

About this document

This handout contains all the slides from a webinar presented online on 26 May 2026 by Mendel Kaelen, as part of an ongoing free webinar series exploring music, musicality, consciousness, and the role of music within therapeutic contexts.

You can find the accompanying video-recording of the lecture (minus the Q&A) [here](#).

An accompanying E-book is shared with all participants of the webinar. If you did not receive this e-book, or would like to get in touch for other reasons, you can **contact us** [here](#).

More information about the course foundations of therapeutic music can be found here [here](#).

You can follow Mendel on

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If you find this work valuable

The most meaningful way to support my work is by sharing it with others.

These webinars, articles, videos, and educational materials are offered freely and are sustained largely through word of mouth and community sharing.

If something here resonated with you, please consider sharing it with friends, colleagues, professional networks, therapeutic communities, or online groups that may benefit from it. A simple share, repost, recommendation, or conversation can genuinely help this work reach the people who may find the most value in it.

Thank you.

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How to create therapeutic playlists

Online Webinar | 26 May 2026

Foundations of Therapeutic Music | Mendel Kaelen

Where are you right now?



share in the chat

What is your main profession?



share in the chat

reflection

What calls you to
learn more about
music?

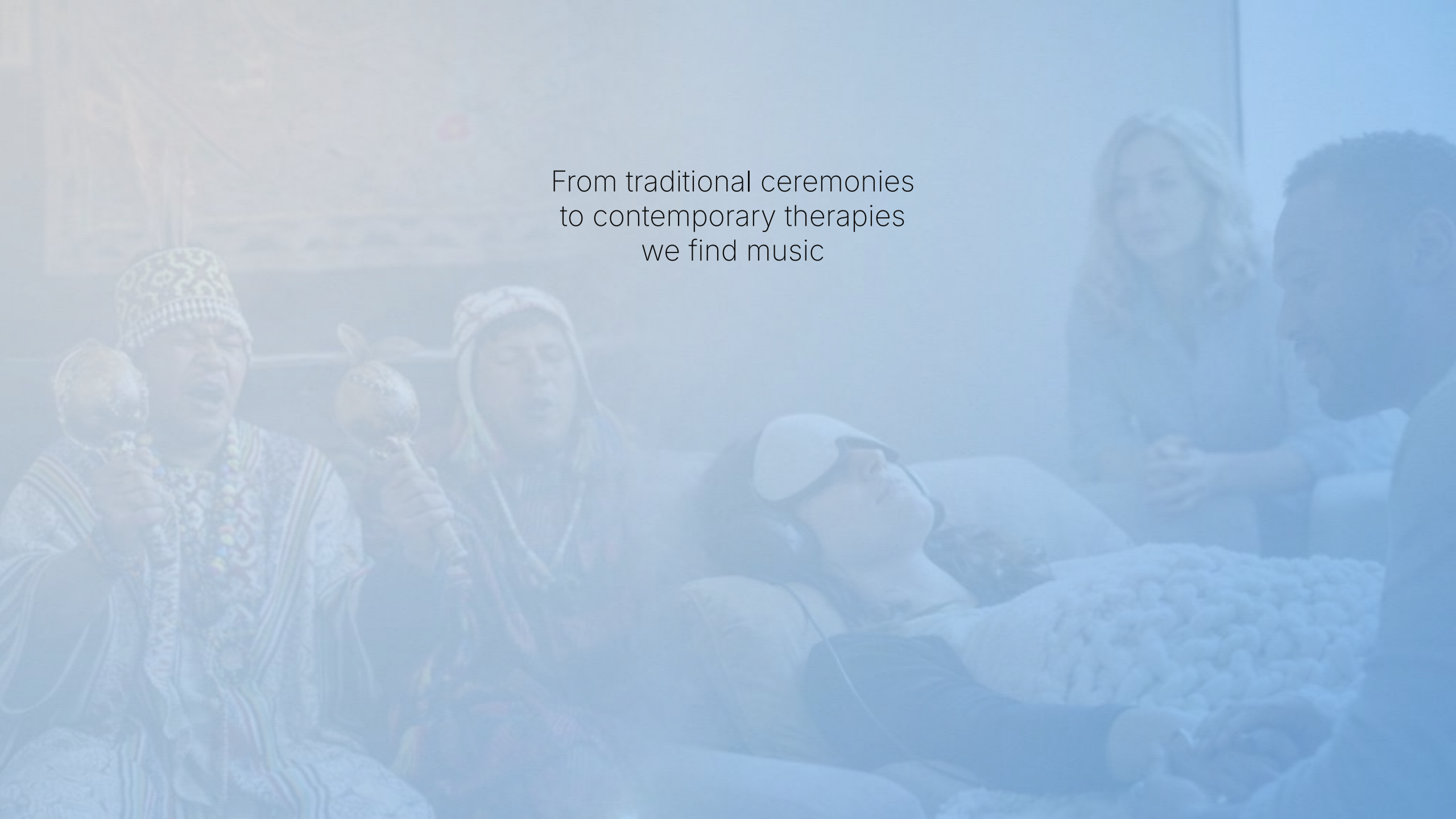
reflection

How has your
relationship with
music changed
during your lifetime?

reflection

What do you wish for
to happen to your
relationship with
music?

From traditional ceremonies
to contemporary therapies
we find music



What are best practices?



Non-stop Music

1 / 0



Majority of contemporary practices
(clinical trials, groups)

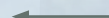
Mostly Music



1950s+ *Psychedelic* approaches

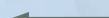
Mixed

0.5/0.5



Traditional ceremonies

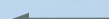
Mostly No Music



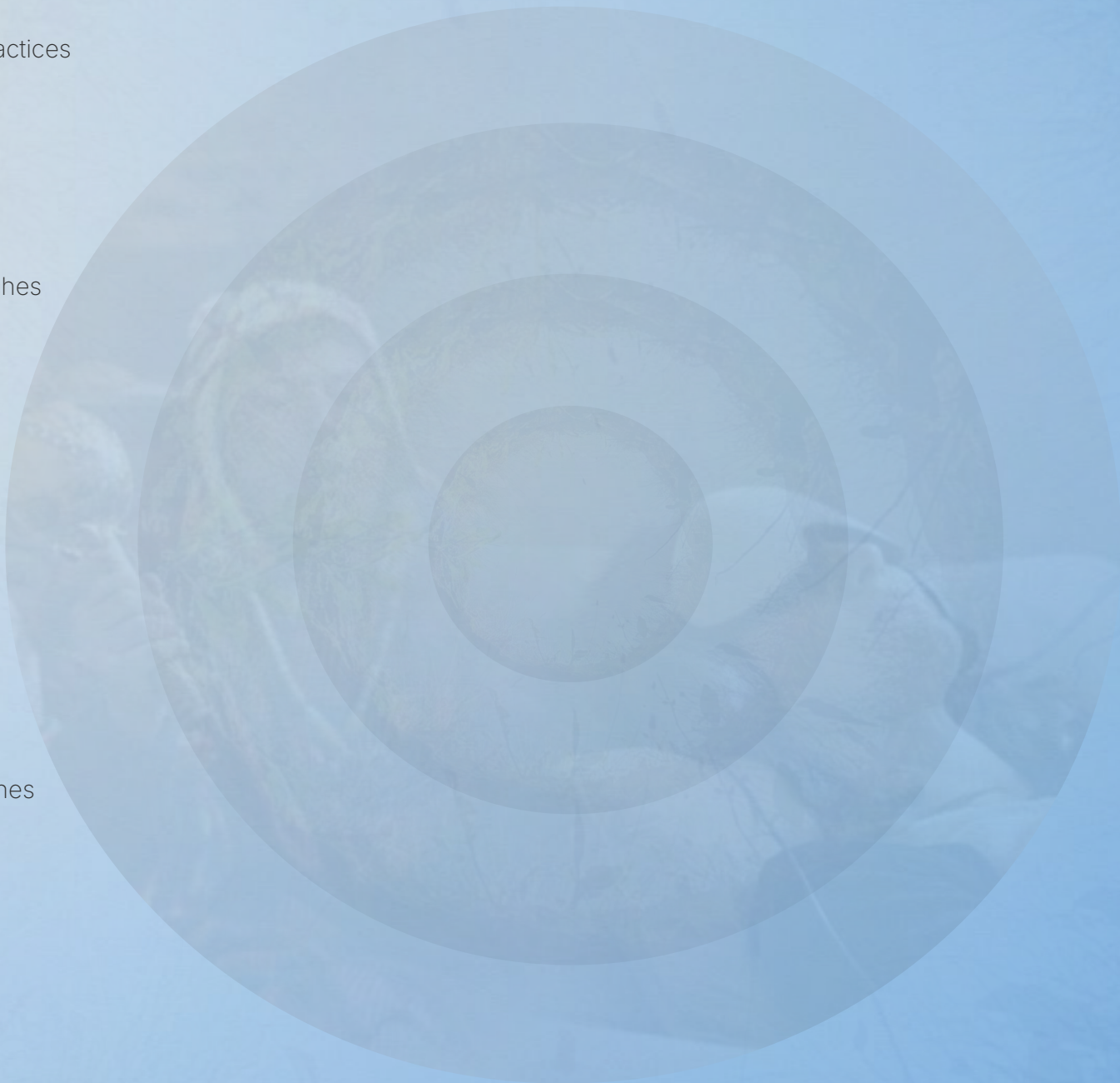
1950s+ *Psycholytic* approaches

No Music

0 / 1



Ex: Andrew Feldmár



Non-stop Music

1 / 0

← Majority of contemporary practices
(clinical trials, groups)

Mostly Music

← 1950s+ *Psychedelic* approaches

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0.5/0.5

← Traditional ceremonies

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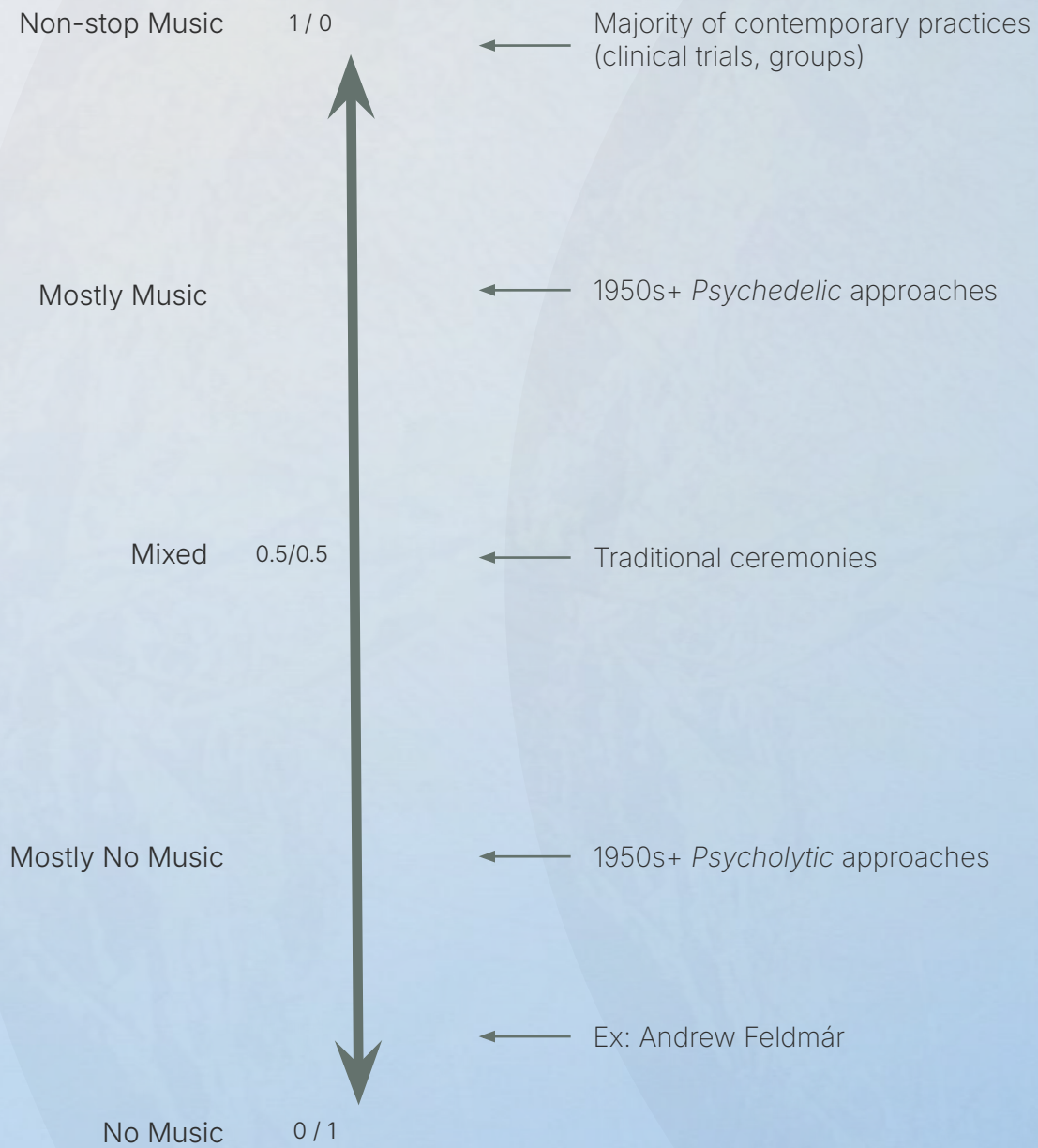
No Music

0 / 1

← Ex: Andrew Feldmár

Music-Centredness





reflection

Where on this scale
do you or would you
place yourself and
your practice?

Non-stop Music

1 / 0

← Majority of contemporary practices
(clinical trials, groups)

Mostly Music

← 1950s+ *Psychedelic* approaches

Mixed

0.5/0.5

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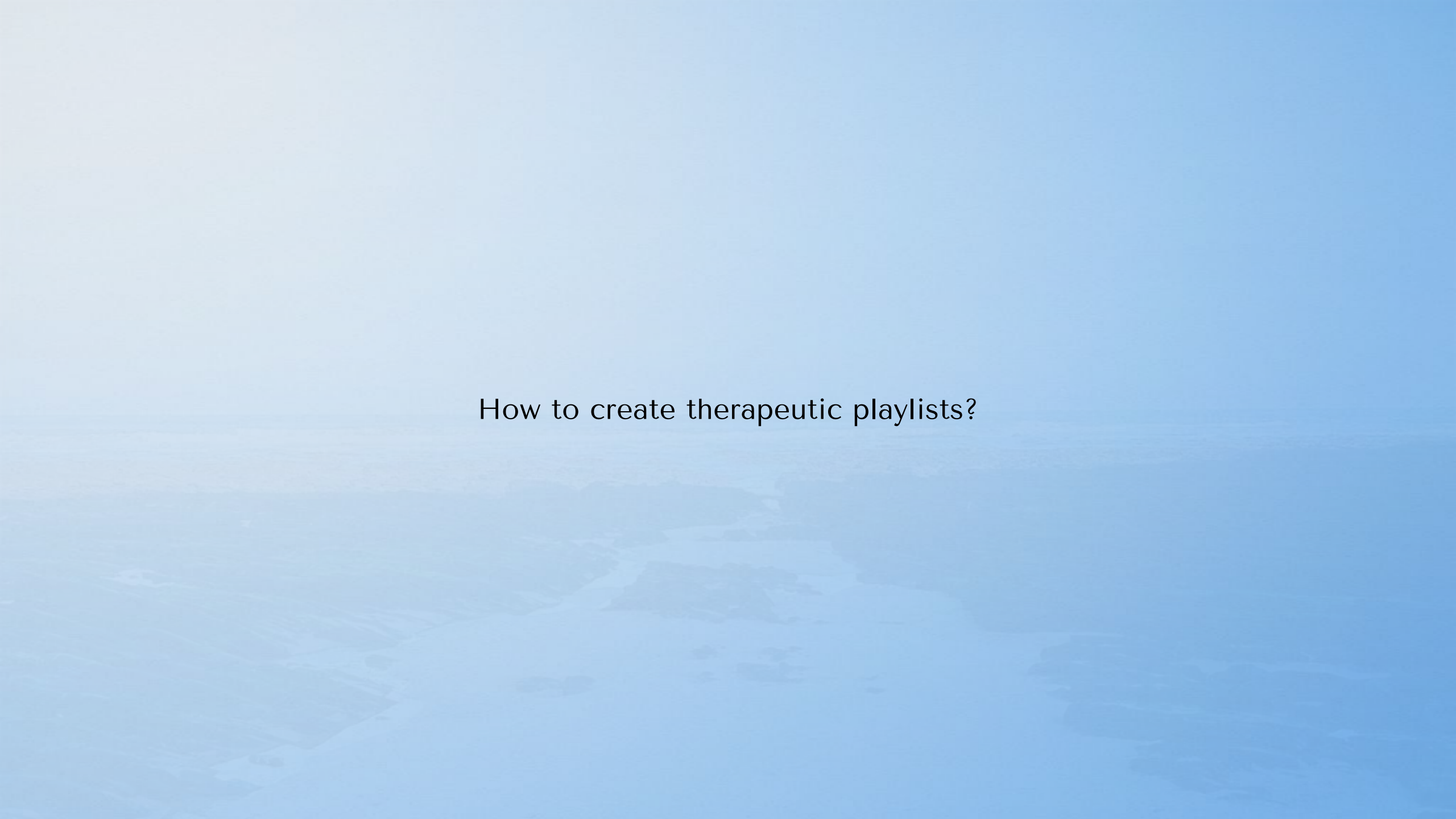
← Ex: Andrew Feldmár

reflection

Why?

reflection

What is your
practice philosophy?

The background of the slide is a blurred aerial photograph of a coastal area, showing a mix of land and water. A semi-transparent blue gradient is applied over the entire image, creating a calm, aquatic atmosphere. The text is centered in the middle of the frame.

How to create therapeutic playlists?

An aerial photograph of a coastal landscape. The top half of the image shows a clear, light blue sky. Below the sky is a body of water, likely a bay or a large lake, which is a deep blue color. The water is surrounded by green, hilly land. The hills are covered in dense vegetation, and there are some small, light-colored patches that could be fields or cleared areas. The overall scene is peaceful and scenic.

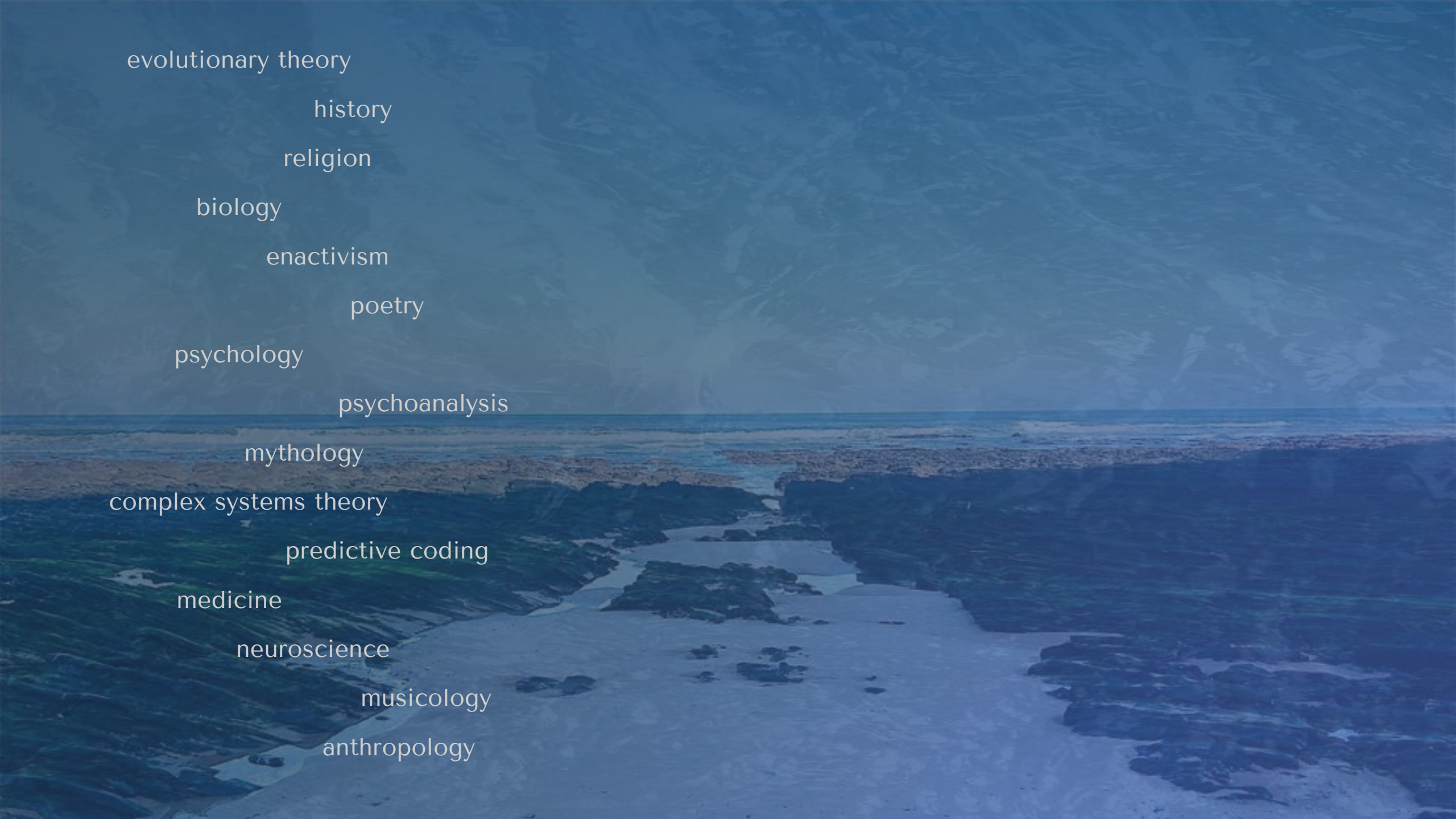
What makes a playlist therapeutic?

An aerial photograph of a coastal landscape. In the foreground, there is a large, light blue body of water, possibly a bay or a large pond, with several small, dark, rocky islands or peninsulas. The water is surrounded by green marshland and fields. In the background, there are rolling hills and a distant city skyline visible on the horizon. The sky is a clear, pale blue.

What makes music therapeutic?

An aerial photograph of a coastal landscape. In the foreground, a wide, light-colored river delta or estuary flows into the ocean. The surrounding land is covered in dense green vegetation, likely mangroves. In the background, a city with a grid-like street pattern is visible along the coast. The sky is a clear, pale blue.

We need a unified theory

An aerial photograph of a rugged coastline. The foreground shows dark, jagged rock formations meeting the sea. The ocean is a deep blue, with white foam from breaking waves visible further out. The sky is a lighter, hazy blue. The overall mood is serene and majestic.

evolutionary theory

history

religion

biology

enactivism

poetry

psychology

psychoanalysis

mythology

complex systems theory

predictive coding

medicine

neuroscience

musicology

anthropology



evolutionary theory

history

religion

biology

enactivism

poetry

psychology

psychoanalysis

mythology

complex systems theory

predictive coding

medicine

neuroscience

musicology

anthropology

Foundations of Therapeutic Music

Multidisciplinary integration

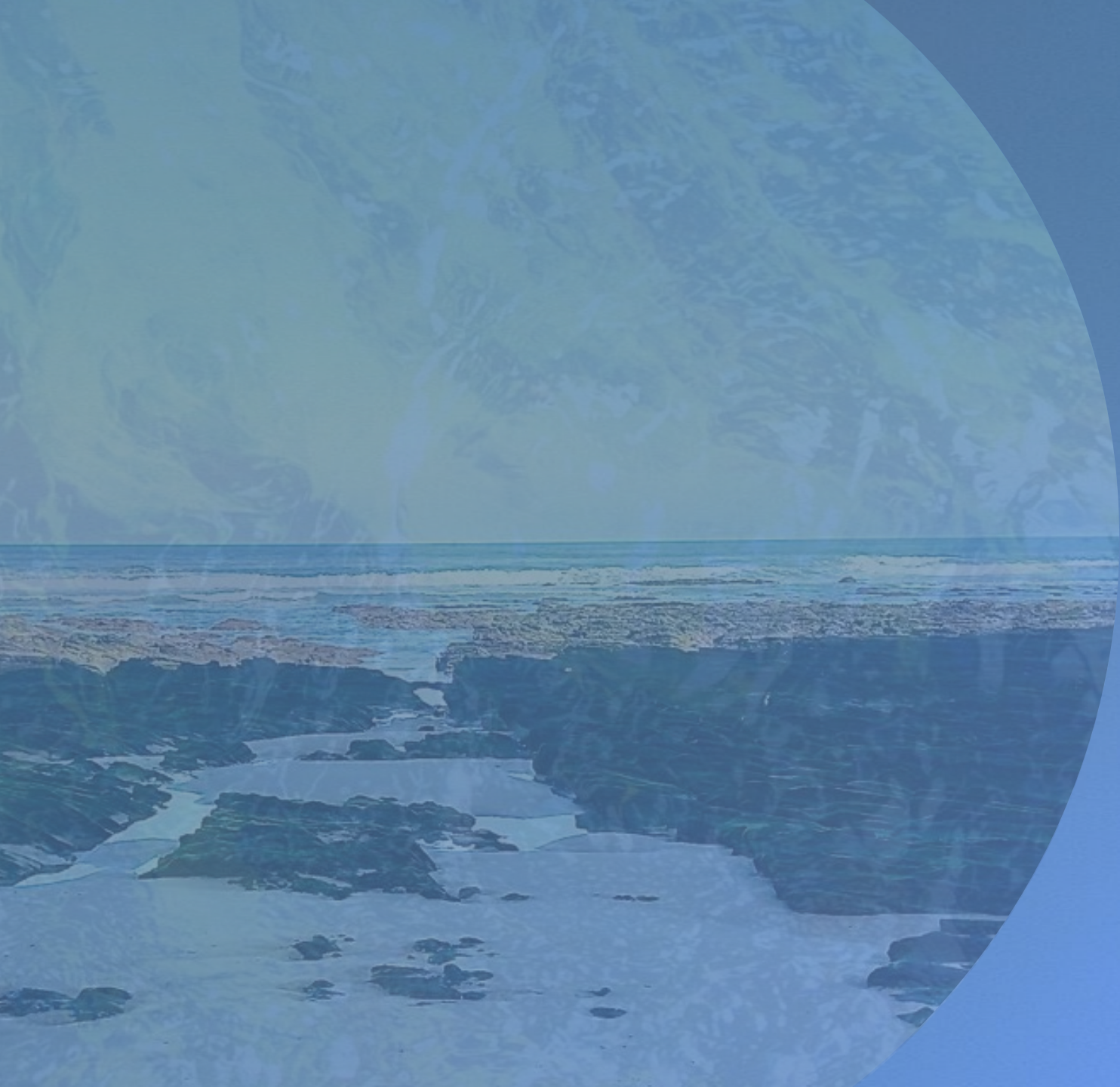
Understanding & embodying

Therapeutic musicality

Perceiving & expressing

Situational flexibility

Relating & responding



Foundations of Therapeutic Music

Origins of music

The musical self

Musical enactment

How music works

Ways of listening

Dimensions of music

Therapeutic music

Creating playlists

Creating climates

Foundations of Therapeutic Music

9-months online group training

2.5 hours every 2 weeks

Starting 19 september 2026

Very early bird tickets ending 31 may

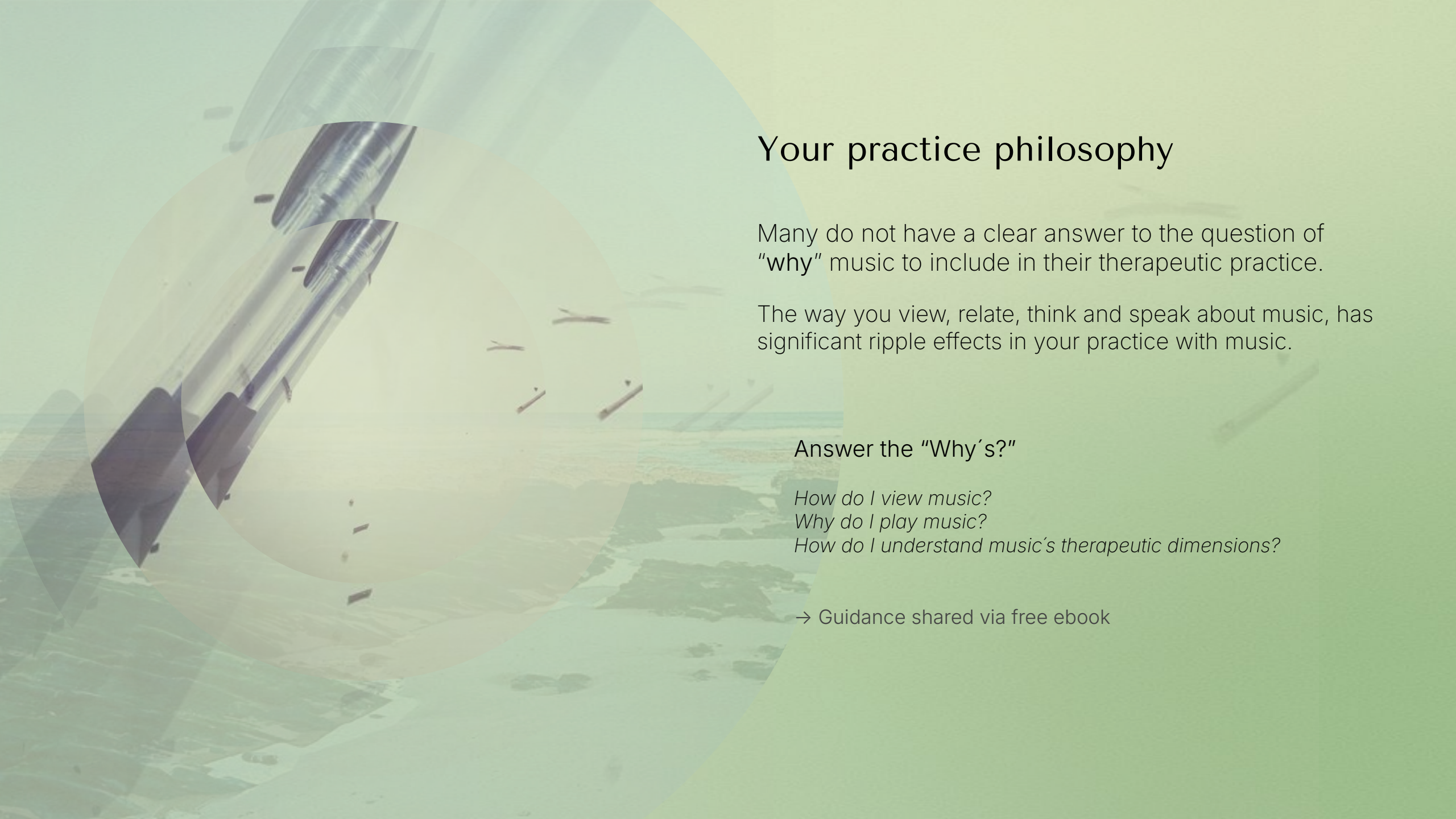


*Questions about the
course are welcome in
the Q&A too*



Curating music

1. Your practice philosophy
2. Knowing the music
3. Therapeutic musicality
4. Curating the *right* music



Your practice philosophy

Many do not have a clear answer to the question of "why" music to include in their therapeutic practice.

The way you view, relate, think and speak about music, has significant ripple effects in your practice with music.

Answer the "Why's?"

How do I view music?

Why do I play music?

How do I understand music's therapeutic dimensions?

→ Guidance shared via free ebook



Knowing the music

Many therapists end up using playlists made by others.

The degree to which you *know* the music played, directly influences the degree to which you *know* your client's experience and what experience you invite them into.

Develop listening practices

Deepen your perception

Develop a curation routine

Create a library of music that you know *intimately*

→ Guidance shared via free ebook



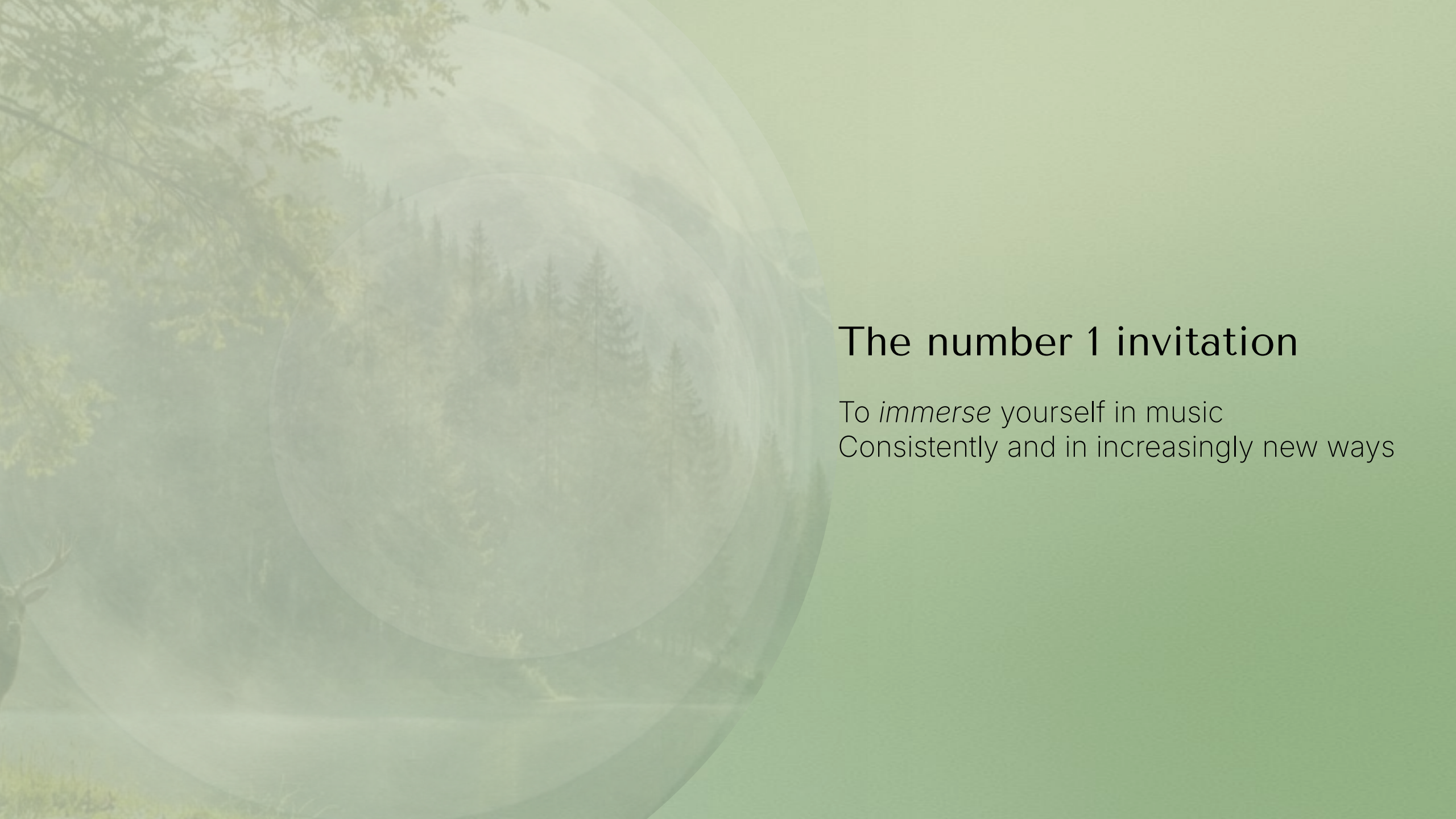
Therapeutic musicality as a *primary* foundation

The capacity to perceive and modify musical qualities in service of a therapeutic practice.

Does not concern the mastery of a musical instrument or learning of music theory. Neither does its development depend on these.

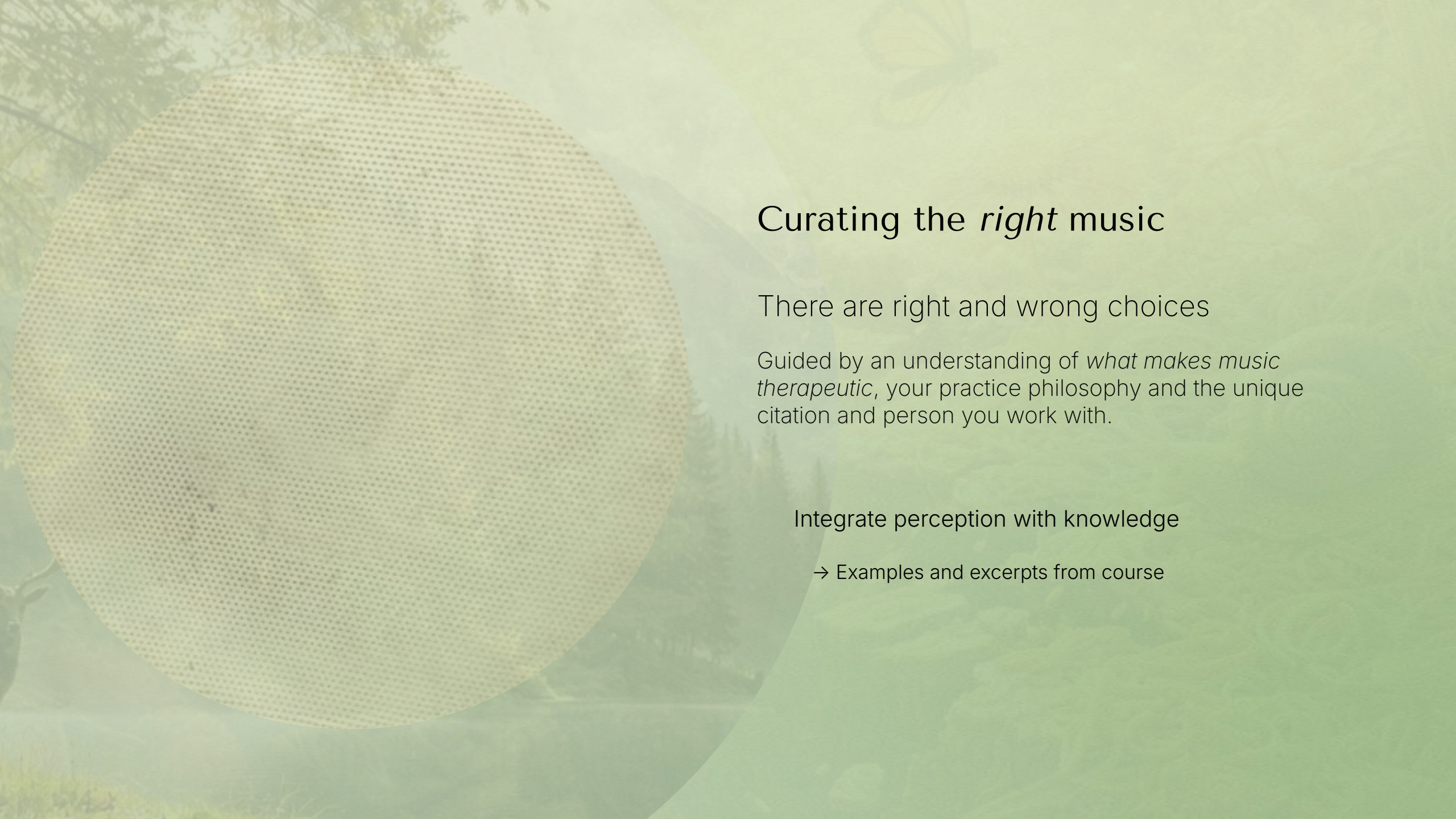
→ *Borrow* the ears of others

During the course we do this ongoingly and in a variety of ways

The background of the slide is a soft-focus photograph of a forest. In the lower-left corner, the head and antlers of a deer are visible. The rest of the image is a dense forest of evergreen trees, shrouded in a light mist or fog. Overlaid on the left side of the image is a large, semi-transparent circular graphic. This graphic consists of several concentric circles, with the innermost being a darker shade of green and the outer ones becoming progressively lighter, creating a ripple effect. The right side of the slide is a solid, light green color.

The number 1 invitation

To *immerse* yourself in music
Consistently and in increasingly new ways



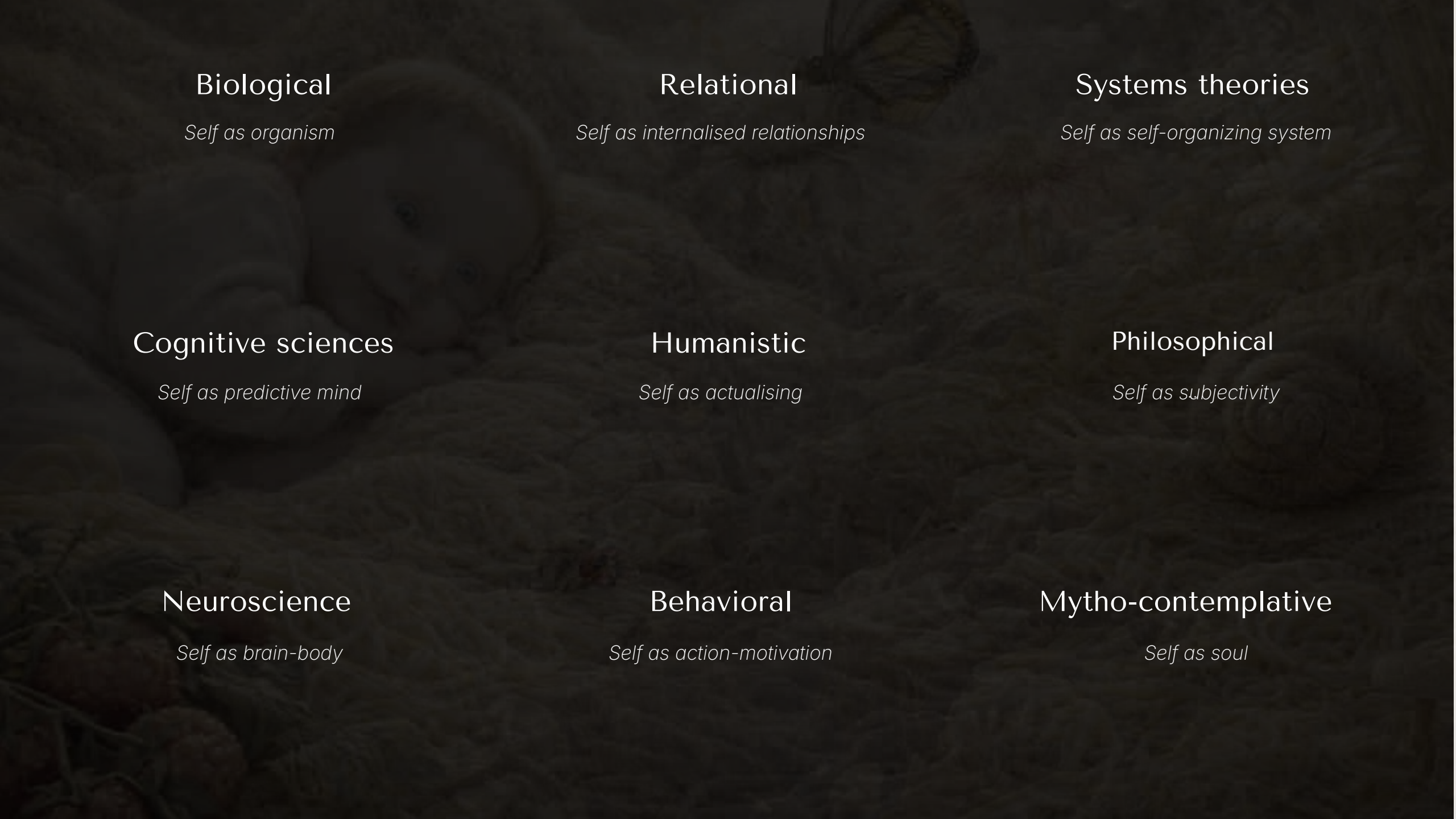
Curating the *right* music

There are right and wrong choices

Guided by an understanding of *what makes music therapeutic*, your practice philosophy and the unique citation and person you work with.

Integrate perception with knowledge

→ Examples and excerpts from course



Biological

Self as organism

Relational

Self as internalised relationships

Systems theories

Self as self-organizing system

Cognitive sciences

Self as predictive mind

Humanistic

Self as actualising

Philosophical

Self as subjectivity

Neuroscience

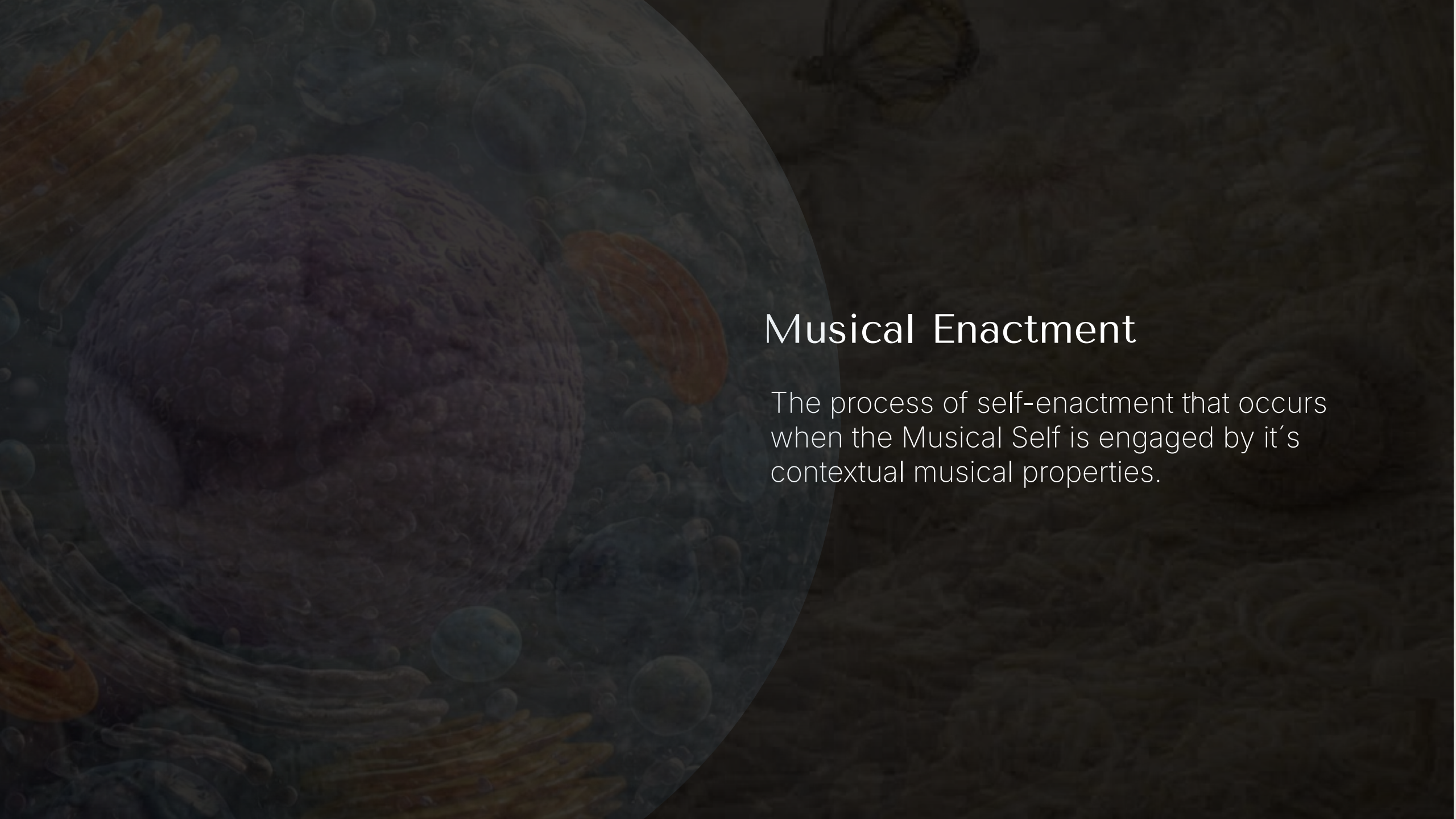
Self as brain-body

Behavioral

Self as action-motivation

Mytho-contemplative

Self as soul

The background is a dark, textured surface. On the left, a large, textured purple sphere is prominent. To its right and slightly above, there are several orange, brushstroke-like shapes. In the upper right corner, a small, dark butterfly is visible. The overall composition is abstract and artistic.

Musical Enactment

The process of self-enactment that occurs when the Musical Self is engaged by its contextual musical properties.



API

Accessing-Processing-Integrating

Key mechanisms of healing that inform the understanding
and use of music in therapeutic contexts

Accessing

Activation of enactments

Processing

Processing of enactments

Integrating

Evolution of enactments

API

Something previously inaccessible becomes accessible

Accessing

Activation of enactments

Processing

Processing of enactments

Integrating

Evolution of enactments

API

The accessed material is (re)processed

Accessing

Activation of enactments

Processing

Processing of enactments

Integrating

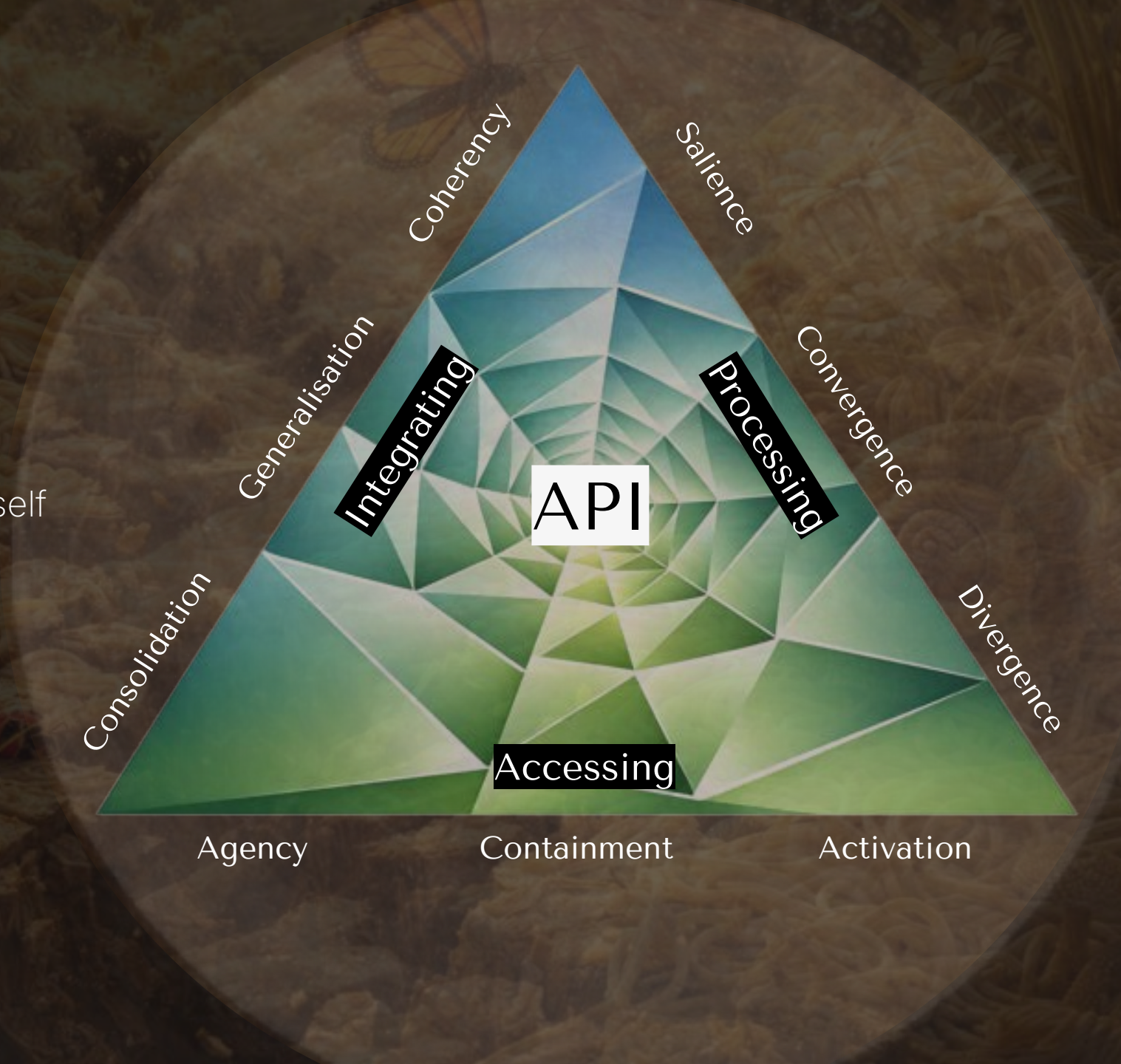
Evolution of enactments

API

Changes consolidate into new configurations

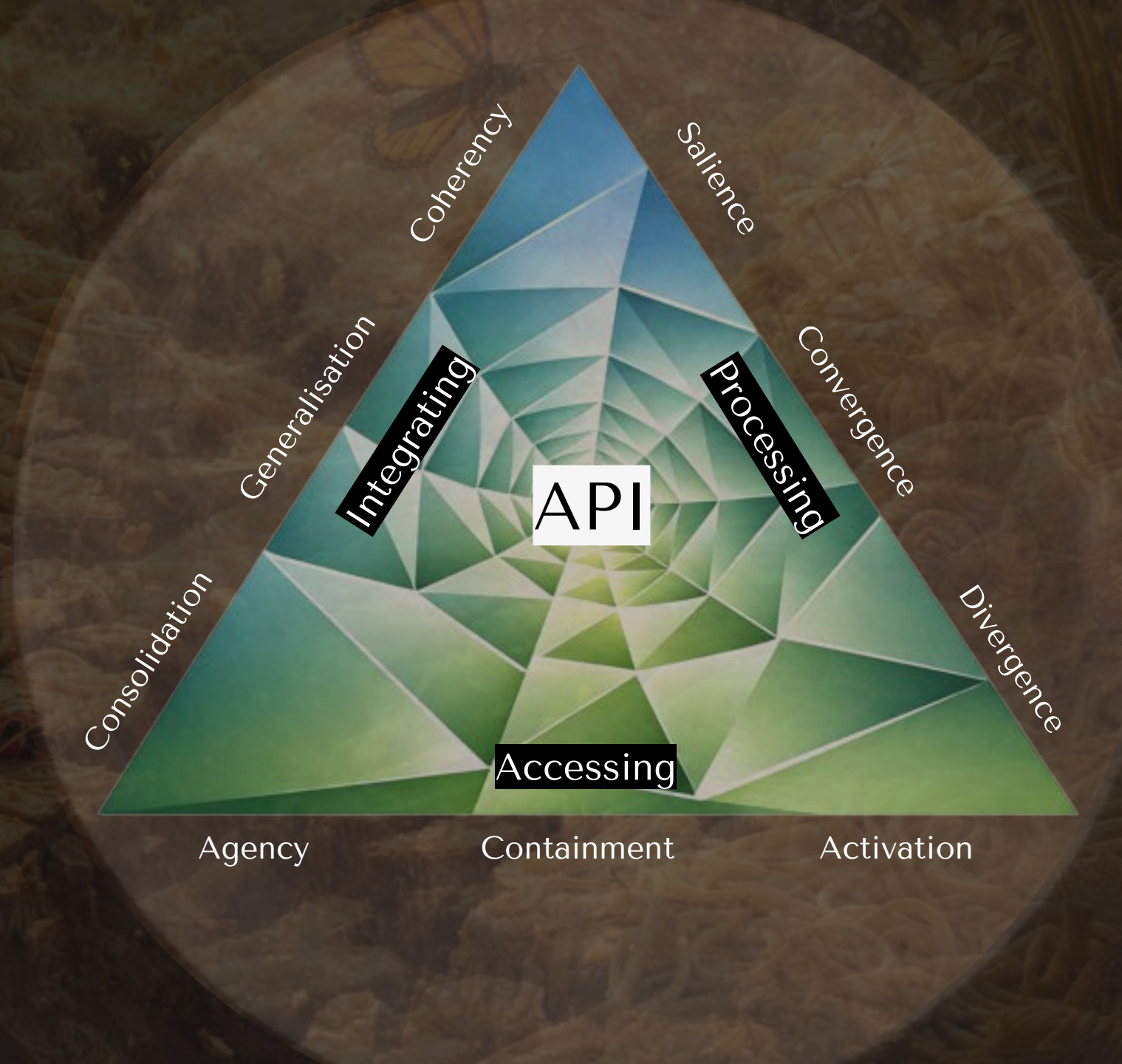
Conditions for change

Core mechanisms and prerequisite conditions for the re-configuration of the self



The *right* music

Provides optimised conditions for
Accessing-Processing-Integrating (API)



Situational flexibility

Therapeutic functions of music

Distinct influences that music can have on API-processes within musical enactment.

→ *variety of underlying variables taught in the course*



Soothing



Deepening



Resolving



Bridging



Holding

An aerial photograph of a coastal landscape. In the foreground, there are green, rolling hills or dunes. A sandy beach curves along the shoreline. The ocean is visible in the distance under a cloudy sky. A large, semi-transparent green circle is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing the title and list.

Designing playlists

1. Session Phases
2. Process vs content
3. Song relationships
4. Song transitions
5. Approaches to Flexibility

An aerial photograph of a lush green hill. A narrow, light-colored path winds its way up the slope from the bottom center towards the top. The hill is covered in dense grass and small plants. In the background, more rolling hills and clusters of trees are visible under a soft, hazy sky. The overall tone is peaceful and natural.

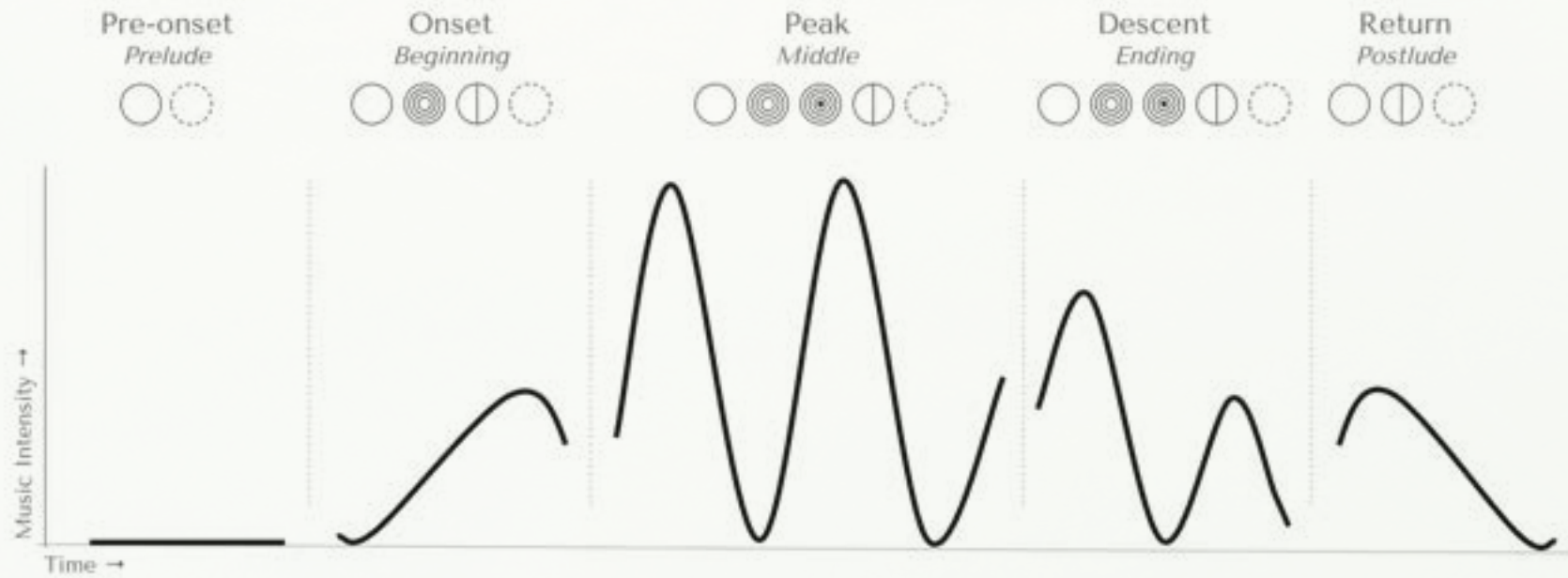
The many ways of structuring playlists

An aerial photograph of a lush green field with a winding path and a single tree on a hill. The image is faded and serves as a background for the text.

The many meanings of session phases

	Pre-onset <i>Prelude</i>	Onset <i>Beginning</i>	Peak <i>Middle</i>	Descent <i>Ending</i>	Return <i>Postlude</i>
Drug intensity	Before anything felt	When first noticed	When strongest	When decline starts	When (almost) gone
Ritual structure					
Self-Dynamics					
Processes					
Music Intensity					
Music Functions					

	Pre-onset <i>Prelude</i>	Onset <i>Beginning</i>	Peak <i>Middle</i>	Descent <i>Ending</i>	Return <i>Postlude</i>
Drug intensity	Before anything felt	When first noticed	When strongest	When decline starts	When (almost) gone
Ritual structure	Call Readiness	Initiation Departure	Challenge Transformation	Reconciliation Integration	Renewal Return
Self-Dynamics	Trust ↔ Mistrust	Agency ↔ Inhibition	Generativity ↔ Stagnation	Integration ↔ Fragmentation	Wholeness ↔ Despair
Processes	Meeting, Holding, Settling, Supporting, ...	Carrying, Departing, Crossing, Entering, ...	Opening, Resolving, Releasing, Expanding, ...	Converging, Decelerating, Resolving Merging, ..	Returning, Settling, Meeting, Leading, ...
Music Intensity	Low	Low-Medium	Low-Highest	Low-High	Low-Medium
Music Functions	1. Soothing 2. Deepening 3. Resolving 4. Bridging 5. Containing	1. Soothing 2. Deepening 3. Resolving 4. Bridging 5. Containing	1. Soothing 2. Deepening 3. Resolving 4. Bridging 5. Containing	1. Soothing 2. Deepening 3. Resolving 4. Bridging 5. Containing	1. Soothing 2. Deepening 3. Resolving 4. Bridging 5. Containing



→ See full course video for free (Creating Playlists (part I))

→ exercise shared in E-book



Is music personal or universal ?



Process vs Content

Innate and acquired organizing principles project meanings into the music that are both personal and statistically universal.



The practice:

Learn how to perceive and separate
process vs content within the subjective
experience of music

→ Example and exercise shared in E-book

Musical Enactment Scorecard Guidance For Elementary Processes & Qualities

Elementary Processes

Direction: Moving toward, Withdrawing, Arriving, Departing, Returning, Crossing over, _____

Boundaries: Entering, Exiting, Opening, Closing, Breaking through, Contact, _____

Expansion: Expanding, Contracting, Unfolding, Folding inward, _____

Containment: Holding, Carrying, Supporting, Releasing, _____

Continuity: Continuing, Sustaining, Repeating, Interrupting, _____

Temporal: Emerging, Growing, Accelerating, Decelerating, Settling, _____

Relational: Meeting, Joining, Merging, Separating, Leading, Following, _____

Resolution: Converging, Diverging, Resolving, Suspending, Deferring, _____

Elementary Qualities

Textures: Smooth, Flowing, Pulsed, Oscillating, Jagged, Drains, _____

Force: Gentle, Soft, Firm, Weighted, Forceful, Heavy, Explosive, _____

Temporal feel: Gradual, Abrupt, Sudden, Sustained, Fleeting, _____

Contours: Surging, Swelling, Cresting, Fading, Tapering, Diffusing, _____

Tension: Tense, Pressurized, Suspended, Resisting, Yielding, Relaxed, _____

Energetic: Intensifying, Softening, Rising, Falling, Dissolving, _____

Activation: Calm, Restful, Energized, Agitated, Frenzied, _____

Patterning: Continuous, Rhythmic, Fragmented, Repeating, Irregular, _____

Density: Sparse, Dense, Thick, Saturated, Crowded, _____

Coherence: Coherent, Unified, Integrated, Layered, Disjointed, Disintegrating, _____

Stability: Stable, Modulating, Unstable, Wavering, Chaotic, _____

Clarity: Clear, Diffuse, Transparent, Opaque, _____

Structure: Regular, Patterned, Complex, _____

Musical Enactment Scorecard Guidance For Personal Content

Relational figures

mother figures, father figures, sibling figures, child figures, friend figures, lover figures, ex-lover figures, caregiver figures, dependent figures, authority figures, teacher figures, guide figures, protector figures, betrayer figures, stranger figures, witness figures, rival figures, abandoned figures, idealized figures, threatening figures, _____

Self-states / parts

wounded self, defended self, child self, adolescent self, competent self, ashamed self, grieving self, sensual self, spiritual self, hidden self, ideal self, fractured self, observing self, collapsing self, resilient self, ecstatic self, _____

Attachment configurations

being held, being abandoned, longing for contact, fearing engulfment, seeking approval, resisting control, reunion, separation, rupture, repair, idealization, disappointment, dependence, autonomy struggle, ambivalent closeness, mutual recognition, asymmetry, submission, protection, betrayal, _____

Life themes

birth / beginning, growing up, leaving home, initiation, becoming oneself, failure, perseverance, sacrifice, grief, healing, reconciliation, forgiveness, longing, exile, return, transition, homecoming, death, rebirth, surrender, transcendence, meaning-search, survival, belonging, alienation, _____

Activity / situation worlds

travel, waiting, wandering, searching, falling, climbing, fighting, hiding, resting, dancing, embracing, praying, grieving, working, remembering, saying goodbye, awakening, crossing a threshold, witnessing an event, participating in ceremony, _____

Spatial / Environment

house, room, corridor, threshold, doorway, cave, forest, ocean, mountain, desert, city, ruins, temple, sky, void, garden, battlefield, river, bridge, underworld, horizon, _____

Archetypal / Mythic

mother archetype, father archetype, child archetype, orphan, seeker, warrior, lover, sovereign, healer, trickster, witness, guide, guardian, mourner, martyr, mystic, destroyer, reborn one, pilgrim, ancestor, _____

Atmospheres

sacred, eerie, nostalgic, intimate, catastrophic, redemptive, festive, mournful, innocent, decadent, apocalyptic, maternal, ancestral, pastoral, celestial, infernal, erotic, devotional, collective, solitary, _____

Memory / Autobiographical

childhood scenes, family homes, important relationships, places lived, significant losses, illness or recovery, rites of passage, sexual memories, trauma memories, spiritual experiences, _____

Song relationships

Do not see this as a mere "listing" of songs, but as the evoking of new worlds, whose harmony lays in your hands

- Perceive the emergence
 - Notice what emerges from the combination of songs
What is being conveyed in their interactions?
- Create coherency
 - Create an arc and consider what is recursive throughout
Is this sequence conveying a clear thread, from start to finish?
- Protect fluidity
 - Pay attention to song-transitions and ensure an evolving continuity
Can transitions become unnoticeable or be meaningfully paced?

Song transitions

Abrupt changes in music equals abrupt changes in consciousness

This can distract or disrupt processing, and will quickly be perceived as mechanical and “uncaring”.

Instead of the responsive, attuned, empathic climate we wish to create.



Choose your tools

Streaming platforms
Spotify mixing feature

Wavepaths

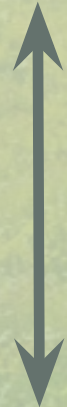
DJ tools

Traktor
Rekordbox

DAW

Audacity (Free)
Ableton
Qbase

basic



advanced

Timing, pacing and pausing

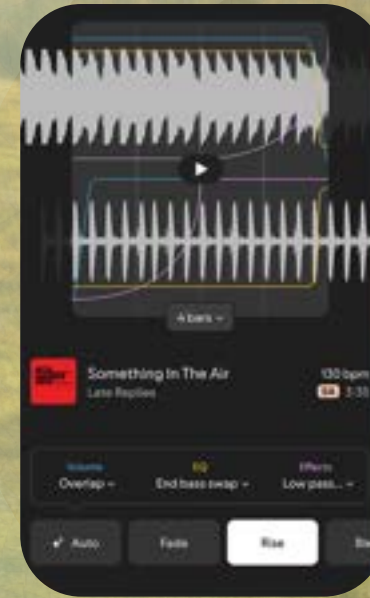
Volume levels and fades

EQing and filtering

Cross-fading, (re)mixing, key, bpm

Cut-ups, selections and exclusion

Live mixing, DJing



Approaches to flexibility

Single-playlist

Multi-playlist

Multi-Path

Path-by-Path

Song-by-Song

Live Mixing

Approaches to flexibility

Single-playlist

Multi-playlist

Multi-Path

Path-by-Path

Song-by-Song

Live Mixing

Approaches to flexibility

Single-playlist

Multi-playlist

Multi-Path

Path-by-Path

Song-by-Song

Live Mixing

Optionality for switching
paths during sessions

When

(adaptation options)

Resolution

Attention

(Patient : Music)

Duration

(Min. pre-selection)

Effort

(Preparing)

Knowing

(The music)

Organisation

(Shortlists / templates)

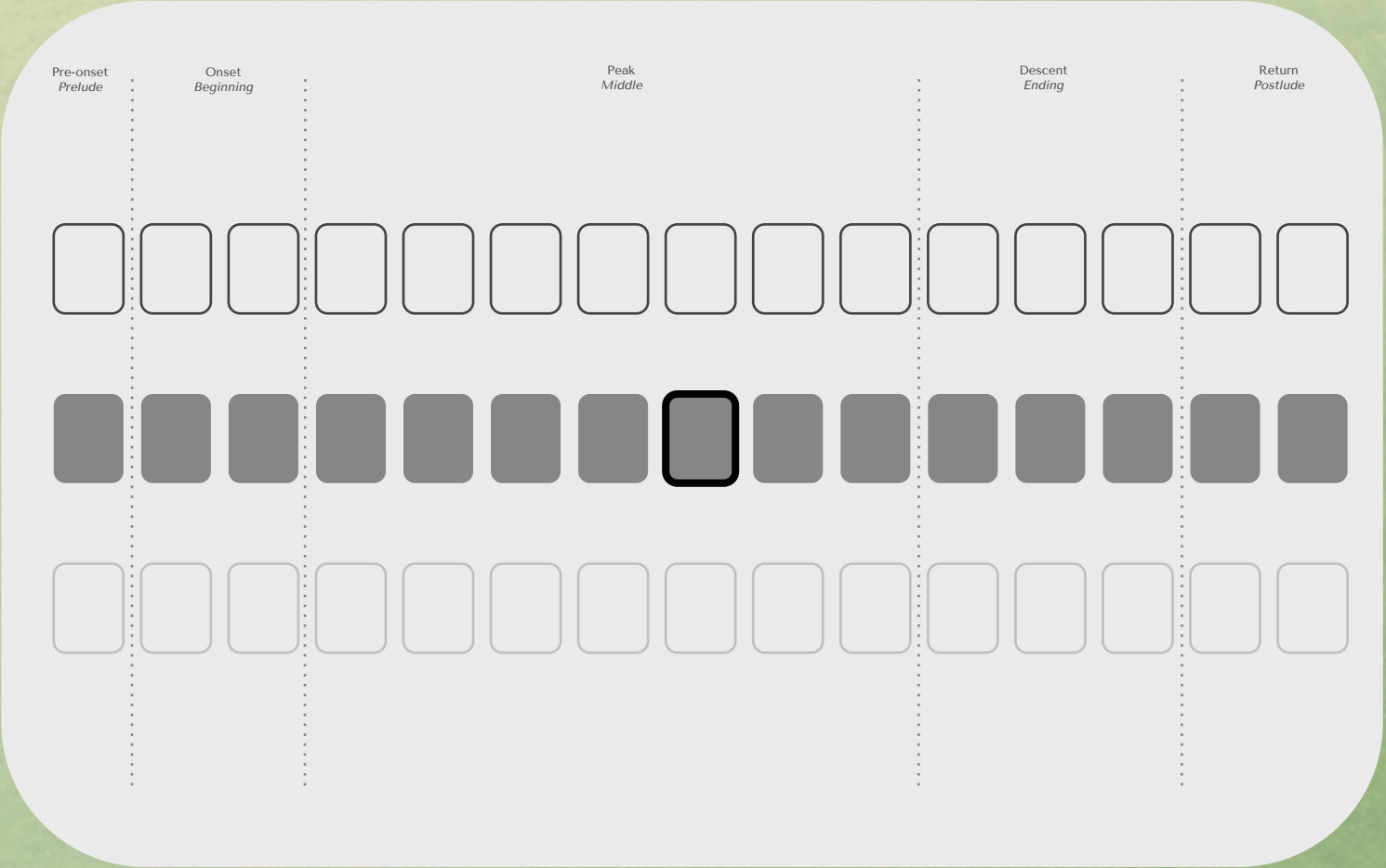
* Numbers and ratio's are based on the need
for 8 hours of music, for illustration purposes.

Approaches to flexibility

Single-playlist Multi-playlist Multi-Path Path-by-Path Song-by-Song Live Mixing

Optionality for switching paths during sessions

When <i>(adaptation options)</i>	When intuited
Resolution	20-40 min
Attention <i>(Patient : Music)</i>	90 : 10
Duration <i>(Min. pre-selection)</i>	24 hours
Effort <i>(Preparing)</i>	Highest
Knowing <i>(The music)</i>	High
Organisation <i>(Shortlists / templates)</i>	Function Intensity Session-use-case Musical language Phases Subjectivity



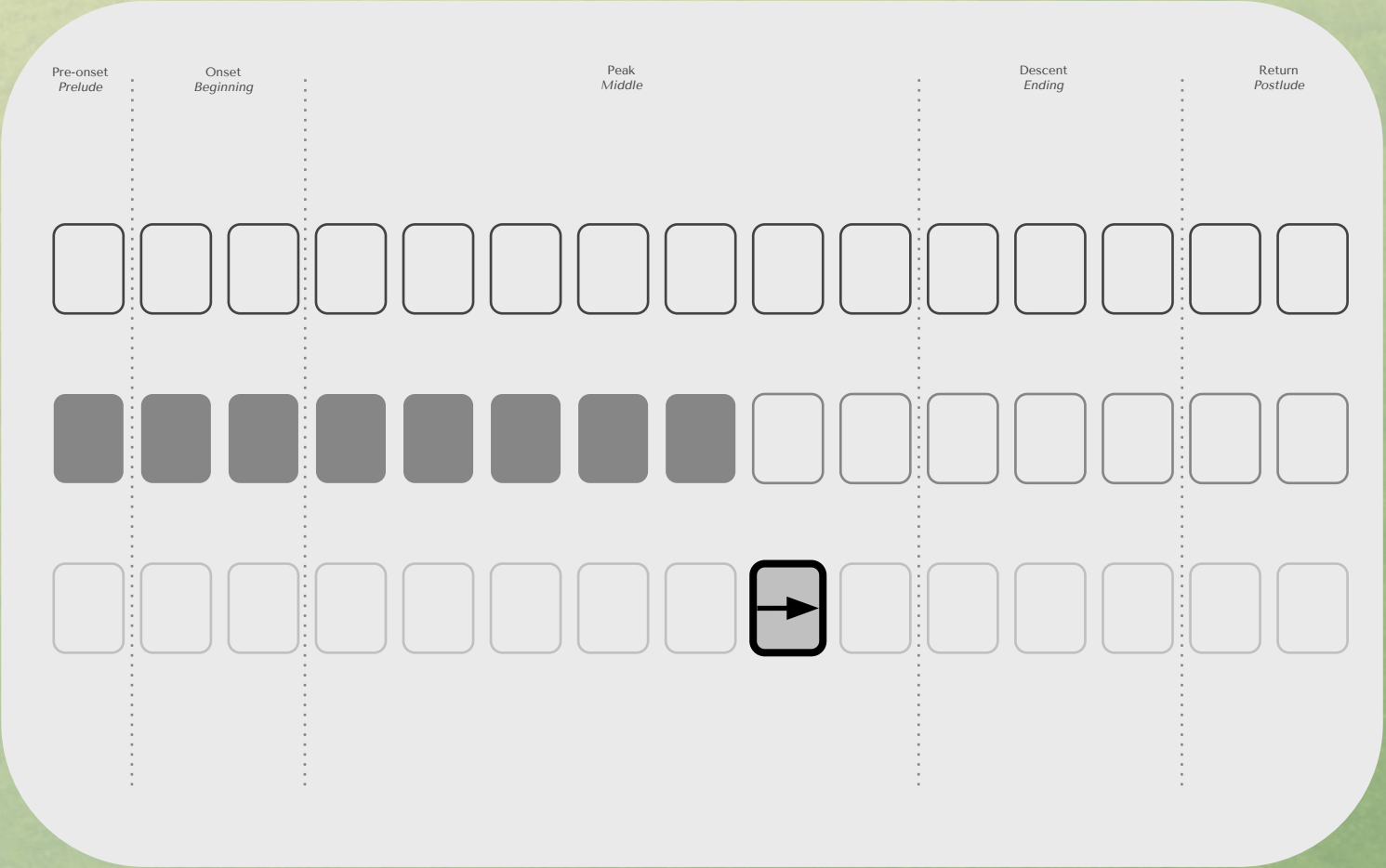
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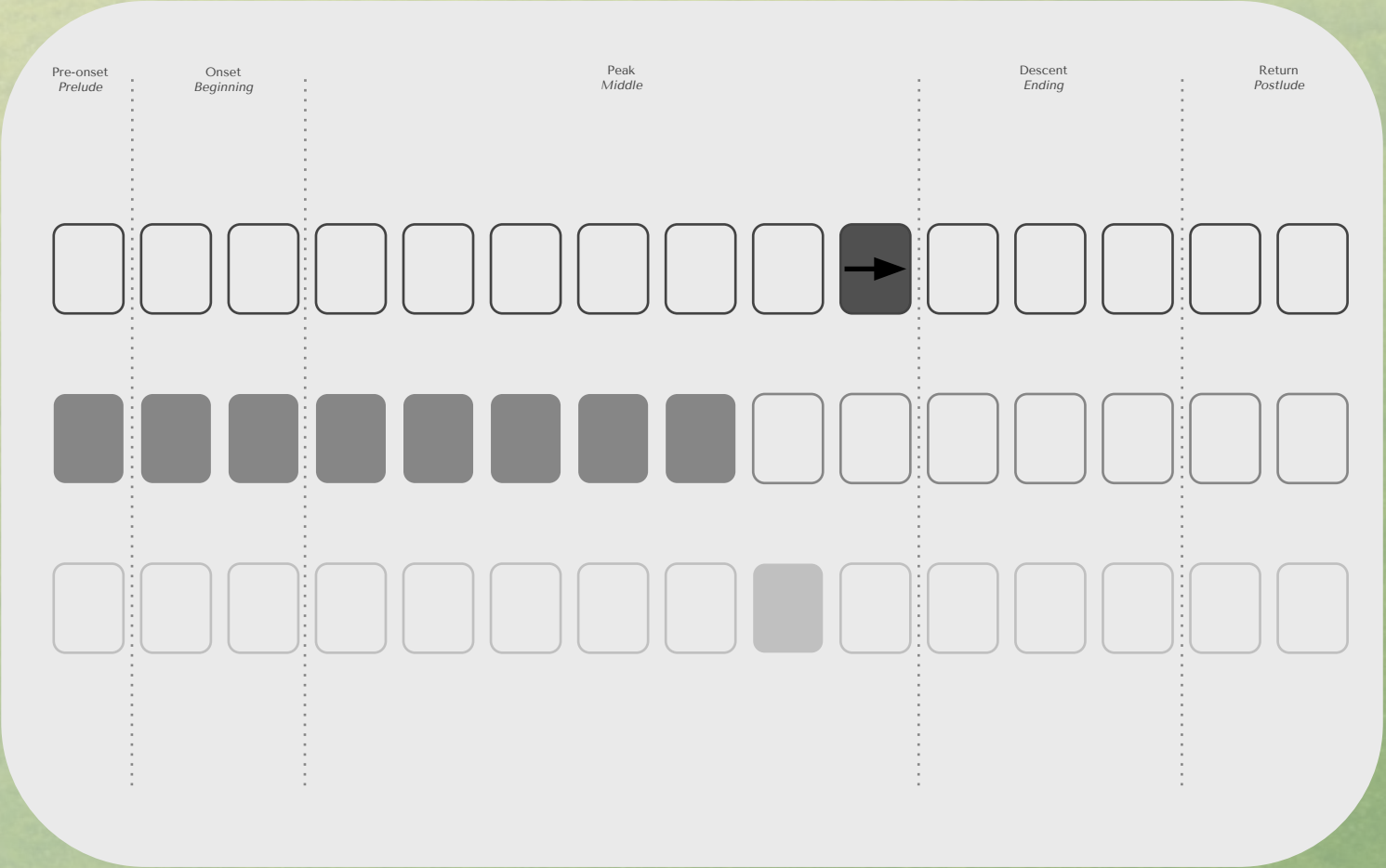
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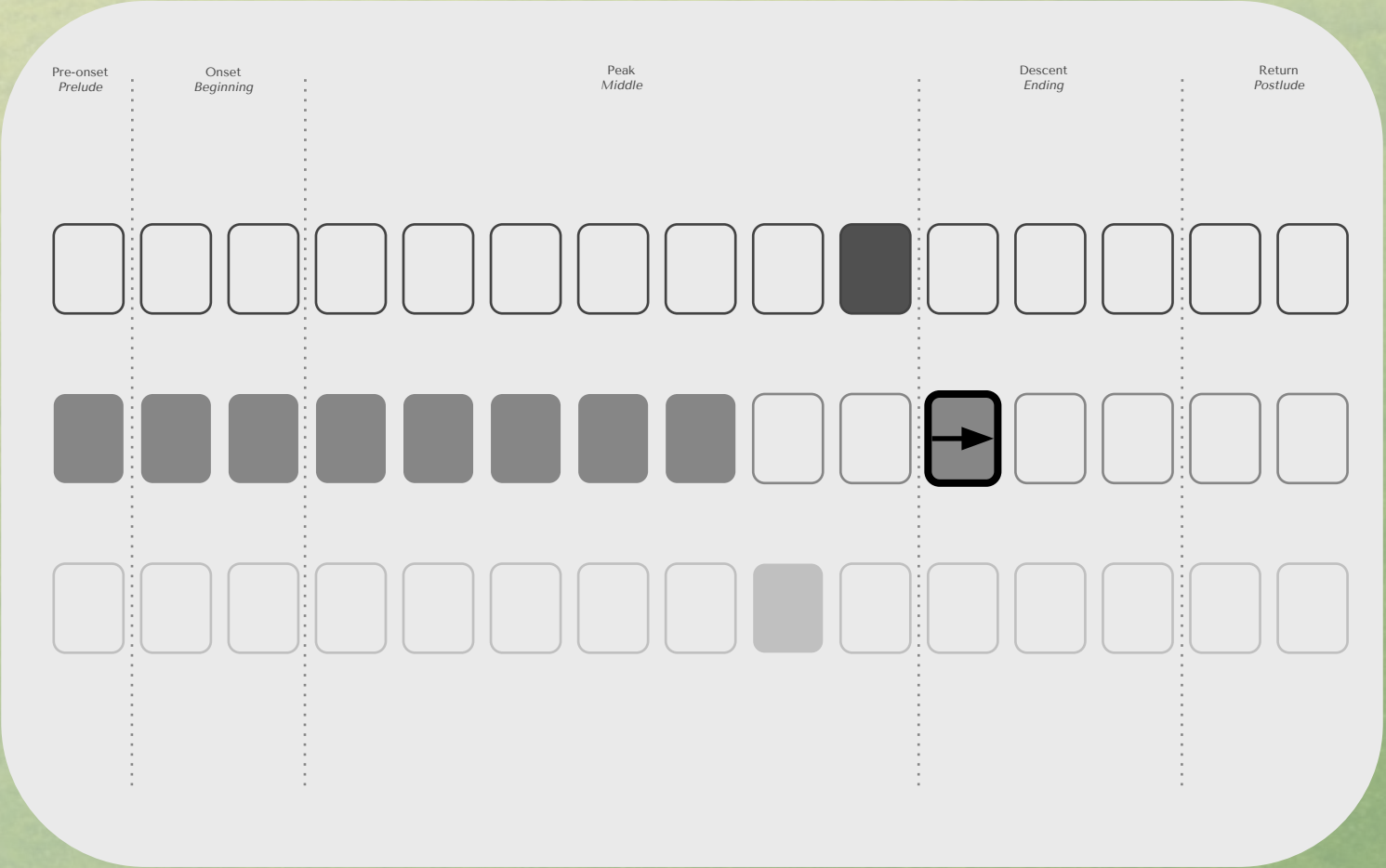
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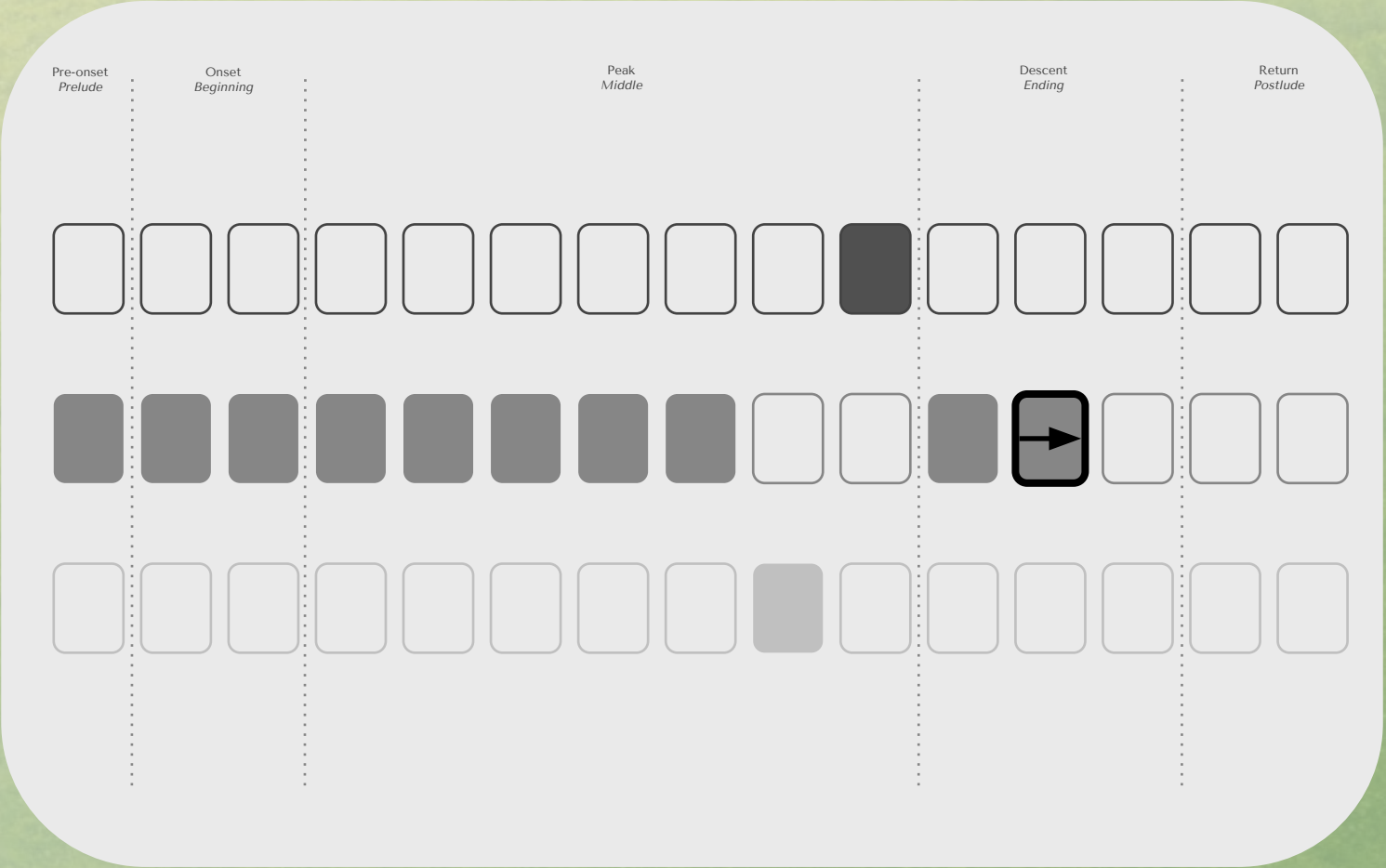
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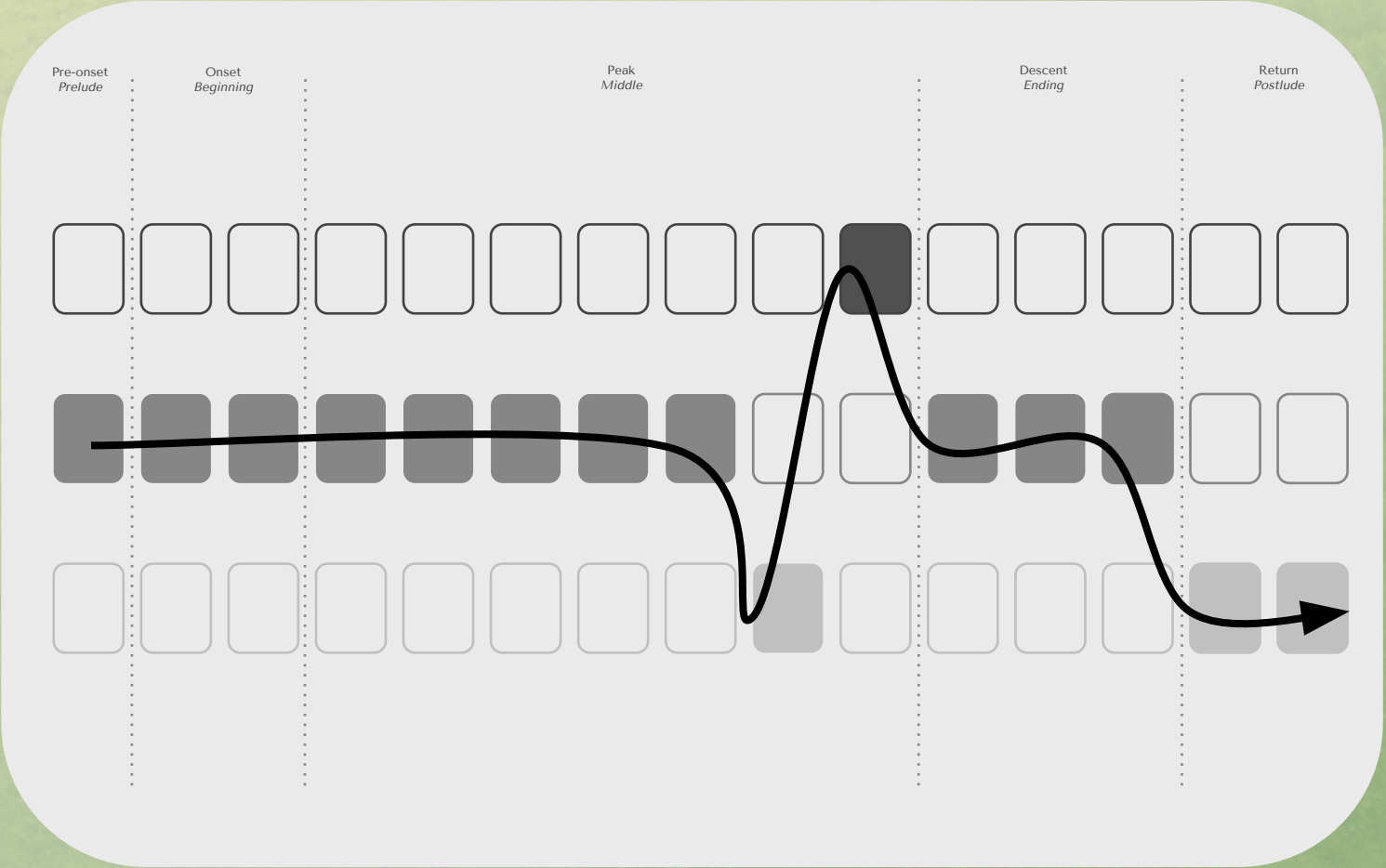
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Attention <i>(Patient : Music)</i>	90 : 10
Duration <i>(Min. pre-selection)</i>	24 hours
Effort <i>(Preparing)</i>	Highest
Knowing <i>(The music)</i>	High
Organisation <i>(Shortlists / templates)</i>	Function Intensity Session-use-case Musical language Phases Subjectivity

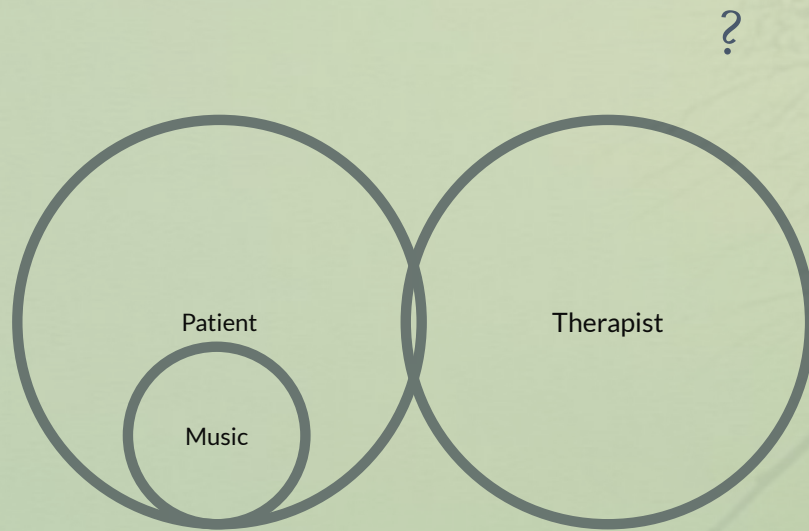


* Numbers and ratio's are based on the need for 8 hours of music, for illustration purposes.



Running sessions

1. Listening together
2. The intersubjective triad
3. Sound and room quality



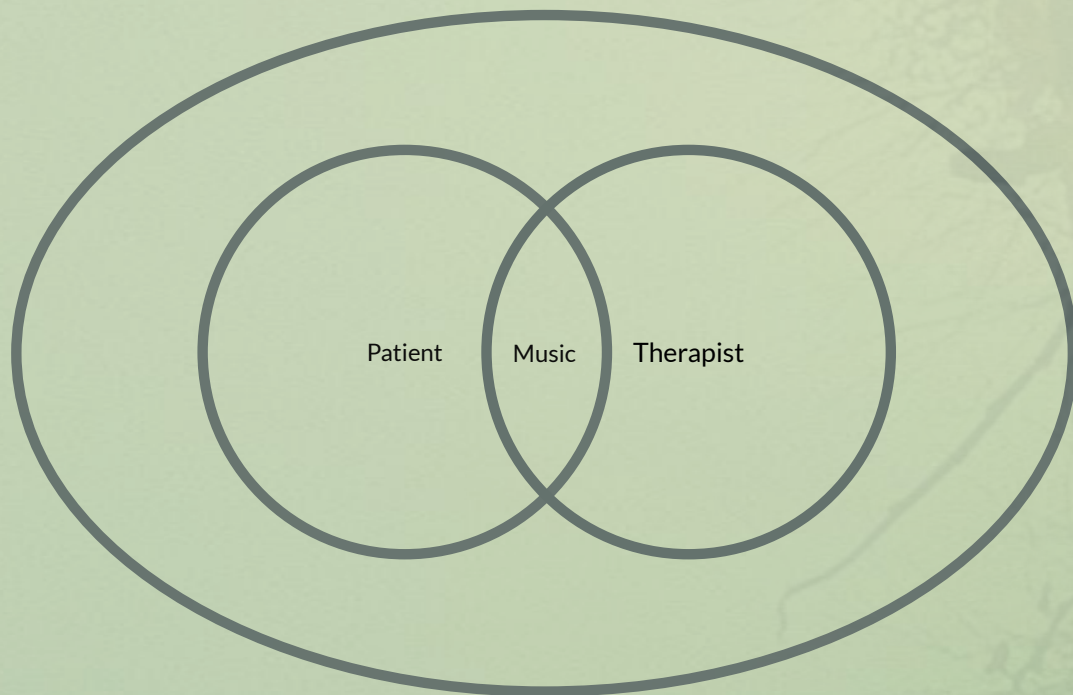
Shared listening

When therapists do not hear the music this impairs affective resonance, attunement and the "triadic relationship"

Play sound output over headphones *and* speakers (Or only use speakers.)

→ Avoid splitters. Use external sound-cards.

→ *What is your setup like?*



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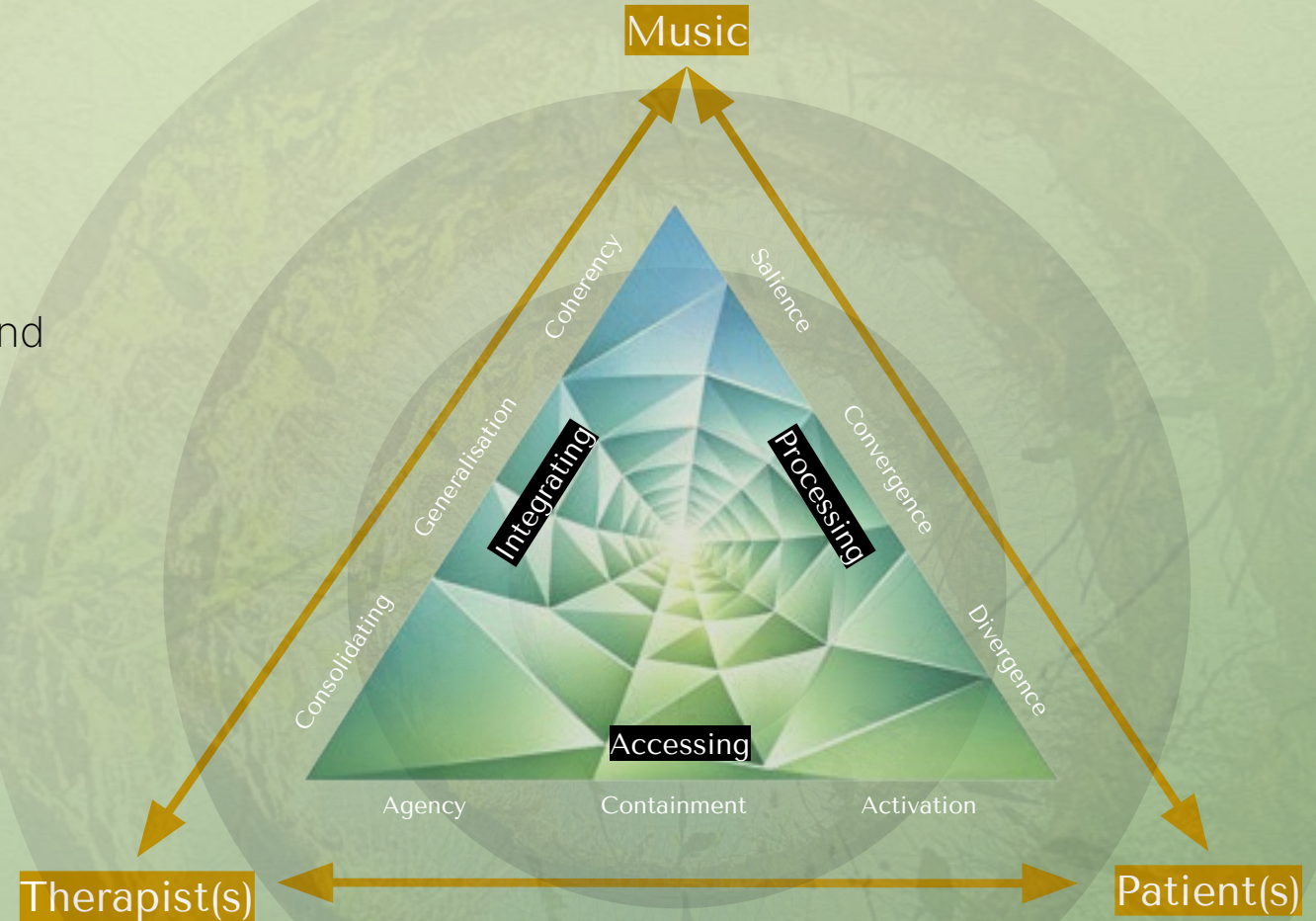
→ Avoid splitters. Use external sound-cards.

Triadic relationships



Triadic relationships

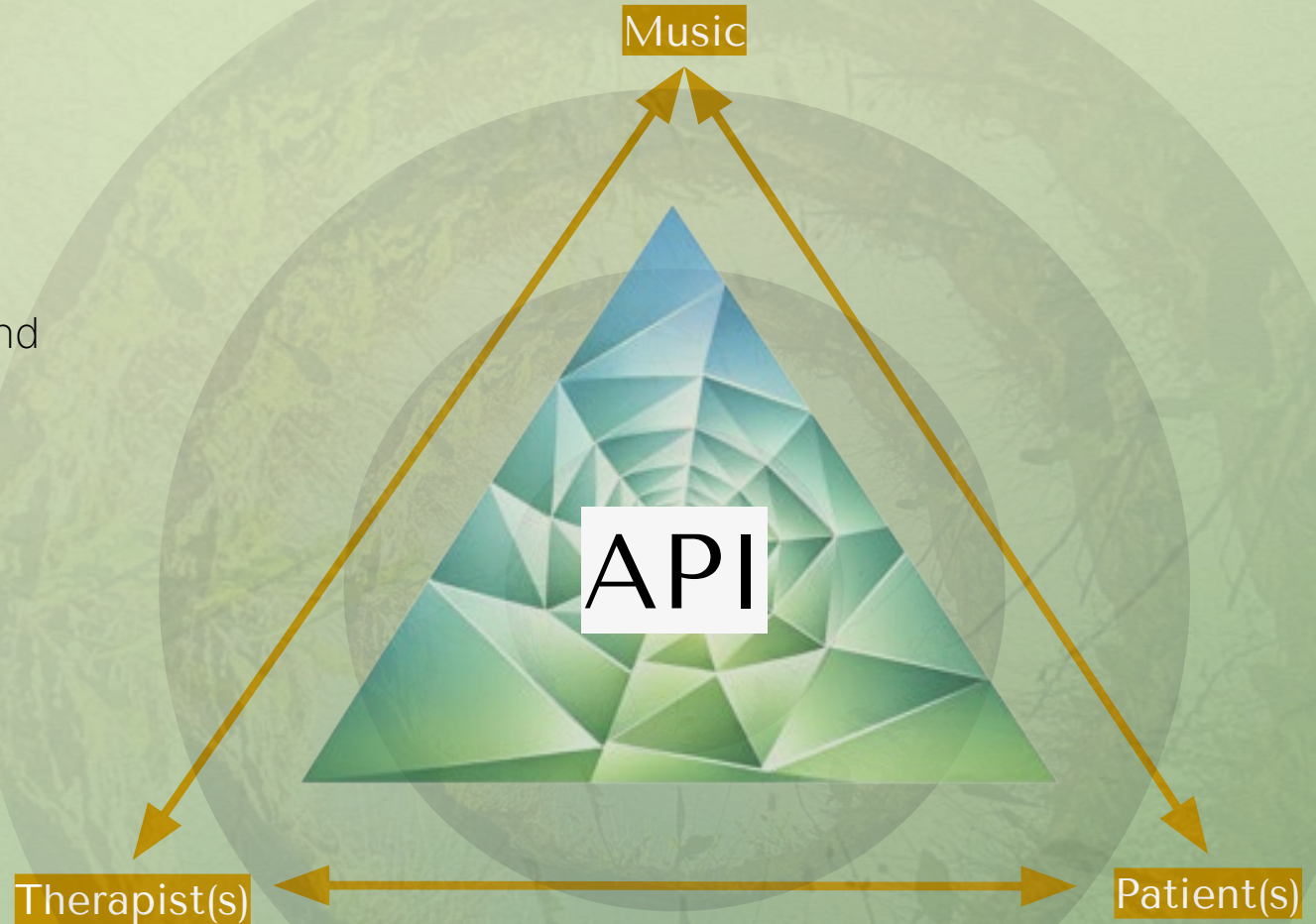
The musicality, relationship with music, and resulting musical enactments of *both* therapists and patients are impacting API continuously



Triadic relationships

The musicality, relationship with music, and resulting musical enactments of *both* therapists and patients are impacting API continuously

Not understanding this **relational dynamic** limits attunement to the patient experience and capacities to select music constructively





Sound and Room Quality

Poor to terrible quality hardware can be used. Sometimes spaces are acoustically untreated with hard materials.

This impairs authenticity, relatability and absorption potential of the music

→ Study, list and test options for audio system. Individual vs group spaces. Listen to the space, play and optimise.

→ Audio is to be "tasted" (systems, spaces)

→ *What are your speakers, headphones and interior decisions and why?*



There is much more to say



Let's talk

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