

# Psychosocial Spiritual Alberta Community of Practice: Poetry in Therapy

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## **Presenter:**

Joanne Morcom, BSW, RSW, Social Worker, Extendicare Cedars Villa

## **Facilitator:**

Sheila Killoran, Education Lead, Covenant Health Palliative Institute

## **Host:**

Manpreet Tatla, Program Assistant, Covenant Health Palliative Institute

## **Date:**

May 15, 2025



# Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that we are located on Treaty 6, 7 and 8 territories. We respect the histories, languages, and cultures of First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and all First Peoples of Canada, whose presence continues to enrich our vibrant community.



# Disclosures

The Palliative Care Public Awareness project is funded by the Government of Alberta. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of the Government of Alberta.



# Reminders

- This session is being recorded.
- Please do not disclose any personal health information during the session.
- Your microphones are muted. When we invite participation, please unmute yourself if you'd like to speak at that time.
- If you experience technical difficulties, please let us know in the chat.

# Learning Objectives

By the end of the session, participants will be able to:

Improve understanding of bibliotherapy as a creative arts therapy, therapeutic uses of poetry

Enhance skills in the use of poetry as therapy including coping with serious illness and grief

Increase awareness of bibliotherapy resources

# The Healing Power of Poetry

Presented on May 15th, 2025  
For Psychosocial Spiritual  
Alberta Community of Practice  
2024 -2025

By Joanne Morcom BSW RSW  
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# Basics of Bibliotherapy

Defined as the use of literature (i.e. poetry, prose, non-fiction) to help people maintain, improve and enhance their quality of life.

Used in groups and with individuals in most circumstances, ranging from healthy to palliative.

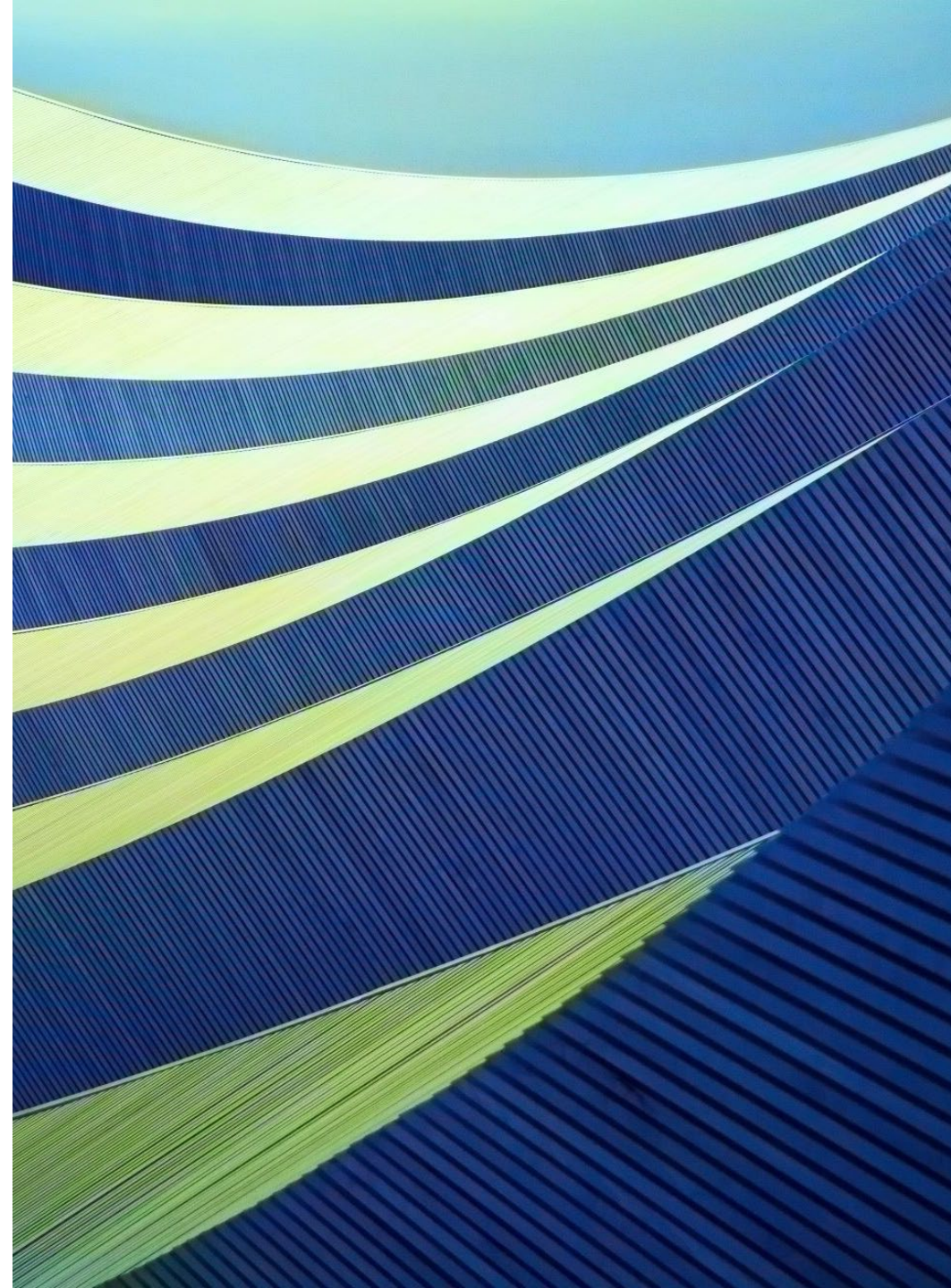
Can be self-directed / self-healing.

Develops creative and critical thinking.

Strengthens interpersonal, communication and coping skills.

Encourages self-expression, self-awareness, personal growth.

Helps to find meaning through new ideas, insights, information, guidance, knowledge, etc.



# Basics of Bibliotherapy Group Session (Tips and Tricks)

01

ESTABLISH A REGULAR  
DATE AND TIME FOR  
SESSIONS, E.G. ONE TO  
TWO HOURS.

02

PROMOTE ATTENDANCE  
THROUGH PRIOR NOTICE,  
ANNOUNCEMENTS,  
ETC. AND ASK FOR  
ASSISTANCE IN  
GATHERING  
PARTICIPANTS, E.G. 10 TO  
20.

03


CHOOSE A QUIET, PRIVATE  
MEETING SPACE.

# Basics of Bibliotherapy Group Session (Tips and Tricks) continued



## Basics of Bibliotherapy Group Session (Tips and Tricks) continued


Distribute handouts, proceed with readings and facilitate a discussion.



Consider asking participants to read and/or co-facilitate.



Ask questions to stimulate the discussion, e.g. What message is the poet trying to convey? Do you agree or disagree?



Ask participants for suggestions for future sessions.

# Selected Resources

- Poem Analysis

<https://poemanalysis.com>

- "Explore all thing poetry."

- Poetry Foundation

<https://poetryfoundation.org>

- "We work to amplify poetry and celebrate poets by fostering spaces for all to create, experience and share poetry."



"First Fig"

from *A Few Figs from Thistles*

by Edna St. Vincent Millay

American Poet

1892 – 1950

My candle burns at both ends:

It will not last the night:

But ah, my foes, and oh, my friends—

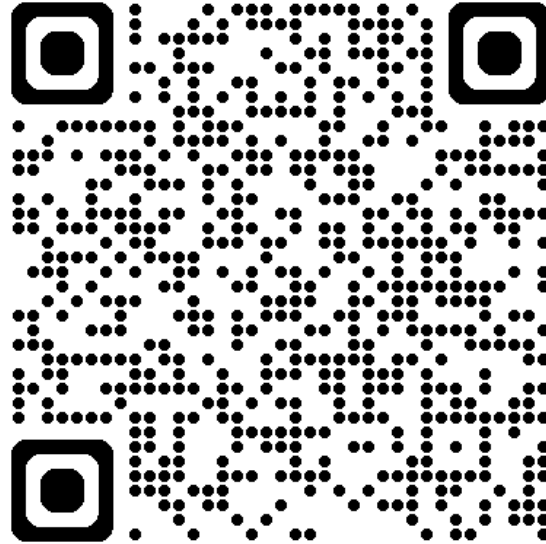
It gives a lovely light!



# Breakout Room Questions

1. What does the poem's title suggest to you? (Hint: "First Fig" is the opening poem in the collection titled "A Few Figs From Thistles." Figs from thistles is an old saying that means something that's impossible.)
2. The image of a candle burning at both ends is an example of an extended metaphor. What does it mean to you?
3. Why did the poet choose this image in particular?
4. What are the main themes of the poem?
5. Does the poem stir your emotions? If so, can you share them?
6. How could this poem help readers to cope with or comes to terms with their own mortality?

# Evaluation



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# Upcoming Session

## **Suffering and Spirituality in End-of-Life Care**

**Date:** June 19, 2025

**Presenters:**

Wenda Salomons, MTS, Certified Spiritual Care Practitioner, Covenant Health

Craig Traynor, MDiv, Spiritual Health Practitioner, Covenant Health

This presentation explores end-of-life suffering through a lens of spirituality. While touching on some historical and cultural background, it focuses on modern approaches to spiritual care and proposes some solutions to address suffering in end-of-life care.

# Stay Connected



- Visit [Compassionate Alberta \(covenanthealth.ca\)](https://covenanthealth.ca) to access all our tools and resources.
- Please subscribe to our newsletter: [Palliative Institute | Compassionate Alberta newsletter](#)
- Contact us at: [Palliative.Institute@covenanthealth.ca](mailto:Palliative.Institute@covenanthealth.ca)



# Thank You!

The Palliative Care ECHO Project is supported by a financial contribution from Health Canada. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of Health Canada.



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