



The Art of Narrative Psychiatry: Stories of Strength and Meaning

SuEllen Hamkins

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Narrative psychiatry empowers patients to shape their lives through story. Rather than focusing only on finding the source of the problem, in this collaborative clinical approach psychiatrists also help patients diagnose and develop their sources of strength. By encouraging the patient to explore their personal narrative through questioning and story-telling, the clinician helps the patient participate in and discover the ways in which they construct meaning, how they view themselves, what their values are, and who it is exactly that they want to be. These revelations in turn inform clinical decision-making about what it is that ails them, how they'd like to treat it, and what recovery might look like.

The Art of Narrative Psychiatry is the first comprehensive description of narrative psychiatry in action. Engaging and accessible, it demonstrates how to help patients cultivate their personal sources of strength and meaning as resources for recovery. Illustrated with vivid case reports and in-depth accounts of therapeutic conversations, the book offers psychiatrists and psychotherapists detailed guidance in the theory and practice of this collaborative approach. Drawing inspiration from narrative therapy, post-modern philosophy, humanistic medicine, and social justice movements - and replete with ways to more fully manifest the intentions of the mental health recovery model - this engaging new book shows how to draw on the standard psychiatric toolbox while also maintaining focus on the patient's vision of the world and illuminating their skills and strengths. Written by a pioneer in the field, *The Art of Narrative Psychiatry* describes a breadth of nuanced, powerful narrative practices, including externalizing problems, listening for what is absent but implicit, facilitating re-authoring conversations, fostering communities of support, and creating therapeutic documents.

The Art of Narrative Psychiatry addresses mental health challenges that range from mild to severe, including anxiety, depression, despair, anorexia/bulimia, perfectionism, OCD, trauma, psychosis, and loss. True to form, the author narrates her own experience throughout, sharing her internal thoughts and decision-making processes as she listens to patients. *The Art of Narrative Psychiatry* is necessary reading for any professional seeking to empower their patients and become a better, more compassionate clinician.

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