



Creativity in Education

Preparatory workbook

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Introduction

The very best forms of learning have been described as 'tough fun' – experiences that are both inspiring and inspired by educators who foster an ongoing passion for learning and who nurture their own and their students' creative energies.

For many of us, the experiences that have shaped our professional identities – both as caring professionals and as educators of new professionals – derive from the rich experience and the privilege of working with those who are in (often extreme) need. This, however, can be a draining as well as a rewarding process.

Much emphasis is now placed upon 'reflection' as a key source of professional learning, but it is not always made explicit to students that 'reflection' is not simply the act of 'remembering' a specific interaction or event. 'Reflection', as a prompt to learning, implies 'thinking around' an event – looking at it from different perspectives and seeking to develop a 'felt understanding' of what was happening for participants by exploring the different 'shadows' that are cast when it is 'illuminated' from different perspectives and by different senses than the purely intellectual/abstract.

As an aid to this type of 'reflection', to deepen our understanding of the situation of those whom we seek to help, and/or to recharge our own emotional and intellectual batteries, many of us turn to the creative arts – whether that is painting, poetry, fiction, drama, film, sculpture, handicraft or music – occasionally as creators, but more often as engaged audiences. In this way, our one brief experience of time can be extended so that we can live, imaginatively, a thousand lifetimes and enhance our empathic understanding of the world as it is experienced by others.

These influences and the understandings they generate can help to sustain our own creativity as well as to form and to refine our professional identities and develop our capacity to care.

As professional educators they can sustain our passion for learning, and help us to be imaginative in our facilitation of students' learning, enriching it through access to their own, and others', creativity.

The boundary of 'creativity' should be an inclusive one – and not one that is 'owned' by a self-styled social or intellectual 'elite'.

'We do not learn from experience. We learn from reflecting on experience.'

John Dewey, 1939

Experience and education

'By three methods we may learn wisdom: First, by reflection, which is noblest; Second, by imitation, which is easiest; and third by experience, which is the bitterest.'

Confucius

I hear and I forget,

I see and I remember

I do and I understand.

Lao Tsu

Please watch Steve Corry's story 'Care of the Dying?' at

www.patientvoices.org.uk/lssc.htm

'Find purpose, the means will follow.'

M K Gandhi

'Crafts can be the working woman's means of creativity ... engaging in hand work which requires skill and artistry is the 'common' form of creative expression which has helped keep generations of mothers/woman/carers sane, as they work together to make and talk and tell their stories and share their hardships.'

Noda, B. 2008

The power of stories and of personal narratives as creative prompts to and sources of deep learning will be another key theme of the NET conference. Stories are one of the ways we express and share our common humanity and they can be told in so many ways, as the quote above reminds us.

A number of 'digital stories' are used to illustrate and illuminate some of the issues raised below. (Digital stories build on the centuries-old traditions of storytelling and community-building using new media and technology to combine still images, words and music into a deceptively simple short movie that reveals the essence or 'heart' of an individual's story.) As you watch the stories, look at the pictures and read the poetry contained in this workbook, you may like to ask yourself these questions:

1. How does the story/picture/poem make you feel?
2. What does it make you think?
3. What relevance, if any, does it have for you in relation to caring or the education of professionals?

This workshop will provide an opportunity to share influences upon and ideas about creativity – and to do so in an informal social environment. A buffet dinner will be provided during the evening session.

As a preparation for the event and to make the most constructive use of the evening itself, you are invited to complete this online electronic workbook (to paraphrase Mark Twain or, some say, Pascal, 'I am sorry it is such a long workbook. I didn't have time to write a shorter one.').

The workbook includes a number of poems, images and stories that for me resonate with my own work as a paid carer and educator. Some helped to inform and shape my professional repertoire. Others, I have used directly as prompts to learning in my work with student nurses, social workers, doctors and other health professionals. Others have helped to keep alive my own sense of wonder.

Please bring with you to the workshop something that exemplifies creativity for you – perhaps a poem, a piece of music, a photograph or a painting (live performances are welcome, but you may prefer to bring a data stick containing your chosen item or items).

The creation of 'art' and the making of 'crafts' have played an important

Please watch Pep Livingstone's story 'Once upon a time ...' at www.patientvoices.org.uk/shu.htm

The narrative art in verse

'Digital stories are a new medium through which narrative art can be explored and made accessible so that 'ordinary' people can articulate their extra-ordinary understandings.'

Paul Stanton, 2007

Please watch Pip Hardy's story 'Transplant' at www.patientvoices.org.uk/pilgrim.htm

The Mind is a Hawk

The mind is like a hawk, trying to survive

on hardscrabble. Hunting, you wheel

sometimes for hours on thermals

rising from sand so dry no trees

grow native. Some days, you circle

only bones and snakeskin, the

same old

cactus and mesquite. The secret

is not to give up on shadows, but

glide

until nothing expects it, staring

to make a desert give up dead-still

ideas like rabbits with round eyes

and rapidly beating hearts.

Walter MacDonald

'Convivial tools are those which

part in most cultural traditions. From simple toys made of clay and wood to complicated baskets woven from reeds and grasses, from cave paintings to elegant Grecian Urns, from tapestries and quilts to wooden cabinets and chairs, from delicate lace to cosy knitted jumpers and gloves, our mothers and fathers, grandmothers and grandfathers have shaped their lives and their environments by turning their creative abilities to those things that were also necessary for survival.

give each person who uses them the greatest opportunity to enrich the environment with the fruits of his or her vision.'

Ivan Illich, 1973 *Tools for Conviviality*

So, if you are not a painter or a poet or a musician, you might wish to bring an object or item which is typical of you or your community. This might be something to which you have a personal connection, or something which was made by someone in your family – perhaps some beadwork or embroidery, a piece of jewellery or a photo of a piece of furniture...

In any case, please be prepared to share your chosen artefact with others, to explain why it is important to you, and how it links to your work as a professional educator and educator of professionals.

Reflection

'Many of us don't necessarily consider ourselves to be creative, and yet most of us are more creative than we think.'

In what ways does your own creativity express itself?

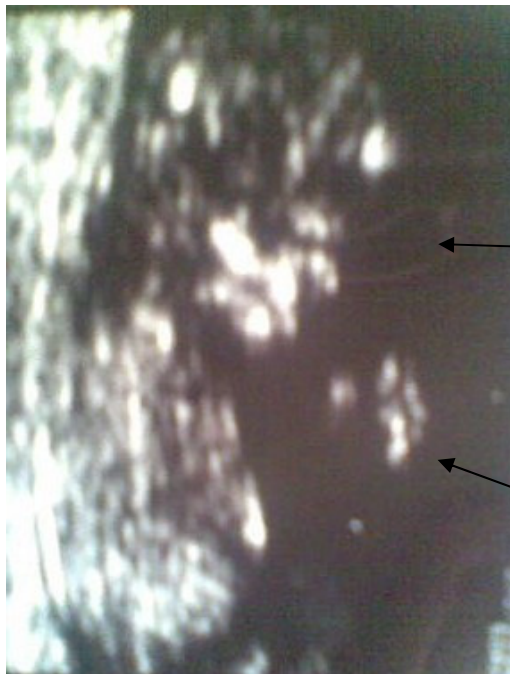
How would others (friends, family, colleagues) describe your range of creative gifts?

Finally, before turning to the rest of the workbook, where we invite you to add your own comments and ideas, please look at the following link. The first of the illusions is, for me, particularly engaging and perplexing. It's fun and does have a (perhaps tenuous) link to the theme of creativity.

Please click here: www.philosophyblog.com.au/some-optical-illusions/

The experience of care

All of us share the experience of being 'cared for' – from the first, we were dependent upon others for the satisfaction of all of our physical and emotional needs.



Eyes and nose

Hand waving in greeting

"Saying Hi!"

'Coco' – my grandchild

ETA 14.12.08

The nature and the quality of that early care leave an almost indelible impression upon us. A good deal of our sense of self derives from the formative impact upon us of these early and intimate interactions and the messages that they convey to us, about ourselves.

Spend a few moments looking deeply at Picasso's 'Mother and Child' and consider the child's sense of self as revealed in this picture.



Song before birth

I am not yet born; O hear me.

Let not the bloodsucking bat or the rat or the stoat or the club-footed ghoul come near me....

I am not yet born, provide me

With water to dandle me, grass to grow for me, trees to talk

to me, sky to sing to me, birds and a white light

in the back of my mind to guide me....

I am not yet born; O fill me

With strength against those who would freeze my

humanity, would dragoon me into a lethal automaton,

would make me a cog in a machine, a thing with one face, a thing, and against all those

who would dissipate my entirety, would blow me like thistledown hither and thither or hither and thither

like water held in the hands would spill me.

Let them not make me a stone and let them not spill me.

Otherwise kill me.

Louis MacNeice

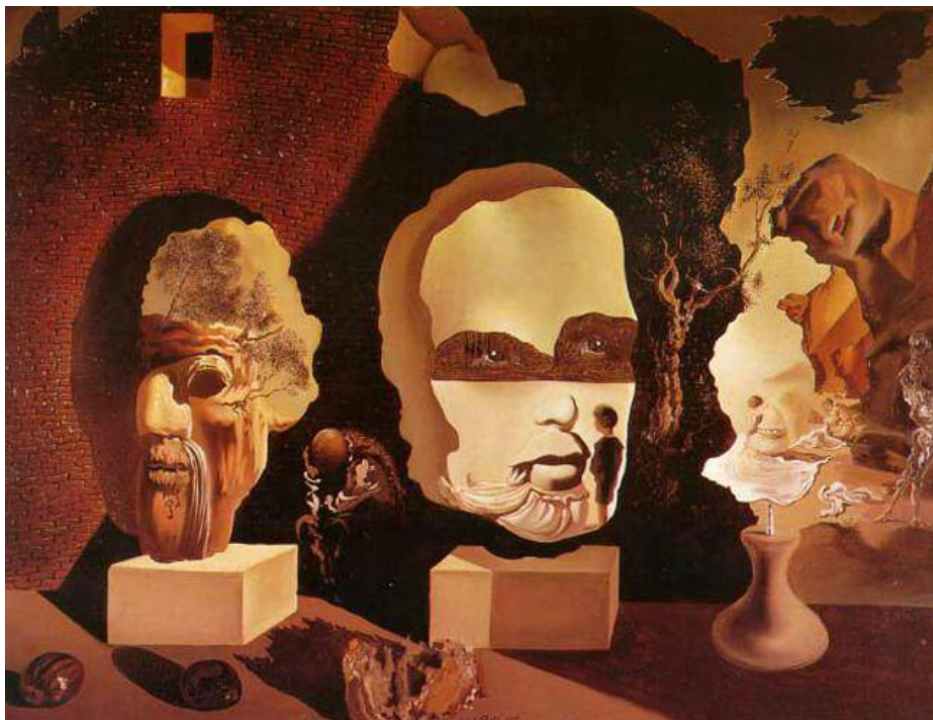
Please watch Paul Benson's story, 'Something from Nothing' at www.patientvoices.org.uk/shu.htm



The experience of childhood, however, is rarely optimal and sometimes deeply traumatic.

Picasso 'The Tragedy'

The journey of childhood and adolescence should, however, be an extended and gradual transition from enmeshed dependence to (boundaried) independence and (secure) interdependence – though some never make it safely.



Salvatore Dali 'Three ages'

We are this inner voice,
 this confidante, this clown
 that fills the silent void
 whence we were born.
 In-tongued within our head
 this canticle, this dirge,
 echoes how others spoke
 when first we heard....
 As we strain for sleep
 it badgers or it soothes;
 our torment and our solace,
 liar and speaker of truths.
 Companion of my waking,
 friend in darkest times;
 Judas of the evening,
 partner in my crimes.
 Myself, the way I know me,
 sophistry and art,
 this voice and I together
 till death us do part."

A P McQuade

They fuck you up, your mum and dad.

They may not mean to, but they do.

They fill you with the faults they had

And add some extra, just for you.

But they were fucked up in their turn

By fools in old-style hats and coats,

Who half the time were soppy-stern

And half at one another's throats.

Man hands on misery to man.

It deepens like a coastal shelf.

Get out as early as you can,

And don't have any kids yourself.

Philip Larkin

Reflection

What key messages were conveyed to you during your childhood?

Think back to your own adolescence. How did you come through?

To Santa Claus and Little Sisters
Once... he wrote a poem
And called it "Chops."
Because that was the name of his
dog,
and that's
what it was all about.
And the teacher gave him an "A"
And a gold star.
And his mother hung it on the
kitchen
door and
read it to all his aunts...
Once...he wrote another poem.
And he called it "Question Marked
Innocence."
Because that was the name of his
grief
and that's
what it was all about.
And the professor gave him an
"A"
And a strange and steady look
And his mother never hung it on
the kitchen door,
because he never let her see it...
Once...at 3 a.m....he tried another
poem...
And he called it absolutely
nothing,
because that's
what it was all about.
And he gave himself an "A"
And a slash on each damp wrist,
And hung it on the bathroom door
because he
couldn't reach the kitchen.
[The writer of this poem killed
himself, two years later, aged 18]

As adults, our own need for care and our capacity to care for others is significantly influenced by the extent to which we emerge from the chrysalis of adolescence with a sense of self that balances independence with interdependence; understanding of the world with understanding of the self. An important element of this self-awareness is to remain in touch with the vulnerability and the threat that all of us experience when we are catapulted back – by accident, illness or the inexorable passage of time – into a position of dependence.

Please watch Wee Haan Pang's story 'Can I have a hand, please?' at www.patientvoices.org.uk/lssc.htm

Reflection

Think of an occasion when you were dependent upon others – what feelings did this generate in you?

There are many novels, plays and films that explore the nature of dependence, for example, Michael Gambon's character in Denis Potter's *The Singing Detective*, or Solzhenitsyn's *The Cancer Ward* or Jean-Dominique Bauby's *The diving bell and the butterfly*.

Can you think of any novels, short stories, plays or films that have particularly extended your own understanding of the complex feelings generated by dependence? Please note your thoughts, particularly those in relation to what you may have learned about yourself.

The caring task

The task of caring is, itself, a rich source of learning about the human condition. It is both a privilege and a potential burden.

Nurses and other caring professionals are exposed to more human suffering and trauma in a calendar year than many people will experience in their entire life time. Human beings have, as part of their repertoire of evolutionary endowment, the ability to cope with exposure to trauma and tragedy – but this is not a limitless capacity – of the shell-shock or neurasthenia suffered by combatants and others in battle situations.

Isobel Menzies Lyth (1958) wrote in her paper 'The Functioning of Social Systems as a Defence Against Anxiety', that nursing culture and rituals have evolved, in part, as a 'coping strategy' to defend the individual nurse against the impact of this trauma. But these rituals are only partial armour. The more humane, caring and empathic a nurse (or other carer) is, the more her own feelings are engaged in and with the caring task and the more the 'shadow' of others' pain may fall across her life. This sometimes happens to such an extent that the need for self-protection distances the carer from her own feelings and, as a result, from the feelings of others.

Those who care need to feel cared for if their own humanity is not to be compromised.



Helen Sinclair

'Of tears and pain'
After Mozart Aria

'The proper study of mankind is man.'

Alexander Pope

*But yield who will to their
separation,*

*My object in living is to unite
My avocation and my vocation
As my two eyes make one in
sight.*

*Only where love and need are
one,*

*And the work is play for mortal
stakes,*

*Is the deed ever really done
For Heaven and the future's
sakes.*

Robert Frost (1936)

'Two Tramps in Mud Time'

*'The soul has bandaged
moments,*

*when too appalled to stir,
she sees some ghastly Fright
come up*

and stop and look at her.'

Emily Dickenson

Throwing the lifebelt

And the one throwing the lifebelt,

Even he needs help at times;

Stranded on the beach

Terrified of the waves

Brian Patten

Healing the Healer: Poetry in Palliative Care

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Background: Poetry plays an age-old role in the art of healing. Although medicine today seems distant from the world of poetic expression, there are surprising commonalities between the two.

Objectives: In this essay we reflect on three aspects of healing that are fostered by poetry.

Observations: Practicing medicine with too many facts and not enough poetry leads to dissatisfaction, disappointment, and impaired healing, especially in the care of the terminally ill. Likewise, poetry deficiency cuts off an important avenue for physician self-awareness and reflectivity.

Alternatively, three aspects of healing are fostered by poetry: the power of the word to heal (and also harm); the skill of "negative capability" that enhances physician effectiveness; and empathic connection, or compassionate presence, a relationship that heals without words.

Conclusion: Reading and writing poetry can help physicians, especially those who care for dying patients, become more reflective, creative, and compassionate practitioners.

Jack Coulehan, Patrick Clary (2005) Journal of Palliative Medicine. April 1, 2005, 8(2): 382-389. doi:10.1089/jpm.2005.8.382.

Xmas at the Welfare

*That year, Father Xmas brought
a house fire to a family of five;
attempted suicide to a man in
the police cells*

*who knew his eyes were
cameras;*

*a strong suspicion of incest
to a young girl caught*

*stealing a present for her
sisters,*

and it was very cold.

*I moved the family to temporary
accommodation;*

*the man to a locked psychiatric
ward*

*and the girl to a Children's
Home.*

The places all felt cold.

*On Boxing Day, I drove south,
through snow showers*

on deserted roads

and got drunk by my own fire.

I can be very cold.

McQuade 1977

Reflection

Think back to your own work as a direct provider of care. How would you characterise the key lessons that caring taught you about the nature of the human condition?

When you were in practice, to what extent were your own emotional needs recognised and supported within the practice setting and by your employing organisation?

The role of the professional educator

One part of your role as an educator of professional carers, is to prepare students, who are often very young, to have a felt understanding of the complex emotional and psychological components in, the potential hazards of, and the capacity for learning within, the caring task.

While providing care is an 'immediate' transaction (that is, it occurs within the 'immanent and intimate' time and space that the carer and the cared for share), the professional educator works 'mediately' (that is, their influence on the quality of care is *mediated* through their influence (for good or ill) upon those professional/pre-professional learners with whom they interact).

'Serving, rather than helping or fixing, is a challenge for health professionals that requires the development of humility, respect, patience, non-judgement, empathy and compassion.'

Youngson, R (2007) *People at the Centre of Health Care: Harmonizing mind and body, people and systems*. WHO

Like the carer/cared for relationship itself, the educator/student relationship can give rise to powerful (and sometimes regressive) feelings in relation to dependence and independence. This is just one of a number of ways that 'parallel process' manifests itself in the professional learning transaction. The nature and the quality of the relationship that is forged between the professional educator and the professional learner is a powerful and important proxy/model for the relationship that new professionals should, in their turn, foster with those for whom they care.

If a new and more egalitarian form of 21st century professionalism is to evolve, it will be as a result of the work of those professional educators who create a new form of learning opportunity and a new paradigm of professionalism that moves beyond the (mostly benevolent) paternalism of the last century or the increasingly dispassionate and technocratic 'clinical functionalism' that has come to dominate many western health care systems. This requires from professional educators and the system as a whole 'a fundamental mindshift: away from the biomedical, disease-oriented and technically-driven model of care towards a more holistic approach that validates the personal experience of illness and comprehends the complex cultural, psychosocial and environmental determinants of health and wellbeing.' (Youngson, *op cit*)

Please watch Wee Haan Pang's 'Be patient with us' at www.patientvoices.org.uk/lssc.htm

'What makes the painful experience bearable is an interest and ability to think about the feelings evoked in us. We may need space and time to consider the nature of the pain and appreciate what it is about. This thinking about feelings enables us both to have the experience and to apprehend its meaning and may thus result in a better understanding of ourselves and of others. It may lead to personal growth as well as greater ability to tolerate the emotional pain of others.'

Salzberger-Wittenberg (2004) *Emotional experience of learning and teaching*.

London: Karnac.

Songs of the Professions (I):

*When I was a young boy,
teachers seemed to me
arrogant and stupid
and vicious as can be.
Now that I'm an adult,
it's some relief to know
I wasn't all that far wrong
all that time ago.*
McQuade 1982

Please watch 'The Dormouse and the Doctor' at www.patientvoices.org.uk/pilgrim.htm

Songs of the Professions (III)

*Stethoscopes and spectacles,
a hand upon my testicles.
There must be more human feeling
in a pack of vultures, wheeling
round a decomposing corpse
than in these Hippocratic oafs.*
McQuade 1982

The task of care and the task of educating a new generation of carers forces all of us to address (or to live in denial of) the most fundamental questions of human existence. In our attempts to wrestle with these questions and to discover or to create meaning we are often brought face to face with dilemmas and contradictions. Though creativity may not solve these paradoxes, it can help – as does the very best science – to illuminate them.

Perhaps we should characterise professional learning – and the caring task itself – less as a ‘task’ and more as a ‘dance’ – where all of the participants clasp hands as they strive to express their common humanity and move to the rhythms of time and of eternity.



‘First and last, think about humanity. Everything else is an irrelevance.’

Bertrand Russell

Reflection

What are the key messages you would like to convey to your fellows who will be attending the workshop?

‘For centuries we have comfortably lived with the brain’s insolent recreation of itself as mind. Perhaps we can finally begin to live with the more ancient mythology that envisions the fragile, vulnerable, and utterly perishable body as indistinct from soul.’

Jamake Highwater *Myth and Sexuality*

‘The opposite of a correct statement is a false statement. But the opposite of a profound truth may well be another profound truth.’

Neils Bohr, Physicist

‘Poetry is an echo, asking a shadow to dance.’

Carl Sandburg

‘More and more I come to value charity and love of one’s fellow being above everything else... All our lauded technological progress – our very civilisation – is like the axe in the hand of the pathological criminal.’

Albert Einstein (1879-1955)

Labour is blossoming or dancing where

The body is not bruised to pleasure soul.

Nor beauty born out of its own despair,

Nor blear-eyed wisdom out of midnight oil....

O body swayed to music, O brightening glance,

How can we know the dancer from the dance?

W.B. Yeats

Please remember to bring along a piece of music, poem, picture or other artefact to share during the workshop.

And finally...

I'm not sure exactly how this works, but it is amazingly accurate.

Read the full description before looking at the linked picture.

You are going to look at a photo which has two identical dolphins in it. It was used in a case study on stress levels by researchers at St. Mary's Hospital, Baltimore. Look at both dolphins jumping out of the water. The dolphins are identical.

A closely monitored study of test groups of clinicians and lecturers revealed that in spite of the fact that the dolphins are identical, a person under stress will think they find differences between them. Too long or too intense an exposure to stress fundamentally erodes our capacity to be creative.

Be honest in your response. If you think there are differences between the dolphins, it may mean that you are experiencing a significant level of work-related stress. Look at the photograph for fifteen seconds and, if you find differences, consider, on your return to work, asking your line manager for a sabbatical.

Now click here www.happychild.org.uk/nvs/cont/jokes/page0002.htm

We look forward to seeing you on 2nd September.

Paul Stanton

Belinda Noda

Pip Hardy

August, 2008

'When I dehumanise you, I inexorably dehumanise myself. The solitary human being is a contradiction in terms and therefore you seek to work for the common good because your humanity comes into its own in belonging.'

Archbishop Desmond Tutu