

PEDS REFLECTION SESSION JUN 13, 2011

Hi guys. Very creative work on the Child Abuse Jeopardy. As we discussed in class, one aspect I particularly liked was the active learning with which you engaged your peers. You effectively showed your classmates both what they knew and what they didn't know; and I am certain that what they learned (how many children die daily as a result of child abuse; how many child abuse reports are generated quarterly) will stick more vividly than facts and figures spewed forth in a lecture. By transforming the topic of child abuse into a game (although a little disconcerting), you brought attention to this terrible problem. Your project gave us all an opportunity to draw closer to something all of us would prefer to avoid. Very well done. Best, Dr. Shapiro

Hi --. I really loved your haiku (and they are harder to write than they look :-)). Above all, I appreciated the empathy you showed - for parents, patients, and yes, even medical students. The line "Where is my sweetie?" is just so touching. Similarly with "Can't wait to swaddle." Of course you nailed the medical student perspective, especially the omnipresent dread of that terror, "the crying kid." Thanks for contributing these little morsels of genuine humanity. Dr. Shapiro

Hi --. Thank you for sending your reflection. Your presentation of this patient in class was both insightful and moving. As we discussed in class, depression is often comorbid with diabetes and can obviously complicate adherence/compliance. I was impressed that you were able to get your patient to open up, so that you could discuss the underlying reasons for his struggles to control his diabetes. I also admired the way you actively involved the patient in his healthcare by figuring out ways to adapt his managing his diabetes to his own particular situation. Your essay and in-class comments demonstrated a patient-centered approach that is both empathic and effective. Thank you for sharing. Best, Dr. Shapiro

Dear --, -- (and -- in absentia :-)), you came up with a very interesting idea and executed it well. We tend to be very self-absorbed in this country, and our geographic separation from the rest of the world reinforces this lack of awareness of other cultural practices and experiences. Your poster (aside from providing a reminder about world geography!) was filled with unusual slivers of information demonstrating that there is no one way of growing up; and that we are all the products to some degree of our social and physical environments. Thanks for the research you did and your hard work in putting it together in an appealing, easy to absorb format. Best, Dr. Shapiro

Hi --. As always, a pleasure to see you again. It's hard to believe you're completing your third year (probably harder for me than for you, since you've lived through every minute!). Your collage was beautiful. At first when I glanced at it from across the room, I thought it was rather pedestrian. But the artful blurring of the figures (in addition to protecting the anonymity of the subjects) gave them a universal, transcendent feel, almost spiritual. It was surprisingly effective.

Thank you deeply for sharing about your little "smurf" brother. These personal experiences are so formative and so powerful, yet it can be hard to figure out how to integrate them into our current lives. By choosing to talk about your perspective as the sib of a chronically ill kid, you gave your peers a gift of greater insight and understanding. Even better, you chose not your adult, almost-a-doctor voice of the present, but the confused, resentful, fearful voice of a little child. The fragments that you provided – of long hallways, people running, grandparents appearing, parents disappearing, the mysterious Box in which brother lived. The line I thought most poignant and expressive was this one: "I do not know why he took so much time to feel welcome in our Home." It revealed such confusion, heartache, and guilt that for some reason the baby didn't "want" to come home, didn't feel he "belonged" there. As we discussed, the effect of a chronic illness or condition on the siblings is a really critical topic; and I appreciate that you were willing to use your own life to bring it into our awareness. All best, Dr. Shapiro

Hi --, it was so nice to see you at the Peds reflection session. And your project was fantastic! First, it was hilarious. You are a really strong writer, and you were absolutely writing from the inside out. I gathered that none of your classmates in that group had kids of their own, but through your honesty and craft you were able to draw all of them in to the challenges of being a new mom. In addition to the humor, the poem was full of empathy. I believe you really helped your fellow-students understand just how much new mothers need reassurance (about every little thing imaginable!); and how much they fear being judged by the doctor. I was impressed by how well you translated your own personal experiences as a mom into powerful and accessible lessons that will make your peers more sensitive and compassionate doctors. Thanks so much, --. Dr. Shapiro

--, thank you for highlighting the critical topic of autism spectrum disorder in your reflection project. You brought out a great point that some of the most pressing issues for parents of autistic kids are behavioral ones. There are many programs and resources available for autistic children, but sadly these often require resources. Even more sadly, they do not offer perfect solutions, and certainly no quick fixes. For an overwhelmed mother of five, it is hard to imagine coping with an autistic teen. The poem you brought in expressed beautifully just how alienated and alone an adolescent with autism can feel. If you are interested in this topic, there is a wonderful book told from the point of view of

an autistic adolescent The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time by Mark Haddon. I think someone with autism would feel less isolated just reading it. Best, Dr. Shapiro

Dear --, all I can say is wow. Every aspect of your project was astonishing – your performance (the interpretation of the lyrics was nuanced and powerful), your overall musicianship, the composition of the song itself. Indeed, some of the lines were funny (the list of incomprehensible infections followed by the list of incomprehensible medications stands out), but overall the effect (for me at least) was incredibly poignant; and at various points I felt near tears by the lament of this kid with cf. The last line was so minimal, yet so expressive, the desire of every chronically ill child to just be, to not be sick. Then you threw in the hook, “like you,” thereby involving the audience who had previously merely been somewhat removed spectators to the kid’s suffering. Through this one deceptively simple phrase, you forced a connection by confronting us with the awareness that we all (more or less) have the precious gift of health, and this kid does not. In short, your project transcended assignment and became art. Thank you! Dr. Shapiro

--, you came up with an entirely unique topic, one which in 10 years I’ve never heard a student address. To be honest, I’d never thought about it myself in the context of the Peds reflection session. Physicians easily feel they have the right to advise parents about various aspects of childrearing such as nutrition, exercise, sleep, safeguarding children through car seats, water safety etc. Yet, although physicians often are privy to observing poor parenting skills such as yelling at kids, belittling them, harshly criticizing them, even shaking or pinching them (all things I’ve witnessed either in exam rooms or waiting rooms), they rarely think it is their place to intervene. As we discussed, this is a delicate area falling somewhere between the private affairs of a family and the doctor’s duty to promote the wellbeing of her patient. As your eye-catching poster notes, there is a large body of research that finds such behavior to be emotionally abusive and damaging to the child’s long-term development. Your project challenged all of us to consider being more proactive in situations where our tendency might be to turn away. Thank you for generating such a thought-provoking class discussion. Dr. Shapiro

Dear --, I was extremely impressed by your project. It was deceptively simple, yet took your enthralled listeners from the mundane diagnostic differentials of an average day on the wards/in clinic to an astonishingly evocative reflection on what makes children so precious and so special. The way you interweaved memories from your own childhood was beautiful and touching, and grounded your philosophical ruminations. The story you told of the kid with cf (“truer than the truth”) demonstrated all that narrative should be – a way to teach us about suffering and unfairness that no lecture could ever teach. Finally, I

must comment on your delivery which was incredibly dramatic and powerful. I don't know if you have a background in theater (probably unlikely :-)) or if you are just naturally gifted, but through the modulations of your voice and the rhythm of your speech you compelled our attention till we hung on every word. All in all, an unexpectedly amazing experience. Dr. Shapiro

Hi --. Your poem was an excellent example of capturing the patient point of view, in this case the more remarkable because you were portraying the voice of a 9 mo old baby. Who can know what goes on inside such a little one, who doesn't really have language so much as babble? Yet through your imagination, you were able to create an experience that heightened our empathy for this sweet little girl who for some reason was FTT. How baffling, how utterly confusing, how distressing a hospitalization must be for a baby. Yet somehow, despite her suffering, you imagined her hopeful. Who knows? But by believing in her hopefulness, you connected yourself to her, and in doing so, committed yourself to caring for her. This is the sign of a truly good doctor. Best, Dr. Shapiro

I thought the situation you described (your 13 yo patient diagnosed with MS) provided much food for thought. One difficult question was when and how to inform your patient, especially when the family resists this process. Another issue, which you brought out in the first person point of view writing, was how difficult it is for a patient to understand the implications of a diagnosis of chronic disease. "Please fix me before you send me home..." pleads X. How hard for the patient to accept she cannot be "fixed"; how hard for her physicians to know that they do not have the knowledge to "fix" her. The essay did a great job of capturing the priorities of a 13 yo. X was worried about missing school and having kids "make up stuff" about her. These concerns were probably more paramount in her mind than what it meant to have MS. She'll need a sensitive and patient pediatrician (neurologist) to help her adapt to a chronic diagnosis. Your essay showed that, one day, you could be just such a doctor. Best, Dr. Shapiro