**Writing the narrative:**

Think about a student you’ve had, what was most impactful? It could be an interaction with a patient, a family member, or other health care provider. It could also be observing the interaction and dynamic between your student and other stakeholders (patient, family, other staff). The narrative does not need to be a ‘life threatening’ experience but rather one that involved your relationship with the situation and others involved. What did you, the student, and the patient plan for his or her care? Why were those decisions made? Write as though you are trying to have someone understand your practice.

Remember, it needs to be a first person narrative (even though it is difficult to write about ourselves). You are the one involved in this story, so use the word “I”.

For review, the narrative levels are:

1. Descriptive Writing: a description of the event with no reason or justification. “Just the facts”
2. Descriptive Reflection: Not just a description of the events but some effort of justification for the events and decisions made. Recognition of alternative of viewpoints is limited.
3. **Dialogic Reflection:** Demonstrates a “stepping back” from the events and actions. Moves between the two landscapes of exterior (action) and interior (consciousness or awareness). Explores and interprets events from multiple perspectives.

Examples: “this was quite possible due to…” or “alternatively” or “the problem here, I believe, was in fact that…” or “on the one hand…on the other…”

1. **Critical Reflection:** Demonstrates that an awareness that actions and events are not only located in multiple perspectives, but are locate in and influenced by multiple historical and socio political contexts.

Examples include exploring the power of relationships inherent in clinical practice, exploring organizational factors or even focus on the community of practice. Mainly, the narrative is much more ‘layered’ like an onion.

Remember, the goal is to shoot for narratives of the 3rd or 4th level.

Now what?

1. Set the scene for the story – let the reader visualize your patient and the situation. Write one or two paragraphs opening the scene.
2. Involve yourself early on in the scene
3. Tell what you did (or observed), what you thought about, and why you (or your CI) made those choices.
4. As with any story, there is a beginning and an end. The reader should know what happened as a result of your intervention, and what this whole experience means to your practice or says to you about your practice.

As you proceed with your story, talk about your role with this patient, your assessment of the care that was needed, the care you gave (your intervention), how you involved the patient and family, and the advocacy role you played with the patient. Include the reason(s) why you made the choices you did. What was your thought process? Talk about how you mobilized your resources or extended your intervention outside the hospital or clinic. As you write the narrative, you will realize how your care influenced the patient’s outcome.

**Co-constructing: The group process for narrative unbundling**

*Overview*: One group member will read their narrative while others listen reflectively and mindfully. The group will then have a conversation with the author exploring the story’s meaning. The last part of the process is to discuss how the story may have evolved to reveal a new, shared meaning amongst the group.

*Instructions*:

Identify someone who will share his or her narrative. The author will read the narrative to the group – more than once if necessary.

Group members will listen with a careful ear, working to understand the setting, the characters and the plot. When listening to and engaging in the reader’s story, consider the stance or attitude with which *you* approach the role. In a narrative unbundling it can be helpful to remain (habits of mind):

* Open
* Genuinely Curious
* Reflective and aware of your response to the story
* Non-judgmental
* Aware that you are a partner in exploring the story’s meaning

After listening to the story, group members will take a few minutes to individually digest it and note any initial responses, aspects of the story they would like to discuss further with the author, questions they may have, etc.

Consider the following:

* What is this a story of…(what is its “about-ness”)
* Why do you think the author chose this particular experience to write about? What is its meaning to the author?
* What do you as a listener bring to this story? What is its meaning to you?
* What were you were curious about as you listened? What would you like to know more about in order to better understand the story’s meaning(s)?

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**Your Turn**