



Palliative Institute

Psychosocial Spiritual Alberta Community of Practice: Narrative Medicine: Reflective Writing Practices for Palliative Care Providers

October 9, 2025

Presented by: Narrative Prescriptions: Mireille de Réland and Paula Holmes-Rodman

Facilitator: Sheila Killoran, Education Lead, Covenant Health Palliative Institute





Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that we are located on Treaty 6 territory and Métis Nation Region 4. We respect the histories, languages, and cultures and current experience of First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and all First Peoples of Canada.



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.



Narrative Medicine: Reflective Writing Practices for Palliative Care Providers

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Narrative Prescriptions

Narrative Prescriptions provides creative expression and mindfulness-informed ‘small dose’ practices, workshops and retreats for professional care providers, family caregivers and individuals impacted by life limiting illnesses.



Paula Holmes-Rodman: Anthropologist, consultant, writer, caregiver, and advocate. Holds an advanced Certificate in Narrative Based Medicine from the University of Toronto in illness narratives, solidarity storytelling, and health equity.



Mireille de Réland: Mindfulness and narrative medicine facilitator, program manager, caregiver, advocate and volunteer. Holds Certificates in Narrative Based Medicine, Mindfulness Applications, and Mindful-End-Of-Life Care from the University of Toronto.



Learning Objectives

Understand how Narrative Medicine can support the wellbeing of psychosocial palliative care providers.

Engage in reflective writing prompts to restore the self and cultivate resilience.

Reconnect with meaning and purpose through guided reflection and shared discussion—fostering sustainable, compassionate patient care, peer connection, and mindful self-care.



The Origins of *Narrative* Prescriptions for Palliative Care

Purpose and Guiding Principles of the *Narrative Prescriptions* Program



Create a Community
of Practice for
end-of-life care staff
and volunteers



Provide an accessible,
inclusive and safe
space



Simple, applicable and
research-based
narrative practices
for
professional/personal
growth and deepening
patient relationship

Compassion and Mindfulness Based Facilitation



Narrative Medicine...

“Medicine practiced with the ***narrative competence*** to recognize, absorb, interpret, and be moved by the stories of illness.”

- Dr. Rita Charon, Columbia University

Narrative Medicine In Practice



Find Meaning / Acknowledge Interactions / Recognize Feelings / Build Connections

Narrative Medicine Benefits

- ❖ Acknowledge interactions → improve awareness of self and others
- ❖ Recognize feelings → enhance emotional and moral resilience
- ❖ Develop empathy and compassion
- ❖ Build connections
- ❖ Improve team collaboration and understanding
- ❖ Find meaning in EOL work



Narrative Medicine in EOL Care...

“The value of Narrative Medicine is really in ***self-nourishment***. Even with debriefings, palliative care clinicians don’t always get the time to ***digest their experiences and try to heal.***”

- Katie Grogan, Associate Director of Clinical Education, US Center to Advance Palliative Care



Tips and Tricks for Writing in a Brave Space



Guidelines for Writing

1. Don't think
2. Keep your hand moving
3. Don't censor yourself
4. Write in any language or format
5. Privacy & Confidentiality

Guidelines for Sharing

1. You don't have to share what you write
2. Whatever is shared here today is confidential
3. Listen generously and openly

Listen to the Words

The Word

By Tony Hoagland

Down near the bottom of the crossed-out list of
things you have to do today,

between “green thread” and “broccoli,”
you find that you have penciled “sunlight.”

Resting on the page, the word is beautiful.

It touches you as if you had a friend and sunlight
were a present he had sent from someplace
distant as this morning- to cheer you up,
and to remind you that, among your duties,
pleasure is a thing that also needs accomplishing.

Do you remember?

that time and light are kinds of love,

and love is no less practical than a coffee
grinder or a sage spare tire?

Tomorrow you may be utterly without a clue,

but today you get a telegram from the heart
in exile,

proclaiming that the kingdom still exists,

the king and queen alive,

still speaking to their children,

-to any one among them who can find the
time to sit out in the sun and listen.

Writing Prompts

Choose one of the following prompts, the first one that grabs you. You have 4 minutes to write.

Write about 'You have penciled in 'sunlight'.

OR

Write about a line in the poem that inspires you.



Visual Prompt



Group Sharing - 10 Minutes



1. Observations about the poem or the image.
2. A few lines or words that you wrote.
3. What was the process of writing like for you?
4. How was it different writing to an image compared to a poem?

Closing Reflection

As you reflect on today's session, what insights will you carry forward that can help you sustain your own wellbeing?



Thank you! ♥

For further conversations, collaborations or questions:
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Mireille de Réland



Paula Holmes-Rodman





Q & A

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- <https://falk.syr.edu/resilience-writing/> by Diane Stirling Oct 4, 2022

Evaluation



<https://redcap.link/PSCoPECHOSession1>

Upcoming Session

Session #2: Deepening Connections: How Our Presence and “Holy Curiosity” Might Deepen Spiritual Care Conversations

Date: November 13, 2025

Presenter: Christine Enfield, M.Div, Spiritual Health Practitioner, Covenant Health

This session considers how our listening and responding may either keep conversations on the surface or invite deeper sharing. We will explore our own strategies for grounding ourselves and remaining present in patient/client encounters. How might the use of “open honest questions” and reflective listening techniques encourage a patient’s/client’s inner voice to be heard?

Thank You!

Stay Connected

- Visit [Palliative Institute | Covenant Health](https://covenanthealth.ca/palliative-institute) (covenanthealth.ca) to access all our tools and resources.
- Contact us at: Palliative.Institute@covenanthealth.ca



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