



Turning Termination Into Closure:

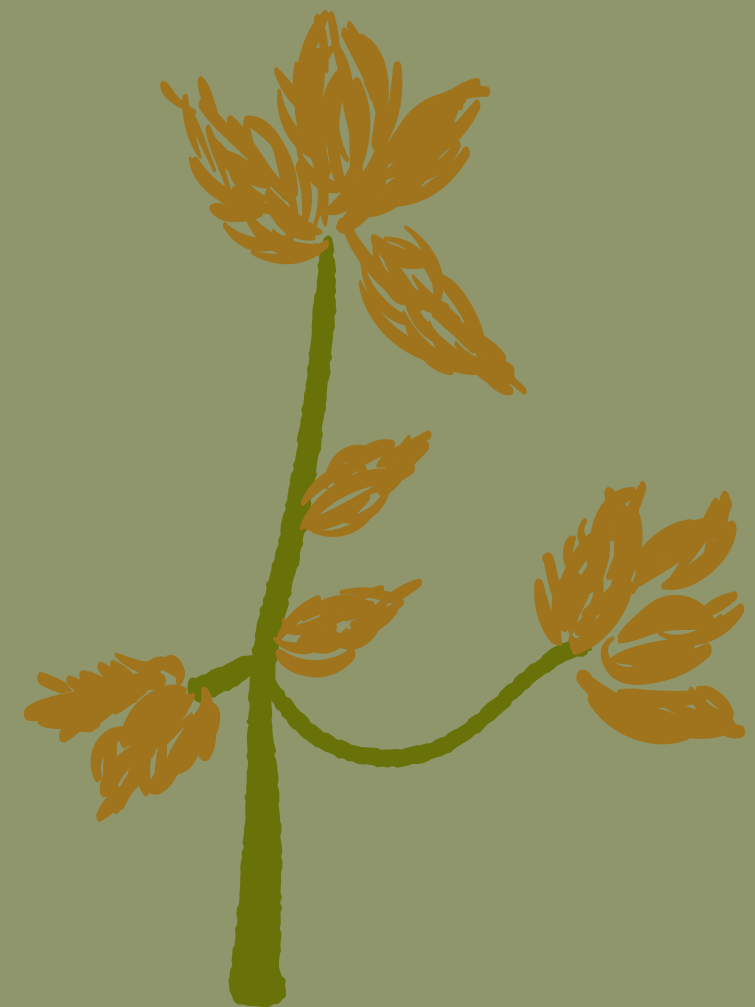
Tasks & Activities for Ending Short-Term Therapy

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Disclaimer

Although we recognize the importance of future treatment planning in the termination process, this will not be the focus of today's program. We intend to use our time to focus on the components of coming to closure and "saying goodbye" within the termination process. Our goals for this program are further outlined in our learning objectives seen in the next slide.



Learning Objectives ✓

- ✓ Review meanings connected to therapy termination
- ✓ Recognize range of client responses to therapy termination
- ✓ Develop a plan for processing therapy termination
- ✓ Explore ways to reflect on therapy termination, including metaphor
- ✓ Identify activities to facilitate closure/say goodbye
- ✓ Acknowledge counselor responses to termination
- ✓ Contribute to this year's CCNY theme, **Charting Our Course**

*In charting our course to the future,
we are mindful of our path from the past.* ~Brad Henry



DISCUSSION: The Meaning of “Termination”

- ❖ What comes to mind with the word “termination”?
 - Abrupt, harsh ending
 - End of employment
 - Final stop (as in death)
- ❖ What alternative words/phrases could you/do you use?
 - closure
 - finale
 - commencement
 - new beginning/begin again
 - closing a chapter/next chapter
 - new journey
 - goodbye



REFLECTION: How We Hold Goodbyes

- ❖ What do goodbyes mean to you?
- ❖ How have you historically experienced goodbyes?
- ❖ What shows up for you when you say goodbye to clients?



Anticipating Client Responses to Therapy Termination

- ❖ Clinical concerns: new issues, symptoms, regression
- ❖ Emotional responses: ambivalence, anxiety, disappointment
- ❖ Other reactions:
 - Bargaining to continue - client may identify future stressors, state need for additional therapy sessions
 - Devaluing treatment - client may attribute progress to other factors (e.g., external event, function of time)
 - Ending abruptly – client may cancel or no show for planned final session, or premature termination



Plan for Processing Termination

❖ Early in treatment – we chart our course for the future

- Review timing, other practical concerns
- Consider defining therapy as "episodic" process
- Keep termination in mind when formulating treatment plan

❖ As termination approaches – we are mindful of the path from the past

- Connect the plan for termination to the length/depth of treatment
- Consider tapering sessions (a.k.a. "termination phase")
- Continue to strengthen the therapeutic alliance
- Collaborate with the client in termination planning
- Hold space for whatever arises during this process – old wounds, attachment issues, triggers, feelings of anxiety, abandonment, other



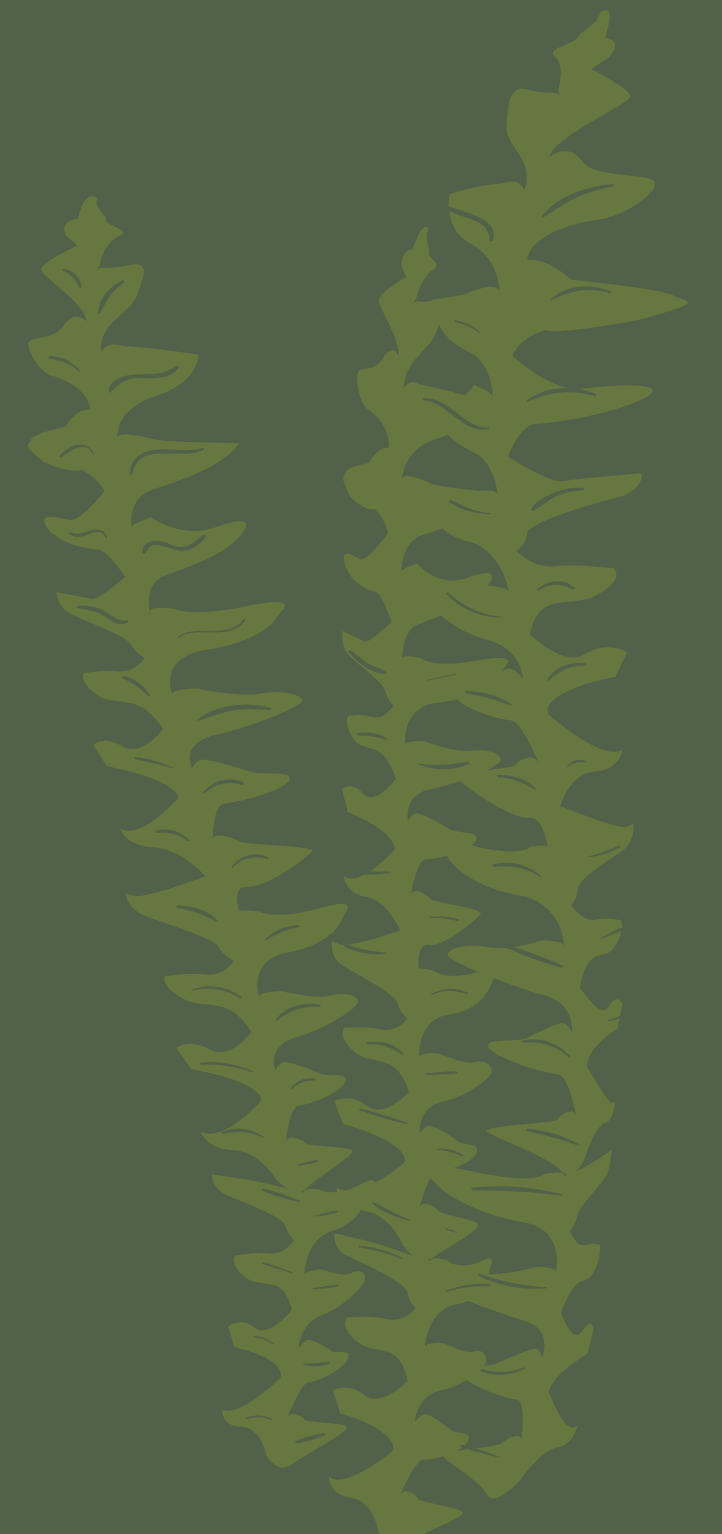
Ways to Reflect on Termination

❖ Past: Discuss what went well in therapy

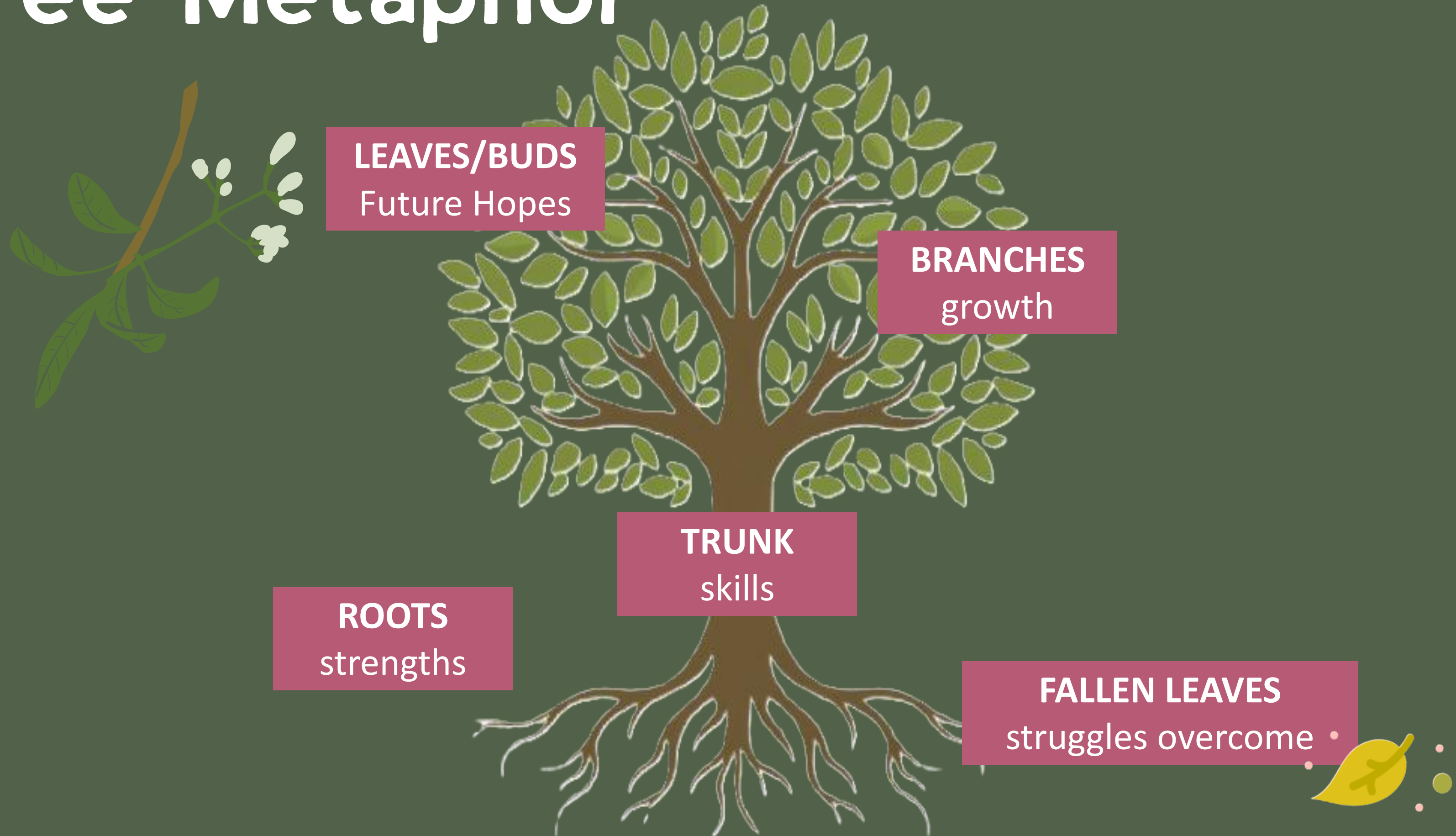
- Explore growth and development of the therapeutic relationship
- Help client identify strengths, growth, takeaways, other insights
- Emphasize client agency by connecting client's progress to client's specific efforts over the course of treatment
- Highlight client autonomy for making further progress on own, generalizing gains made in therapy

❖ Future: Prepare for potential opportunities and challenges

- An *opportunity* for the client to experience an ending and new beginning with support, from a secure attachment perspective
- A *challenge* for the client to utilize new skills, apply insights, and process inevitable changes and obstacles
- An *opportunity and challenge* for the client to have responsibility for ongoing personal development, post-therapy growth



Tree Metaphor



Building Blocks Metaphor

The tower can be rebuilt stronger with the gained skills and insights.

The tower may collapse, representing the inevitable ups and downs or "falls" in life.

As the tower rises, anxiety, distress, and other emotions may rise also.

Each block represents a powerful moment in therapy – e.g., a coping skill, an insight learned, a change made, etc.



Activities to Facilitate Closure

Termination is an opportune time to utilize creative and engaging interventions that supports the client's active reflection about the themselves as well as the overall therapy process.



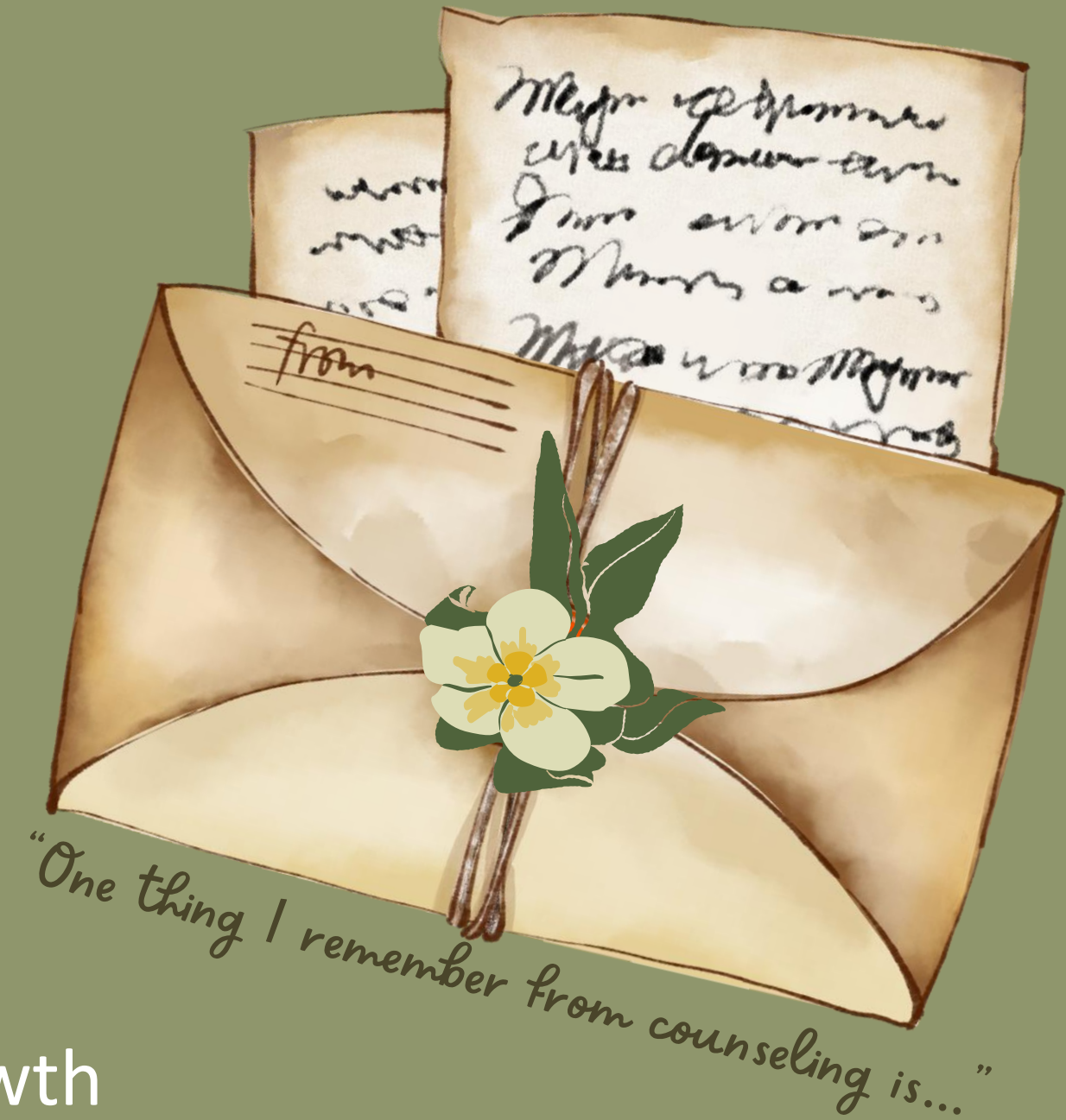
Client Activities

❖ Writing Ideas for Clients

- Client journals about progress in therapy
might include hardest thing, biggest thing learned about self, main takeaways, etc.
- Client writes a letter to past or future self
- Client writes a letter to therapist
client decides whether therapist should read in session

❖ Other Ideas for Clients

- Client creates a playlist to represent their progress, growth
- Client creates a toolkit or suitcase of future coping strategies
- Client chooses an activity for the final therapy session



Counselor Activities

- ❖ Acknowledge the loss of the existing relationship
- ❖ Offer tangible evidence of progress – e.g., changes to test scores
- ❖ Write letter to client – growth, strengths, fond memories, etc.
- ❖ Provide index cards/Post-Its with encouragement reminders
- ❖ Share a meaningful poem or quote
one example: Autobiography in Five Chapters
- ❖ Give a symbolic or other *small* gift
ideas: completion certificate, stone or shell, sticker, pin, small journal



DISCUSSION: *What else have you done?*

Counselor Responses to Termination

The termination phase of treatment creates an opportunity for counselors to bring more of ourselves into the relationship.

❖ Emotional Responses

- Reactions related to own past goodbyes (ex. feelings of grief or loss)
- Frustration about unfinished business (premature termination)
- Feelings of pride, appreciation, or enjoyment in working together

❖ Processing Responses

- Acknowledge the investment of time, emotional and intellectual energy, and dedication towards helping our clients
- Allow oneself space for reflection of professional strengths demonstrated as well as potential growth areas
- Seek supervision when further support needed



DISCUSSION: How We Hold Goodbyes

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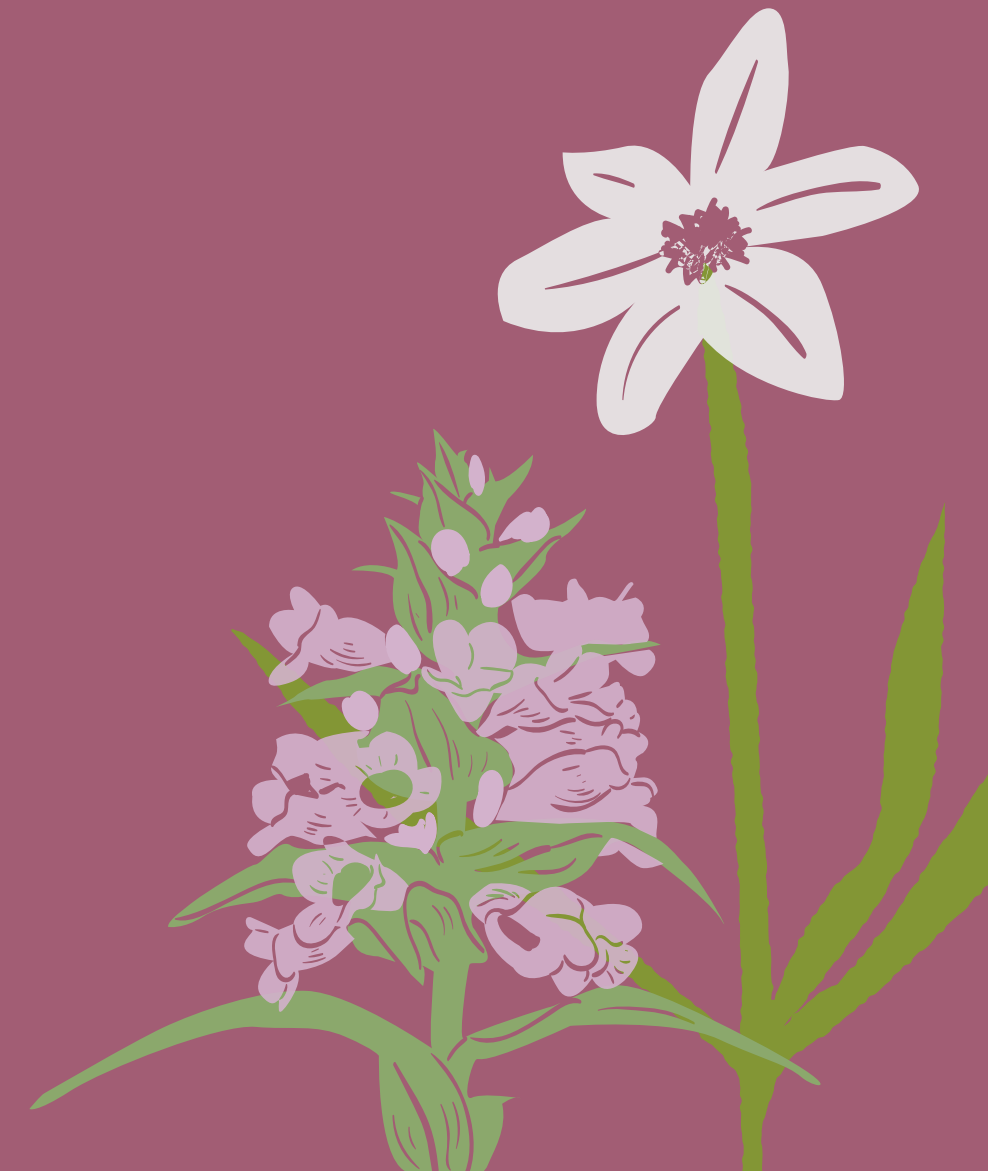


QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

- ❖ What else have you done when terminating with clients?
- ❖ Do you have a favorite termination story to share?
- ❖ Any other issues or concerns about termination?



*Thank You for Sharing —
This is Our Goodbye!*



References ✓

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