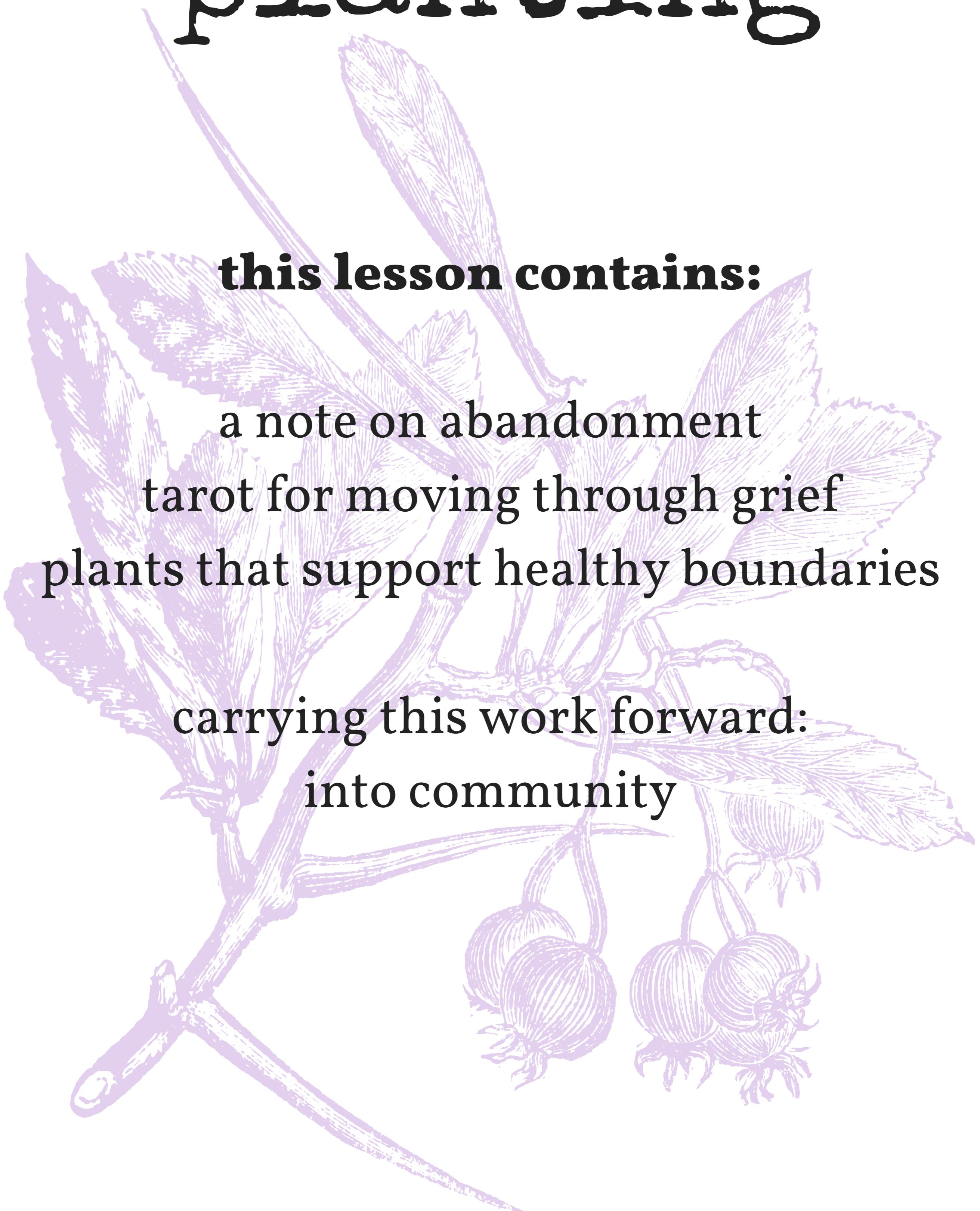


part 4: planting

this lesson contains:

a note on abandonment
tarot for moving through grief
plants that support healthy boundaries

carrying this work forward:
into community



a note on abandonment

before we dive into the wild and powerful world of plants, i want to share some thoughts with you on abandonment.

i have noticed recently through personal experience, watching social media, and observing the tensions and questions arising from this class that in setting boundaries many people feel nervous about the idea of abandoning someone or something. and in turn many of us also feel scared of the idea of *being* abandoned.

for those of us who ascribe to anti-oppression, much of the conversation around abandonment is tied to language around disposability culture, as well as mutual aid and community. there are conversations about power and privilege tied in here as well. it's tender territory, to say the least.

i first want to clarify what abandonment is, so we can have a shared definition to work with.

a few months ago a friend offered a definition that i have found quite helpful. she told me that in speaking with her therapist they worked together to understand what abandonment is, and what it isn't.

my friend had been left abruptly by her father, with no explanation and no communication to explain why he had left her. her therapist offered that she had experienced being abandoned. she was the child, not the parent, and therefore held a different level of responsibility in the dynamic to offer care. further, her father did not explain to her where he was going or why. he literally left her with no explanation.

this leaving with no explanation, no care, no acknowledgement of her father's responsibility

to care for her as a parent: *this was abandonment.*

i want to acknowledge that there are moments when leaving without explanation or offering care is sometimes a valid thing to do, especially if you feel there are no other options or you would be unsafe to stay or offer an explanation.

but further than this, i want to clarify the difference between setting a boundary and abandoning someone.

often when we leave someone or someone leaves us, it triggers deep feelings of rejection and un-safety. in these moments we can sometimes say: "you abandoned me." when in fact, this might not actually be fair to say.

i have noticed that frequently this is said less to name what is happening and more to make a claim about the person who is leaving. it can be leveled as somewhat of an emotional threat.

it can come across as if it's being said that: if you do this, you are a horrible person; you are someone who *abandons* people.

this has been said about me, as i'm sure many of you may also have been told this about yourselves. or perhaps you are worried that if you do something (perhaps something you deeply crave doing or know deep down you need to do), this will be said about you. it fucking hurts. it doesn't feel good to hear or know that people think this about you.

and the reality is that there are moments when someone leaves because they can no longer stay. perhaps they are incredibly unhappy, have reached the end of their capacity, or are not able to care for themselves the way that they need to in order to be well or kind.

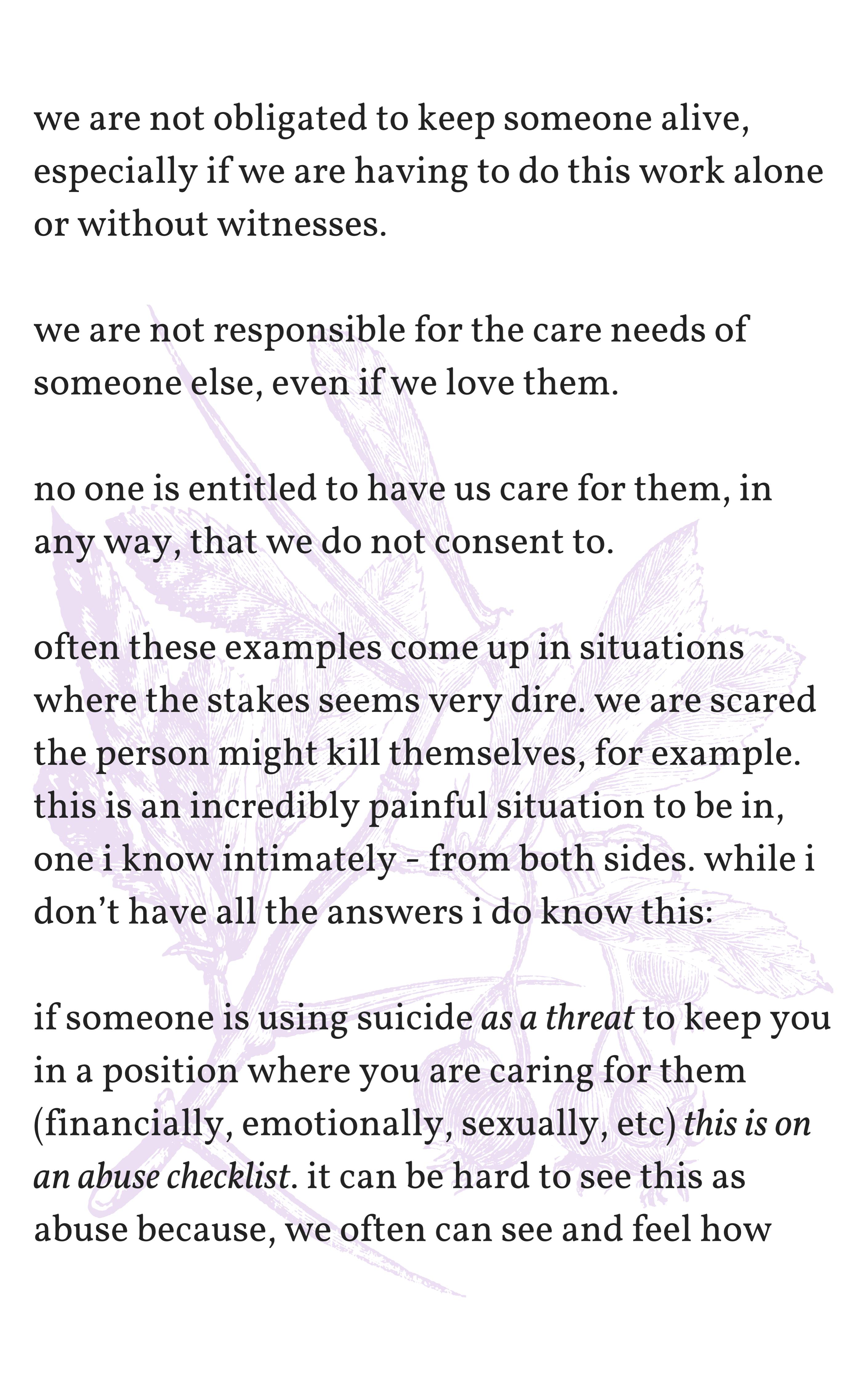
i wonder about how we can learn to deepen our capacity to find compassion for both parties in these moments. to understand that often when

someone leaves or ends a connection, *often both people are grieving* - even if one person is experiencing relief and another a profound sense of loss. i think it is rare that we end connection without some kind of pain and grief following in the wake of those choices.

i think because we all experience deep scarcity in our loving supportive relationships - as part of the culture we are steeped in - we often find it hard to have empathy for why someone might leave, why there might be completely valid reasons to make this choice, why there might not actually be another choice that can be made where both people can live harmoniously.

relationships end. connections shift. this is a natural aspect of connecting and building relationships.

we are not obligated to care for and nurture someone endlessly because we once did.



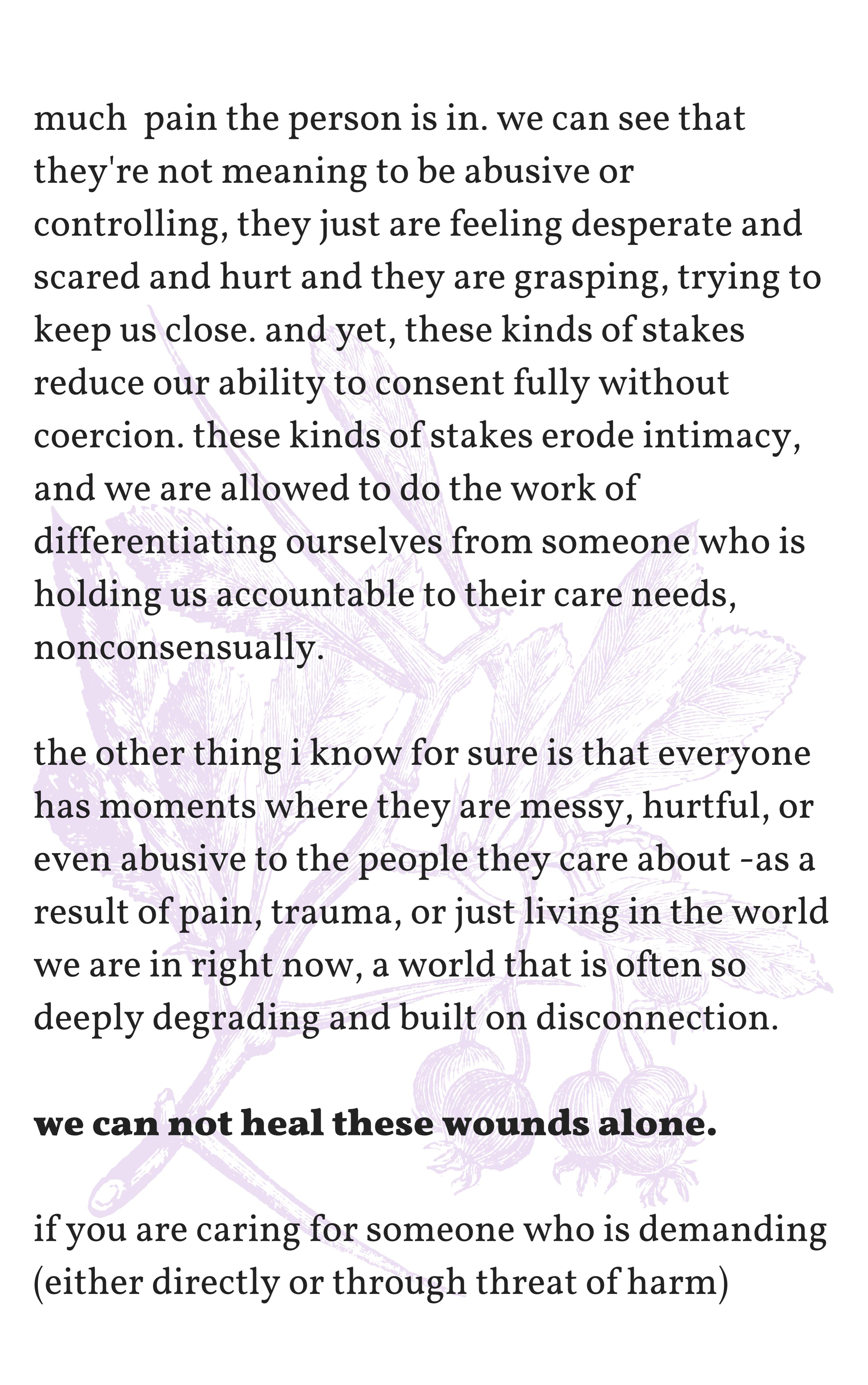
we are not obligated to keep someone alive, especially if we are having to do this work alone or without witnesses.

we are not responsible for the care needs of someone else, even if we love them.

no one is entitled to have us care for them, in any way, that we do not consent to.

often these examples come up in situations where the stakes seems very dire. we are scared the person might kill themselves, for example. this is an incredibly painful situation to be in, one i know intimately - from both sides. while i don't have all the answers i do know this:

if someone is using suicide *as a threat* to keep you in a position where you are caring for them (financially, emotionally, sexually, etc) *this is on an abuse checklist*. it can be hard to see this as abuse because, we often can see and feel how

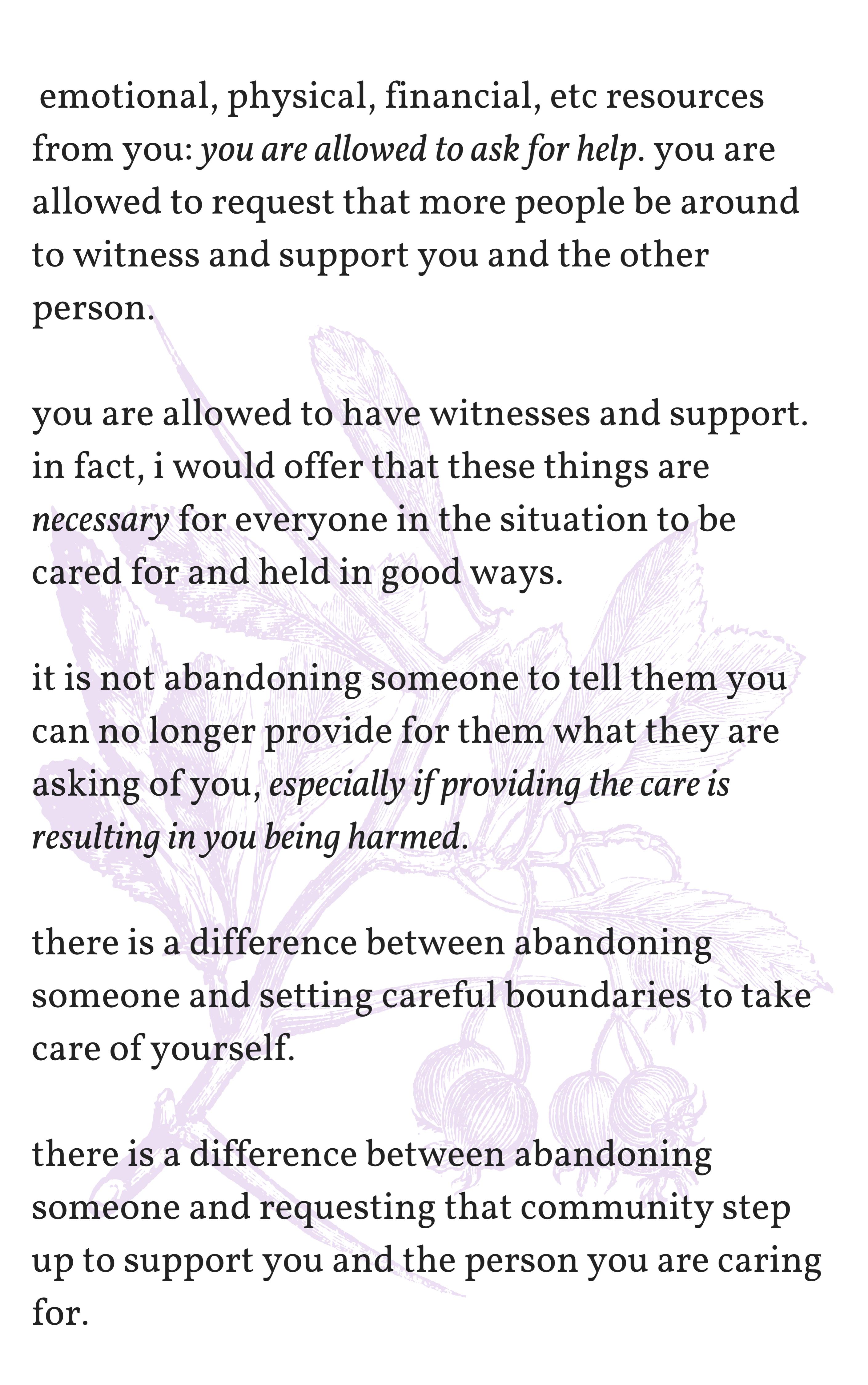


much pain the person is in. we can see that they're not meaning to be abusive or controlling, they just are feeling desperate and scared and hurt and they are grasping, trying to keep us close. and yet, these kinds of stakes reduce our ability to consent fully without coercion. these kinds of stakes erode intimacy, and we are allowed to do the work of differentiating ourselves from someone who is holding us accountable to their care needs, nonconsensually.

the other thing i know for sure is that everyone has moments where they are messy, hurtful, or even abusive to the people they care about -as a result of pain, trauma, or just living in the world we are in right now, a world that is often so deeply degrading and built on disconnection.

we can not heal these wounds alone.

if you are caring for someone who is demanding (either directly or through threat of harm)



emotional, physical, financial, etc resources from you: *you are allowed to ask for help.* you are allowed to request that more people be around to witness and support you and the other person.

you are allowed to have witnesses and support. in fact, i would offer that these things are *necessary* for everyone in the situation to be cared for and held in good ways.

it is not abandoning someone to tell them you can no longer provide for them what they are asking of you, *especially if providing the care is resulting in you being harmed.*

there is a difference between abandoning someone and setting careful boundaries to take care of yourself.

there is a difference between abandoning someone and requesting that community step up to support you and the person you are caring for.

in times when i have had to make choices like these, i have found these affirmations to be supportive and affirming:

i am allowed to leave.

i am allowed to burn bridges.

i am allowed to say no.

i am allowed to cut off contact.

i am allowed to put myself first.

i am allowed to tell my story.

and i trust that you all will be able to practice and hold these ideas in balance with the other ideas we have talked about so far in this course. many of these ideas are about *balance, not binaries*. we can need to walk away and set a boundary AND we can tell the story and talk to the person we are setting the boundary with, in a way that treats them as fully human and deserving of love.

none of this is clear or easy. setting boundaries, especially with high stakes like

the ones we've discussed here, is an incredibly difficult undertaking. it's painful. it involves deep grief.

there are no easy answers here - just a search for something that feels better, more integral, or more whole than how we feel right now.

if you are in a position like this, seeking support in a situation that feels painful and unclear, please feel encouraged to post on the [facebook group](#) and ask for help.

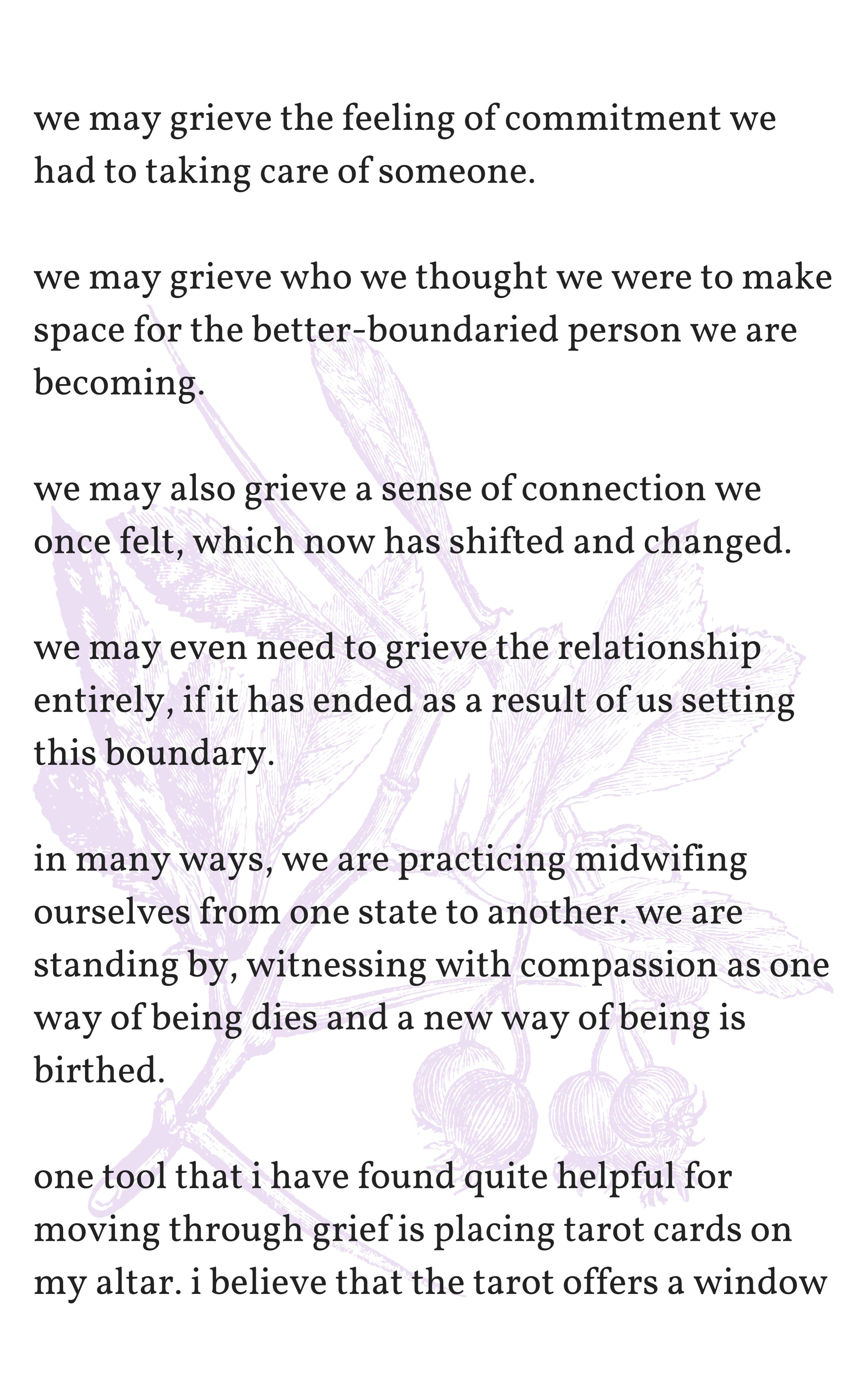
clementine morrigan recently published a piece about emotional labour that i feel applies deeply to the thoughts shared here.

tarot for moving through grief

in many ways, moving through grief is an art form and a skill. most certainly it is a fierce and delicate magical practice. i recently curated a zine about femmes grieving family and fertility. there is some beautiful work in this collection, and i'd highly recommend reading it if you want to get ideas for working with grief.

as i've said above, **it's nearly impossible to set boundaries with people we care about - shifting our relationships into more sparse daily actions of care than we once practiced - without dealing with feelings of grief.** even if we know we need to move on to a new way of interacting and relating, it can still be true that we have things to grieve.

we may grieve the feeling of control we had that comes from feeling like we were helping.



we may grieve the feeling of commitment we had to taking care of someone.

we may grieve who we thought we were to make space for the better-boundaried person we are becoming.

we may also grieve a sense of connection we once felt, which now has shifted and changed.

we may even need to grieve the relationship entirely, if it has ended as a result of us setting this boundary.

in many ways, we are practicing midwifing ourselves from one state to another. we are standing by, witnessing with compassion as one way of being dies and a new way of being is birthed.

one tool that i have found quite helpful for moving through grief is placing tarot cards on my altar. i believe that the tarot offers a window

into the energies that animate our lives and the worlds around us - be they physical, spiritual, elemental, ethereal.

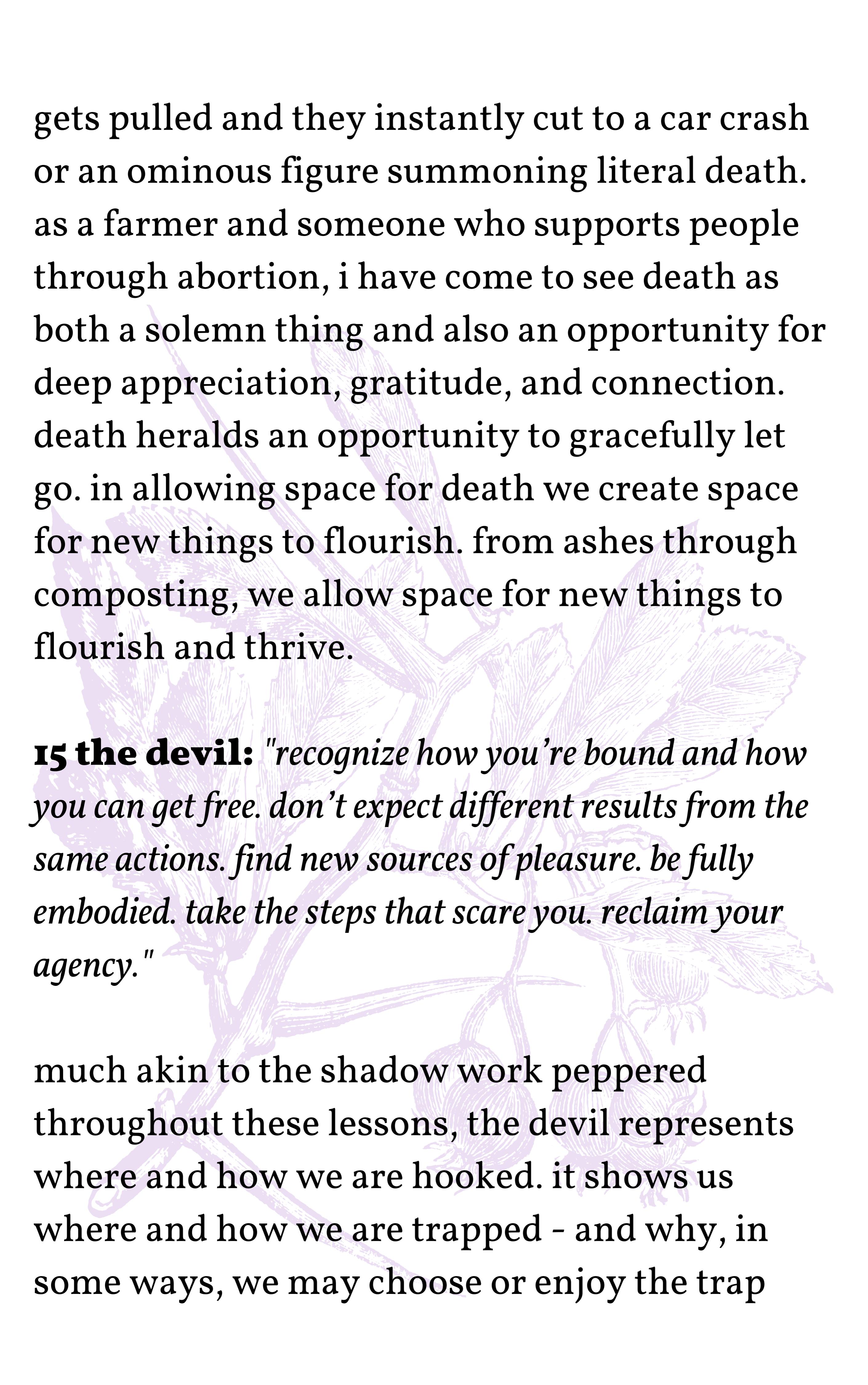
sometimes i will put a card on my altar with a sticky note containing someone's name, if it's meant to honour a specific person. i may also use a photo of that person or an object of significance to them or our relationship.

some of my favourite cards to represent loss, grief, protection, & transformation include:

please note: card names and descriptive quotes are from one of my favourite decks, Slow Holler.

13 death: "release the need to know what's next. grieve. let yourself transform. complete a cycle. let go of what's too heavy to carry. welcome a new world in its infancy."

death, i have found, is the most inaccurately represented card in the tarot. on tv, a death card



gets pulled and they instantly cut to a car crash or an ominous figure summoning literal death. as a farmer and someone who supports people through abortion, i have come to see death as both a solemn thing and also an opportunity for deep appreciation, gratitude, and connection. death heralds an opportunity to gracefully let go. in allowing space for death we create space for new things to flourish. from ashes through composting, we allow space for new things to flourish and thrive.

15 the devil: *"recognize how you're bound and how you can get free. don't expect different results from the same actions. find new sources of pleasure. be fully embodied. take the steps that scare you. reclaim your agency."*

much akin to the shadow work peppered throughout these lessons, the devil represents where and how we are hooked. it shows us where and how we are trapped - and why, in some ways, we may choose or enjoy the trap

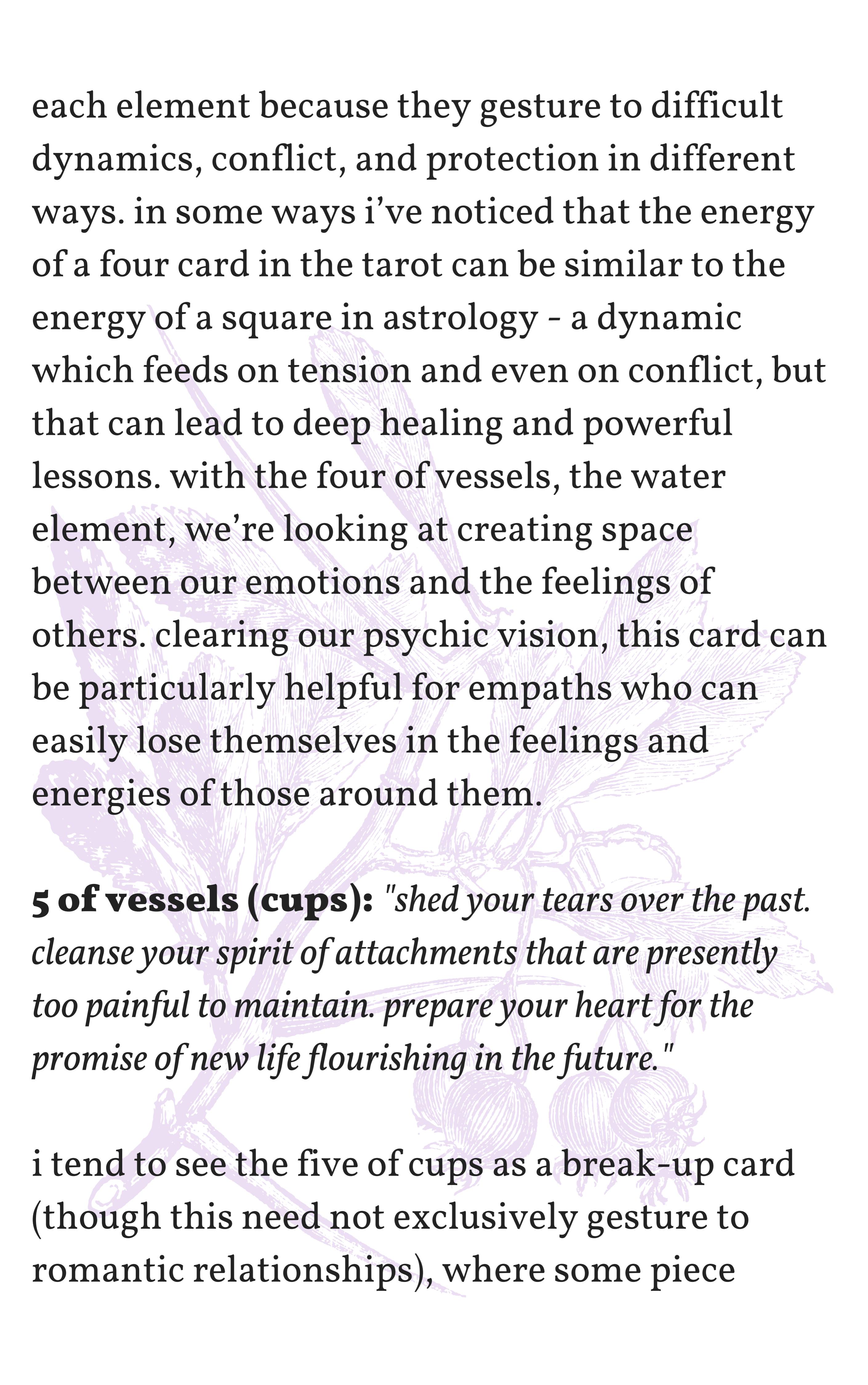
until we come to embody a new way of feeling held.

16 the storm (the tower): *"embrace change and chaos. light a match. let it all burn down. release attachment. open to profound clarity. align yourself with the energy of creative destruction, and welcome the winds of renewal."*

the tower is about being profoundly trapped and then being broken free, being flung or choosing to jump from the places and people to whom we feel captured. while this energy can sometimes feel chaotic or painful, it can also represent bold action to remove ourselves from the ties that bind.

4 of vessels (cups): *"be careful that people's sorrows or your own isolation don't drown you. come up for air. your understanding of what is needed becomes clearer with your head above water."*

i've included each of the number four cards for



each element because they gesture to difficult dynamics, conflict, and protection in different ways. in some ways i've noticed that the energy of a four card in the tarot can be similar to the energy of a square in astrology - a dynamic which feeds on tension and even on conflict, but that can lead to deep healing and powerful lessons. with the four of vessels, the water element, we're looking at creating space between our emotions and the feelings of others. clearing our psychic vision, this card can be particularly helpful for empaths who can easily lose themselves in the feelings and energies of those around them.

5 of vessels (cups): *"shed your tears over the past. cleanse your spirit of attachments that are presently too painful to maintain. prepare your heart for the promise of new life flourishing in the future."*

i tend to see the five of cups as a break-up card (though this need not exclusively gesture to romantic relationships), where some piece

remains salvageable. in most five of cups cards there are some cups that remain upright and some that are tipped over. there is something to salvage, but it often must be salvaged by breaking off on our own.

8 of vessels (cups): "*allow your mourning to be generative. turn the ashes of what was into the fertile soil that welcomes what is to come. from your grief, new connections can grow - if you let them.*"

the eight of cups, on the other hand from the five, usually gestures to a relationship or connection where everything that once was rich and flourishing has died or become painful. it's usually a clear clue to walk away and create something entirely new from the ashes. luckily, with the cups (water) suit, once you progress through these stages of grief you reach the 9 and the 10 where your cups become full. i think this shows the tarot's general philosophical lean towards cyclical, generative processes of healing that involve going deep, honouring the

truth, and building new and richer endeavors from the lessons of the past.

4 of branches (wands): *"admire the beauty to which you've contributed. notice how your actions can empower others to act and create as well. step back and let others build on your efforts."*

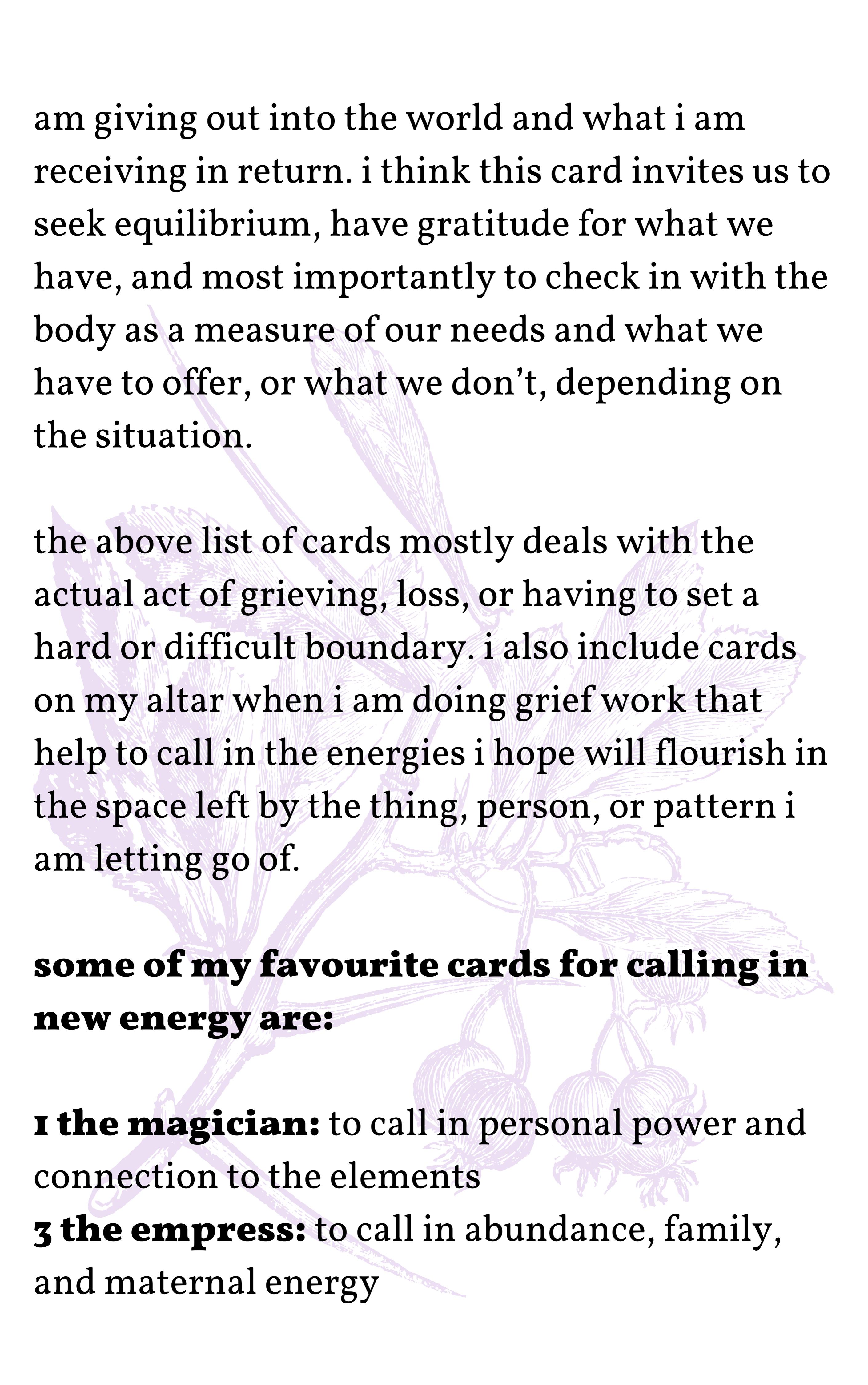
where cups deal with water (emotions, love, connection, psychic powers, intuition, dreams) wands address fire (drive, leadership, goals, passion, sex). and so with the four of wands we are thinking about what and who we give our passion to. i find this card particularly useful for looking at our involvement in collective projects, especially ones we had a hand at creating or where we had a pivotal leadership role.

4 of knives (swords): *"give yourself permission to rest. sink down and be still. let your internal processes knit you back together."*

swords deal with the element of air (the mind, speaking, thinking, and strategizing). with this four we consider how to set our mind at ease; how to take a break from those people, places, and projects that make our heads spin; how to gain clarity in the dizzy spell of anxiety; how to calm and clear the mind to gain clarity and deep insight which can only come from stillness.

4 of stones (pentacles): *"no need to hoard, no need for excessive accumulation. trust that there is always enough. ground your sense of security in that you are always enough."*

pentacles deal with the earth element (bodies, plants, and the physical world; money; work; saturnian matters like boundaries, patience, and limits). typically the four of pentacles is portrayed as a card of greed and hoarding. it's portrayed differently in Slow Holler, as a card of security and knowing you are enough. i like the four of pentacles as a reminder to take stock and figure out where the balance is, in what i



am giving out into the world and what i am receiving in return. i think this card invites us to seek equilibrium, have gratitude for what we have, and most importantly to check in with the body as a measure of our needs and what we have to offer, or what we don't, depending on the situation.

the above list of cards mostly deals with the actual act of grieving, loss, or having to set a hard or difficult boundary. i also include cards on my altar when i am doing grief work that help to call in the energies i hope will flourish in the space left by the thing, person, or pattern i am letting go of.

some of my favourite cards for calling in new energy are:

1 the magician: to call in personal power and connection to the elements

3 the empress: to call in abundance, family, and maternal energy

7 the chariot: to call in sense of will, ability to make decisions, being released from binaries

8 strength: to call in personal power, patience, ability to soothe ragged and extreme emotional states

9 the hermit: to call in solitude and clarity, meditative stillness, and a sense of knowing that beams out into the world

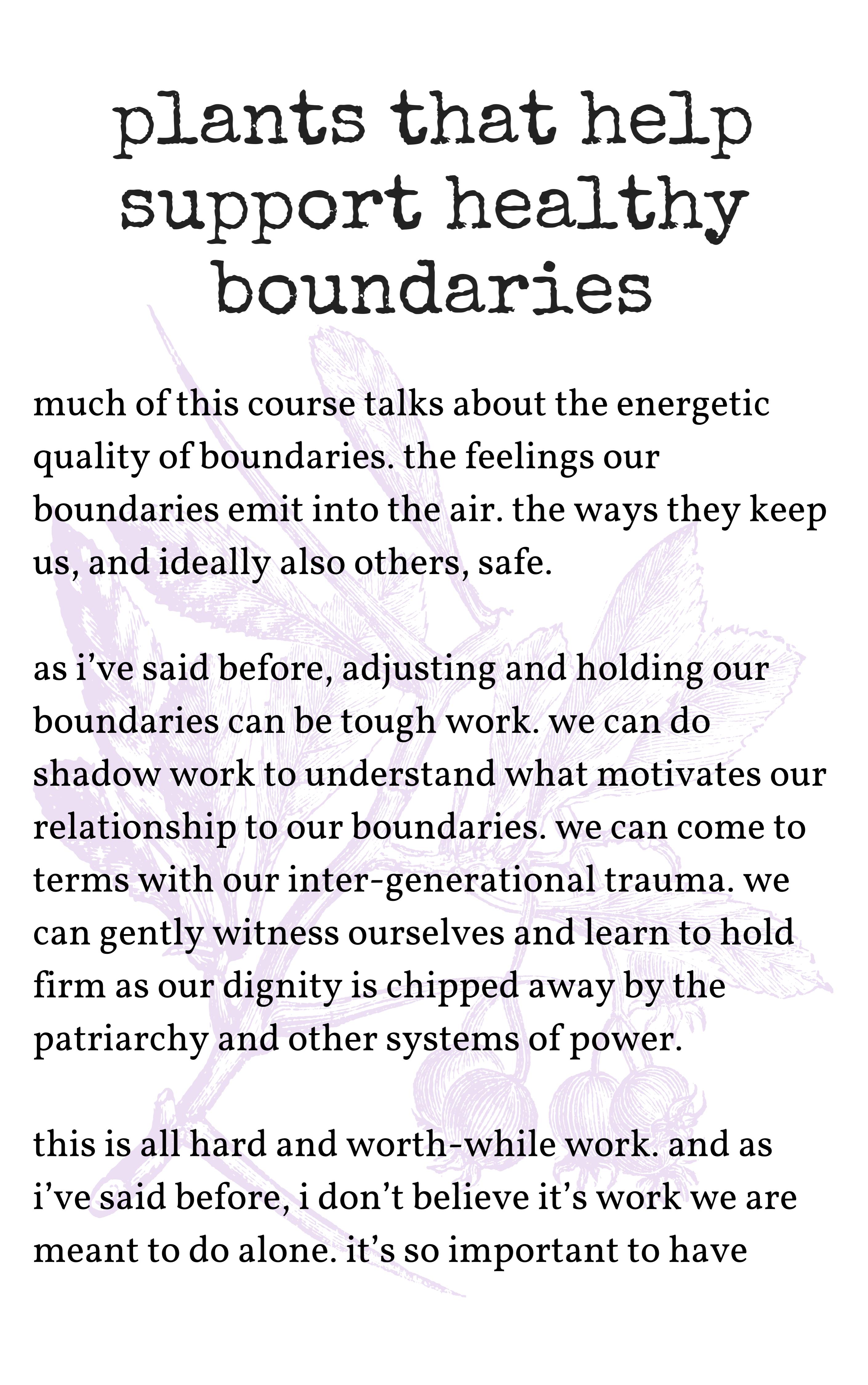
19 the sun: to call in warmth, bravery to being bold and safety in being seen, comfort in being the center of attention

3 of cups: to call in friendship and supportive community that involves reciprocal care and acknowledgement

what are your favourite tarot cards? do you use them in your magical practice? have you used them for boundaries or protection magic?

i encourage you all to share them with the facebook group.

plants that help support healthy boundaries



much of this course talks about the energetic quality of boundaries. the feelings our boundaries emit into the air. the ways they keep us, and ideally also others, safe.

as i've said before, adjusting and holding our boundaries can be tough work. we can do shadow work to understand what motivates our relationship to our boundaries. we can come to terms with our inter-generational trauma. we can gently witness ourselves and learn to hold firm as our dignity is chipped away by the patriarchy and other systems of power.

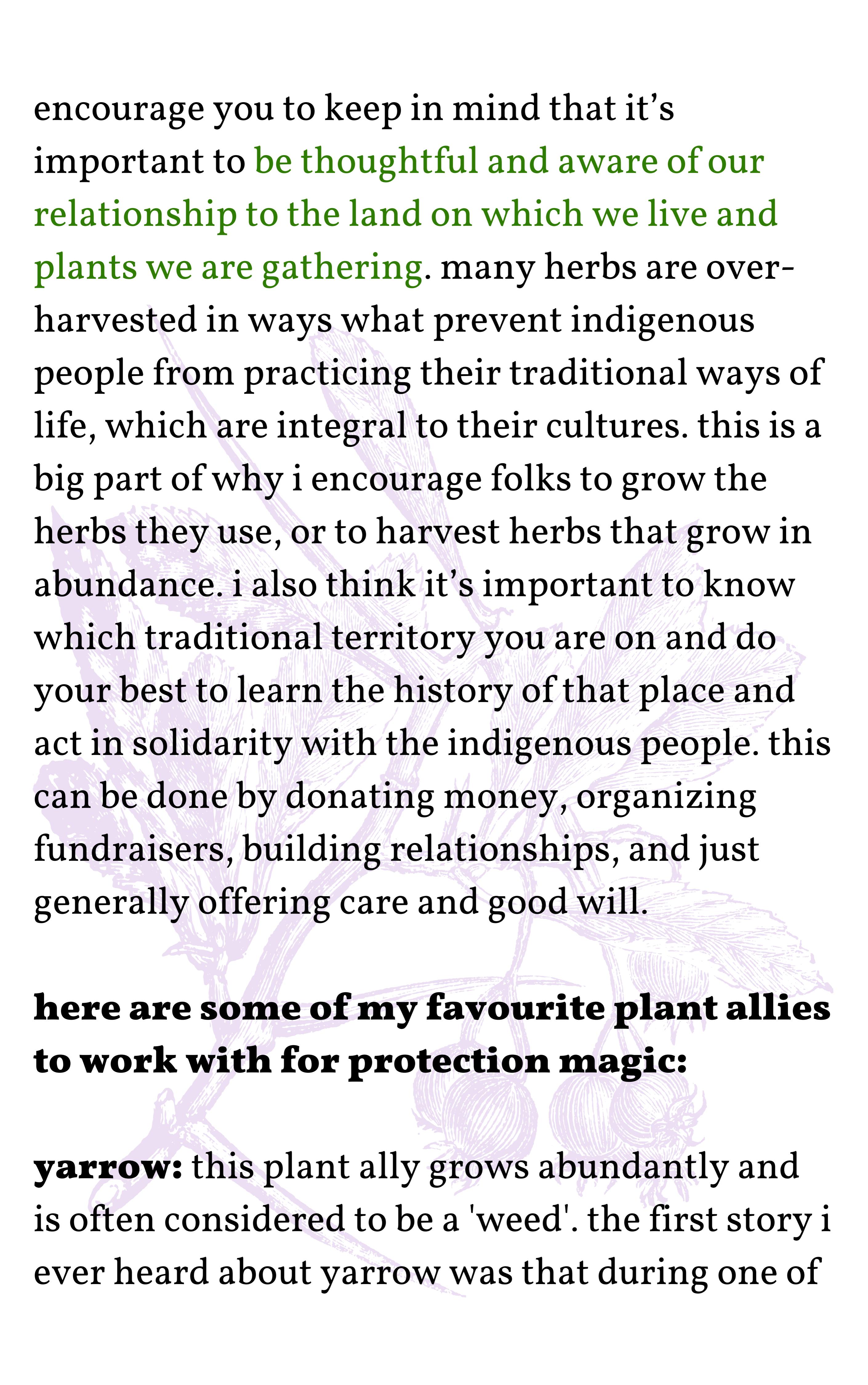
this is all hard and worth-while work. and as i've said before, i don't believe it's work we are meant to do alone. it's so important to have

allies, supportive witnesses, and community in the journey of healing and growing our boundaries.

for me, plants have been some of my most powerful allies in boundary work. what i love about plants is that they contain both subtle and powerful ways to shift our energetic fields and heal our bodies. i believe that plants, like witches, offer powerful magical labour to us if we are open to receiving it. i believe they do this work in exchange for our loving reverence and care towards them.

if it's possible, i encourage you to grow or wildcraft the plants you work with. you can also work with herbalists who have strong ethical mandates like **dana at dandelioness herbals**. if you have other herbalists you love working with i encourage you to please share them with the group on **facebook**.

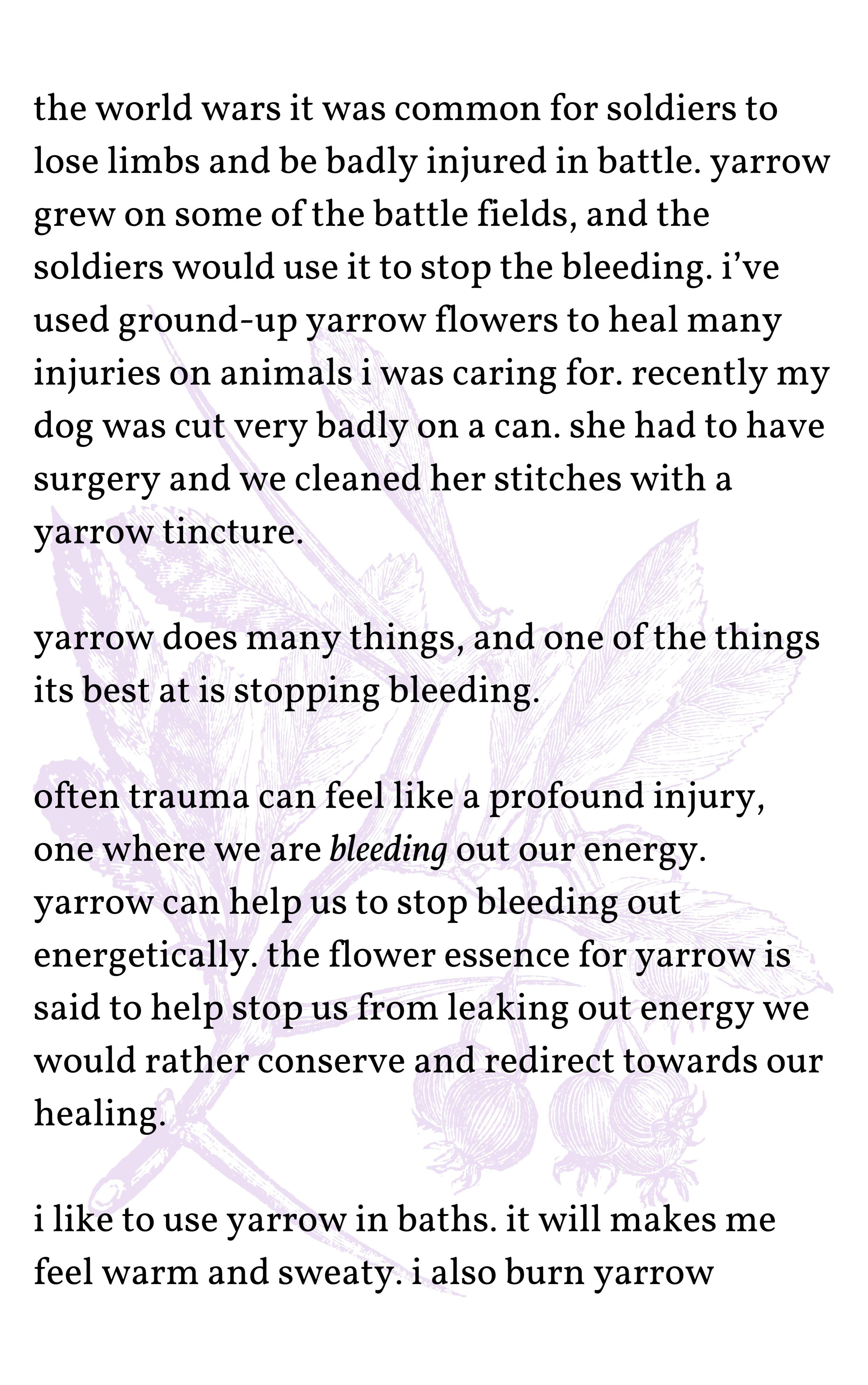
especially for those of us who are settlers, i



encourage you to keep in mind that it's important to be thoughtful and aware of our relationship to the land on which we live and plants we are gathering. many herbs are over-harvested in ways that prevent indigenous people from practicing their traditional ways of life, which are integral to their cultures. this is a big part of why i encourage folks to grow the herbs they use, or to harvest herbs that grow in abundance. i also think it's important to know which traditional territory you are on and do your best to learn the history of that place and act in solidarity with the indigenous people. this can be done by donating money, organizing fundraisers, building relationships, and just generally offering care and good will.

here are some of my favourite plant allies to work with for protection magic:

yarrow: this plant ally grows abundantly and is often considered to be a 'weed'. the first story i ever heard about yarrow was that during one of



the world wars it was common for soldiers to lose limbs and be badly injured in battle. yarrow grew on some of the battle fields, and the soldiers would use it to stop the bleeding. i've used ground-up yarrow flowers to heal many injuries on animals i was caring for. recently my dog was cut very badly on a can. she had to have surgery and we cleaned her stitches with a yarrow tincture.

yarrow does many things, and one of the things its best at is stopping bleeding.

often trauma can feel like a profound injury, one where we are *bleeding* out our energy. yarrow can help us to stop bleeding out energetically. the flower essence for yarrow is said to help stop us from leaking out energy we would rather conserve and redirect towards our healing.

i like to use yarrow in baths. it will makes me feel warm and sweaty. i also burn yarrow

to clear space and create protective containers, as well as help encourage harmful spirits and energies to leave.

pink yarrow is said to be particularly helpful for wounds of the heart. i have found this to be true.

nettles: if you've ever bumped into nettles you'll know: they sting. and in many ways the sting is where the medicine lies.

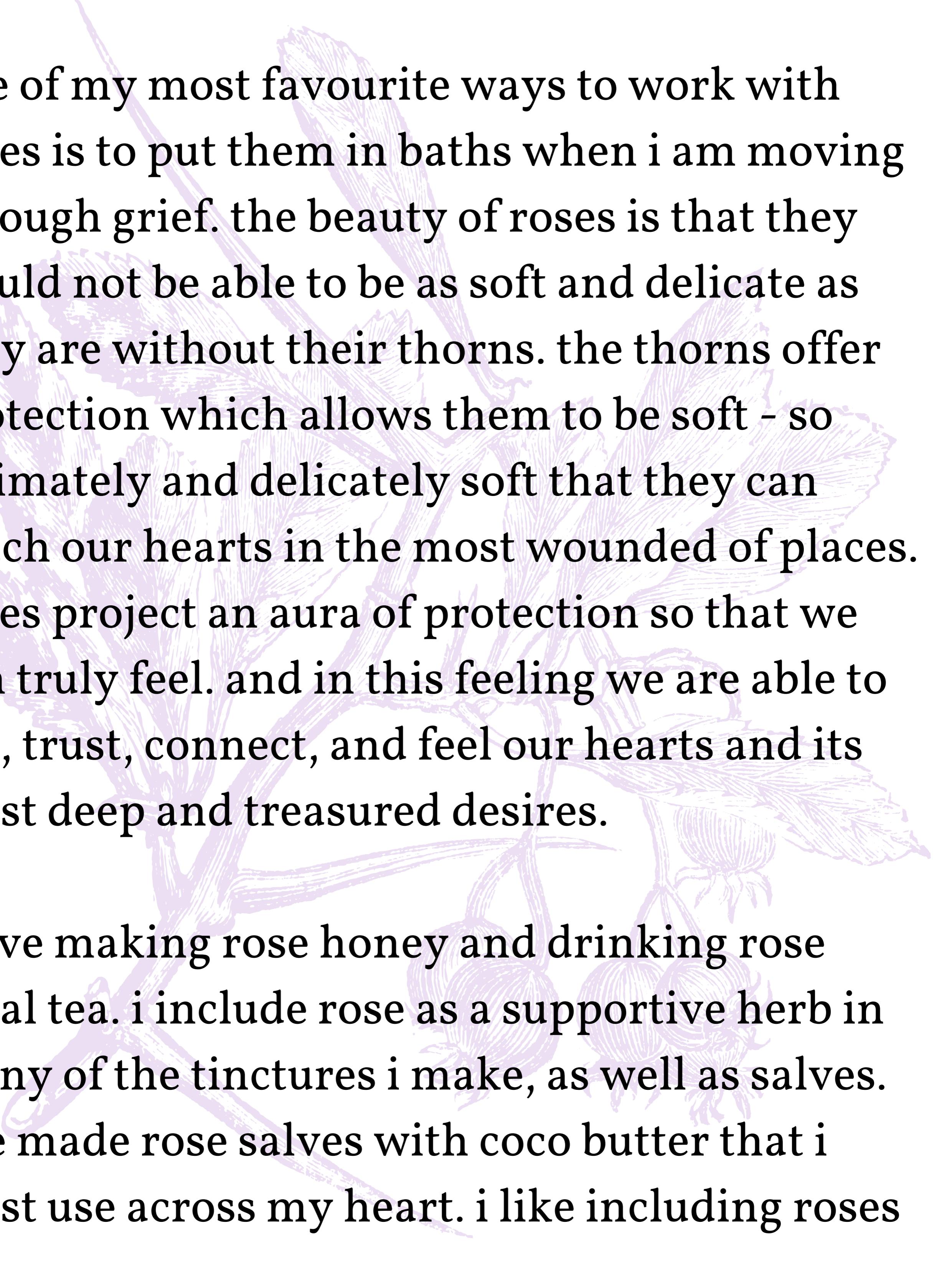
nettles typically grow in areas where they offer protection to other plants. they will sting you if you interact with them in a way that is not present or mindful. nettles are fierce protectors and also rich with nourishment. like yarrow, they can help wounds heal, and i tend to use them in a similar way for treating wounds and cuts.

one of my favourite way to use nettles is to eat them. i love putting them in pesto, grinding them up and using them on popcorn and in soups. i also like to just eat them as a green, after lightly steaming them to lessen their sting.

nettles can act like something of a herbal multi-vitamin, helping the body regain necessary balance and groundedness. i like to take them in tinctures, honeys, and teas. when i'm working with nettles i tend to use them every day.

nettles also help heal trauma in the same way they can grow abundantly in a traumatized landscape. they offer protection, healing, and nourishment. they are fierce and wise. they demand attention. they make you stand at attention and really look with open eyes at the situation right in front of you.

rose: i adore roses. i wrote a longer piece on my feelings about and journey with roses in my little red tarot column. you can read that piece [here](#).



one of my most favourite ways to work with roses is to put them in baths when i am moving through grief. the beauty of roses is that they would not be able to be as soft and delicate as they are without their thorns. the thorns offer protection which allows them to be soft - so intimately and delicately soft that they can touch our hearts in the most wounded of places. roses project an aura of protection so that we can truly feel. and in this feeling we are able to cry, trust, connect, and feel our hearts and its most deep and treasured desires.

i love making rose honey and drinking rose petal tea. i include rose as a supportive herb in many of the tinctures i make, as well as salves. i've made rose salves with coco butter that i most use across my heart. i like including roses

in salves with plants that can sometimes carry a harsher edge, like mandrake or henbane.

i've also put roses on my altar when i'm wanting to soften my defenses and move out of a trauma-based, black-and-white perception of a situation i am moving through. i've offered rose salves to folks i was going through mediation with. roses are a living symbol of profound and tender empathy.

roses soften everything they touch ,and they offer a container where the softness feels safe and welcome.

hawthorn: to have a hawthorn heart is to have a heart full of sweetness, care, and wild abundant love. and in having a heart like this, you become grounded and exude an air of

self-worth, demonstrated through clear and loving boundaries.

hawthorn is a remedy for hearts. both literal pumping, blood-filled hearts and energetic, center-of-connection hearts.

my favourite way to use hawthorn is in a sweet tincture, glycerine, or honey. i like to steep the berries for a long time, ideally in the sun or under the moon, until the menstrum resembles blood. i love adding hawthorn tincture or honey to mixed drinks (which don't need to include alcohol) for a splash of colour and to support good vibes in social spaces.

you can learn more about hawthorn by listening to [this podcast](#).

anything with thorns: many herbalists include literal thorns in their remedies. i love this piece from the lunar apothecary, which explains thorn medicine.

other plants i know folks have found powerful to work with for protection magic include red raspberry leaf, motherwort, comfrey, devil's club, and sage.

do you have plants you love working with for protection magic? i encourage you to share them on the facebook page.

carrying this work into community

i've said this many times, but i'm going to say it again: **healing work is much more likely to succeed when it's bolstered by community. when it is held by supportive witnesses.**

there's over 80 people in the facebook group for this course, and it's just going to keep growing as more rounds carry forward. i highly encourage you all to share with the group, ask questions, and to answer each others questions as you feel able to. i believe we can build a powerful, supportive, and non-judgemental community.

i think we can come together to celebrate our successes, undo gaslighting, and set boundaries bolstered by powerful magic.

i have a deep deep sense of gratitude for all of you, for your support and patience, for your willingness to dive deep into the work and come out the other side with a new perspective.

because i want to keep doing better at this work, i've created a survey where you can give me feedback on how this course has felt to you. *the first three people to answer the survey will be gifted free tuition to one of my workshops, and everyone who answers will be put into a draw to win either a tarot card reading or herbal contraception consultation with me.*

i'm planning on offering more rounds in the future, and i want it to keep running more smoothly and with greater clarity. i already have lots of changes in mind for the next round, and you could help shape even more with your wisdom and reflection.

please submit your responses by the end of june.

big huge love to all of you:
femme powerhouse witches.

i love you all so deeply.

i hope we keep connecting,
growing and fighting the
fucking patriarchy
together.

