

Sustainability in Forensic Social Work: Beyond Self-Care

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**THE
LEGAL AID
SOCIETY
CIVIL**

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Disconnect

- Silence non-essential notifications
- Separate true urgency from perceived urgency
- Doodle don't scroll
- Check in with your body



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Words from Tricia Hersey founder of The Nap Ministry

You are worthy of rest. We don't have to earn rest.

Rest is a healing portal to our deepest selves. Rest is care. Rest is radical.

Survival is not the end goal for liberation. We must thrive. We must rest.

Rest is an embodied practice and a lifelong unraveling.

From her book Rest is Resistance: A Manifesto 2022

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What have you been told about self-care?

It's important!

You should do it!

It will help!

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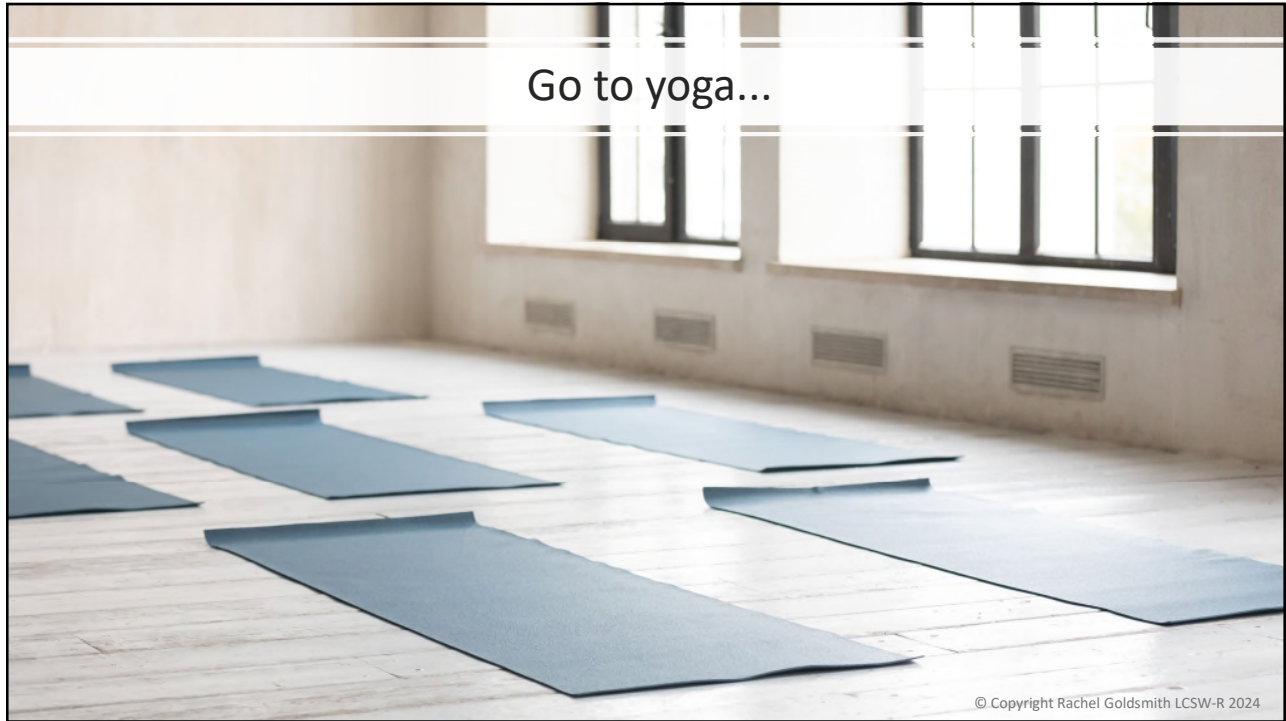
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Take a walk....

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Why don't I feel better?

Treating this
after the fact

Not building a
sustainability
practice

Plan doesn't
align with your
life

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The pressures of a legal setting

- I'm a social worker so I'm supposed to be able to handle this.
- I can't show an attorney I'm impacted by client work as that's "my thing"
- I have training that attorneys don't have so I must know what to do
- If I'm impacted by the work, I'm not a good social worker.
- The attorneys look to me to "fix" the client and when I can't, I worry they'll be disappointed or upset with me.
- Winning vs losing cases

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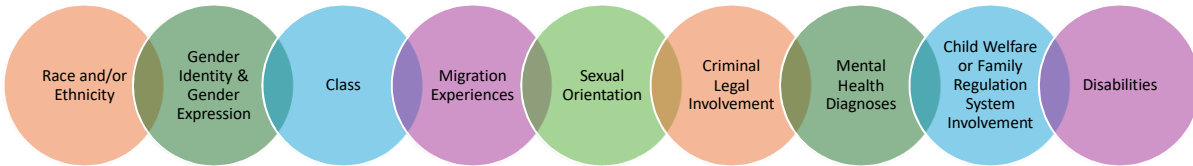
The second elephant in the room



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Intersectional Identities

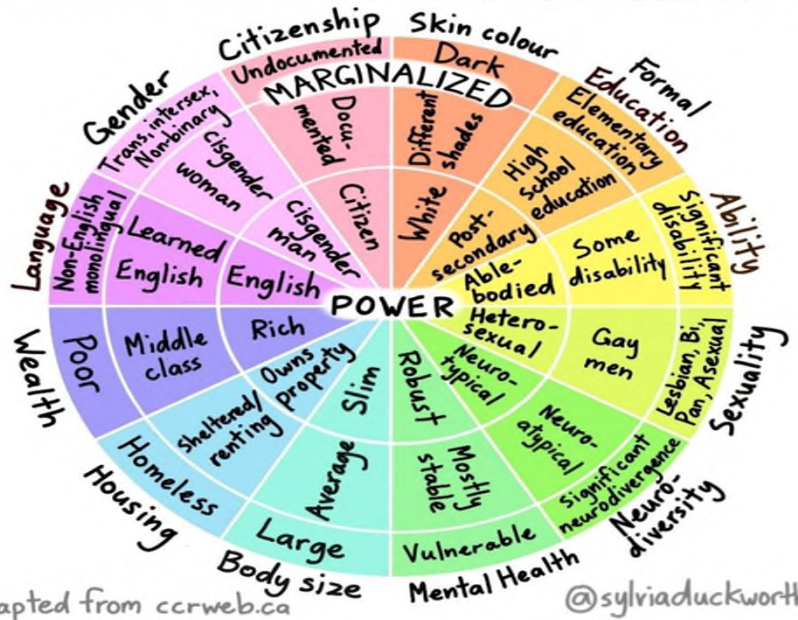


*Not an exhaustive list of all identities

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WHEEL OF POWER/PRIVILEGE



Adapted from ccrweb.ca

@sylvriaduckworth

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Challenges specific to forensic social work



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SYSTEMS
GREATLY
IMPACT OUR
WORK:



Client access (time, type)



Ongoing harm caused throughout the process



Lack of control

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Vicarious trauma

An “inescapable effect of trauma work”

“the natural consequence of our being human, connecting to, and caring about our clients as we hear about and see the effects of trauma in their lives”

Vicarious Traumatization

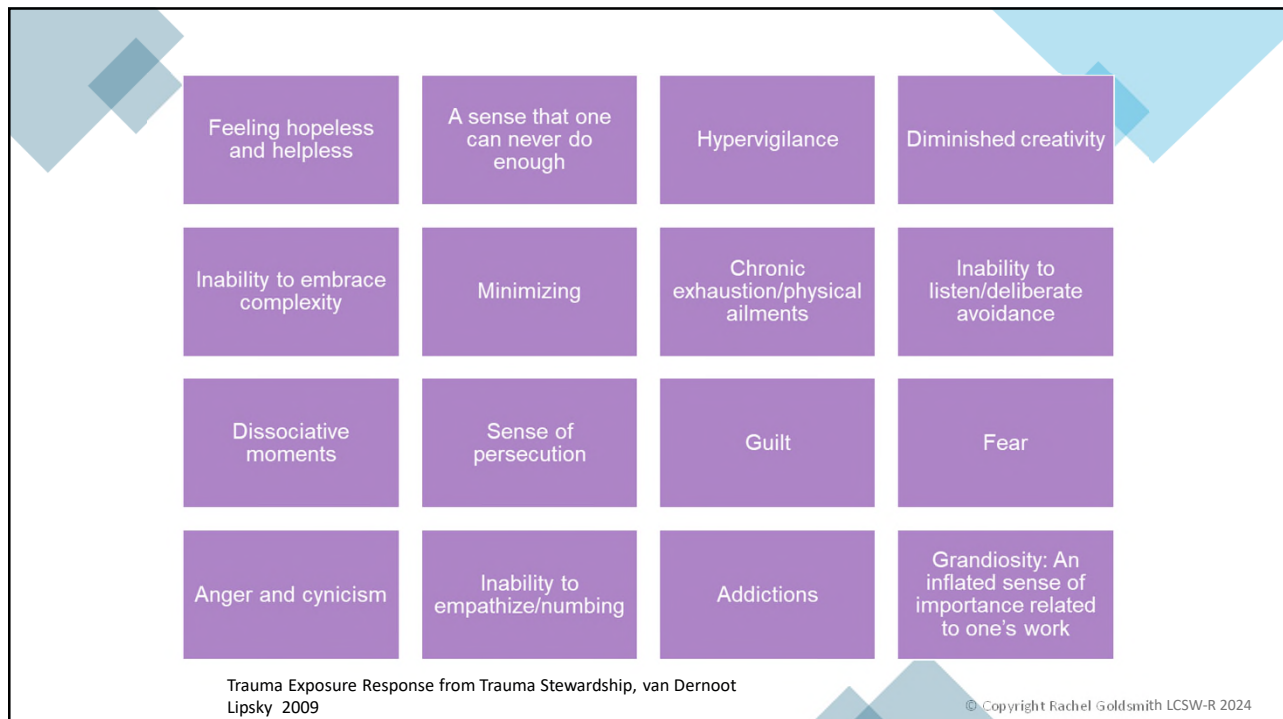
“the transformation or change in a helper’s inner experience as a result of responsibility for and empathic engagement with traumatized clients”

vitne et al 2000

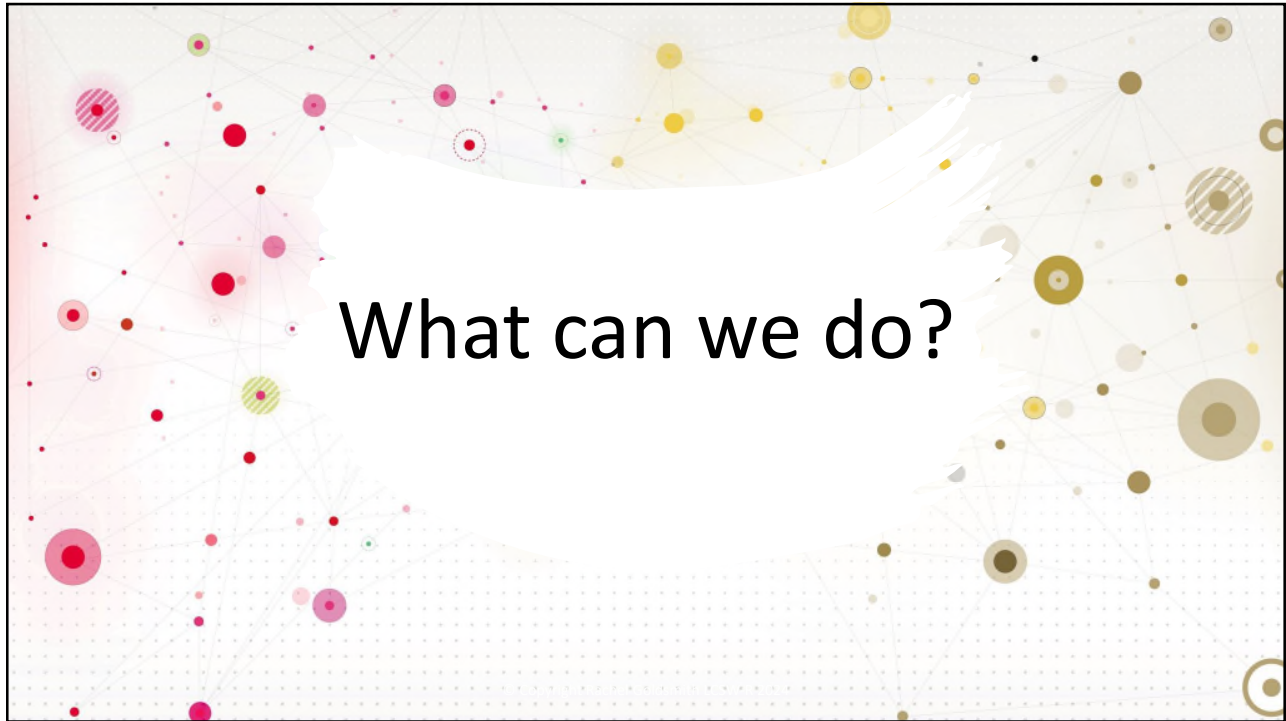
Saa

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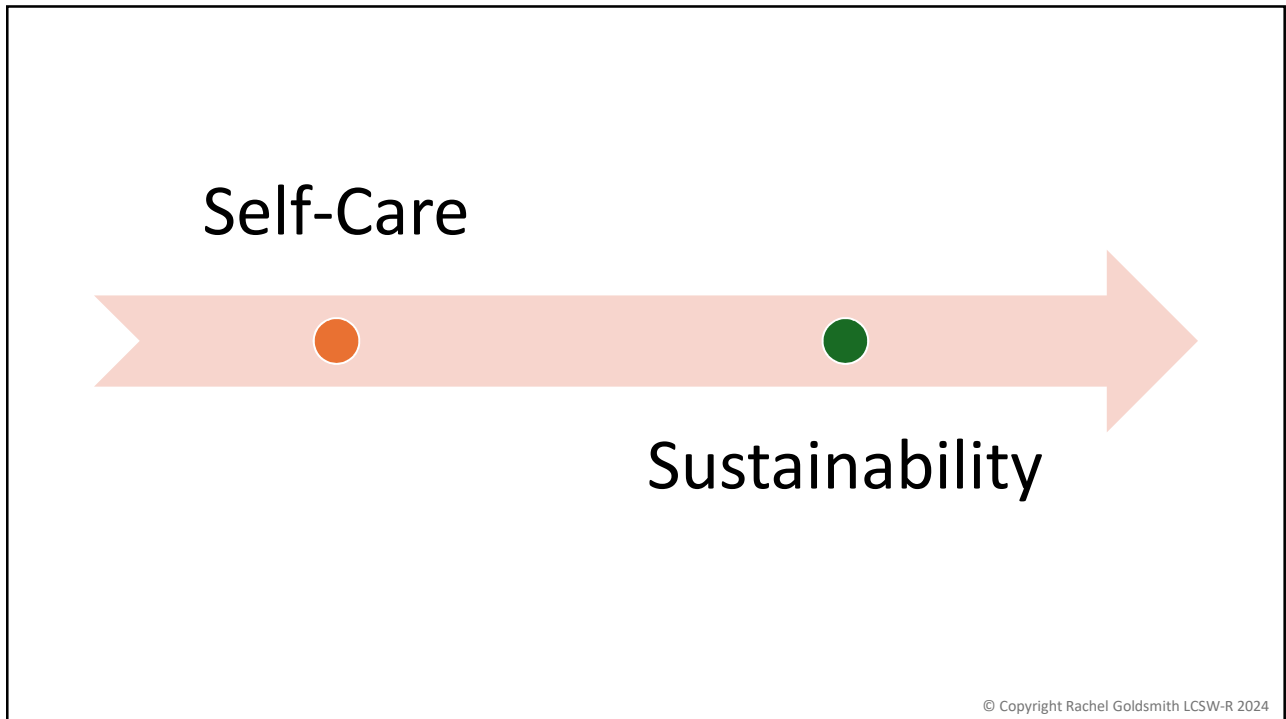
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Self-Care

- Discrete acts
- Moments
- Not always intentional
- Often reactive

Sustainability

- An intentional practice
- A commitment
- Specific
- Nurturing our many parts
- Proactive

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Sustainability Bubble

Bouncing off
what we can.

Reducing the
impact of what
we can't.



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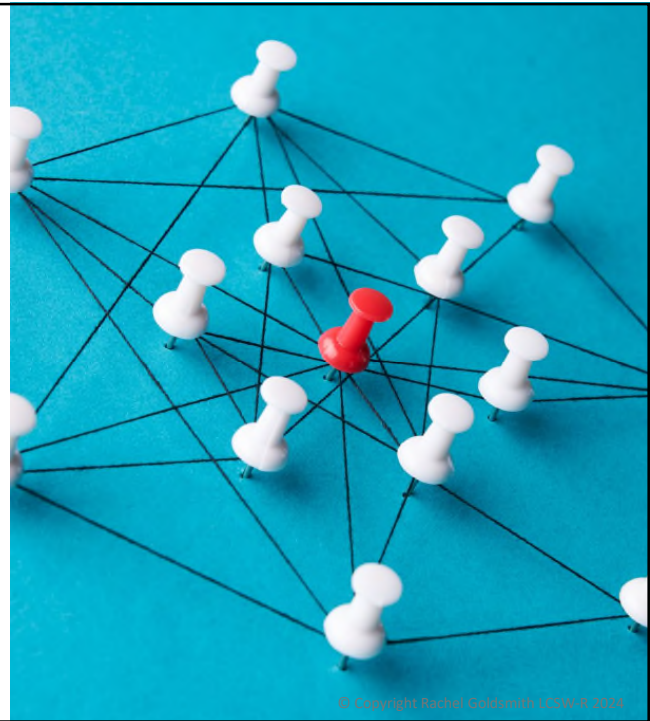
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Connection

We are not in this alone.

We are a part of a collective.

We connect not only around pain but
around strength and survival.



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Hope

We have something to offer.

We believe in the work that we do.

We remember moments not just outcomes.



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Micro and Macro Impact

- How did I impact this person, family, community?
- How did I impact the system?
- How is my work part of a larger movement?



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Shifting to intentionality

We don't wait.

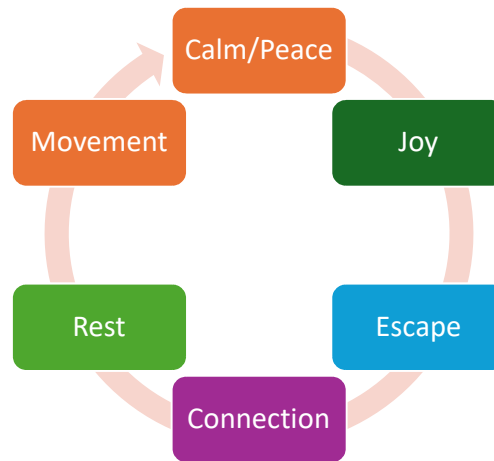
We commit to an ongoing process to sustain ourselves in this work.

We believe we deserve rest and don't have to earn it.

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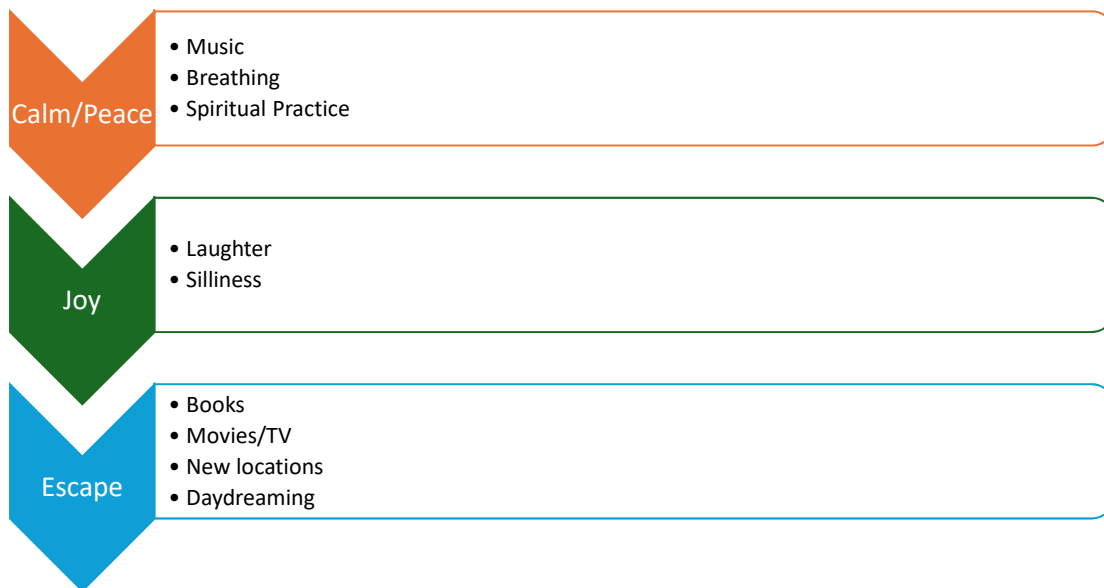
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Intentional Strategies



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Connection

- Who is in this with you?
- Who are your people?

Hope

- What moments remind you the work makes a difference?

Movement

- Not exercise
- A release of what gets stuck inside of us

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Just breathe.

If you have 2 minutes, you can breathe.



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Have a plan

And a backup plan.

And a backup, backup plan.

REMINDER

I cannot tell you what to do. You need to look inside to explore what your body/mind/spirit/heart/soul needs.



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REST

True rest.

"Rest isn't a luxury, but an absolute necessity if we're going to survive and thrive"

"We are not resting to be productive. We are resting because it is our divine right to do so."

Tricia Hersey 2022



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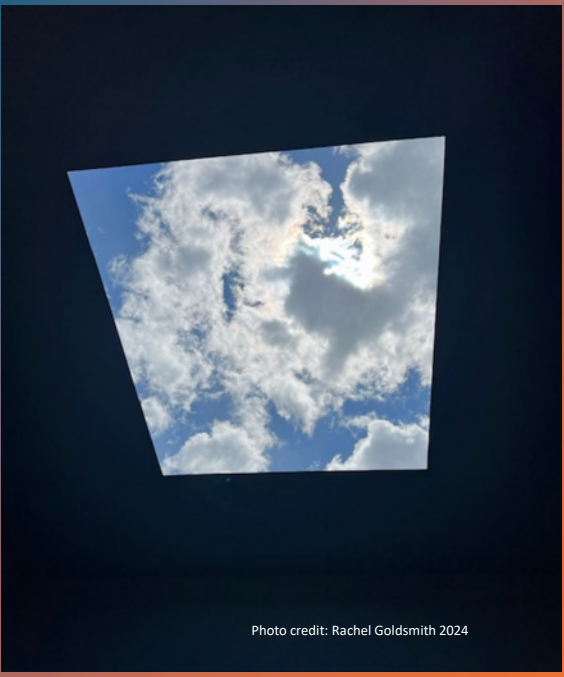
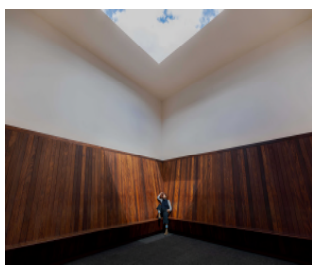


Photo credit: Rachel Goldsmith 2024

Together we rest.

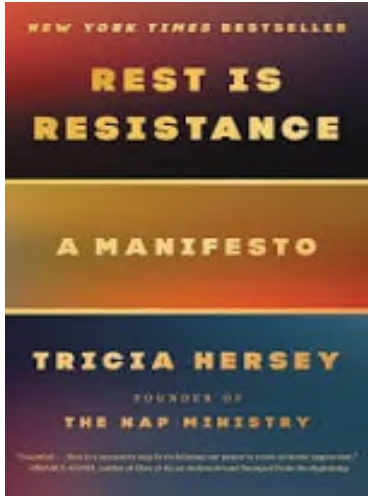


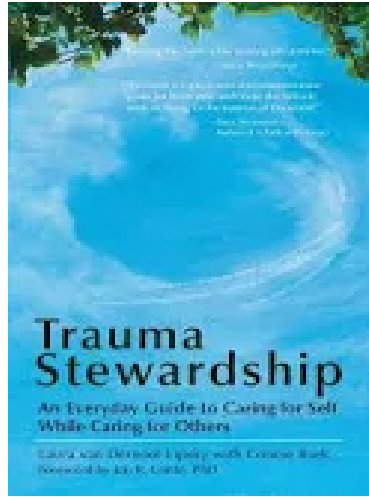
James Turrell. Meeting 1986
Photo credit: Noel Woodford

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Resources





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Thank you!

Questions?

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