

POETRY AND COMICS FOR INSIGHT AND WELLBEING

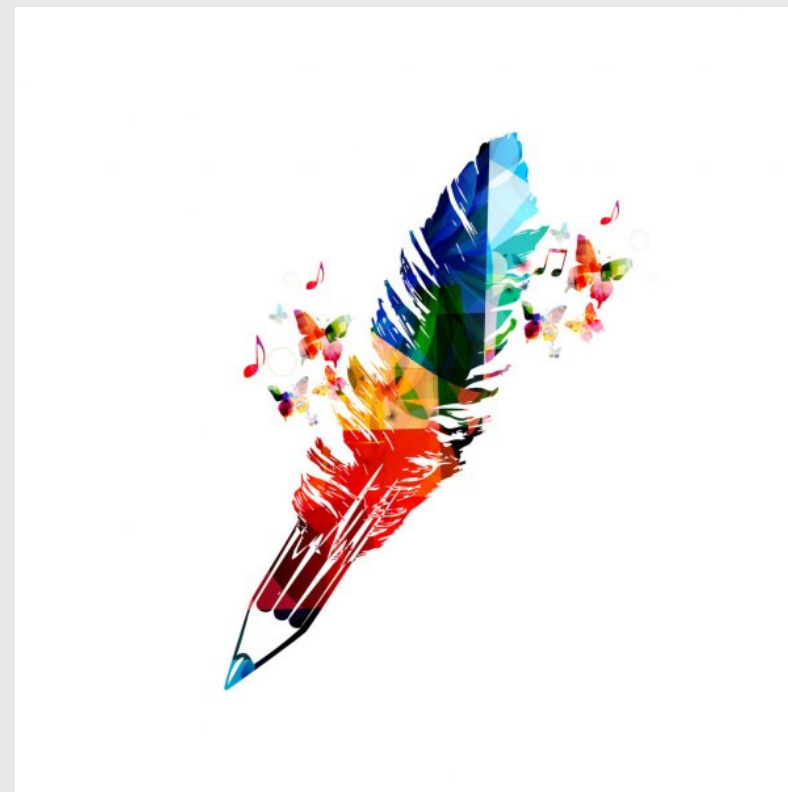
Tan Nguyen, MD, Johanna Shapiro, MA, PhD,
Juliet McMullin PhD, Gabriella Miotto, MD

Workshop Team

- Johanna Shapiro, MA, PhD, University of California, Irvine
Professor Emeritus, Department of Family Medicine
Director, Program in Medical Humanities & Arts, Family Medicine, School of Medicine
- Tan Nguyen, MD, University of California, Irvine
Health Sciences Associate Clinical Professor, Department of Family Medicine
- Gabriella Miotto, MD, TCC Family Health/Community Clinic and FQHC
Family Physician and Poet
- Juliet McMullin, PhD, University of California, Riverside
Interim Dean, College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences, Professor Department of Anthropology
Co-Director Center for Health Disparities Research

Session Overview

- Introductions – Tan and Johanna
- 9:05 – 9:10 Centering Meditation; Discussion: Intersection of Poetry and Comics - Gabriella and Juliet
- 9:10-9:20 How to Teach Making Poetry – Gabriella
- 9:20-9:30 Writing a poem
- 9:30-9:40 How to Make Comics from Poetry - Juliet
- 9:40-9:50 Making comics from poetry
- 9:50-10:00 Breakout Rooms: Sharing creativity
- 10:00-10:10 Overcoming Barriers/Giving Feedback – Tan and Johanna
- 10:10-10:15 Wrap Up - Tan



□

Relaxation exercise:

"You are a breath and heartbeat
between Earth and Sky."



□

**“It is difficult
to get the news from poems
yet men die miserably every day
for lack
of what is found there.”**

— [William Carlos Williams, *Asphodel, That Greeny Flower and Other Love Poems: That Greeny Flower*](#)

Comics and Poetry Similarities

- Cadence, rhythmic, spatial relationships on a page
 - A compactness and economy of words that convey a host of meaning
 - Cadence and rhythm – size and spacing of comic panels
 - Lettering bold, CAPS, *cursive*, small, large – the image of the word in relation to each other, in relation to objects

□

poetry |'pōətrē|

noun

literary work in which special intensity is given
to the expression of feelings and ideas
by the use of distinctive style and rhythm

Poetry: An inexplicable (though not incomprehensible) **event in language**

- **A verbal transaction: a **relationship** between speaker and listener, or between writer and reader (E Hirsch)
- **A form of **stored magic** (R Graves)
- **A **room of marvels** (A Breton)
- **The **best words** in the best order (S Coleridge)
- **If I feel physically like the top of my head were taken off, **that** is poetry. (E Dickinson)

"A Poet's Glossary" by Edward Hirsch:

Poetry is the sound of language organized in lines.

Line: A unit of meaning, a measure of attention. Words isolated by blank space

"...the line in a poem moves horizontally, but the rhythm and sense also drives it vertically, and the meaning continues to accrue as the poem develops and unfolds."

Verse: a group of lines forming a unit

Rhyme: agreement in the terminal sounds of 2 or more words "...as if the poet called up the inner yearning of words to find each other"

Rhythm: sound in motion, also related to the heartbeat

Poetic prose: language that is musical without rhyme or rhythm

Instructions for writing poetry :

- 1) Sit and write OBJECTIVELY: observations about your object, descriptive writing, lots of adjectives, using the senses
- 2) Then write SUBJECTIVELY: spontaneous writing about your object, using your feelings, thoughts, associations
- 3) Then ASSESS the way certain words fit together, almost collage-like, imaginatively
- 4) Finally, write your POETIC RESPONSE (aka PLAN) for how you honor what this object (dream, symptom) leads you towards

□

An example from Nature:

a) scientific description of a seed pod found on walk (the "OBJECTIVE" part of SOAP note):

elongated
rusty-brown, wooden
multi-partitioned,
earthy incense scent
rough, stiff
symmetrical, except for broken edge
inner seeds move when shaken



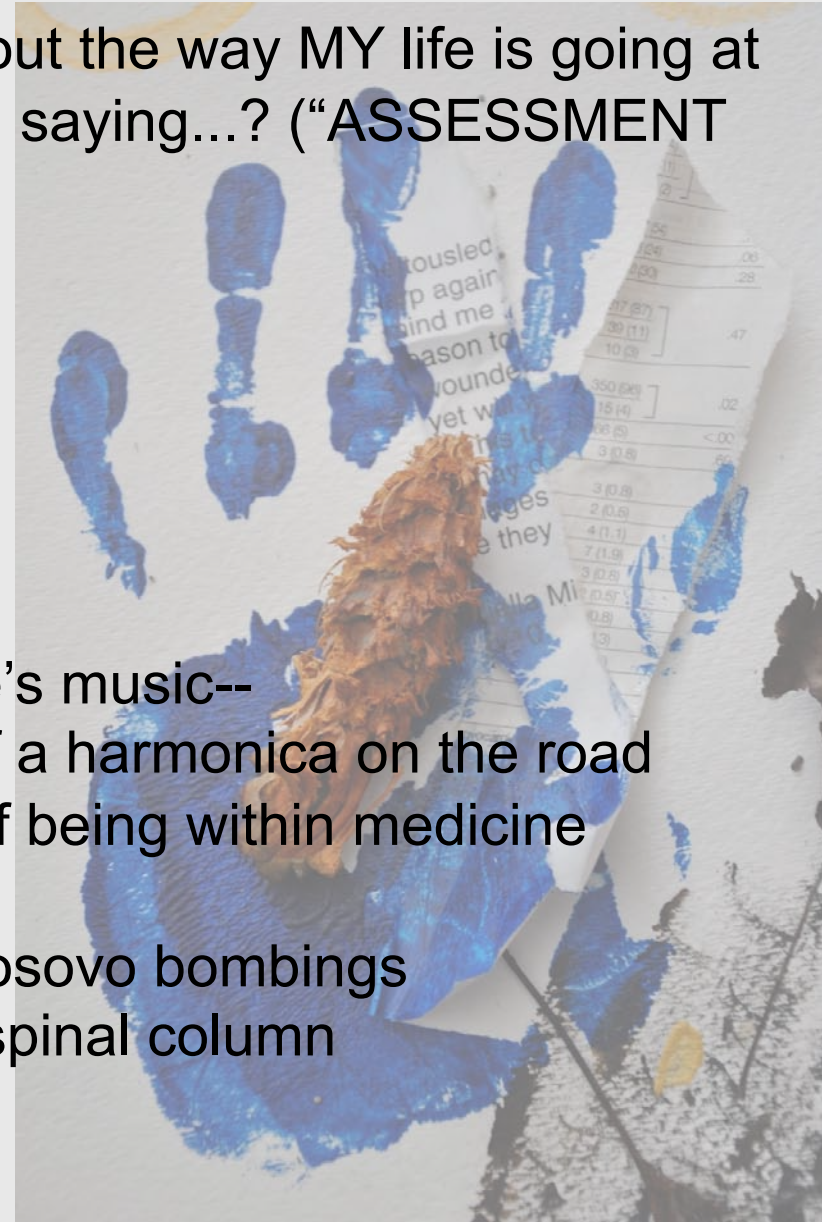
□

b) wildly imaginative ("SUBJECTIVE" part of SOAP note):

harmonica with many notes
high-rise building with elevators
caduceus, Hermes/Mercury
bombed buildings in Kosovo and Iraq
erect phallus
spinal column
thick pencil
multi-pregnant being

c) what is THIS OBJECT saying about the way MY life is going at this time?--what is THIS SYMPTOM saying...? (“ASSESSMENT AND PLAN” part of SOAP note):

“I feel like a pregnant woman stuck in a multi-leveled building, unsure which floor to stop at to safely birth these seeds of my life’s music-- I search for the rich improvisation of a harmonica on the road to birth a new, transformative way of being within medicine with trickster Mercury by my side. I want to hold both the tragedy of Kosovo bombings and the tenderness of my regrown spinal column in my hands that now grow back from their severed state to their original intention.”



Bamboo SOAP Note

Objective:

Bamboo

Green

Stick-shaped with sprouting leaves on top

Hard stem and soft petals

Segmented

Light-weight

3 inches long in length

Subjective:

Growth

Generations

Reaching for the sun and stars

Blooming

Rejuvenation

Pure

Tradition

Assessment:

Generations before me helped me reach where I am today – blooming and reaching for the stars. One generation builds upon the next and gets stronger each time.

Plan:

As a physician, my plan is to look at the whole person and his/her history. Each person is the way he/she is because of the generations and history behind him/her.



Line, rhythm, meaning:



Bamboo Assessment and Plan

Generations before me

helped me reach where I am today

blooming and reaching for the stars.

One generation builds upon the next
and gets stronger each time.

As a physician, my plan

is to look at the whole person and his/her history.

Each person is the way he/she is

because of the generations and history

behind him/her.

SOAP note redux

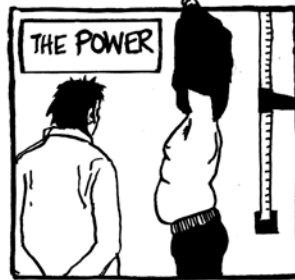
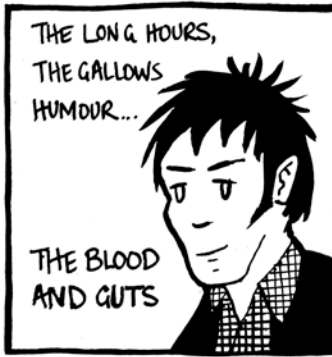
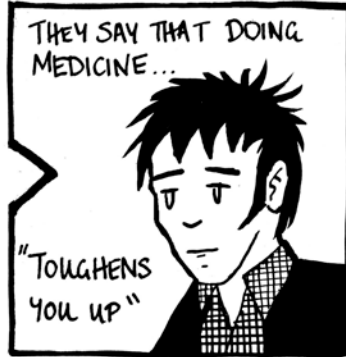
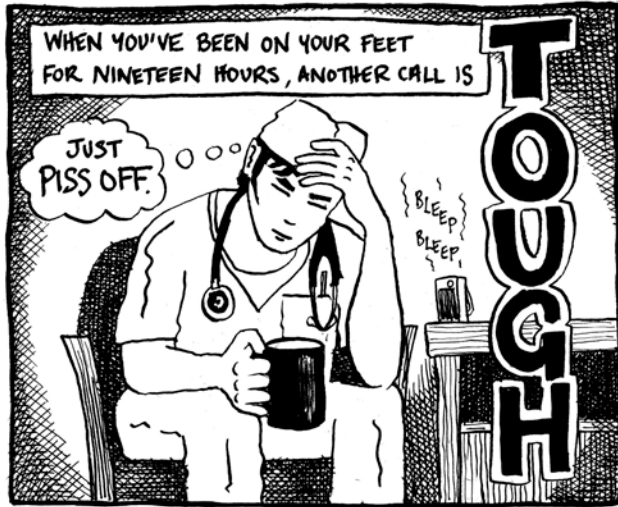
- Observe DEEPLY who/what object is in front of me
- Free the imagination of the object/the patient to speak to me (poetic imagery)
- Find the personal connection between the imagination held by the object or the patient = the poetry/the potential for healing

Instructions for writing poetry :

- 1) Sit and write OBJECTIVELY: observations about your object, descriptive writing, lots of adjectives, using the senses
- 2) Then write SUBJECTIVELY: spontaneous writing about your object, using your feelings, thoughts, associations
- 3) Then ASSESS the way certain words fit together, almost collage-like, imaginatively
- 4) Finally, write your POETIC RESPONSE (aka PLAN) for how you honor what this object (dream, symptom) leads you towards

Comics and Poetry Similarities

- Cadence, rhythmic, spatial relationships on a page
 - A compactness and economy of words that convey a host of meaning
 - Cadence and rhythm – size and spacing of comic panels
 - Lettering bold, CAPS, *cursive*, small, large – the image of the word in relation to each other, in relation to objects



SEE ONE



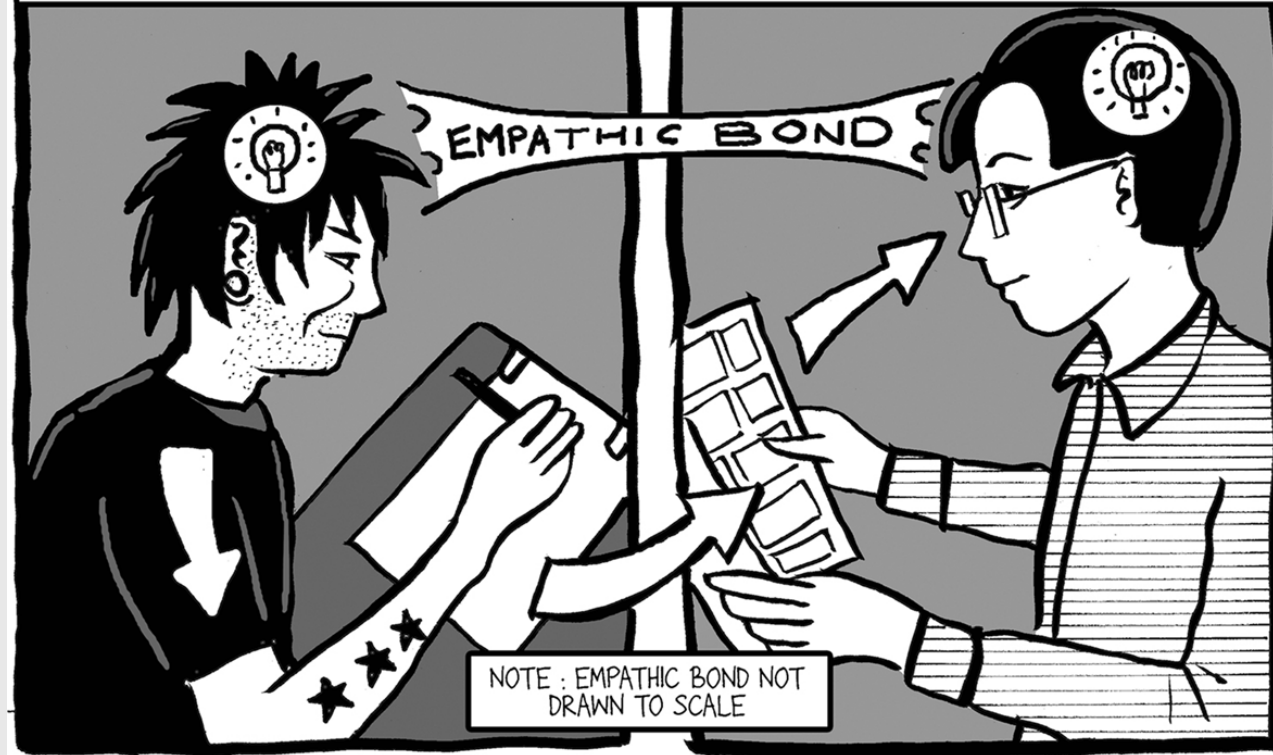
DO ONE



TEACH ONE



FOR THE READER, GRAPHIC FICTION CAN FUNCTION AS AN PORTAL INTO THE INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCE OF ILLNESS, LAID OUT IN THE UNIQUE COMBINATION OF WORDS AND TEXT. THERE IS SO MUCH NON-PROPOSITIONAL INFORMATION PACKED INTO A COMIC, THAT THE MEDIUM LENDS ITSELF TO VERY POWERFUL NARRATIVE, CREATING EMPATHIC BONDS BETWEEN THE AUTHOR AND THE READER.

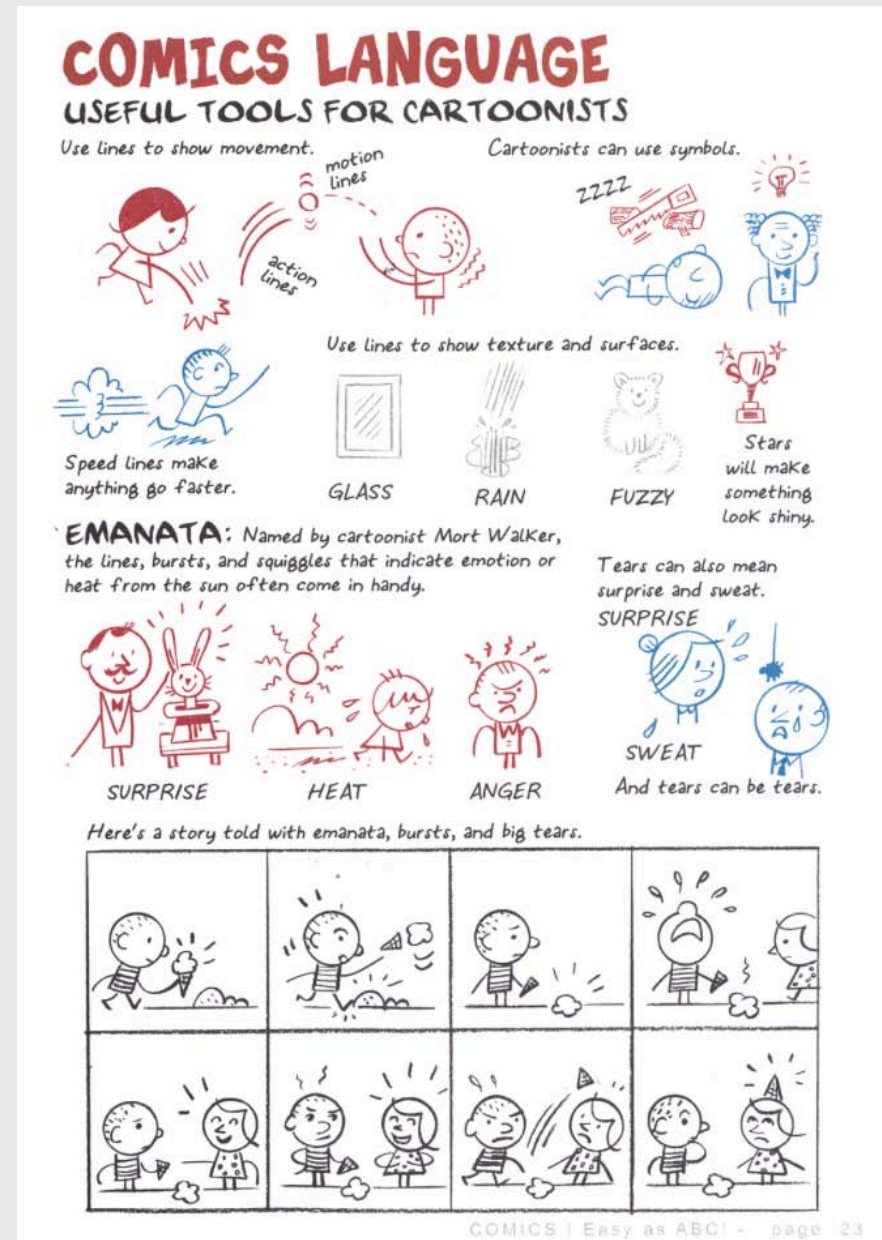


"Creating Empathetic Bonds." Williams, Ian. 2011. "Autography as Auto-Therapy: Psychic Pain and the Graphic Memoir." *Journal of Medical Humanities* 32: 354

Emanata - Unrealistic pictorial elements emanating from a character, symbolizing something about that character, such as a sweat drop for anxiety or a question mark for confusion, or emanating from an object, such as heat rays from the sun.

Emotions – mouth and eyebrows

Image from Brunetti 2019 – Comics: Easy as ABC



Graphic Medicine is a thing



- Field of Study
- Medical Education
- Conferences
- Press
- Collaboration with journals
- Podcast
- Graphicmedicine.org
- Drawing for 45 min significantly lowers cortisol levels
- RESOURCES AVAILABLE ON OUR SESSION PAGE

Instructions for creating your comic

- Making your comic – page and panel
- Consider your poem
- What images come to mind?
 - Your drawing doesn't need to replicate real life
- Begin with the title page
- Then the first panel
- Always write your words first
- Will someone be narrating your poem?
- Or will the words collaborate with the image?
- Once you finish the first panel, ask yourself, what's next?
- Begin the next panel



COMICS/POETRY BREAKOUT



TEACHING IMPLICATIONS

Barriers and Feedback

BARRIERS

Learner Concerns – What would you tell your learners???

- “I can’t draw/write/create”
- “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”
- “I’m afraid reflecting on certain events might be triggering or retraumatizing.”
- “I don’t want to share my project.”

Response Options



Other Options?

Feedback

- Mirroring/Paraphrasing
- Encouragement and support
- Positive evaluation
- Craft
 - Positive:
 - Constructive criticism
- Insight/depth critique



Questions???