

SMALL
GROUP
GUIDES

from HarperOne

SOUL THERAPY

*The Art and Craft
of Caring Conversations*

THOMAS MOORE

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PART 1: THE MATERIAL

1. Thomas Moore suggests that therapy can be understood as “simple, daily concrete care for our essence, our depth, and the source of our humanity” (p. 5). Is this how you think about therapy? Why or why not?
2. “You may think of a life story as stirring the imagination and offering catharsis, a clearing away of confusion and disturbance” (p. 20). Moore believes that stories and storytelling are at the heart of therapy. What is one story (big or small) about yourself that has played an important role in your life, perhaps in how you see yourself, others, or the world?
3. Moore suggests that therapists should “be guided by the symptom” and “listen closely to what the symptom wants” to find the need behind it (pp. 48–49). How have you seen this at work in your life or in the lives of others?
4. “Serenity is not the suppression of conflict or emotion but the achievement of calm through a big enough vision of life that troubles don’t take it away, especially in those moments when you need it” (p. 70). Have you ever experienced this kind of serenity? When or where do you feel most serene?

PART 2: THE VESSEL

1. What is a “vessel” (p. 81), and why do you think it matters?
2. “You could define therapy as souls in dialogue” (p. 94). What experiences have you had of listening deeply in therapy? What difference do you think this makes? Can you think of some situations where you can listen more deeply to people in your daily life?
3. “Getting stuck or feeling like giving up is common even in deep conversations where the people are really committed to the process” (p. 102). According to Moore, why does this happen, and what are some ways through it? Have you ever experienced this? What was that like?
4. “Stories from childhood are usually more potent and useful than other stories you tell” (p. 111). What stories from your own childhood do you remember? How do you see these stories affecting your life today?

PART 3: SOUL STUFF

1. “Every dream is meaningful and relates to waking life” (p. 131). Do you take your own dreams or the dreams of others seriously? Why or why not?

2. How does Moore suggest that dreams should be interpreted? What has your experience been in trying to interpret your dreams or the dreams of others?
3. What is a “complex” (p. 141)? How does Moore recommend we should approach our own or others’ complexes? What has been your experience working with complexes?
4. What struck you about the nature of the therapist–client relationship from this section? As a caretaker of soul (whether your own or someone else’s), what boundaries do you think are necessary to maintain and why?

PART 4: THERAPY IN THE WORLD

1. Moore writes, “I don’t merely advocate therapy for the world but also therapy in the world” (p. 166). What do you think he has in mind? How might you imagine doing therapy “in the world”?
2. “We may think of work as a means for making a living, but it can also be the way we make sense of our lives” (p. 174). Describe your relationship with your work. What do you notice about your description? What does it reveal about your life more broadly?
3. “Politicians and government leaders are meant to be therapists for society” (p. 191). How many politicians

and government leaders today can you name who are playing this role in society? How would you describe them and the impact that they have in our society?

4. “A parent’s job as soul educator is to ‘lead out’ the child’s soul into actual life, and this will give rise to a unique individual” (pp. 194–195). As a child, did you feel like your soul was handled in this way by those who parented you? Why or why not?

PART 5: THE THERAPIST

1. What are some of the similarities and differences between psychotherapy and spiritual direction? What is the relationship between these two fields?
2. “‘Shadow’ is a term Jung used to describe that complex figure within us who embodies all the bad stuff that we keep out” (p. 257). Whether you are a therapist or not, are you aware of your “shadow”? If so, how would you describe it?
3. “To be healed is to reconnect with the positive powers and feel them flowing through you and having their push behind you in everything you do. This kind of power resolves problems and restores happiness” (p. 273). Have you ever experienced this? If so, describe it. If not, what do you think has prevented you from experiencing it?

4. “To be healed is to reconnect with the positive” (p. 273).
Do you see yourself in this way? What did you learn
about everyday therapy from this chapter?

FINAL QUESTIONS

1. How has this book impacted your view of the nature
and role of therapy?
2. What are two or three things that you learned from
this book that could help you better care for your own
soul and/or the souls of those in your life? What is one
takeaway that you can see yourself applying to your life
this week?