



“Armor”

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 Narrative Medicine Digital Library](#) into your rundown.

Workshop sections:

WELCOME	<i>3-5 minutes</i>
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Guidelines reminder. Introductory note about **armor**, the protective layers we bring to healthcare settings, the masks we wear, or ways we code-switch. What levels of trust or mistrust we carry about the medical “establishment.” How we discriminate or experience discrimination. Remind everyone there will be a short break midway through the workshop.

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

With yourself in mind, or some detail about the space you’re in right now, write on one of the following prompts. Engage with all the senses available to you and be sure to keep your pen/pencil/typing moving:

- The real me under all this...
- If we let them in...

Share (10-15 minutes)

Give everyone an opportunity to share all or part of their writing aloud. 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.

**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 armor shows up in your life, particularly in areas of health and illness? Without placing judgment on whether these forms of armor 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 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.

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 15-20 minutes instead of 40-45 minutes.

**WRITE #2, SHARE, DISCUSSION***40-45 minutes total***Write #2 (15 minutes total)**

With the third object still in mind, do another write. Think of a time where you acted in a way to protect yourself from a difficult or painful situation. Consider your action (or inaction) in this situation for a minute or so. Notice, without judgment, what sort of armor or strategy you used to protect yourself? Jot these down. (1 minute)

Pick one of these forms of armor and write a **thank you letter** to this part of you (7 minutes)

- Example: *Dear polite smile...*

Pick another one of these forms of armor and write a **respectful goodbye letter** (7 minutes)

- Example: *Dear self-mocking humor...*

Share (15-20 minutes)

Give everyone an opportunity to share one of their letters, 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 use different forms of armor in healthcare settings. Discuss ways to recognize and acknowledge these natural defenses within ourselves and others, without judgment. Discuss ways to build trust.

Production note:

A shorter version (15-20 minutes) of this same write/share/discussion means capping these two writes at 3-4 minutes each and using language to suggest an ode, a eulogy, or postcard: “ode to my...,” “eulogy for my...,” etc. Then, instead of sharing full pieces, folks could share the title or opening line aloud or in the chat. Leave time for discussion.

WRITE #3, SHARE*9-11 minutes total***Write #3 (3-4 minutes)**

Invite people to return to one of the letters they wrote in the second write. Pick one of them and write a response: Dear (your name)...

Share (6-7 minutes)

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