

WRITING MEDICALLY-THEMED POETRY

- I. Overview of session
 - A. Writing as a meaning-making activity
 - B. Why poetry is special
 - C. Learn a few ideas about writing a poem
 - D. Write a poem!
 - E. Share a poem with a partner
 - F. Share poem with larger group if desired

- II. **Writing as a meaning-making activity**
 - A. **Experiences of illness in self, family and friends raise many existential questions**
 - B. **Reflective writing enables us to consider:**
what is happening from a human perspective
 - C. **Telling stories one way we can examine our experience /understand its possible meanings**
 - D. **Writing enables adopting a different perspective from biomedical interpretations of what is happening**

- III. **Writing as an aesthetic activity**
 - A. **In the midst of ugliness, we discover something important, memorable, worth memorializing, even beautiful**

- IV. **Special Features of Poetry**
 - A. **Alternative to language of science**
Expresses emotion
Expresses particular, subjective experience
 - B. **Helps us understand oblique, ambiguous moments in our own lives and the lives of others**
 - C. **Boundary-crossing and transgressive**
Offers critique of what is
 - D. **Insight**
New ways of seeing
Metaphor, imagery
 - E. **Stress-reduction**

- V. **Writing a Poem**
 - A. **Find a central image or scene**
Some aspect of your life or friend or family member's life as it intersected with illness or treatment

Something wise/shocking a doctor or someone else said to you about your experience with illness

B. Write down words that associate to that image

C. Put them together

Pay attention to imagery, metaphor, word choice, language

Use rhyme scheme, meter, or free verse

VI. Tips for Writing Poetry

A. Know your goal

B. Avoid clichés

C. Avoid sentimentality

D. Use images

E. Use metaphor and simile

F. Use concrete words instead of abstract ones

G. Show (don't tell) your feelings

H. Subvert the ordinary