

Social Work

with Dr Laura Béres
and Tracey Jones

Talking points

Knowledge

1. What is social work?
2. What is narrative therapy?
3. What is narrative medicine?

Comprehension

4. Why did the Journey Through Words team decide to combine the approaches of narrative medicine and narrative therapy?
5. Why did the team use a group therapy rather than individual therapy approach in their programme?

Application

6. Talking about vulnerable topics in a group setting could be risky, if other members of the group do not respond kindly. How do you think this risk can be mitigated in group therapy?
7. Eco-anxiety is considered a normal response to the state of the world. How do you think therapists might be addressing eco-anxiety in young people?

Analysis

8. How do you think the researchers might assess whether the programme is benefiting patients, and to what extent?
9. “We recognise that our current Wellspring model isn’t one-size-fits-all,” says Tracey. How do you think the Journey through Words programme might need to be adapted to serve different communities or individuals? What further research might need to be done to ensure it is effective?

Evaluation

10. “The rise of artificial intelligence in society will bring its own research needs for social work,” says Laura. How do you think artificial intelligence (AI) might affect individual and community well-being, and how might social work programmes respond to these effects?
11. Laura talks about the importance of the spiritual within mental well-being. Approaches to spirituality can vary widely across different individuals, social groups and cultures. To what extent do you think these variations might impact group members’ resilience to hardship?



Activity

Think about a challenging time in your life. For example, it might be a time when you fell out with a friend or you had to make a difficult decision. You do not have to choose the ‘biggest’ difficult time if you do not feel like thinking about it, at the moment; smaller difficulties are also worth addressing.

Now, think about the following questions from the Journey Through Words handbook:

- What do you think helped keep you going one day at a time during this difficult time?
- Who are the people who have influenced and/or supported you in your life and how has knowing each other impacted you both?

Without judging or analysing your words too much, spend twenty minutes on a piece of creative writing using the Journey Through Words creative writing prompt below. The creative writing prompt does not directly address the questions above, but if you keep those questions in mind, they will colour what you write.

Imagine yourself as a plant of some sort (a flowering or vegetable plant, a shrub or small tree). Think of this plant as having been transplanted, moved from where it used to grow, and placed somewhere new. Where has it been replanted? What was the process of being replanted like? What was needed to transplant it – for example, a big shovel or a small spade? Was it fertilised, watered and protected within its new location?



You can write about this plant in the first person (as if you are the plant describing the process) or in the third person (describing the process as one that you witnessed).

Once finished, you do not need to share your written work with others. Instead, take some introspective time to think about how performing this task made you feel:

- What was it like to use the metaphor of a plant to experience some of your own responses to a challenging time?
- In looking at what you have written, are you able to identify what values, resources and strengths have influenced you? Do you value consistency or change, support or independence, for example?
- Did you feel better? Different? The same?
- To what extent do you think doing such an activity could help you in the future?
- What would be the challenges of doing this activity as part of group therapy session and/or with a therapist?
- What would be the benefits of doing this activity as part of group therapy session and/or with a therapist?
- How would you feel as a social worker guiding someone else through this task?

Do you need to talk?

If there is a problem or challenging issue concerning you at the moment, remember that there are always people you can talk to – if not at home, there are adults at your school who you can talk to. It might feel like a daunting thing to do at first, but it is important that you talk to your tutor or a pastoral care teacher in your school if you are going through a difficult time. They will always be there to listen to you.

In Canada, Kids Help Phone supports young people with social and mental health issues:
www.kidshelpphone.ca

In the UK, Childline provides support and advice for getting through difficult times:
www.childline.org.uk

More resources

- You can find the Journey Through Words facilitator's guidebook, as well as slides used for the six sessions, on the Wellspring website: wellspring.ca/london-region/journeythroughwords
- Leah mentions her role as a co-creator of the 'Storytelling for Impact' module created for the Can-SOLVE CKD network, Canada's largest kidney research initiative. You can find the 'Storytelling for Impact' learning module on the Can-Solve website, which you can find here: cansolveckd.ca/storytelling
- This video from SciToons explains the value of narrative medicine and why it is a useful discipline for healthcare: www.youtube.com/watch?v=N4Z6J9YUxo8
- Here is a brief video describing some key elements of narrative therapy: www.youtube.com/watch?v=NTTe8Yr4rH0
- Here is an interesting example of how depression has been 'externalised' and imagined as a black dog so that the person no longer feels totally overwhelmed by the label of depression: www.youtube.com/watch?v=XiCrniLQGYc&t=2s
- To learn more about eco-anxiety, read: www.futurumcareers.com/how-can-art-therapy-help-children-cope-with-eco-anxiety