

USC WORKSHOP POETRY MAKING AND COMICS CREATING

Overcoming Barriers

1. I can't draw/write/create.
 - a. Normalizing – most of us can't
 - b. Empathizing – scary to try new things, especially things we think we're not good at
 - c. Reframe –
 1. Original creative work that is authentic is always “good” because it is a genuine expression of self
 2. There are no mistakes today – everything is a poem; everything is a comic
 3. Exploring different aspects of ourselves usually teaches us something, even if we decide it's not something we want to pursue
 4. Trying something you're “not good” at is actually a great way of confronting the perfectionism that plagues many medical students and physicians; in this low stress environment, see that it's okay to struggle or to make “mistakes”
 - d. Accommodating – for a really resistant student, have them write about why they don't feel they can complete the assignment

2. This is a waste of time/doesn't have anything to do with medicine/I didn't go to med school to write poetry or make comics
 - a. Normalizing – Lots of students feel that way
 - b. Empathizing – you all are so busy, you have so much studying to do, this can seem like a waste of time.
 - c. Reframing –
 1. Wellness – research shows we study better when we take a break, switch to another task. Taking a break to write a poem/make a comic can reset your brain to return to studying
 2. Wellness – it's possible that if you can let go of doing this perfectly, it can actually be fun!
 3. Insight - Sometimes looking at your life from a different perspective (i.e., writing a poem about it, making a comic about it) can give you insights you might not otherwise have

3. I'm afraid reflecting on certain events might be triggering or retraumatizing.
 - a. Normalizing – we are sensitive to this issue, which happens for others as well.
 - b. Empathizing – triggering is an aversive and unproductive experience, and we don't want to ask you to engage in anything that might have this outcome.
 - c. Reframing – the purpose of this exercise is not for you to examine your most traumatic life events, but to explore a clinical or training-related situation in which you had difficulty or just wanted to understand more deeply
 - d. Accommodating –
 1. Choose an event that you'd like to think more about, but is not connected to any personal traumas

2. Original creative work does not have to be about difficult or challenging experiences. Choose an experience that brought you joy or reaffirmed your decision to become a doctor.

4. I don't want to share my project.
 - a. Normalizing – that's natural; most students are initially hesitant to share their work
 - b. Empathizing – it's scary to be vulnerable with others, to share something of yourself.
 - c. Reframe – in similar situations, the vast majority of students listening to the project express their gratitude for the courage of their classmate in sharing; the vast majority of students share their project express relief at discovering they are not alone in their feelings and feeling closer to their classmates as a result of the experience.
 - d. Accommodating – make sharing optional

Giving Feedback

Feedback about personal artistic creations is different than clinical feedback, which in addition to encouragement and reinforcement, must correct mistakes and guide constructively in specific diagnostic and treatment directions.

1. Mirroring/Paraphrasing – neutral; I hear you and see you
2. Encouragement and support – I hope you keep writing; thank you for having the courage to write this
3. Positive evaluation – I enjoyed this so much; reading this meant a lot to me; your poem was very moving
4. Craft –
 - a. Positive: I thought this was beautifully written; this phrase really resonated with me
 - b. Constructive criticism: generally avoid craft criticism, as this is not about the artistry of writing a poem or creating a comic: I wonder if an example here could underline your point?
5. Insight/depth critique – Could you tell us a little more about what moved you to write this poem? This is such a beautiful image, but I admit I'm not sure exactly what it means. Could you help me understand it better? I'm wondering how you felt writing this poem.