



Photo Insights™

PhotoTherapy Cards Instruction Guide



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Introduction



We all long to be truly heard and understood—to have our experiences seen without judgment and our feelings honored. That kind of deep connection can be hard to find, even in our closest relationships. PhotoTherapy Cards open a new path to self-expression and understanding, making it easier to explore what’s difficult to express and allowing you to feel genuinely seen and validated. Whether you’re navigating healing or deepening connection, these cards offer a powerful tool for meaningful insight and growth.



Language structures meaning. It gives shape to how we see things. It conveys the traditions of our culture and affects our worldviews. And, more often than not, language is the primary tool of communication. Yet communication is the root of the majority of challenges amongst all types of relationships. Working with youth, people from diverse backgrounds, those with and without disabilities, and those whose trust has been betrayed can be especially challenging. The use of visuals helps move beyond language bound barriers. It opens a new way to convey experience, which gives an opening into the experience of those around you without the preconceived notion that you are speaking the same language.

Language is richly embroidered with symbolism. When using visuals to convey thoughts, ideas, and experiences, it is easier to pick out and question what these symbols may represent to individuals. When this occurs, individuals can move toward understanding the meanings imbued in the selected images, as well as move toward the construct of new meanings suited to healing, growth, and improved relationship dynamics.

The PhotoTherapy cards unlock conversations that you did not know existed bringing self-awareness and people together.



The Creation of PhotoTherapy Cards



When speaking with individuals who have endured profound tragedies or life events far outside the bounds of everyday experience, words often fall short. These moments can leave everyone—those living through them and those trying to help—feeling helpless, even hopeless. For people who struggle to express themselves verbally, the isolation can be even more profound.

In her search to better understand these deeply human experiences and their impact on families, Dr. Diane Hovey invited families to document their journeys through photo journaling. Through images, the layers of emotion and meaning began to unfold—offering insights that words alone could not capture. This approach proved powerful in research settings, revealing complexity, resilience, and truth in ways that data or dialogue could not.

However, translating this method into therapeutic and workshop environments proved challenging. Determined to bridge that gap, Dr. Hovey spent decades gathering the language of lived experience. From this work, she developed a series of evocative images—carefully selected to help individuals express what is so often too difficult to put into words. These images now form the heart of the PhotoTherapy Cards, offering a way into stories that might otherwise remain locked away.

Photo Insights™ PhotoTherapy Cards are emerging as a powerful resource for therapists and helping professionals who seek deeper, more intuitive ways to engage with clients—approaches that are truly client-centered and grounded in the client’s own meaning-making, rather than shaped by the professional’s interpretations or assumptions. Developed by a therapist and tested in diverse clinical settings—including by Dr. Hovey and many other practitioners—these cards consistently help uncover thoughts, feelings, and insights that often remain hidden in traditional talk therapy. Their strength lies in the universal language of imagery, which can gently bypass defenses and open space for authentic reflection and dialogue.

Although originally designed for therapeutic use, Photo Insights™ PhotoTherapy Cards have proven valuable across a wide range of personal and professional contexts. People from diverse backgrounds and industries have found creative ways to use them to support self-reflection, enhance communication, deepen relationships, and strengthen team dynamics. Whether you’re a clinician, coach, educator, or simply someone seeking personal insight, these cards offer a flexible and inspiring tool for meaningful engagement.

Photo images help people:

- Find a way to express what they’re feeling—even when words don’t seem to work
- Connect and collaborate more meaningfully with others, whether in personal relationships or team settings
- Break free from emotional or creative ruts that keep them feeling stuck
- Begin to see parts of a challenge or issue they may have been avoiding or didn’t even realize were there
- Tap into emotions that feel distant, blocked, or hard to access
- Make sense of complicated, even conflicting, experiences by giving them form and clarity through imagery

Guiding Principles



While there are many creative and effective ways to use Photo Insights™ PhotoTherapy Cards, it's essential to keep the following guiding principles in mind:

- Let go of assumptions. Avoid projecting your own interpretations onto others. These cards are not meant to be read like a book of symbols. Even if certain imagery is commonly associated with specific meanings, each person brings their own context and experience. The true power of the cards lies in staying open to what emerges uniquely for each individual.
- Resist the urge to assign meaning. Using standardized symbolism or imposing your own interpretations can limit the effectiveness of the process. The goal is not to define the images, but to invite reflection and insight. Ascribing fixed meanings can undermine the organic, client-driven discovery that makes these cards so impactful.
- Avoid affirming or dismissing responses. Refrain from statements like “That’s not what this picture means,” or “Yes, that’s the right answer.” There are no right or wrong interpretations—only the meaning that arises for the person engaging with the image. Honor their perspective without correction or judgment.
- Let the conversation unfold naturally. Don’t use the cards to steer the dialogue or guide someone toward a particular conclusion. Instead, allow space for expression and exploration to evolve on its own terms.

These cards are also highly effective in group and team settings. Use them to give introductions more depth, as icebreakers or as a tool to foster shared understanding. Use them to explore how each person connects meaning to a particular topic or image.

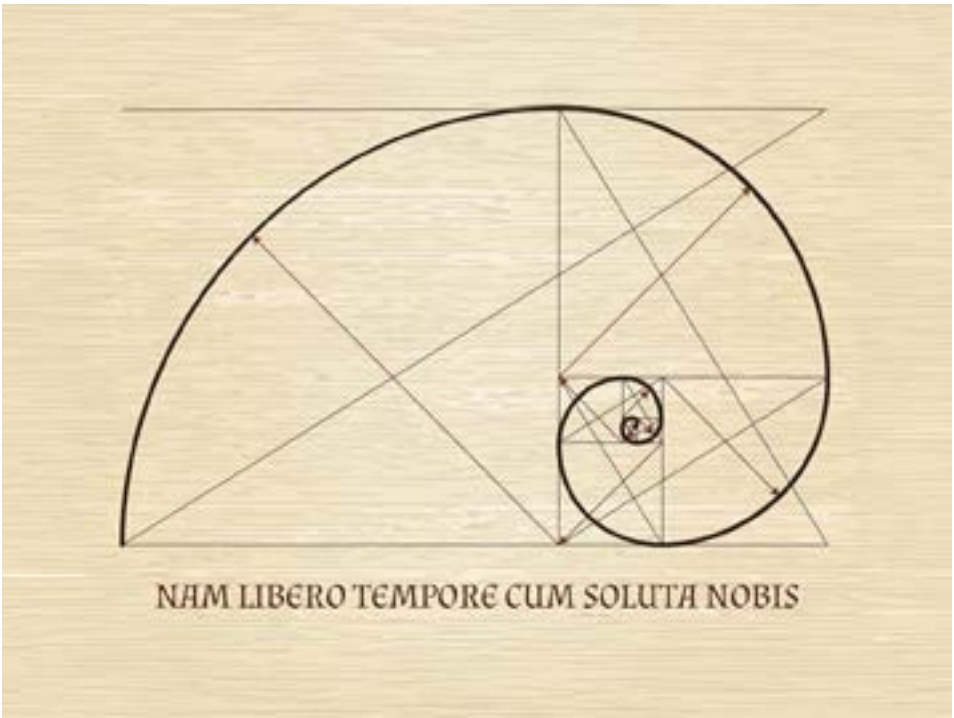
To deepen your understanding of how to use PhotoTherapy in a grounded and respectful way, check out our available courses.

Beyond Words



Beyond Words includes two core decks from the Photo Insights™ PhotoTherapy Cards collection, designed to be highly flexible and open-ended. These decks are ideal for a wide range of settings and diverse populations. The images were selected through a process informed by over three decades of gathering words used to describe lived experiences—and the visual imagery those words evoke. Each image was intentionally chosen for its balance of ambiguity and clarity, allowing individuals to project their own meanings and emotions. In practice, these images have consistently shown that there are no fixed or universally “correct” interpretations—only what resonates for the person engaging with them.

Created to be inclusive and adaptable, these decks work equally well in therapeutic, educational, coaching, or personal development settings.



The Golden Rule of Use

The core principle in using the Beyond Words decks—and all Photo Insights™ PhotoTherapy Cards—is simple but essential: The only correct interpretation is the one offered by the person selecting the image.

This aligns directly with the Guiding Principles for Use outlined earlier. Facilitators must refrain from suggesting meanings, affirming responses, or using outside symbolism to influence interpretation. Even if an image seems to carry a common symbolic meaning, that meaning is only relevant if it aligns with the individual’s personal experience. Interpretation must stay grounded in the user’s perspective to preserve the power and purpose of the process.

Primary Deck vs. Secondary Deck

Although connected thematically, the Primary and Secondary decks each contain a completely different set of images. The Primary Deck features more content related to relationships and interpersonal dynamics, while the Secondary Deck leans toward themes that reflect youth, growth, and identity development.

The decks can be used separately or together. For example, in a session with multiple participants, one individual might draw from the Primary Deck while another draws from the Secondary Deck. Patterns may emerge across selections, offering opportunities for shared reflection and conversation—always grounded in each person’s unique interpretation.

Suggested Use:

There are countless ways to engage with Photo Insights™ PhotoTherapy Cards, but here are a few foundational suggestions to help you get started.

Begin with a focus

Start by identifying a topic, question, or concern that feels relevant or pressing. Once the focus is clear, sort through the cards and select the images that resonate most. Ideally, aim to narrow the selection down to about five cards. Sometimes this takes a few rounds of sorting—especially if the initial reaction is to select many images. Keeping the number manageable allows for greater clarity and deeper reflection. It’s better to take things step by step than to overwhelm the process at the start.

Narrow with intention

People approach the sorting process in different ways. Some may move quickly with little thought, others may be highly selective, and some might struggle to limit their choices. When too many cards are selected, a second round of sorting is helpful. Invite the individual to group similar cards together based on shared themes or meanings, which can make it easier to reduce the set to a practical number for discussion or reflection.



Primary Deck vs. Secondary Deck



Explore through expression

Once the selections are made, invite the person to reflect on their choices. This can be done through conversation, writing, drawing, movement, or any other form of expression that feels natural. Let them choose where to begin. If you’re guiding the process, offer encouragement rather than direction—fostering confidence in their own insight. In group settings, alternating between participants can build shared understanding and perspective.

Use open-ended questions to gently guide exploration. Avoid imposing your own interpretations or labeling any response as “right” or “wrong.” By remaining neutral and curious, you create space for the conversation to unfold in a deeper and more meaningful way.

Try a free-form approach

Another option is to lay all the cards out on a table and invite individuals to select any image that draws their attention. From there, encourage reflection on why they chose it and how it might represent their feelings, experiences, or situation. This intuitive approach often reveals insights that aren’t immediately obvious.

Again, the golden rule applies: do not assume meaning for someone else. Stay open, stay curious, and let their perspective guide the process.

Use as a writing or journaling prompt

These cards also make excellent prompts for journaling or creative self-expression. They can help tell the story of a moment, a day, or a feeling—offering a more intimate way to share personal experience beyond simply “reporting.” Sometimes images give shape to thoughts we didn’t know how to say out loud. Sharing reflections through imagery can build empathy, spark connection, and create a more compassionate, peaceful environment—whether at home, in therapy, or in group settings.

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Boundaries Deck

Boundaries PhotoTherapy Cards are designed to help individuals explore and develop healthy boundaries in relationships. These visual tools encourage self-reflection and deeper understanding, making it easier to discuss personal limits, emotional safety, and relational dynamics. The use of these PhotoTherapy cards offer a powerful way to clarify and strengthen your boundaries.

Understanding Boundaries

Boundaries help define personal limits, create safety, and foster mutual respect. They allow for meaningful connections while preserving individual identity and well-being. Boundaries may be:

- **Physical** (e.g., personal space, bodily autonomy, sexual touch, and respect for personal belongings.)
- **Emotional** (e.g., protecting feelings)
- **Financial** (e.g., managing shared money)
- **Social** (e.g., time spent with others)
- **Time-based** (e.g., scheduling needs)

Exploring Boundaries

Start by examining the images in your deck. What boundary is shown, and what purpose does it serve? For example, the purpose of a **railroad crossing** is to prevent accidents. The **elements** that support this purpose—such as warning signs, flashing lights, and crossing arms—help keep people safe.

Relationship boundaries work similarly. They also need a **clear purpose** and **functional elements** to make them effective and safe.

Key elements of relational boundaries include:

- **Perspective & Perception** – How your personal experiences shape the way you understand boundaries.
- **Possibility & Purpose** – How boundaries can support growth and protect emotional and relational safety.
- **Roots & Responsibility** – How values and accountability serve as the foundation for sustainable boundaries.
- **Structural Components** – How clearly and consistently a boundary is communicated, understood, and maintained.

Exploring Relational Boundary Components

Take a moment to reflect on the boundaries you currently use in your relationships. Some may be working well, while others may feel ineffective or even harmful. This is a common experience—especially when we haven’t explored what makes a boundary truly functional.

Boundaries that lack clear purpose, structure, or accountability can easily become **threats** or **demands** rather than supportive agreements. These types of boundaries often fail, creating more tension and conflict instead of fostering safety and respect.

Another common misstep is applying the same approach to all boundaries, without considering what each one needs to be effective. Just as physical boundaries vary depending on the terrain or environment, relational boundaries must be tailored to the specific context and relationship. Use the boundary images in the deck as visual guides to help you design boundaries that fit different situations. Refer to the element cards in your deck to ensure you're including the key components that make a boundary clear, respectful, and functional.



Boundaries Deck

Boundaries and the Drama Triangle

Included in the deck are cards that describe the **Drama Triangle** and the **Responsibility Triangle**. Understanding these relational dynamics is key to creating boundaries that empower rather than create conflict.

Take time to learn how each triangle works. Healthy boundaries should keep you grounded in the Responsibility Triangle, where individuals take ownership of their feelings and actions, rather than falling into the roles of victim, rescuer, or persecutor.

Values Sort

Also included in your Boundaries Deck is a **Values Sort** tool. While many people have a general sense of what they value, few have taken the time to clearly define their **core values**—which can cause confusion when setting or defending boundaries.

Here’s how to do a values sort:

1. Sort Your Values

Divide the cards into two piles:

- One that reflects your values
- One that does not feel representative of your core values

2. Narrow It Down

Discard the less-representative pile. With your remaining cards, sort them into **no more than five groups**, each representing a different theme.

3. Identify Your Core Values

From each group, choose one card that best represents the entire set. Each selected value stands for all the values in its group, giving it greater depth and broader meaning. These core values will serve as anchors for your boundaries and guiding principles in life.



Final Thoughts

Boundaries are a deceptively simple concept. While the idea is easy to understand, creating boundaries that are both respectful and effective can be challenging.

This deck is just the beginning. We encourage you to dive deeper into our boundary classes and resources for further growth and practice.

Drama Triangle



In the drama triangle, nobody takes responsibility. Rather they stay trapped in a game of musical drama chairs assigning blame, being helpless victims, or becoming rescuers only to change roles as the other players twist the story to avoid responsibility.

When in the drama triangle everyone avoids personal responsibility. The only way to get out or stay out of the drama triangle is to act from a place of responsibility and possibility willing to see and address challenges without casting blame. Since maintaining healthy boundaries and appropriate consequences are about responsibility, it is helpful to know both. There are three ways to fall into the whirlpool of the drama triangle. The first is being stuck (a victim), the second is the perpetrator or bully, and the third is the rescuer.



The Bully

Or persecutor, assigns blame to others by pointing out others' faults and shifting their shortcomings onto others.

Key Challenge: The persecutor or bully shifts responsibility to others in an attempt to rid themselves of any blame for their own role in the situation at hand. They are masters of “point, score, win” assigning blame and pointing fingers. They twist and turn responsibility onto someone else, throw out accusations, and blame people or situations rather than take responsibility for their actions.

Moving out of the drama triangle: Rather than looking for others to blame, stepping out of the drama triangle requires the ability to challenge assumptions without casting blame and taking responsibility to find and address the challenge at hand.



The Victim

Feels stuck without options. They claim whatever goes awry is not their fault and want a rescuer or someone else to take responsibility.

Key Challenge: When a person is stuck in a victim mode, they can no longer see options or recognize their own discarded responsibility. A victim is how a person responds to their situation. This is not about being caught in misfortune. Instead, a victim is when one chooses, through thought and actions, to remain in a helpless state of stuck waiting for someone else to come to their rescue.

Moving out of the drama triangle: Rather than remaining endlessly on hold, moving out of being stuck, or a victim, requires learning to see endless options. A creator does not stall out in perceived failure, rather they see failure as an elimination of one potential solution amongst many possibilities.



The Rescuer

Focuses all his or her attention on the needs of others, solving their problems for them.

Key Challenge: The rescuer takes on others' responsibilities without being responsible for themselves. When rescuers “help” others, they risk causing greater problems. Imagine stepping up to the plate to bat and being pushed aside by a rescuer who believes they can bat better than you. Your batting confidence drops and you feel humiliated rather than rescued. The other team then gets mad causing chaos to erupt.

Moving out of the drama triangle: Rescuers need to become guides or coaches rather than try to fix what is not theirs to fix.

Responsibility Triangle



Stepping out of the drama triangle requires openness to possibility, and seeing challenges as solvable while using wisdom as a guide. It is about taking responsibility for thoughts and behaviors in healthy and appropriate ways.



The Creator

The creator is open to possibility and sees challenges as solvable. This is the antithesis of the victim who perceives challenges as being unbeatable.

Boundary Setting

The creator takes responsibility by being open to what works and being willing to try a new course of action when other attempts are not effective. The creator is resilience in action. They are open to alternative solutions based on a variety of perspectives.

In setting boundaries, victims (people who feel stuck) have little tolerance for alternative solutions. Fears, lack of safety, and failed attempts to set limits beg for certainty, for clear cut limits without wiggle room. A creator embraces fear, lack of safety, and other challenges as factors that need to be addressed. They take these elements and integrate them into their boundaries. When boundaries fail, the creator sees the failure as a measure that did not work and is willing to explore different options.



The Coach

Is a guide, one who advises rather than acts for another. They are unlike a rescuer, who will self-deplete or even self-destruct doing for others what they need to do for themselves.

Boundary Setting

Athletic coaches do not practice, run, workout, or perform for their players. The coach may assist with skill building tips, mentor, or share their wisdom gained from experience. Rather than the need to prove their worth, they assist others in thoughtfully revealing their own strengths and abilities to become people who are living to their full potential.

In boundary setting, a person acting from the role of coach is not controlling the behaviors of another, they are guiding another into choosing behaviors that are responsible and respectful.



The Challenger

Is willing to explore the factors or nuts and bolts of what did not work without assigning blame or pointing fingers. This is unlike the bully who avoids accountability by placing it elsewhere.

Boundary Setting

The challenger approaches problems as conundrums to be solved. There is no need to find fault or assign blame, only the need is to examine what is involved, and what needs to be addressed to improve the situation. This requires curiosity and understanding. It is an opening of options rather than a pinpointing of blame.

A challenger approaches boundary setting with a discussion of desires, thoughts, concerns, responsibilities and opportunity costs. The goal is to create a boundary that respects its need as well as the impact it will have. It is designed to serve its purpose without imposing shame. Challengers expect there will be adjustments made and consequences defined to ensure the boundaries can be effective, respected and maintained.

Animal Defense Deck



How to Use This Deck

Each animal in the Animal Defense Deck represents a specific defensive strategy, drawing from both natural animal behaviors and their symbolic human equivalents—such as “putting up a stink” or “playing dead.” Each animals defense mechanisms are defined on the following page to help identify and understand these defense patterns.

To begin, each person selects the two animals that best represent their own go-to defense mechanisms. Then, they choose two animals that they believe reflect the typical defenses of their partner, colleague, or family member.

Start with self-reflection, exploring how your own selected defense behaviors show up during moments of stress or conflict. Then, shift into a relational exploration, considering how your defense patterns may interact with those of the other person. How might they escalate or trigger one another? What impact do they have on communication, emotional safety, and resolution?

By bringing awareness to these instinctive reactions, individuals and pairs can begin to shift from automatic conflict responses toward more mindful, adaptive ways of relating. This process builds empathy, insight, and greater emotional resilience—making it easier to de-escalate tension and foster connection.

Maladaptive Self-Defense Responses

Shove It!	Package It	Avoid It	Detach It	Internalize It!
Push threat at another, persecute the source.	Bundle, justify & set threat aside.	Evade or withdraw from the threat.	Escape from the reality of threat.	Take threat in as part of self.
Deny, project & passively/ aggressively respond	Intellectualize, rationalize & compartmentalization	Dodge and/ or emotionally neutralize the threat	Transform or flee from reality of threat	Repress, project & passively/ aggressively respond

Adaptive/Healthy Threat Responses

Embrace It (or own it)	Explore It	Guide It	Transforms It	Release It
Being able to hold and tolerate emotional responses while remaining responsible.	Being open to other perspectives, and possibilities in grasping the threat	Being able to see beyond the threat to address its source in a healing manner	Being able to creatively change the threat into opportunity	Being able to assess and appropriately let go of the threat

Animal Defense Deck

- Porcupine**
"Quills" can be released and can puncture the skin of a predator. Once stuck in the skin the "quills" are difficult to remove.
- Opossum**
Retreat. Feign death. Growl, hiss, and bare their teeth.
- Human**
As humans we can deny, intellectualize, displace, and project our thoughts and feelings. We can rationalize and justify our behaviors. We can hide behind humor or act out.

Cheetah

Flee with their speed and have rapid acceleration. Avoiding confrontation. Spots serve as camouflage.



Iguana
Sharp claws and teeth. Fast runners, swimmers, and climbers (flee). Ability to blend into their environment (camouflage). Able to "drop their tail" and regrow a new tail.

Owl

Large wings enable them to fly almost silently. Keen eyesight. Colored feathers and an ability to pull their feathers close to their body help camouflage. Long, sharp claws and talons

Starfish

Thick, tough skin that is sometimes “spiny”. Produces and projects “slime” (chemical defense) that protects itself from predators. Camouflage.

Mountain Goat

Excellent climbers. Their ability to climb higher on steep terrain is their primary way to avoid predators (Flee). Pointed horns. A thick white coat keeps them warm and camouflage.

Horse
Horses, if confronted with a threatening situation, run or bolt. If running away from a threat isn’t an option, horses can protect themselves by biting, striking, rearing up, bucking, or kicking. A horse’s kick is powerful enough to kill most of the threats they face.

Peacock

Fluffing out their large tail feathers to look larger and eyespots to scare predators. Sharp spurs on their feet to kick. Females use brown feathers to camouflage. Male peacock will spread its tail feathers.

Blue Poison Dart Frog

Brightly colored skin warns predators that it is unfit to eat. Chemical defense that paralyzes/ kills predators.

Crocodile

Are armor-plated (bony plates inside skin that make it very hard to penetrate). Tail whipping. Exceptional hearing. Large. Biting with powerful jaws. Death roll.

Animal Defense Deck



Zebra

Kicking and biting. When they're grouped together their combined stripes make it hard for predators to see them (camouflage). Speed, powerful legs and stay in big groups. Long stamina to outrun predators. Muscular legs to have lethal kicks. Biting and pushing.

Boa Constrictor

Boa's ambush their prey, strike with force and constrict their captive. For defense their skin colors act as camouflage and they can release a musk smell. Their only offense weapon is muscular strength.

Bears

Bears possess physical size and claws. They also have territories to protect limited resources and advertise male presence/ dominance. They woof, yawn, salivate, growl, snap their jaws and ears go back when they react defensively. Sometimes they make a false charge. Young bears will climb trees.

Puffer Fish

Will "puff up" to make itself look less appetizing to predators. Also, their bodies produce a neurotoxin which can cause predators to experience seizures, paralysis, or even death if eaten.

Wolf

Rely on their speed and quickness to escape a threat. Large sharp teeth and claws. Strong jaws. Run fast. Strength in numbers, stay in a pack and fight together. Consciously pursue weak or vulnerable prey giving a distinct advantage before the fight even starts.

Eagles

Eagles have keen eyesight, speed, strength, and powerful clamping talons that can grip and carry prey. They also make loud vocalizations to protect their territory.

Rattle Snake

Rattle snakes use camouflage and concealment to avoid detection. It can coil up and raise their head to appear larger. They can hiss and rattle to intimidate. They can also bite and deliver venom.

Weasel

Crafty hunters who will attack animals larger than itself. Will "dance" prior to a kill in order to intimate its prey. Fur changes colors with different seasons (camouflage). Weasel's can kill more than they can eat and will store what's left to eat later. They also release an offensive smelling odor to keep away prey and mark territory.

Skunk

Skunks stamp their front feet, lift their tail and growl. Some do a handstand before they spray a foul smelly fluid (chemical defense) up to 12 ft, aiming towards the eyes so they can escape.

Chameleon

Chameleons can change their skin colors and patterns to blend into their surroundings. They can also regenerate limbs, nerves and damaged skin. If threatened, they'll puff up their body and can use feet to strike and jaws to bite.

Spider

Webs created by spiders are typically sticky and difficult to see making them good traps for prey. After caught, the spider can numb and wrap its prey. If a spider is grabbed by a predator it will self-amputate a leg to detach. The colors of a spider act as camouflage to keep blended into its environment.

Turtle

Hard shells provide camouflage as well as a protective place to hide. Sharp claws allow them to burrow into the ground. Some turtles can bite. A large snapper can bite and damage, even break, the leg of a horse.

Crisis Trauma Deck

For those who have lived through life-altering experiences—such as chronic illness, disability, abuse, catastrophic loss, betrayal, or other deeply personal challenges—there is often a profound need to make sense of what has happened. Individuals seek meaning, healing, and a way to reconnect with life, community, and self. Yet, these experiences can leave people without words, lost in the emotional and psychological impact of events that have shaken the very foundation of their world.

Why This Deck Matters

Healing begins when we are able to explore what has happened in a way that feels safe, grounded, and personal. These cards, featuring images of natural disasters, act as powerful metaphors for the internal and external destruction caused by trauma. Just as natural disasters dismantle landscapes, life-altering events can dismantle our inner world, our identity, and our assumptions about life.

By connecting personal experience to symbolic imagery, individuals can begin to give form and structure to what was once chaotic. As understanding deepens, so does the ability to be seen, heard, and supported in a more authentic and respectful way.

How to Use This Deck

Select an image that represents a trauma, tragedy, or pivotal event that changed how you understand and experience life. These are events that shake beliefs and assumptions once held to be true. Reflect on the thoughts, feelings, or memories that come up when viewing the image. Use the image as a guide to mapping your own trauma experience. Write down any words, images, or associations that surface. This can serve as a journaling exercise or the starting point for therapeutic dialogue.



Healing from trauma is not a single moment—it's a journey. Revisit the images over time to observe how your understanding evolves. Track shifts in perception, language, or emotional response as a way to witness your own progress.

Weathering Relationship Deck



Relationships, much like the weather, are in constant flux. Some days feel sunny and warm, others are cloudy, foggy, or unpredictable—and sometimes, we find ourselves in the middle of a storm we never saw coming. Just as we rely on weather forecasts to guide our daily plans, we can use weather imagery as a creative tool to reflect on the emotional climate of our relationships.

Use the images in this deck to explore the current "weather" of your relationship. Is the atmosphere pleasant and healthy, or has a particular pattern—whether tension, distance, or uncertainty—settled in for too long? Consider whether this condition is fleeting or persistent. How does it compare to the climate you want in your relationship?

What needs to shift in order to move from the current condition to something more desirable? Let this process guide your insights, your conversations, and your next steps toward healthier connection.

Final Thoughts

Like real weather, relationships go through **seasons and shifts**. Storms will come, but they **don't have to last forever**. The key is to **understand, adapt, and prepare**.

Remember:
"There's no bad weather, only bad clothes." By acknowledging your current state and defining your **desired changes**, you can take **meaningful steps** toward a **healthier, more fulfilling relationship**.

Take the weathering your relationship quiz online.



Rivers Stress Deck



How to Use This Deck

As you view each river image, consider both the intensity (the level of emotional energy or anxiety it evokes) and the desirability (how appealing or comfortable you would feel in that scene). For example, a still bayou may at first appear calm and relaxing—until you notice an alligator resting nearby. That one detail could shift your emotional response entirely, depending on your experience and perception.

Here's a simple way to begin:

- Step 1: Select an image that represents your current state of stress. Reflect on the words, thoughts, or feelings that arise as you look at the image.
- Step 2: Choose another image that reflects your desired state—where you would ideally like your stress level to be. Again, note the words that come to mind.
- Step 3: Compare the two. What needs to shift to move from one state to the other? What resources or strategies might support that shift?

By incorporating river imagery into your stress exploration, you engage both mind and body in understanding how stress flows through your life—and how to navigate it with greater awareness.

OTT-R Barometer

Over The Top - Rivers stress assessment

Use these images to assess and discuss the stress in your life and in your relationships. Use them to encourage mutual understanding and explore the actions required to reduce stress and build necessary supports.

