



Haiku Mind: a creative tool for stress management and mind-body connection

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Disclosures

- ▶ OBGYN for Presbyterian Healthcare x 12 years
- ▶ Founder/Director of *(H)Arts in Medicine, LLC* – educational company promoting wellness for community and clinicians via overlaps between humanities and the arts, and health and medicine.
- ▶ No pharmaceutical or biotech commercial ties



Objectives

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- 1) Identify a key element of haiku poetry (e.g., simplicity, nature) and explore how these principles can enhance mindfulness, emotional awareness, and focus in daily life.
 - 2) Recognize and describe a moment of mindfulness or beauty in a day, using haiku and reflective practice to increase awareness of the present moment
 - 3) Identify and practice one mindfulness technique and explore how it can help improve emotional regulation, increase resilience, and foster greater self-awareness
 - 4) Demonstrate basic writing techniques to create simple haiku.



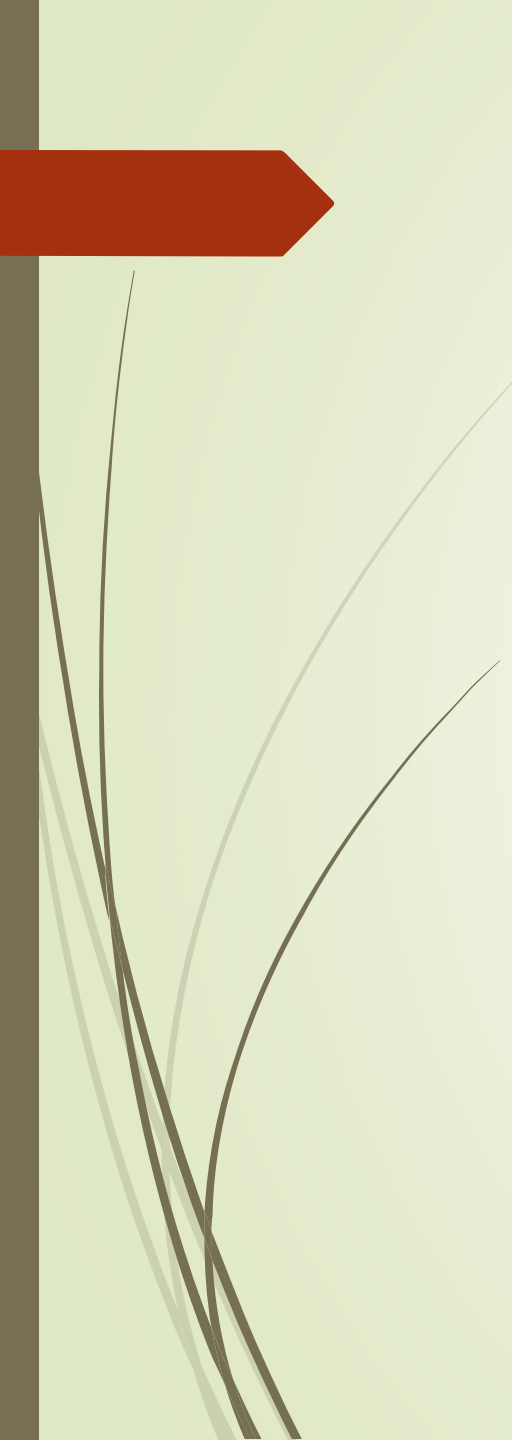
What is Narrative Medicine?

- Interdisciplinary field whose goal is to create habits of mind that are finely tuned towards **Noticing...**
“... the dynamics of one’s own experiences – with patients, colleagues, and institutional structures.”
- “This necessarily involves attending to crucial affective responses of bias, of making judgments, of uncertainty and impatience. Recognition that **what one hears in someone else’s story** can depend on one’s own experiences and state of mind can change everything – can be culture change.” R. Charon, *The Principles and Practice of Narrative Medicine*, 2017



What is Narrative Medicine?

- Uses literature and art (in general) as a prompting tool to practice and develop a *skill set* that can then be applied towards other people's stories, texts, relationships, and the **self**.
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Why is haiku useful for us?

- Practice and concept of “Haiku Mind”
- Baker, B. *Redesign Your Mind – The Hidden Power of Haiku*, 2017
- Brooks, R. “Haiku of Care: Empathy and Compassion in Haiku Poetry” *Frogpond Journal*, 2024, 47(3), 114–141.

This is a wonderful review of a “haiku classroom”, a description of how haiku and haiku community were developed, and its **healing effects on those who write haiku, those who then read the haiku**, and even **how these practices were carried forward into professional realms among former students**.
- Activating parasympathetic systems



so much depends
upon

a red wheel
barrow

glazed with rain
water

beside the white
chickens

-William Carlos Williams



From free-write to haiku...

- Guided haiku exercise, here we go!
- We start with a free-writing exercise:
 - Visualization or a brief 5 minute walk outside
 - Let it take your mind to a positive place – ideally, we are trying to think of a place or a time or a person that has a positive association. Could be something in the past, or in the present. A person, a location, an experience.
 - Hold this visual in your mind's eye for a minute or two. Think about the senses involved in being in that space. What do you see? Who do you hear? What do you feel? How does it smell?
 - Now, write for five minutes without letting the pen stop, even if you have to write, "I don't know what to write" a few times. Your mind will get there, don't worry!



➤ **Free write, 5-ish minutes...**





haiku examples...

In a Station of the Metro

The apparition of these faces in the crowd;
Petals on a wet, black bough.

-Ezra Pound, 1913



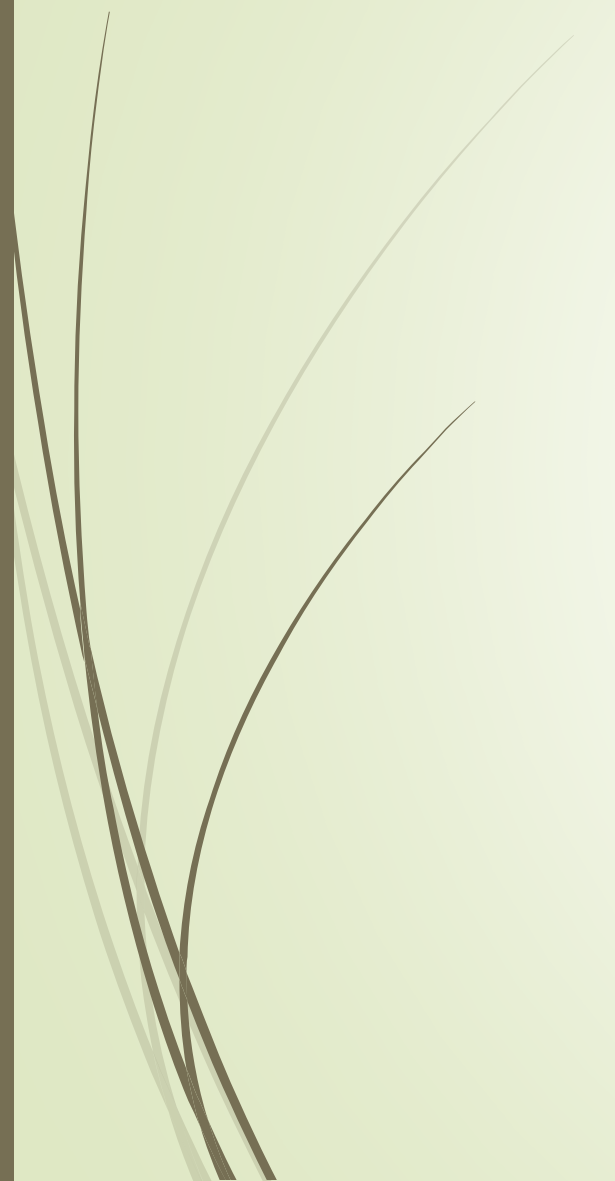
old pond...
a frog leaps in
water's sound

-Basho



moonlight –
through thin clothes
to naked skin

-Hisajo Sugita



violets here and there
in the ruins
of my burnt house

-Shokyu-Ni



pausing
halfway up the stair –
white chrysanthemums

-Elizabeth Searle Lamb

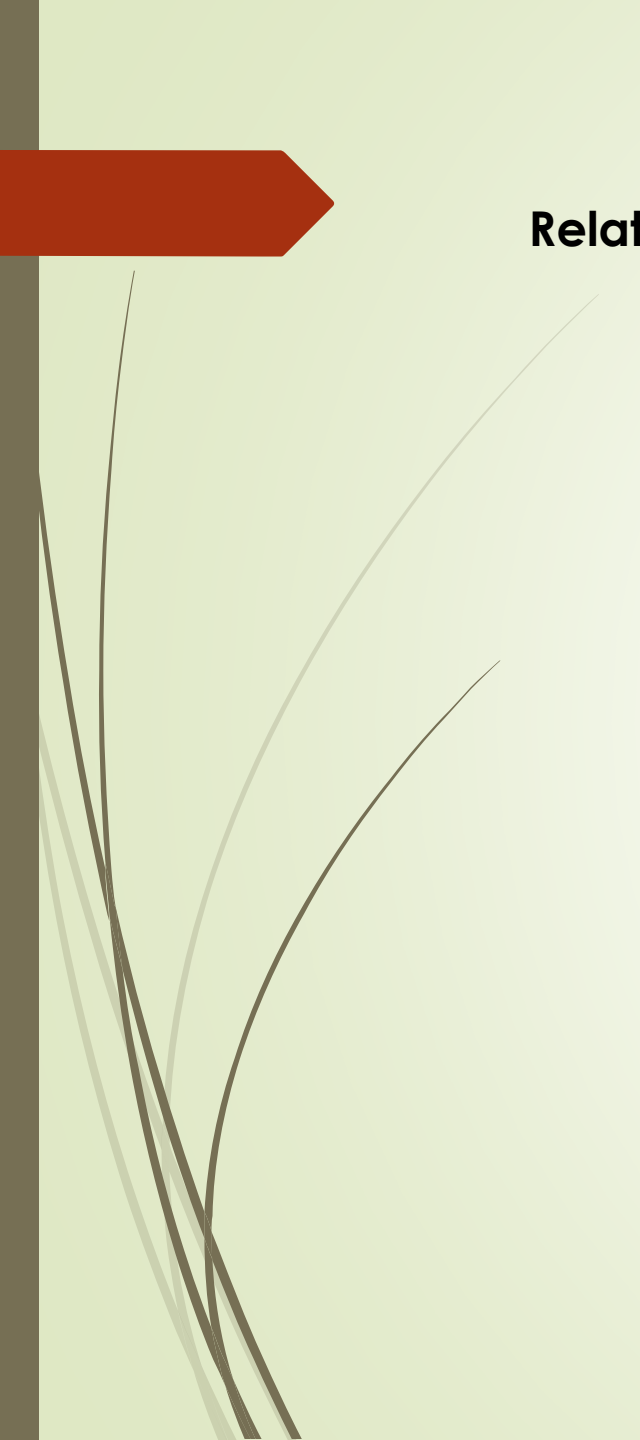


Sunrise:

I forget my side

Of the argument

- George Suede, *Almost Unseen:
Selected Haiku of George Suede*



Related art forms – example of *tanka*

back home
from the oncology ward
I peel my first orange
the burst of justice and smell
colour of the sun I missed

-Sonam Chhoki, *Eucalypts* 10, 2011.
(Padhy, 2024)

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- Return to your free write:
 - Circle **nouns**, Circle **verbs**
 - How many are there? What is central image or object (ie noun)?
 - Let's extrapolate a little...

 - Write three **COLORS** that describe what you chose – ex: brown, red, gray, yellow, etc
 - Write a **SMELL** associated with what you chose – ex: “moldy”, “fresh”, “like grass”,
 - Write a **SENSORY/TOUCH feeling** associated with what you chose – ex: “warm”, “cold”, “brisk”, “prickly”
 - Write an **EMOTION** associated with what you chose – “sad”, “confused”, “happy”

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- ▶ Now let's pick **three lines** from all of the above writing that you *LIKE*. Consider looking for elements of **season**, elements of **positivity**, **humor**

- ▶ Trim away excess!
 - ▶ Focus on nouns brings us to a state of being, not doing
- ▶ See if you can trim it to less than 17 syllables total, and see what you get!
- ▶ Haiku! Let's print it nicely on a clean sheet. Or you can fold it and put it somewhere special to remember the moment, or dab it with the aroma that you selected
- ▶ OR... you can take it another step....



Option... going a little further

- Read it out loud (to someone else or to yourself) – How does it **SOUND**? Do you notice areas that have rhythm? Are there areas where the tongue stumbles? Are there areas that sound hard or soft? Loud or quiet? How do you *want* it to SOUND?
- Let's look at **noun and verb counts**. Try not to have more than one verb, focusing on nouns brings the reader into “**being**” and not “**doing**”. Try not to end with a verb.
- Is it in the **present tense**? And does the word choice reflect positive or negative? Which are you aiming for?
- Does it include elements of **seasonality**? Of **juxtaposition**? (positivity?)



...going a little further...

- ▶ this is WORK and takes craft and practice!... let it evolve. Think about it over time. There is no hurry. The art and the work here is to consider the object, consider the *moment*, and consider how to most precisely and concisely engage your reader and bring them to that moment as well.
- ▶ Try working with haiku for **20 minutes per day for 3 days in a row**. If possible, place yourself somewhere you can appreciate something from nature.

Option: from haiku to sigil

- Pick ONE WORD that you like from your haiku or free-write, that you feel like represents you or something important to you
- Write it out on a separate piece of paper
- Cross out any repeating letters, and vowels
- Now, let's re-deisgn what you are left with... add colors!





Wrap up & Conclusions

- Hoping you have found one little method of slowing the brain and “noticing”
- Consider practicing “haiku mind” once per day... try 3 days in a row!
- A little bit of relaxation and creativity for your day!



References:

- Charon, R., et al, *The Principles and Practice of Narrative Medicine*, 2017
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