces i have accountability for - in any conflict or painful situation that i am in. i want to be as gentle and non-judgemental as i can. i do this work through witnessing, but also through powerful, alchemical magic. i want to understand my influence and power in the situation so that i can change it to the best of my ability. i also want to honour and celebrate the shadow part of me that revels in suffering, so that i may release those cravings & stories and acclimatize myself to a new way of being.



i'll give you an example: when i first started practicing shadow integration work, i was feeling very stuck because i heard the abusive voices of exes in my head. if i were to look at how a part of me enjoyed these painful dynamics, i would hear all their reasons, abusing me anew without even needing to be physically near them.

a good friend of mine helped me see the situation differently. in a kinder more celebratory light - which is exactly what shadow integration does. **it removes the shame from our shadowy unconscious desires so that the power of those desires can be liberated to serve more nourishing aims.**

and so now i am able to see that a *shadow part* of me called in those relationships, because that part of me *enjoys experiencing trauma* - or at the very least is acclimatized to it and wouldn't know how to be in the world without it.

of course, other more conscious parts of me feel broken and hurt and exhausted by the trauma.

and, at the same time, there is a part of me that feels more closely connected to queer community, for example, when i am trauma identified. i feel i'm able to tell more compelling stories about my life when those stories are based in trauma - and to a certain extent this is true! i also know that when i call in relationships with people who don't reflect my highest good back to me i'm able to reject those people, and in a way, reject the part of myself that doesn't seem my highest good either.

in a sense, these are all good things. i cherish my connection to trauma-informed queer community. i love the epic stories and essays i'm able to write and how i inspire others. i also love that i'm able to walk away from relationships that don't serve me.

and, now what i'm working on is taking the *power behind those desires and using it* to continue to tell stories, continue to do inspiring things, while also calling in relationships that *do honour my highest good.*

i'm reorienting my cravings for trauma towards cravings for healing, because really, the part of me that craves the trauma also, and perhaps more deeply, craves the community and healing the trauma often leads to.

shadow integration is about bowing to your shadow desires, dancing with them, loving them deeply and profoundly - so that you can honour them and find ways to let them flow and mingle and exist in your life other than being hurt, traumatized, or unhappy.

and so i offer you some questions for reflection, digestion, and integration. please, *only answer these if they serve your will towards healing.* if you find yourself engaging in a kind of self-harm in answering, it's best to step away or seek support from the facebook group

is there a secret part of you that enjoys having your boundaries crossed or having weak boundaries? what does this craving and pleasure feel like in your body?

is there a part of you that craves or enjoys or feels deeply attached to your victim identity? what does this attachment and enjoyment feel like in your body?

what do you get and what is maintained when you give your power away? if some part of you deeply enjoyed this – what would that look like? what would that feel like?

what is there to deeply appreciate about the part of you that enjoys having weak boundaries? how can you celebrate and therefore satisfy the shadowy desire to have your boundary crossed?

ways you can engage with part 1: containing

- introduce yourself on the facebook page
- choose an area of focus for the course
- jot down some ideas for boundaries that are relevant to your area focus, based the principles of effective boundaries
- sit with the shadow integration prompts: write them, meditate on them, dance through them, or make art with them

and please, feel encouraged to share the results of your inquiry with the group on facebook.

til next week tender fierce ones.

