



“Joy”

Narrative Medicine Workshop Rundown

Description:

This guide is timed for a **1-hour, 30-minute** virtual workshop with **8-10 participants** and includes a short break. It assumes you have already held an introductory “Attention” group and set group guidelines. Adjust your time estimates for groups that are larger, smaller, or of different lengths. Same for in-person groups: adjust timing and exercises as necessary.

Look for facilitator tips, production notes, and sample language throughout to help make your workshop successful. Feel free to copy and paste third objects, prompts, and other exercises from the [Accessible Digital Library](#) into your rundown.

Workshop sections:

WELCOME	<i>3-5 minutes</i>
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Guidelines reminder to create a safe environment. Introductory note about **joy**, which is not always the first thing we think about when we’re considering the healthcare setting or medical environment but is an incredibly important part of healing and renewal. Joy is a critical component of justice, self-care and building community amid struggle, anger, fear and exhaustion. Remind everyone there will be a short break midway through the workshop.

Production note:

This is a great chance to bring your own thinking and experience to this workshop. Why did you choose this workshop? What do you hope these explorations bring participants?

WARM-UP WRITE & SHARE	<i>15-20 minutes total</i>
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Write #1 (5 minutes)

Joy is often found most easily in the body, many times when in community with others. There may be joy right now in the simple act of being together, right here, in this workshop. Spend a minute thinking about how to harness it and invite someone else (or yourself) into a joyful space or memory. Be sure to keep your pen/pencil/typing moving:

- Come with me, come...
- When I let my mind go...

Share (10-15 minutes)

Give everyone an opportunity to share all or part of their writing aloud. Reminder to respect people’s privacy, to read without apology or preamble. For everyone else, bring attention to the writing, practice active engagement with what is being shared. If there is a particular word or phrase that stands out to you, write it down for yourself or type it in the chat.



THIRD OBJECT – ENGAGE, DISCUSS, AND WRITE

16-20 minutes total

For third objects and prompts or exercises that pair best with this workshop, [visit the Accessible Digital Library here](#).

Preface (1 minute)

Before sharing your screen with the third object, encourage everyone to continue the level of active engagement when you share each other's words. Encourage them to keep a list of what they notice about the piece, first impressions, words or phrases, their own experience in their body and any emotional reaction.

Engage with third object (5-7 minutes)

Share your screen. If a written work, have a participant read aloud and a second volunteer read it again. Whatever the third object, have everyone jot a list for themselves what they notice about the piece, the questions they have.

Discuss (10-12 minutes)

Facilitate discussion about what people notice or respond to, what stands out. Use skills honed in previous workshops. Does everybody gravitate to the same things or different? Was there something you brought to your observation, any aesthetic preference or bias? With the subjects of the third objects in mind, do you recognize where joy shows up in your life, particularly in areas of health and illness? Without placing judgment on whether these forms of joy are good or bad, helpful or unhelpful, healthy or unhealthy, can you name them? Was there something familiar that helped you identify with the material, or was there no point of reference? Was anything about the piece that was difficult or challenging for you? Name it.

BREAK

5 minutes

While it is nice to stay inside the dream of a workshop, it's also important to normalize taking breaks. "Powering through" may leave some people behind who have access needs you are not aware of. Encourage people to keep phones and other devices tucked away, but also to stretch their body, use the restroom, grab a snack, and/or do what they need to rest and recharge.

Consider sending people on their break with a prompt to notice anything joyful or uplifting in their environment that they might hold onto for future use (in the workshop, or for later).

Production note:

We offer the following write/share/discussion to be used *instead* of prompts and exercises suggested with your chosen third object. If you want to do both, we've included a production note below with ways to shorten the following exercise to 30-35 minutes instead of 40-45 minutes.



WRITE #2, SHARE, DISCUSSION	<i>40-45 minutes total</i>
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Write #2 (15 minutes total)

With the third object and the prompt to find something joyful in their environment still in mind, do another write. Ask participants to think about the little things that bring joy throughout the day or that can return you to a more joyful place when you're feeling down. These may be small talismans you notice or carry with you, memories, visualizations, people, interactions. Take a few moments to quickly jot these down. (2 minutes)

- 1) Invite each participant to pick a color, sound, or smell they identify with joy. (9 minutes)
Ask them to write a positive address to that color/sound/smell. This could be in the form of a poem, song, essay, letter or graphic treatment (whatever makes them the most comfortable)
 - It makes me feel good when...
 - This is the color/sound/smell of...
- 2) Using the list of joyful things, ask participants to integrate a few of these (4 minutes) things into the piece they've just written to add additional "joyful" detail.

Share (15-20 minutes)

Give everyone an opportunity to share one of their short writes (or snippets of both, or to hold up and take the group through a quick snapshot of their graphic treatment), acknowledging that a writing exercise like this can feel vulnerable and that it is ok *not* to share. Reminder of privacy, to read without apology or preamble. For everyone else, bring attention to the writing, practice active engagement with what is being shared. If there is a particular word or phrase that stands out to you, write it down for yourself or type it in the chat.

Discussion (10 minutes)

Open discussion on ways we might most readily find joy in healthcare settings or provide roadmaps for joy through touchpoints like colors, objects, memories or visualizations to place joyful offerings within reach no matter where we are. Help the group consider how personal joy is and how available it can be through increased awareness of what moves us and/or what we value.

Production note:

This exercise can be easily shortened by doing only #1 and not #2. If you find yourself running short on time, it can be good not to push participants to do more activities but to instead facilitate a stretching out of time in sharing, discussion and final write.

WRITE #3, SHARE	<i>9-11 minutes total</i>
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Write #3 (3-4 minutes)

Time permitting, do a final write. Invite people to choose a different color from the one they chose to represent joy in their recent exercise. Have them speak to this color similarly, using one of the following prompts:

- One way you bring me joy...
- There's something I've been wondering...

Share (6-7 minutes)

Invite people to read aloud with no feedback. End on people's words.