

BRAINSTORMING IDEAS FOR FACILITATING A “POETRY-WRITING” WORKSHOP 11/15/18

INTRODUCTION (5 min)

1. Start with a centering exercise, to help participants be present: a few breaths, a short meditation, just a moment of calmness.
2. Anything is a poem.” This inclusionary approach is meant to reduce anxiety about writing poetry, which can feel intimidating. Participants do not have to “complete” a poem. Even one or two lines that interest them are enough.
3. Don’t worry about “form” (rhyming, meter, structure [sonnet, limerick etc.]). Especially, what they write by no means has to rhyme. The one form exception that might intrigue some participants is the haiku because of its (seeming) simplicity: 3 lines of 5-7-5 syllables.

PREPARING TO WRITE (5 min)

4. A poem starts with a “flash”: This can be an image, a feeling, a picture in our minds, a memory, a snippet of conversation
5. A “flash” can be related to patient care, healing, health, hope, personal wellbeing, as well as experiences of illness, pain, and loss; or it can be something in nature or an object that has special meaning
6. We suggest writing with pen and paper because of the greater intimacy; but people may feel more comfortable writing on their iPhone or computer. Give participants options, but don’t push one manner of writing.
7. Experience a feeling. Note: participants do not have to label or categorize the feeling but it should be strong enough (positive or negative or mixed) to make them want to write about it

WRITING (note: these are options to draw on, not all of them have to be used) (30 min)

8. Word collage (5 min): Associate words to the feeling, image, object etc. of the flash and write them down.
9. Word web: Note the connections of the words you’ve written down. Is there a core, organizing word or words? Are some words more important than others? Are some connections more important than others? These are the words to concentrate on in writing the poem.
10. Free-write (10 min): classic free-write where you do not edit, censure, do not lift pen from paper, or fingers from keyboard. Just write. From the free-write, you can extract salient words to craft into a poem.
11. Write the poem (10 min)
12. Editing (5 minutes): A chance to look over the writing and polish/refine.

SHARING THE POEM OR THE PROCESS OF WRITING THE POEM (20 min)

13. Depending on the size of the small groups, participants can break into dyads and either, depending on their preference (10 min),

- a) Share their poem with a partner or
 - b) Discuss what it was like to write a poem
14. Re-form as a whole group and discuss (10 min)
- a. What it was like to write (what they liked/didn't like; what was hard/rewarding, where they got stuck; how it felt before/during/after writing; whether they learned anything or saw anything differently etc.)
 - b. What it was like to share writing (vulnerable, enjoyable, embarrassing, connecting etc.)
 - c. What it was like to receive writing (connection, identification, privilege, confusing etc.)