

Holding Paradox

Many important experiences do not fit into a single clear category. A relationship may be loving and harmful. A tradition may be formative and constricting. A change may be necessary and heartbreaking.

Paradox asks us to resist the pressure to flatten complexity. It allows more than one truth to remain present without forcing a premature resolution.

In therapy and spiritual direction

In therapy, holding paradox can help make sense of mixed feelings, attachment conflicts, grief, anger, and ambivalence. It allows the nervous system to soften around complexity rather than treating complexity as confusion.

In spiritual direction, paradox often appears as faith and doubt, longing and silence, belonging and departure, surrender and agency. These tensions are not always problems to solve. Sometimes they are places to listen.

What paradox can feel like

Holding paradox can feel uncomfortable at first. The mind wants clarity, a decision, or a single story. But the deeper self may need time to hold what is true from several angles.

This is not indecision. It is a form of maturity.

A simple practice

Choose one situation where you feel pulled toward either/or thinking.

Write two sentences beginning with:

"It is true that..."

Let both sentences stand without explaining one away. Then notice what happens in your body when both truths are allowed to exist.

Reflection questions

- What truth have I been trying to hold onto?
- What truth have I been pushing away?
- What becomes possible if both are allowed to be present?
- What would patience look like here?

A closing note

Paradox does not remove pain, but it can create room around it. It lets us live with complexity without abandoning honesty.

These materials are offered for reflection and support. They are not a substitute for psychotherapy, medical care, or crisis support.