



# Mini But Mighty Skills for Well-Being

Using Stories to Explore Identity  
and Enhance Well-being



American College of Physicians  
Leading Internal Medicine, Improving Lives

# Meet Our Lead Faculty



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# Learning Objectives

- Build confidence in telling your authentic story.
- Develop compassion for self & others through story sharing.
- Learn how narrative medicine can expand insight, creativity, & connection that supports inclusion & sense of belonging.
- Explore the impact of narrative practice for team building & burnout prevention.
- Experience two different models of narrative medicine that can be used in groups of physicians & learners, in interdisciplinary teams, & with patients.



# Meet Our Lead Faculty



**Marion McCrary MD FACP**

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Associate Director, Duke  
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Governor-Elect, NC ACP

Well-being Champion NC ACP



**“Inside each of us is a  
natural-born storyteller,  
waiting to be released”**

*Author Robin Moore*



# Exploring Identity

- **What's your story?**
- **Do you feel safe telling your story?**



# Authenticity and Belonging

"True belonging  
doesn't  
require us to  
change  
who we are.  
It requires us  
to be  
who we are."

Brene Brown,  
Braving the Wilderness

“

“WHEN WE OWN OUR  
STORIES, WE AVOID BEING  
TRAPPED AS CHARACTERS  
IN STORIES SOMEONE ELSE  
IS TELLING”

---

Brene Brown  
**Rising Strong**



# Build Confidence in Telling your Authentic Story

- **See others do it.**
- **Start small – dip your toe in.**
- **Look for benefits/impact for self and others.**





# Stories We Tell Ourselves

- **“What’s the story you’re telling yourself about what’s happening?” (Brene Brown)**
- **Soundtracks**
- **Automatic Thoughts**
  
- **Get curious about the emotions and thoughts**
- **Change to Intentional Thoughts**



# Develop Compassion for Self & Others

## Self Compassion

- Shared Humanity
- Self-kindness = “Grace”
- Mindfulness

## Compassion

- What might the other person be experiencing/need?



# Narrative Medicine

## Columbia University's Dr. Rita Charon

- “Interdisciplinary field that brings powerful narrative skills of radical listening and creativity from the humanities and the arts to address the needs of all who seek and deliver health care.”
- “It enables patients and caregivers to voice their experience, to be heard, to be recognized, and to be valued, improving the delivery of health care.”
- “This evolving transdisciplinary field of inquiry addresses issues of structural inequality and social justice in healthcare.”
- **“Attending to, interpreting, metabolizing, and being moved by stories”**



**In this space, you can bring in the stressors of the day, the clinic, and the world. This is a way to process these powerful emotions and start regulating them.**

**This strategy can be used in groups of trainees, colleagues across disciplines that make up a team, or with collections of patients.**

# Narrative Medicine

- **Can prevent or reverse the emotional exhaustion seen with burnout.**
  - By implementing proven frameworks for observation/listening, reflecting, and writing in a group, *Stories can heal*.
- **Can improve team cohesion - sharing stories leads to a greater connection and sense of inclusion and belonging.**
- **Leads to facilitation of meaning making through the act of reflection.**
  - Intervention for “empathy cliff,” Restores attention to humanity in medicine
- **Can augment your skills as a healthcare professional.**
  - Practicing deep listening skills can enhance your attention in the exam room.
  - Panoramic attention; Slows us down as we consider story



# Narrative Medicine

- **Helps you shed your fear of something new.**
  - In this environment, a spark of curiosity and creativity can remind you of your younger days and inspire you to share your voice.
  - It is a safe space for exploration.
- **Helps improve emotional intelligence by encouraging personal awareness and learning. *Stories reveal.***
- **Facilitates the skill of empathy (the ability to observe and understand the feelings and needs of others).**
  - We attend to what is being told & clear our minds of what we want to say
- **Enhances community.**
  - In groups of physicians, sharing of stories leads to a greater connection.



# Narrative Medicine

- **Builds “narrative humility.”** We are aware we don’t know everything, but we can learn if we listen.
- **Helps develop tools for sitting with ambiguity, loss, not-knowing the answer, regret, shame, and failure.**
- **Balances out the EMR with story.**



# Narrative Medicine

- Stories
- Close Reading
- Reflective Writing
- Radical Listening





# An Invitation to try out Narrative Medicine

- Writers to share their story and tell us what it is like to be heard.
- Listeners to reflect and share what they heard – not a critique.



# Citations

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# Facilitated Group Exercise Close Reading and Reflective Writing

# Close Reading

**Frame:** what do we know about the author?

**Plot:** what happens?

**Form:** how is the story told?

Narrator, character, place, scene, gestures, point-of-view, dialogue, mentation, conflict, irony, syntax (how are sentences shaped?), diction (how do people talk? How does narrator talk?) and more

**Time:** how does time operate in the story or poem?

**Desire:** what does the author want us to know?



# Experience a Close Reading of a Poem

# Khalil Gibran: *On Fear*

**It is said that before entering the sea a river trembles with fear.**

**She looks back at the path she has traveled,  
from the peaks of the mountains, the long winding road crossing  
the forests and villages.**

**And in front of her,  
she sees an ocean so vast,  
that to enter there seems nothing more than to disappear forever.**

**But there is no other way.  
The river can not go back.**

**Nobody can go back.  
To go back is impossible in existence.**

**The river needs to take the risk of entering the ocean  
because only then will fear disappear,  
because that's where the river will know  
it's not about disappearing into the ocean,  
but of becoming the ocean.**

# Close Reading

- What caught your attention?
- What did you hear/read?
- What intrigued you about this poem?
- What else would you like to know?



# Reflective Writing Prompt



**Write about a time you went outside your comfort zone - took a risk or a leap of a faith.**

How did that turn out for you?

How did that feel?



# Invitation to Share



# Thank You

Feel free to contact us at:

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**Access additional well-being resources**

[www.acponline.org/wellbeing](http://www.acponline.org/wellbeing)

[www.acponline.org/supporthub](http://www.acponline.org/supporthub)



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