

REFLECTING WITHOUT WRITING

Metaphor and Story

Explore experience through images

A practical guide with no written answers required.

START HERE

A way to reflect that fits you

A metaphor or imagined story can make it easier to approach an experience indirectly. You might describe a feeling as weather, a landscape, a journey, a room or a character. You are free to change the image or leave it unfinished.

What this approach can offer

Metaphors can create space when direct questions feel too exposed or difficult. The image belongs to you. Nobody else should decide what a storm, locked door or empty road means for you.

Set it up gently

Choose a gentle starting frame, or make up your own. Keep it separate from anything that feels too personal. You can answer in your imagination, tell the story aloud, choose a picture or make a gesture.

When it may be useful

An imagined scene can give you distance from a difficult topic while still helping you notice what matters. Use a familiar story, place, object or made-up image. The image is a tool, not something another person can decode.

A few reminders

- There is no right answer or correct way to take part.
- You can use a word, gesture, choice, image, AAC, pause or silence.
- You can skip, change or stop the activity at any point.

You are the person who decides what your response means.

TRY IT

A short guided practice

Move through these steps at your own pace. You can do one step and stop, or ask someone you trust to read each step aloud.

1. Choose a small focus

Think of one moment, feeling, preference or decision from today. Keep the focus small enough to approach without explaining everything.

2. Try the method

- Step 1. Pick an image for the experience: weather, a path, a room, a season, a landscape or something else.
- Step 2. Notice a few features: distance, pace, light, sound, movement, boundaries or company. Choose only what feels comfortable.
- Step 3. Ask what the image might need: shelter, space, a pause, a companion, more information or a different direction.
- Step 4. Imagine one small change, if you want. The story does not have to become happy or resolve completely.
- Step 5. Step out of the image when you are ready. Look around, name where you are, and choose what you want to do next.

3. Let a question guide you

- If this moment had weather, what would it be like?
- Where are you in the image, and how much space do you want?
- What would make the next part of the story more manageable?

A short example

A decision feels like standing at a crossroads in fog. You notice you do not need to choose immediately; first you want a light, map or another person nearby. That could mean asking for missing information.

4. Choose how to finish

Notice whether you want to continue, pause, ask for support, take one practical step or leave the reflection unfinished. No written record is needed.

MAKE IT YOURS

Adapt the activity to your needs

The method should fit the person, not the other way around. Keep what helps and change anything that adds pressure.

Ways to adapt

- Use a familiar story, game, film or everyday object if weather and landscapes do not fit.
- Choose from a few images or let a support person offer simple alternatives. You can say "none of those".
- Keep the story small and present-focused. You do not need to revisit trauma or explain a metaphor.

Keep it workable

If a metaphor becomes too intense, make it smaller or choose another. Imagine only the next few minutes rather than the whole future. Let the story stay unresolved, and return to the room whenever you choose.

When to pause

If imagination brings up distress or unwanted memories, return attention to the real room and stop. You control how close you come to the subject.

Take something with you

A metaphor can help you approach a question, but it does not have to reveal a hidden truth. Keep only what feels useful.

A gentle reminder

Reflection can be spoken, shown, felt, chosen, moved through or shared. You do not have to turn an experience into writing for it to matter.

For more support, you can speak with someone you trust or a qualified professional. Space to Breathe Therapy can be contacted to ask whether its support may be right for you.