

To all who held me through my messiness—thank you. You were witnesses to my becoming.

Abstract

In this dissertation, I invite the reader into the heart of my therapeutic lens, shaped by the research into literature that has illuminated my humanistic and integrative practice. I explore how cumulative trauma, like a slow and silent tide, wears away at a person's ability to trust, both in themselves and in others. Each relational wound becomes a thread in a tapestry of disconnection, fraying the fabric of the self and dimming the possibility of living a whole and meaningful life. I consider the aching paradox of yearning for closeness while fearing its cost, the aftermath of betrayal, the echo of inherited beliefs that whisper unworthiness, and the hollow absence of internal safety. This work speaks to the quiet devastation of unmet relational needs and the resilient, though fractured, longing to heal.

I will illustrate how my research has shaped and enriched my clinical practice, guiding me to foster both interpersonal and intrapersonal safety. Through the therapeutic relationship, I aim to offer a reparative re-experiencing: a space where fragmented parts of the self can be witnessed, held, and slowly brought into integration. My intention is to show how I have developed the capacity to deliver meaningful interventions that support the emergence of self-acceptance and restore a sense of relational worth. These learnings will be brought to life through the unfolding narrative of my case study.

Believing We are formed, disrupted and healed in relationship.