



“Attention”

Narrative Medicine Workshop Guide

Description:

This workshop is intended to go first. This guide is timed for a **1-hour, 45-minute** virtual workshop with **8-10 participants** and includes a short break. Adjust your time estimates for groups that are larger, smaller, or of different lengths. If your workshop is in person, adjust timing and exercises as necessary.

Find 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 this guide.

Workshop sections:

WELCOME	<i>10 minutes</i>
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Welcome everyone, introduce role of facilitator. Give an outline of the group: introductions (with writing and sharing), setting group norms, close engagement with a third object, response, more writing, and a closing.

The topic of this workshop is **Attention**, so be mindful of the ways you give and receive attention during the workshop.

Sample language for virtual groups:

As facilitator, my role is to pose questions, prompt discussion, and keep time. There are many reasons people may have their cameras on or off during the workshop, including ongoing access needs or technical and personal issues in the moment. All are valid. However you show up in this space, we ask that you do what you can to be present and attentive for the workshop, giving us all the opportunity to be moved by others’ words.

Feel free to share any access needs you have today or any technical issues you might be experiencing. If there is anything I can do to accommodate those needs today, please send me a direct message in the chat so I can adjust, as needed.

Production note:

For warm-up activities, best to not share slides. This is so the virtual room feels more like a workshop than a lecture. For some, it will be less distracting too, and can make it easier to read faces, reactions, and expressions.



INTRODUCTION WRITE & SHARE

15 minutes total

Offer three back-to-back writing prompts. Following the principles of narrative medicine, these help show how we are made up of different roles, identities, values, and characteristics that make us who we are.

Warm-up write (1 minute)

If you were a mode of transportation, what would it be? Elaborate on your response.

Warm-up write (1 minute)

What roles do you inhabit in healthcare spaces that you'd like to share with the rest of the group?

Warm-up write (1 minute)

What else would you like the group to know about you?

Facilitator tip:

We use writing prompts for this short intro exercise for a few reasons. First, by writing something down, you create stories in addition to reporting details. Secondly, it keeps you on track as everyone has the same amount of time to share.

Share (12 minutes)

Have everyone share their name and how to pronounce it, their pronouns if they're comfortable, then read what they've written. Facilitators participate too! When everyone is done, ask "Where did **attention** show up in this exercise?"

Facilitator tip:

To make this a smooth virtual session, write names in the chat in the order they should introduce or ask one person to go first and have them call on the next, and so on.

SETTING GROUP NORMS

10 minutes

It's important to set group norms whether this is a one-off workshop or a series. Be sure to revisit the [Touchstones](#) and [Brave Space](#) resources before you facilitate. Be sure that important group norms (around hate speech, respect, confidentiality, etc.) make the list. Be sure to ask what is missing or what else should we add?

Production note:

Write group norms on a virtual document as you go and save them so you can revisit them in future sessions.



ENGAGE WITH THIRD OBJECT, RESPOND, AND WRITE

20 minutes total

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

Engage with third object (4 minutes)

Share your screen with the third object. Encourage absorbing first, note-taking second. If a written work, ask one participant to read it aloud, and for the others to absorb the piece with all senses available to them. Then ask another participant to read it aloud a second time. For visual third objects, encourage people to absorb it closely for 1-2 minutes.

Production note:

Have your third objects ready to go before sharing your screen. You may also want to paste a link in the chat so participants can link to it directly on their own, so long as that link is to a fully accessible website. This way, if you stop sharing your screen, they can still access it.

Respond (10 minutes)

- If a written work, invite participants to reflect on the differences between both readings, or what they noticed was different between the first and second time through it. Offer another 30-60 seconds for people to engage with the work more.
- Good prompting questions: What is going on in this piece? What captures your **attention**? What do you notice? What makes you say that? What else do you notice?
- Invite participants to share using the chat, or unmuting, then open to full conversation.

Introduce writing prompts (1 minute)

Introduce the idea of a writing prompt. Rita Charon refers to this activity as “writing in the shadow of the text” meaning your writing may be influenced by the previous text—in both conscious and unconscious ways. It is also okay if your writing has nothing to do with the previous activities. Encourage them to follow the writing wherever it takes them. There are no rules, other than to write—pen to paper or fingers to keyboard—for the full amount of time. Let them know you will set a timer and tell them when 1 minute is left.

Write (5 minutes)

For prompts and exercises that pair best with this third object, [visit the Accessible Digital Library here](#). After the write, let the group know you will return to what you wrote after a break.

**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 stretch, use the restroom, grab a snack, and/or do what they need to rest and recharge.

SHARE AND RESPOND*45 minutes*

The remaining time will be spent responding to each other's writing. Remind participants: what is shared here stays between us. And writers: you may read all, part, or none of what you wrote. The one guideline is to do so without preamble or apology. Trust that your words have power. Trust that the group will do their best to receive them.

Share (25-30 minutes)

- As people read, invite participants to write words or phrases that stand out to them in the chat box.
- When the reader finishes, take a moment to read those words in the chat aloud, then move on to the next reader.
- If no one has put anything in the chat, take a pause and ask participants to spend 30 seconds thinking about what stood out to them. Invite them again to use the chat.
- If you are doing this in person, ask participants to write one word in their notebook and go around and have people read their word.
- There will be time to discuss and comment more once everyone has a chance to share.

Discuss (15 minutes)

Sample questions:

- What did you notice about the groups' writing?
- What was it like to share your work with the group?
- What stood out to you from someone else's writing, why?

Facilitator tip:

Bring the idea of **attention** back into the conversation if it doesn't naturally come up on its own.

CLOSING ACTIVITY*1 minute*

- Write one word in the chat that describes your experience in the workshop. Don't hit "enter" yet, just write it.
- Once everyone is done, everyone hit "enter"
- Read the words aloud as a close to the session.