'In our own words: writing about practice'

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‘From A to C’
Rita Wilder Craig, Canadian Woman Studies, 2007

I disposed of almost everyone
From A to C the other day
I was short of filing space
So I decided to go through
My chemo files
I threw away the files
Of all the people
I’d sent to palliative care units
Those that the computer told me
Had died in my own hospital
And those who just seemed to
Disappear

But when I got to C
I lost my stomach
for the whole thing
I stopped
And never returned to this task
Even when I moved to another job

Purpose of today’s session...

1. Introduce narrative & reflective writing in practice
2. Share examples of writing
3. Brief writing exercise
1997  Narrative therapy/social work practice
2007  Personal narrative on practice published
2008  Narrative methods in teaching
2008  Narrative Medicine
2013  Dissertation on practitioner writing
2014  Facilitating Writing workshops

“We have lost ownership of our own writing; we have forgotten we have our own voices” (Gillie Bolton)

‘What matters most...’

“One day, in despair and unable to find anyone to talk to, I walked across the street...”

What matters most in living and dying by Brenda Solomon
What do we write about?

• Critical incidents & rites of passage
• Ethical dilemmas
• Everyday practice
• The margins (e.g. uncertainty; messiness)
• Connection between professional & personal
• Professional identity/role
• Practice issues with social/policy implications

Why do we write?

• To reflect (solo and shared)
• To bear witness
• To cultivate empathy, listening skills, mindfulness
• To consolidate professional identity
• To build resiliency & promote self care
  ‘afloat in a sea of the day’s distress’
• To communicate and advocate
  ‘storytelling with a purpose’

‘A Second Chance’

“The hospital became their home, and for days they slept in the waiting room, keeping a vigil at Sarah’s bedside...”

Writing exercise

Write about a recent interaction or encounter with a client or colleague...

• Tell the story
• Keep writing
• Turn down the inner editor
• Take literary license!

“We write before knowing what to say and how to say it, and in order to find out, if possible” (J.F. Lyotard)

Mr. Grey begins to tell me about his disease and how it has affected his life. In the middle of this, his wife interrupts and tells me that she is also not well...

_A Day in the Life of a Hospital Social Worker_ by Rita Wilder Craig
'Learning Curve Journal'

Orientation

They introduce you to the water by throwing you in the deep end.

Welcome to the life
Welcome to the work

A near-death experience soon to be followed by another & another & another...