

# Mastering the Skills and Benefits of Storytelling in Health Care

John Tegzes<sup>1</sup>, Bryn Baxendale<sup>2</sup>, Susan Kennedy<sup>3</sup>, Amber Fitzsimmons<sup>4</sup>, Katy Avila<sup>1</sup>, Courtney Saenz<sup>1</sup>, & Phillip Mitchell<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Western University of Health Sciences

<sup>2</sup>Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust

<sup>3</sup>Health Education England

<sup>4</sup>University of California, San Francisco

# Welcome & Introductions

- Who we are
- Why we are here today



# Introductions & Goals for the workshop

- Who are you, and what do you hope to achieve today?
  - Introduce yourself and institution you come from
  - What is your experience with storytelling?
  - What do you hope to gain today?

What's your story?



# The art of storytelling

- One of the most ancient and powerful ways of communicating and connecting with people



# The art of storytelling

- Create an experience that:
  - evokes emotions from the listener
  - Makes an impression
  - Changes a mood
  - Transmits values
  - Inspires listeners to action
  - Catapults over significant challenges



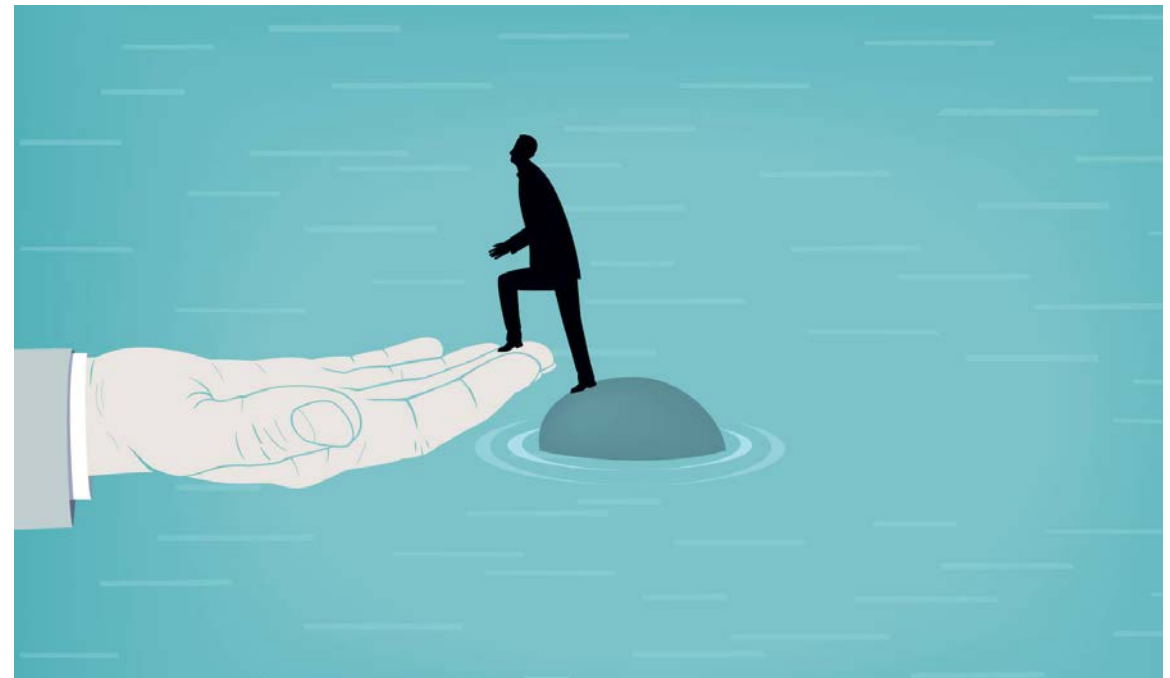
# A good story.....

- Shares a vision in such a way that it engages logical, emotional, and intuitive intelligences and generates “sparks of possibility.”



# The art of medicine & health care

- Despite enormous advances in the science of medicine, the interpersonal encounter remains a keystone of health care
- Most research has tended to focus on theory rather than specifying how doctors & clinicians should act





# Honoring the stories of illness

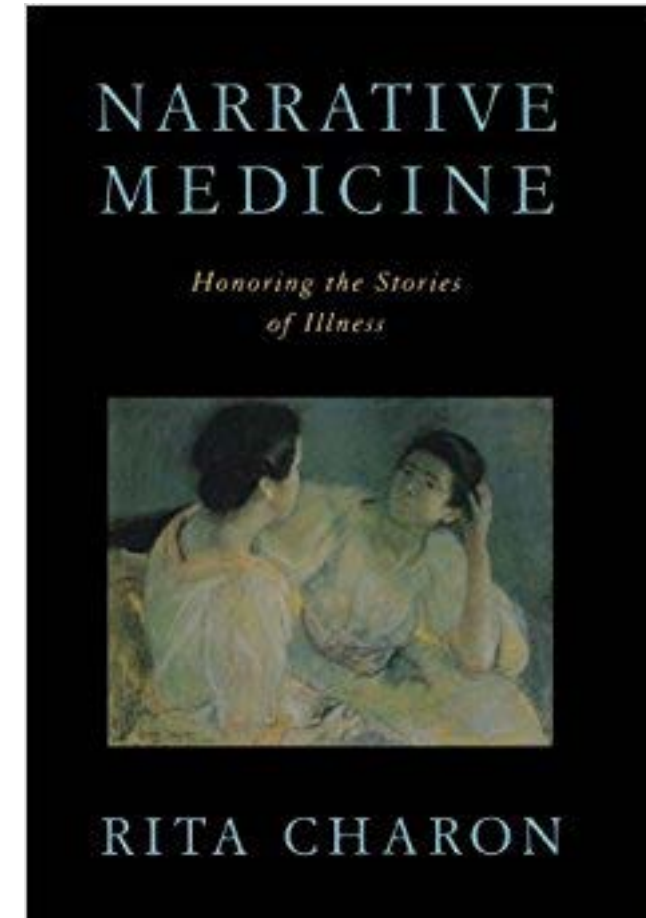
---

- Dr Rita Charon at Columbia University is a pioneer and innovator in the practice of narrative medicine
- Listening attentively to the stories our patients tell is essential to a patient-centered, collaborative approach to medicine



# Honoring the stories of health care

- But what about the clinicians' stories?
- In an age of heightened confidentiality and enormous focus on science and technology, we no longer elicit or hear our own stories
  - How then can we truly connect to our patients, our colleagues, ourselves?



# Who are stories for?

01

To honor our patients  
and focus on their  
whole being

02

To provide a forum  
for health care  
providers to share  
experiences

03

To reflect on patient  
encounters so that  
we can make sense  
and move on

- Sharing those experiences is important!

# The Moth

- The Moth's mission is to promote the art and craft of storytelling and to honor and celebrate the diversity and commonality of human experience.
  - [www.themoth.org](http://www.themoth.org)



# Let's listen to a story

- Attentive listening is an important storytelling skill
- Next we will listen to a story, told by someone who does not work in health care
- While listening to her, notice how it feels to simply listen



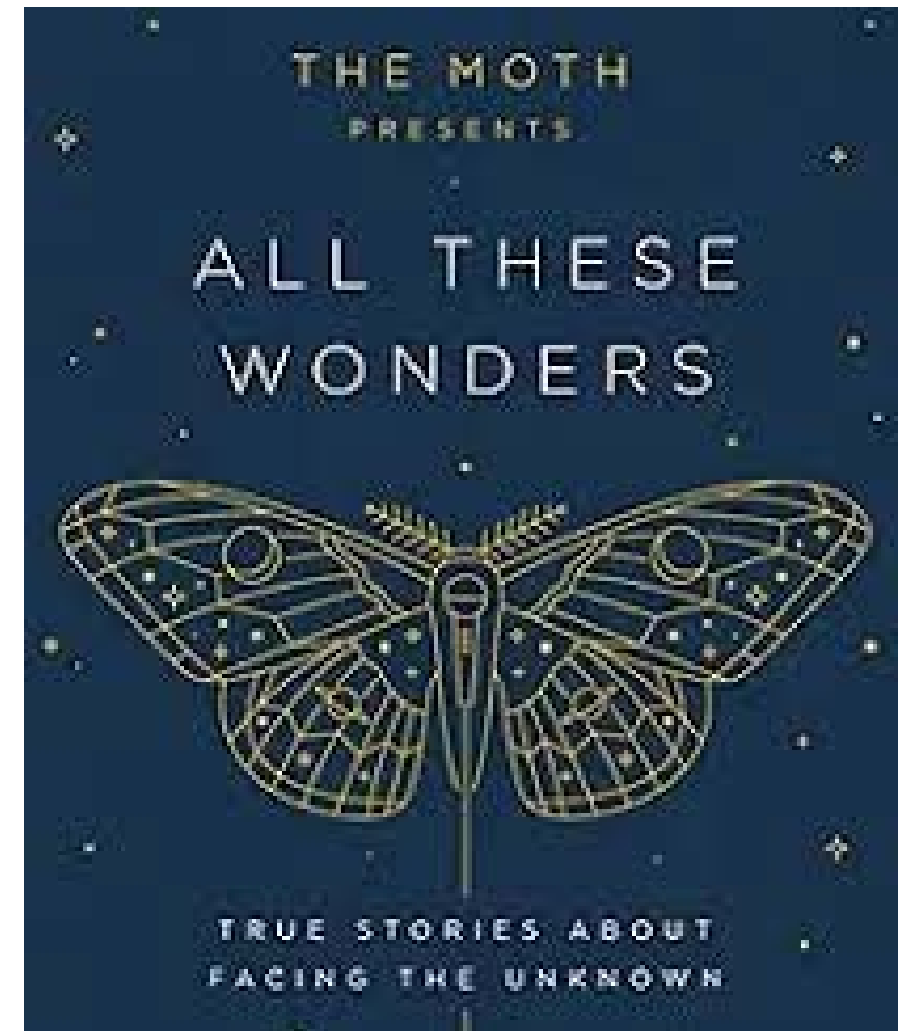
# Cole Kazdin

---

- <https://themoth.org/stories/memorial-under-the-sea>



How was that for you?



# Stories and health care – why connect the two?

- Storytellers are active listeners and keen observers. They are almost never on autopilot but rather fully present in the moment.
- Storytellers keep an open ear, eye, and mind to everything.
- Storytellers establish intimacy and engage people rather than talking at them.



Stories are entertaining, but....

- They serve the teller!





Now let's listen and watch a  
storyteller



# John Tegzes

---

<https://vimeo.com/192868013>

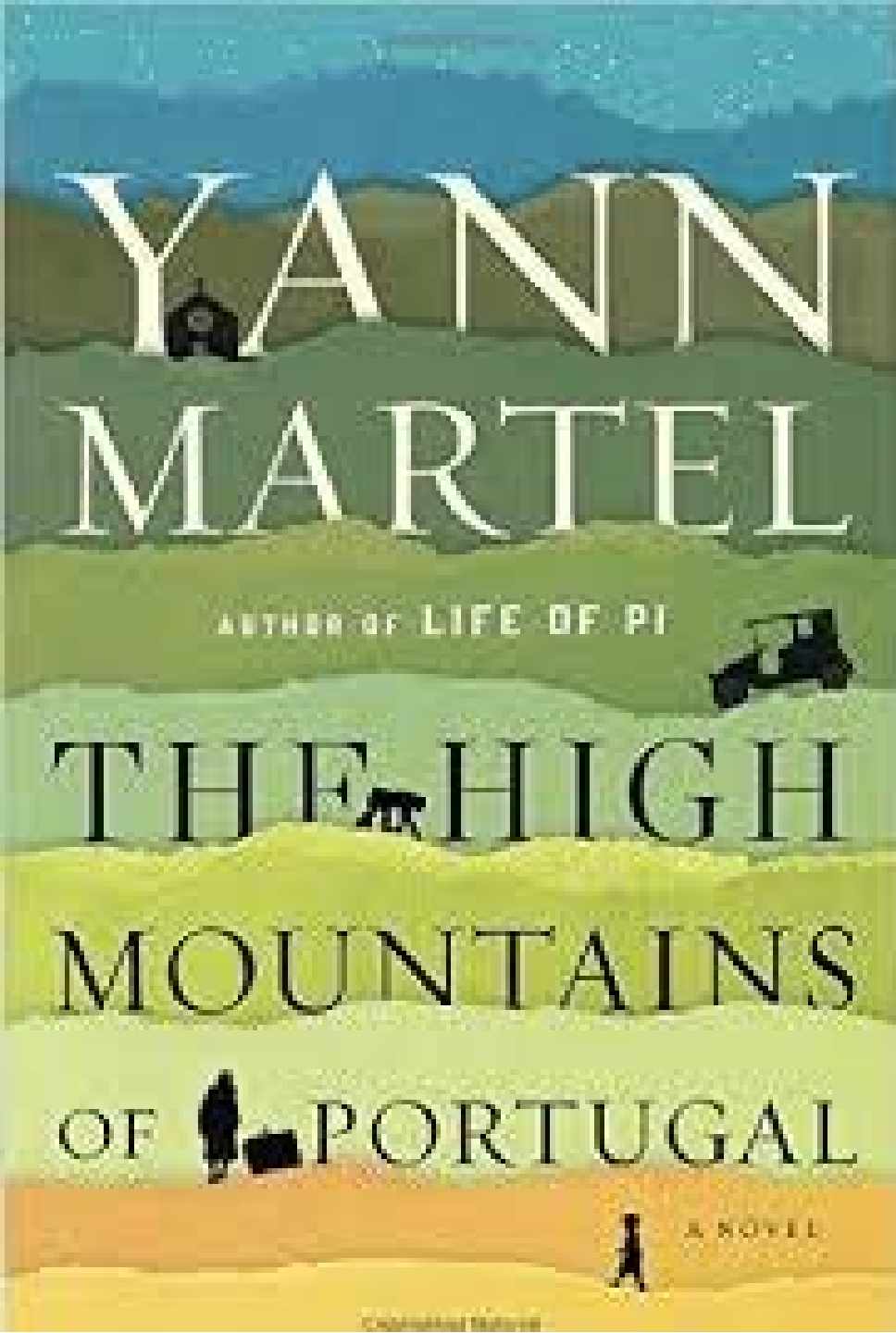
---

# Discussion



# The process in interprofessional practice & education

- Not simply swapping stories
- There is a process
- Since this is a workshop, we will participate in that process right now!



## Close reading

- From, “the high mountains of portugal” by yann martel

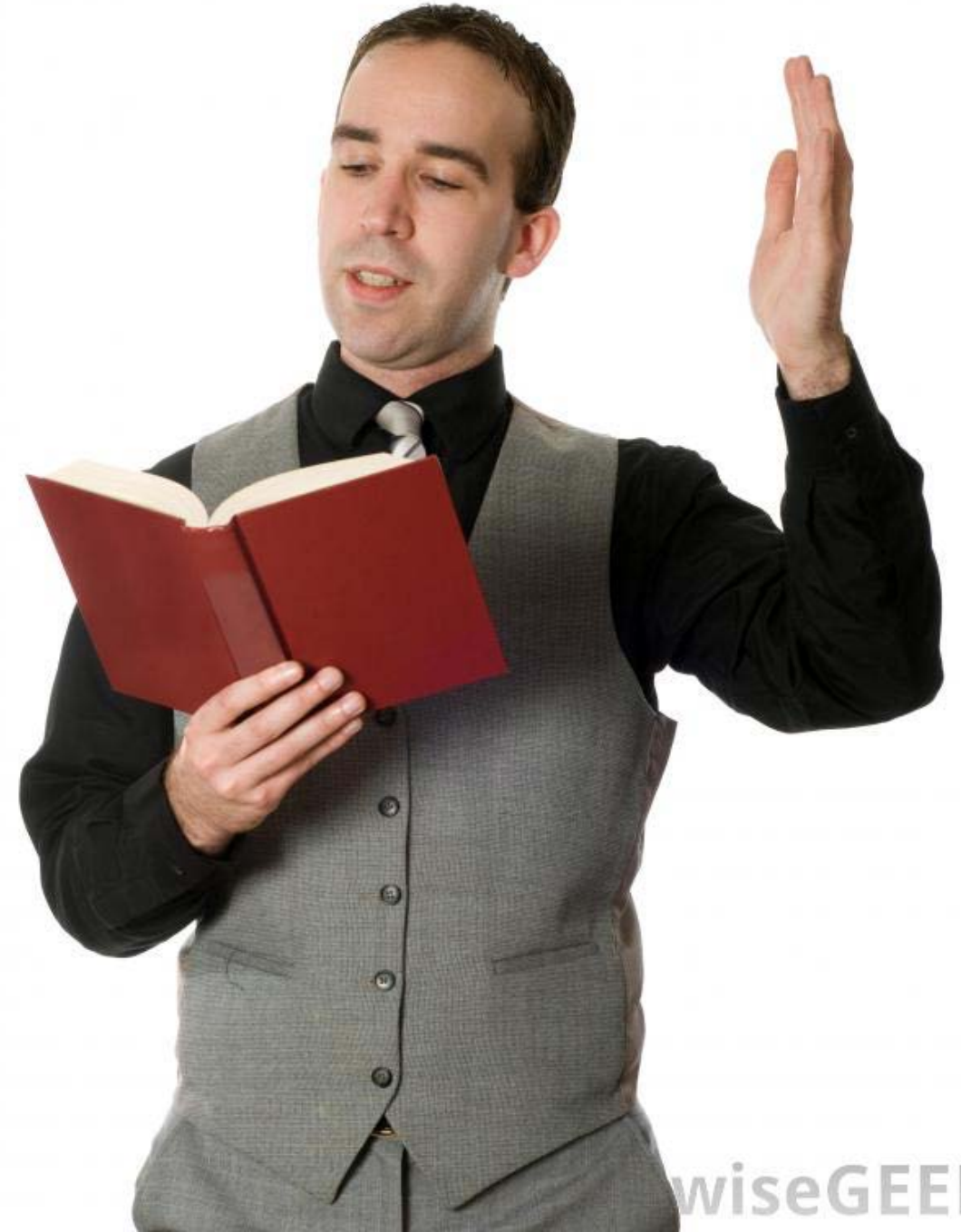
# Writing Prompt – 4 minutes

- Write about a time when you struggled to find the right words.



# Readings

- Take turns reading your story
- It is important to honor your own process, so please, no introduction, to explanations, no justifications, no paraphrasing.....
  - ..... simply read the exact words you wrote on the page



# Discussion

## THE POWER OF STORYTELLING

**01** MRI scans reveal that when we read words like “perfume” and “coffee”, our primary olfactory cortex activates.

**02** Individuals who frequently read fiction seem to better understand other people and display greater empathy.

**03** When someone listens to a character-driven story, their brain immediately floods with oxytocin, a love hormone.

**04** Our brain will ignore clichéd words and phrases – a phenomenon that scientists theorize is caused by loss of storytelling power.

**05** The “hero’s journey” story model is the foundation for half of all Hollywood movies and the majority of the most-watched TED talks.

**06** The hormone cortisol is released during the rising arc of the story, prompting a powerful emotional reaction even when the listener knows the story is fiction.

**E**

echostories.com



Storyslam



next  
steps



- How can you use storytelling in your IP curricula?

Summary and Next Steps