

 COLUMBIA | NARRATIVE MEDICINE
SOCIAL CONNECTIVE TISSUE

MARCH 2020

The social isolation and anguish suffered by our colleagues at CUIMC mount with the scope of the COVID-19 challenge. Columbia Narrative Medicine offers its creative and reflective resources from the humanities and the arts to nourish individuals, provide social connective tissue, maintain contact & morale, and build teams for our clinicians and students. We have developed and tested many narrative medicine methods to gather groups for intensive exploration of art, experiences, and stories. Almost magically, when we look closely at something together, we end up seeing ourselves and our colleagues in a new light. It is always extraordinary!

We are developing several initiatives—one for **naturally occurring work groups** who want to sign up as a unit for virtual sessions together, one for **virtual “drop-in meetings”** for anyone who wants to join in, and one as a **web resource** that anyone anywhere can log onto for suggestions of reading, viewing, and writing opportunities.

Email us at narrativemedicine@columbia.edu to join in.

NATURALLY OCCURRING WORK GROUPS (NOW GROUPS)

These are groups of individuals who work on a clinical or academic team together, e.g., ob/gyn interns, staff on 6 Garden North, or Dean’s Office staff members. The ideal number per group is around 8 to 10. Narrative Medicine will assign a facilitator to each NOW group and settle on a time and frequency for meeting. The groups will read and discuss great writing, look at visual art, talk about they see, write to prompts, and respond to one another’s writing. They might engage in other creative activities—sharing photos, sharing music—that the group itself chooses to do. These groups will have stable membership and meet regularly for a period of time into the foreseeable future.

VIRTUAL “DROP-IN” MEETINGS

These will be open to anyone. No need for appointments or sign in. We can accommodate up to 100 persons at a time. We will take up a work of some kind—text, image, music—read and examine it closely, discuss among ourselves what we see, with the facilitators offering some guidance and background. Then we would have some quiet time for spontaneous writing to a prompt. Some participants would be able to read to the rest of us what they wrote or can share offline with others who are present.

WEB RESOURCES

We will post texts or images on our website. We’ll change the work every week. Persons can visit the resource on their own, watch a video posted by our faculty discussing the work, maybe describing why it was chosen. We will post a writing prompt, and all who join in can write on their own and post what is written.

Eventually, Columbia Narrative Medicine will be able to mount these initiatives in partnership with our international colleagues. We have the capacity for gatherings in Italian, French, German, Japanese, Chinese, and Polish—a Narrative Medicine global handshake!

Please, all, take care of yourselves and your loved ones,

Columbia Narrative Medicine

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