

This reflection is the third and final part of a series of reflections of “life in the in-between”

Community Within the In-Between

There is something profoundly human about finding ourselves reflected in the presence of others.

Not necessarily through identical experiences, but through moments of recognition, commonality, and shared emotional understanding. The quiet reassurance that we are not the only person navigating uncertainty, rebuilding identity, or learning how to exist within change.

During periods of transition, there can be deep comfort in being alongside others who are also carrying forms of vulnerability, emotional struggle, or becoming within their own lives. This may be part of what makes shared therapeutic spaces feel so significant - not simply because support is offered within them, but because people no longer have to move through the in-between entirely alone.

Spaces such as social and therapeutic horticulture bring together many of the elements that can help people feel supported during periods of transition; nature, rhythm, continuity, sensory grounding, and the presence of others moving through their own forms of change and rebuilding.

There can be comfort in existing alongside people who, while carrying very different stories, understand something about what it means to live through vulnerability, uncertainty, or emotional rebuilding. The experience is not necessarily one of needing to explain everything in order to be understood. Sometimes, simply being within the presence of others who are also navigating forms of change can soften the isolation that transition so often creates.

People may find themselves grounded not only by the rhythms of the natural environment, but by shared presence, commonality, and the quiet reassurance that they are no longer moving through difficult periods entirely alone. There can be something deeply regulating about no longer carrying uncertainty alone. Not because other people can remove the storm, provide perfect answers, or eliminate difficulty altogether, but because shared spaces can soften the loneliness that so often accompanies emotional struggle. In many ways, people may begin to feel less like ships navigating a weathered storm entirely alone. The uncertainty still exists. The waves have not disappeared. Yet there can be comfort in recognising the presence of other people navigating their own forms of vulnerability, rebuilding, and becoming alongside you.

Within shared therapeutic spaces, people are often witnessed in ways that extend beyond clinical labels or explanations. They may begin to experience forms of recognition, understanding, and relational presence that help restore a sense of connection - not only to others, but sometimes to themselves.

There may also be something significant in the act of contributing within these spaces. Not only receiving care or support, but participating in something shared and ongoing. Tending to plants, caring for growing spaces, noticing seasonal change, or contributing to the rhythm of a community can all create subtle experiences of purpose and meaning.

There can be comfort in returning each week to familiar faces, shared rhythms, muddy hands, half-finished conversations, and the quiet reassurance that someone notices your presence within the space. Within these environments, people are not defined solely by illness, vulnerability, or transition. They become part of a shared space shaped by presence, care, and mutual recognition.

Identity may also begin to shift here. The movement from inpatient to community member, from patient to participant, from someone being cared for towards someone once again able to contribute, nurture, and belong. These shifts may appear subtle from the outside, yet they can hold deep psychological significance. The person watering seedlings, noticing seasonal change, offering encouragement to others, or returning each week to familiar spaces of care is not only receiving support, but actively participating within life again.

There can also be something deeply human in simply being noticed within a space. The quiet reassurance of familiar faces. Someone asking where you were last week. The feeling that your presence within a community matters enough to be missed when you are absent. These moments may hold more significance than they first appear to. They can offer subtle reminders that a person is more than a diagnosis, more than a crisis, and more than a name moving through systems of care.

Modern life often asks people to hide their in-between states. To move quickly through grief, vulnerability, illness, uncertainty, or change in ways that appear manageable, productive, or resolved to the outside world. Within shared therapeutic spaces, people may begin to experience something increasingly rare within modern life - the possibility of arriving as they are. Not only on good days, but on difficult ones too. The opportunity to exist without needing to conceal uncertainty, rush through vulnerability, or perform recovery before feeling worthy of belonging. There is something profoundly human in being given permission to exist authentically while becoming.

Within these environments, individuals may find themselves connected not only to nature, but to community, shared humanity, and parts of themselves that had begun to feel distant beneath emotional struggle or transition. People may begin to experience themselves not only through illness or difficulty, but through presence, relationship, and belonging. In this way, spaces such as social and therapeutic horticulture may offer something deeper than activity alone. They may become places where people are gently held while navigating the in-between - where uncertainty can continue to exist, yet life, identity, connection, and belonging are still allowed to unfold alongside it.

By Tamara Batchelor, July 2026

