The background of the slide is a solid teal color. Faintly visible in the background is a grayscale image of two hands shaking, symbolizing agreement or a transition. The text is centered and reads:

Time to Say Goodbye: Therapist-Initiated Termination of Long-Term Therapy Relationships with Complex Trauma Clients

Laurie Anne Pearlman, Ph.D.

Situations Leading to Therapist-Initiated Termination

- Leaving practice
- Taking extended leave for health reasons
- Moving a practice to a different geographic location

Styles of Ending

- Mutual/unilateral*
- Planned*/unplanned
- Hasty/brief/extended*

*Focus of this presentation

Dynamics of Trauma Therapies that Affect Endings

- All trauma clients
 - Sensitivity to lack of control, loss
- Complex trauma clients
 - Histories of childhood abuse and neglect, giving rise to attachment & abandonment issues
 - Reenactment with retraumatization potential
- Long-term relational treatment relationships
 - trust (the promise)
 - shift from mutuality to unilateral decision

Ending Therapy Relationships RICHly*

- **Respect:** Reassurance, time, choice
- **Information:** Why, how, when
- **Connection:** Authenticity
- **Hope:** Past progress and future possibilities

(*RICH comes from *Risking Connection*, 2000)

Minimizing Retraumatization in the Ending Process

- Preparation (time, planning)*
- Support (connection, control)
- Processing
(express & discuss feelings)

**How much time?*

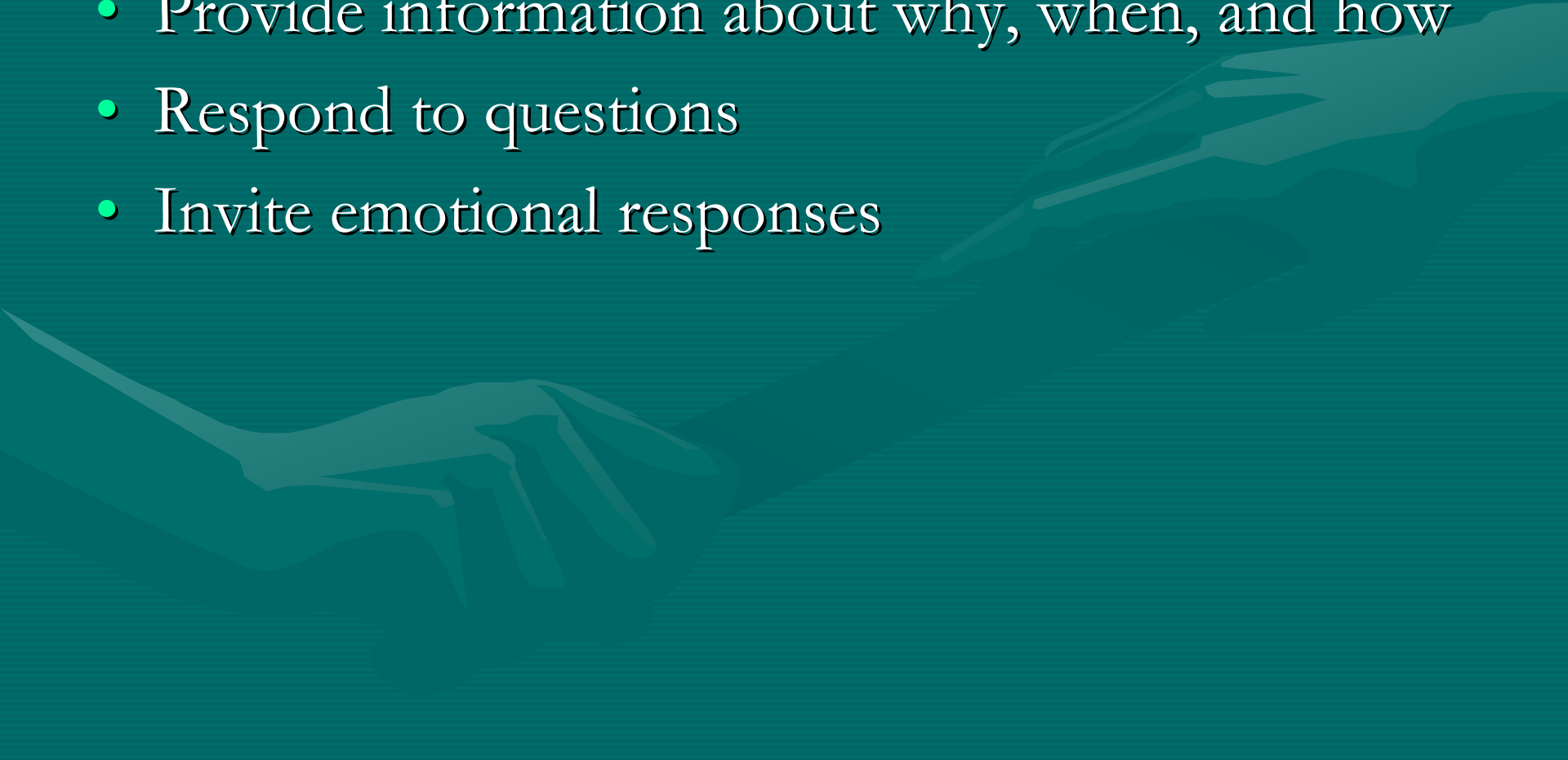


Ending Process: Overview

- Announcing the therapist's departure
- Processing the client's feelings about the ending
- Reviewing the therapy
- Reviewing the relationship
- Remembering each other
- Planning for the future
- Processing therapist's feelings

Announcing Therapist's Departure

- In person and in writing
- Provide information about why, when, and how
- Respond to questions
- Invite emotional responses



Processing the Client's Feelings about the Ending

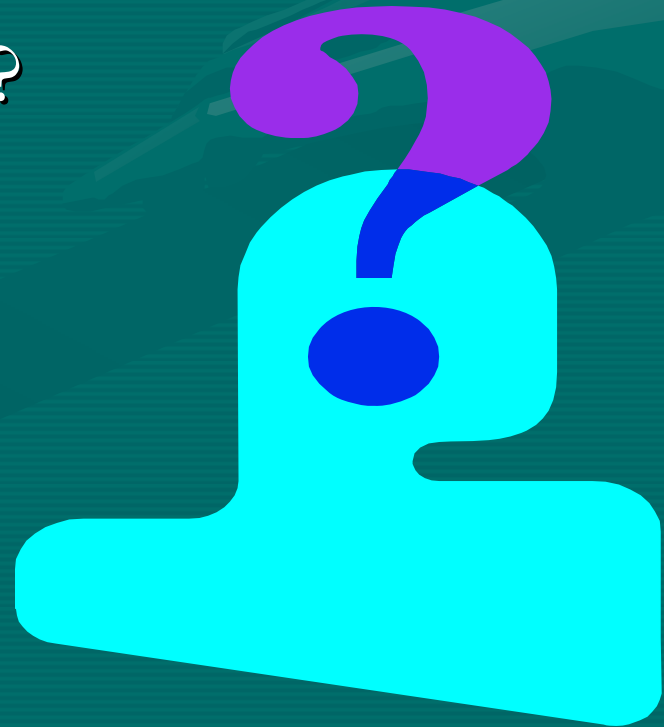
- This goes on throughout the process
- Some clients are able to talk about ending the therapy many months before the time of ending.
- Clients' feelings about the shift from their agenda to the focus on ending

Reviewing the Therapy

- What do you recall about yourself when you started therapy?
- Where are you now? In what ways have you changed? What new resources do you have?
- How would you summarize what happened in the therapy?
- What were the factors that contributed to those changes?

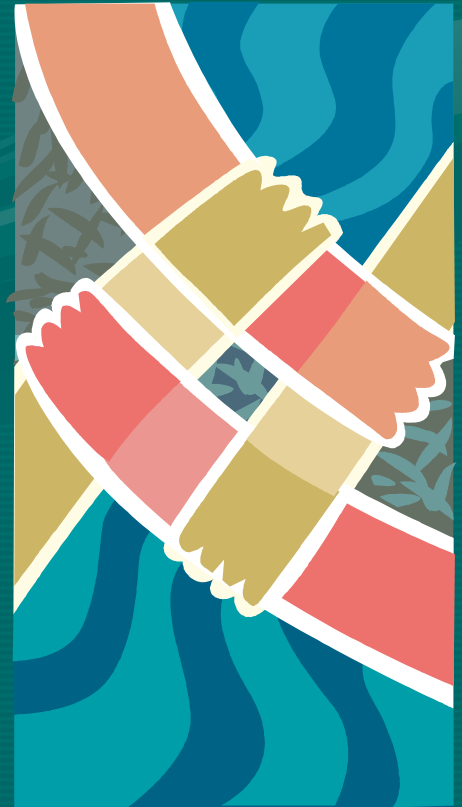
Reviewing the Therapy

- What was helpful?
- What was challenging or problematic?
- What hasn't changed (yet)?



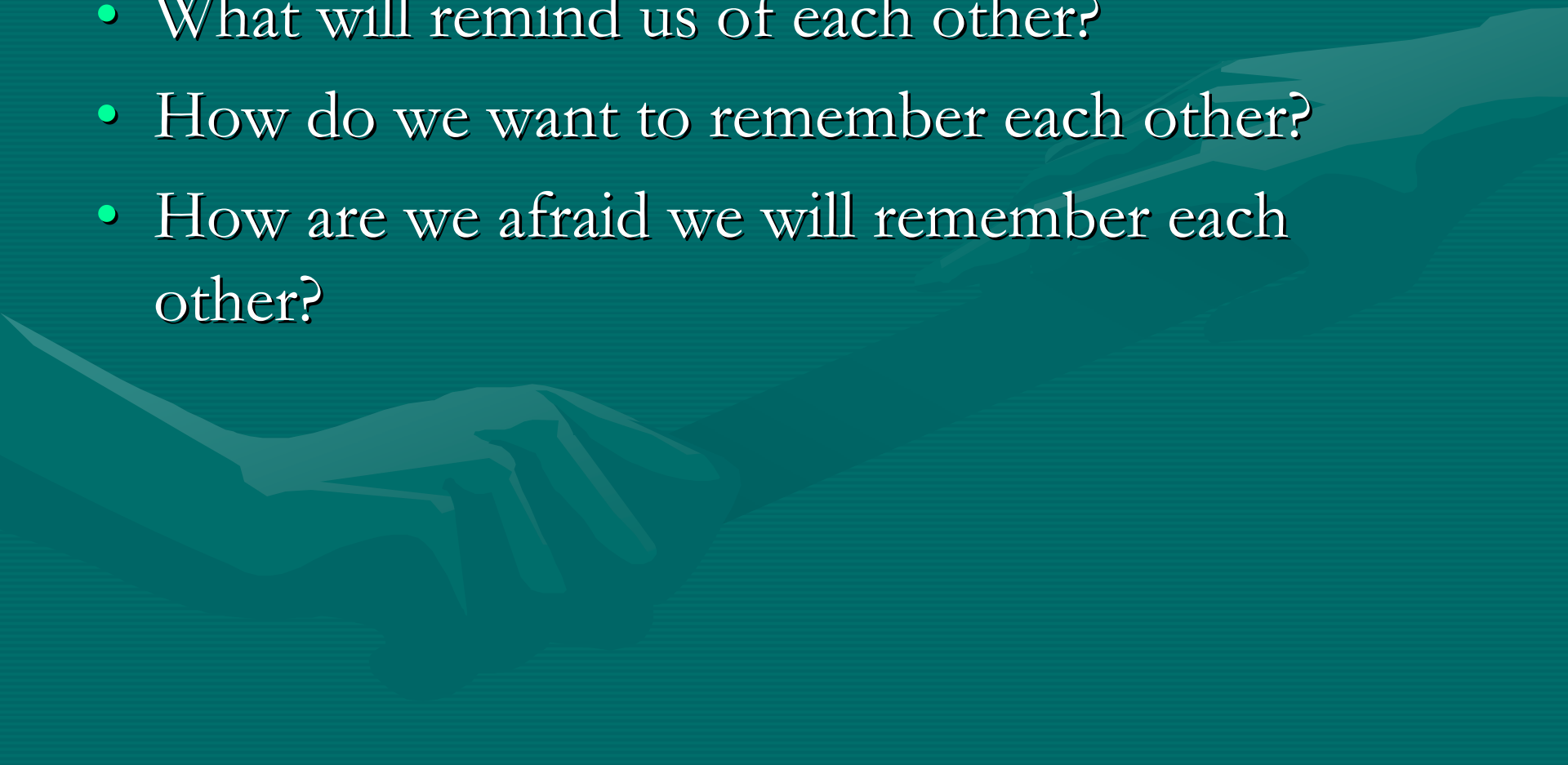
Reviewing the Relationship

- What worked well for us?
- What didn't work so well?
- Disappointments & appreciations



Remembering Each Other

- What will each of us remember about the other?
- What will remind us of each other?
- How do we want to remember each other?
- How are we afraid we will remember each other?



Planning for the Future

- Referrals for clients who want them
- How will you manage the things for which s/he has relied on the therapy relationship?
- What would be the signs that you needed to return to therapy or the issues that might arise around which you might return to therapy?
- Future contact

Saying Goodbye

- Any remaining appreciations and disappointments
- What will you wish you'd said after you leave here for the last time?
- Saying goodbye in the penultimate session



Processing the Therapist's Feelings about the Goodbyes

- The feelings
- Sources of support
 - Colleagues
 - Literature
 - Psychotherapy
 - Journal



Additional Considerations in Ending Time-Limited Therapies

- Ending is built in from the start
- Importance of talking about ending throughout the therapy
- Clients often wish to continue treatment. Clinical considerations.

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