

# Do better storytellers make better teachers, researchers and healers?

**Dr. Megan Milota**

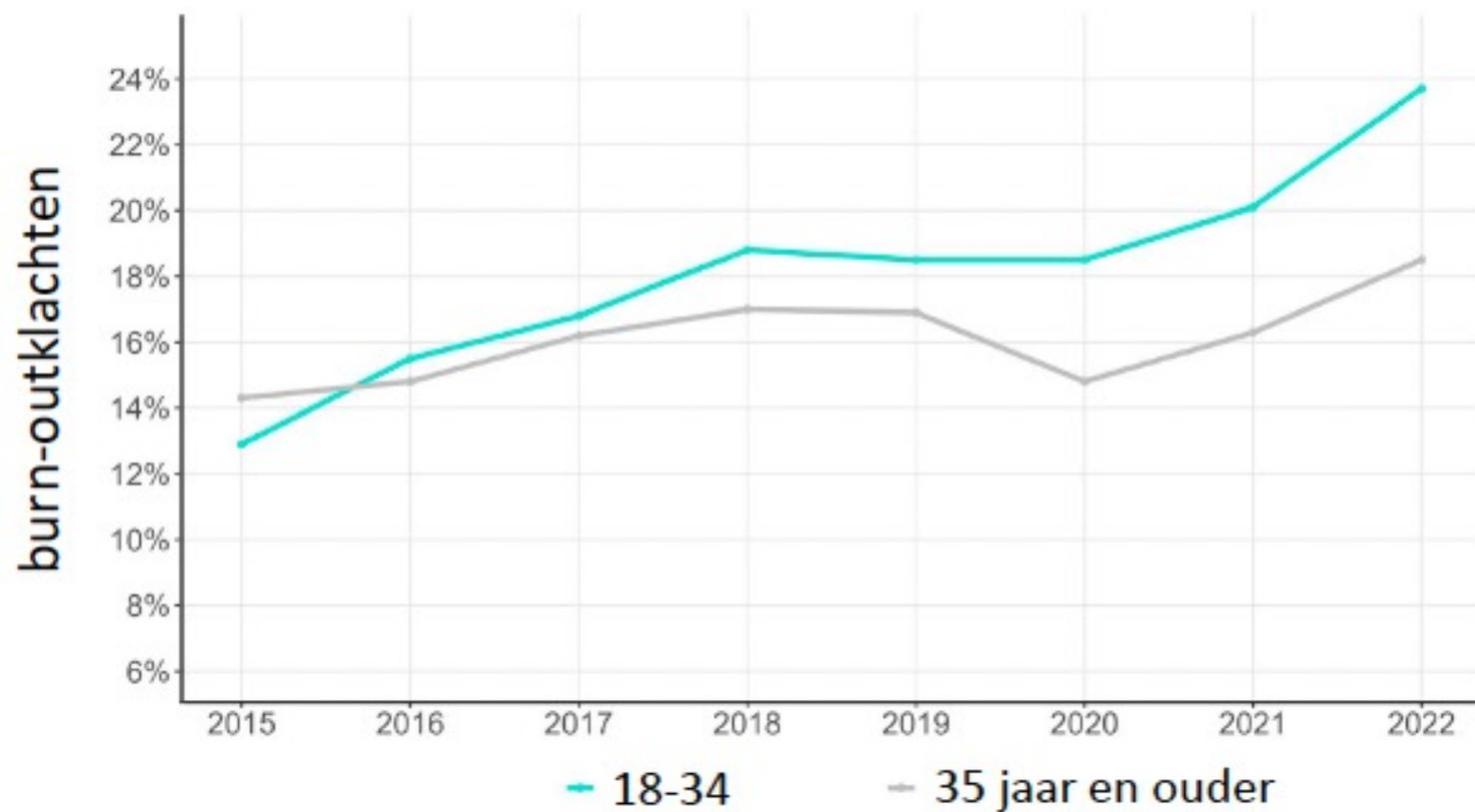
*University Medical Center Utrecht*



I swear by Apollo the physician, and **Aesculapius** the surgeon, likewise Hygeia and Panacea, and call all the gods and goddesses to witness, that I will observe and keep this underwritten oath, to the utmost of my power and judgment.







Bron: NEA – TNO, CBS

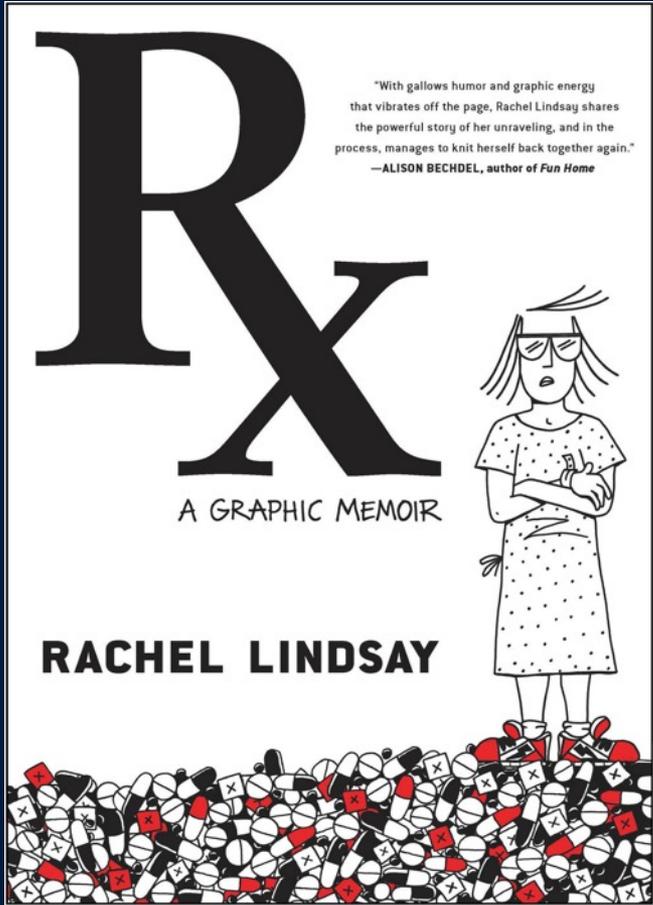


**What can we learn  
from Epidaurus?**



# 1. Respect for the individual journey

# RACHEL LINDSAY



11N

LINDSAY, RACHEL E.

DOB: 5/4/87

SHE BECOMES TEARFUL WHEN DESCRIBING HOW DIFFICULT IT IS TO LIVE WITH HER DIAGNOSIS.



SHE DOES NOT BELIEVE THAT SHE NEEDS TO BE IN THE HOSPITAL.



11N

LINDSAY, RACHEL E.

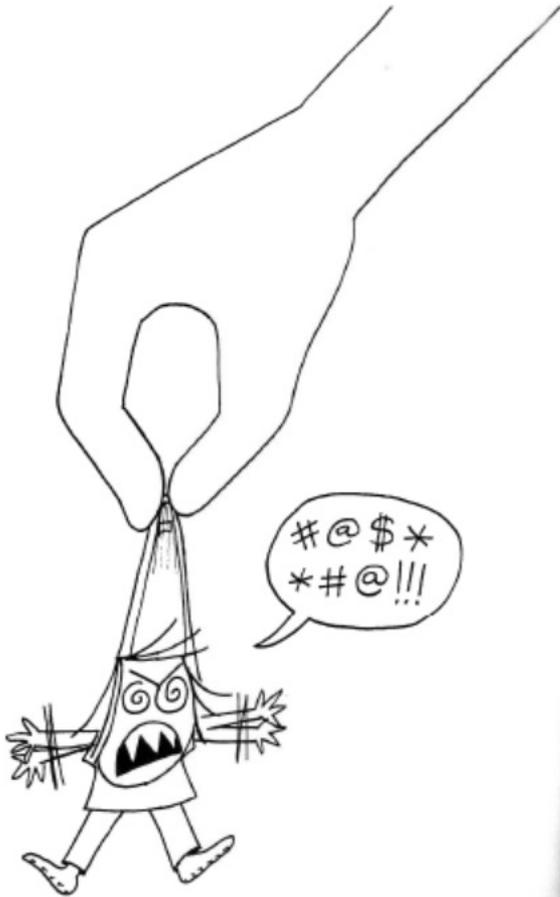
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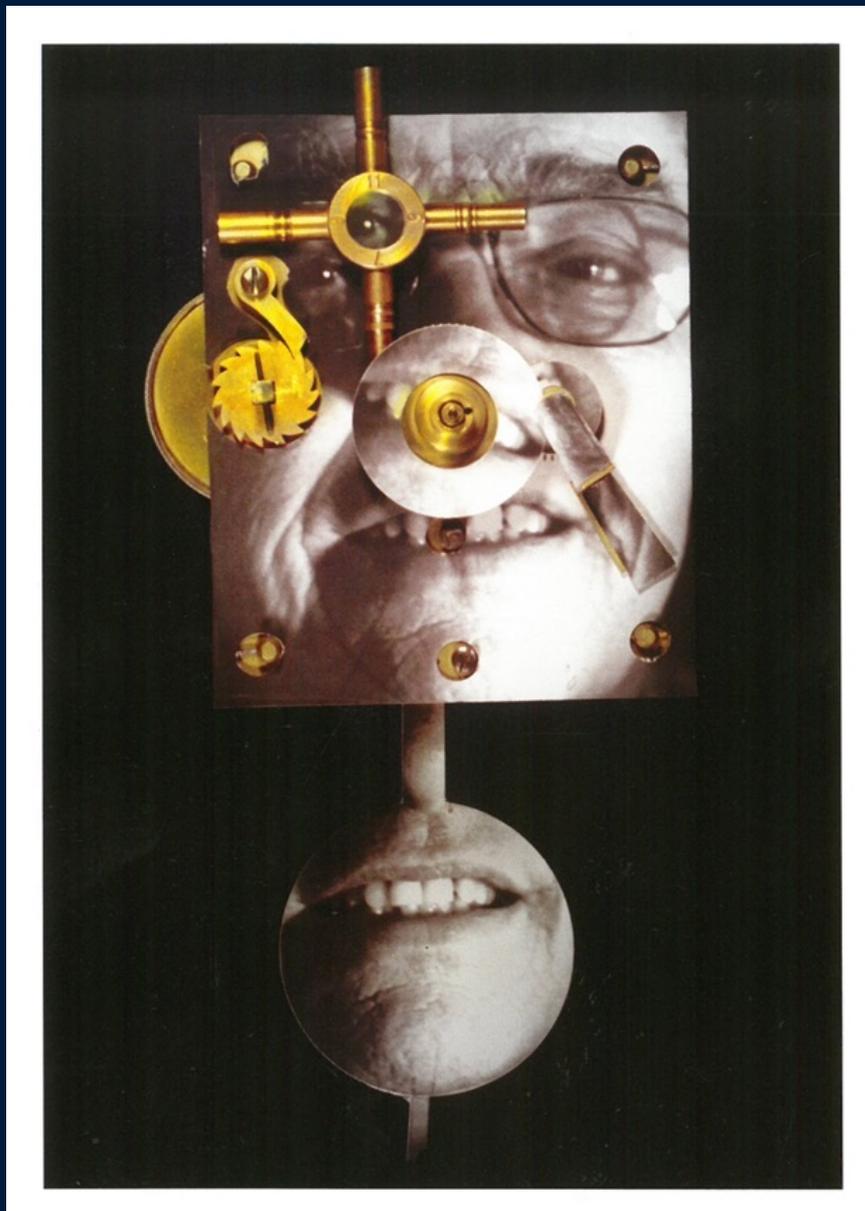
SHE IS CLEARLY IN THE MIDDLE OF A  
**MANIC EPISODE.**



HOSPITALIZATION  
IS INDICATED  
FOR STABILIZATION  
AND MEDICATION  
ADJUSTMENT.



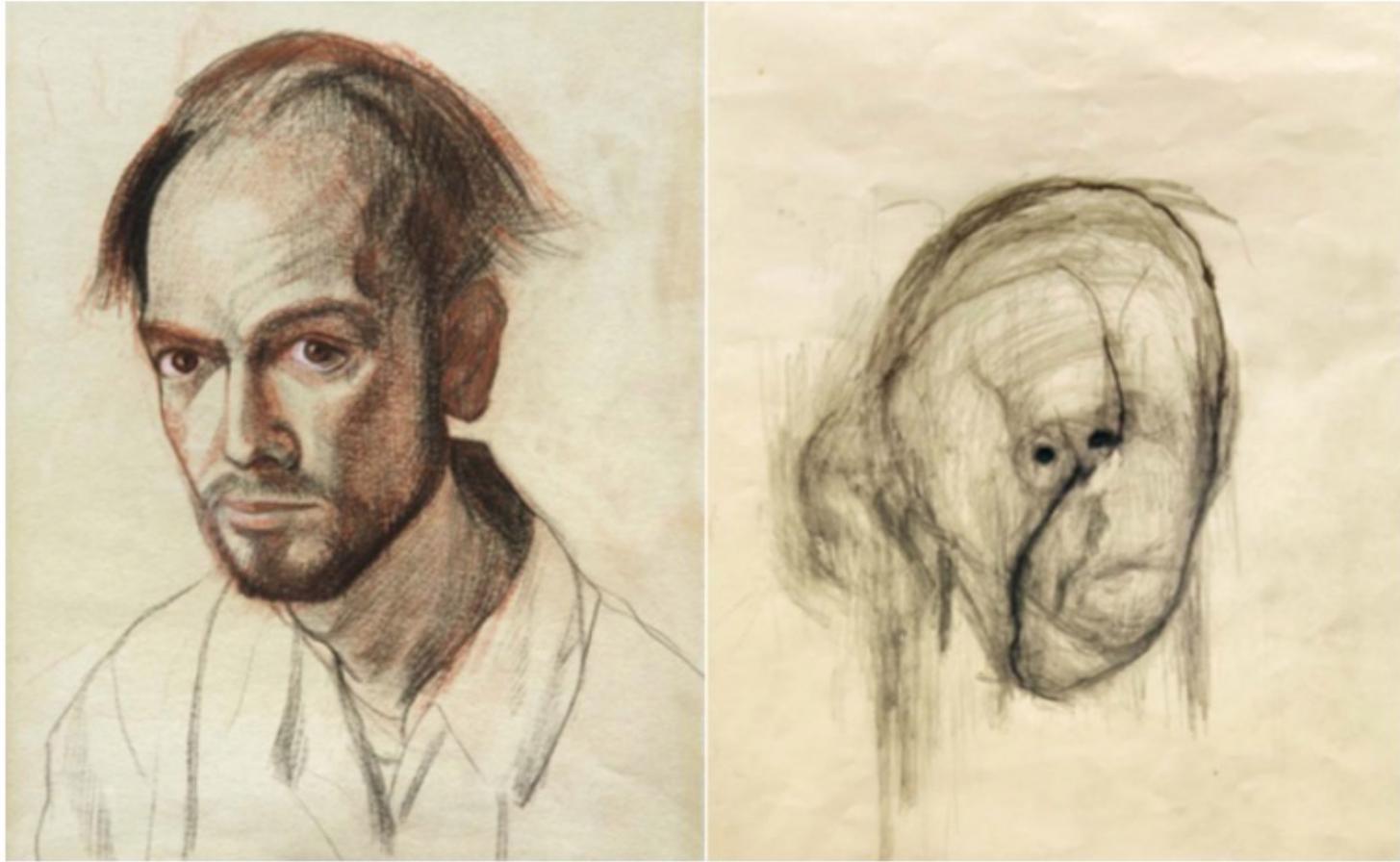




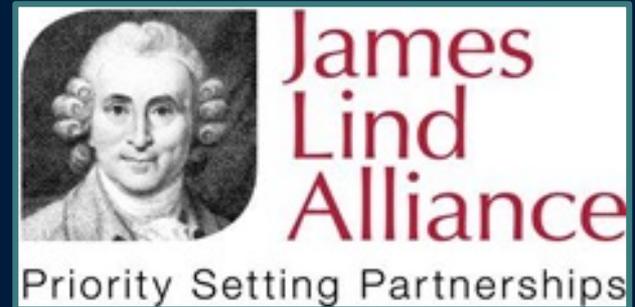
*Perceptions of Pain*  
Deborah Padfield



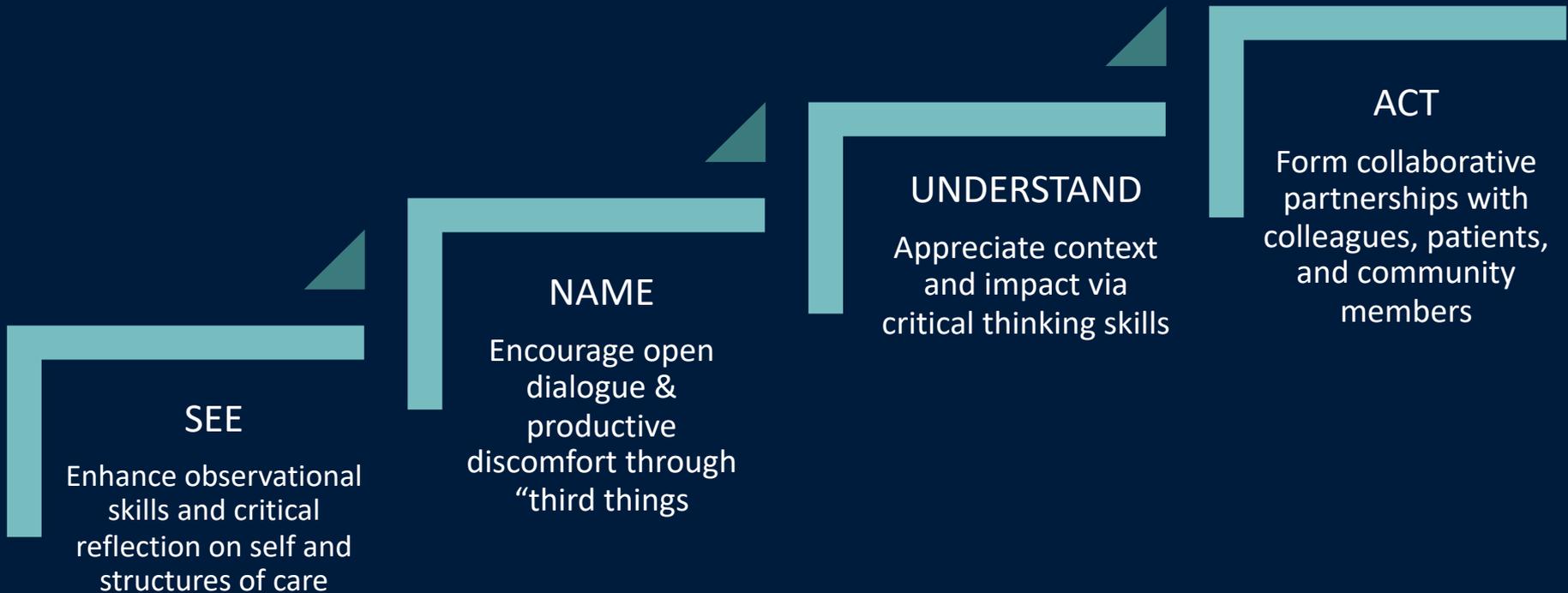
**2. Open to new insights and perspectives**



William Uthermohlen (1933-2007)  
Self-portrait left (1967), final self-portrait right (2000)



# Health humanities-based skills and tools



Antiracism in medical education framework, Balhara et al (2022)



### 3. Preference for (interdisciplinary) dialogue



# De Nieuwe Utrechtse School



Medical Humanities

# Collaborations with 'De Nieuwe Utrechtse School'



Het Nederlands Tijdschrift voor Geneeskunde, Optimale Zorg-Dappere Dokters, De Nieuwe Utrechtse School en Van Hier Naar [...] presenteren:

## Verkiezingsdebat

*"Zorgen voor een Gezonde Samenleving"*

**Over onder andere:**

- Preventie
- Gezondheidsverschillen
- Houdbare zorg

**Meer Informatie, Aanmelden en Livestream:**

Dinsdag 14 november  
19:30 uur - 21:30 uur

Social Impact Factory Utrecht  
Vredenburg 40 (Nabij Utrecht CS)

Livestream beschikbaar



# JOTE

Journal of  
Trial and Error



## Prikkel

een zintuiglijke tentoonstelling over neurodiversiteit en prikkelverwerking



## WORKSHOP

6 ZATERDAGEN  
02/09/16/30 OKT 2021  
06/13 NOV  
CA. 10:00-15:00

DE NIEUWE  
VERBINDING  
DE NIEUWE  
VERBINDING

KOSTEN VOLLEDIGE INZET  
MEER INFORMATIE:  
STUDENTENINITIATIEVEN

DE NIEUWE  
UTRECHTSE  
SCHOOL



## ECTMIH2023

Shaping the future of equitable and sustainable planetary health

20-23 November 2023



## 4. Appreciation for (and use of) the arts

**BETWETER**



# WE ZIJN ALLEMAAL MENS

**Tijd**

19:00-00:00

**Zaal**

Plein 6

Experience

Performance

Wie goed wil zorgen voor iemand die ziek is, zal moeten luisteren. Niet alleen naar de patiënt, maar ook naar familie en vrienden, en de behandelende artsen. Allemaal spelen ze hun eigen rol. Hun verhalen doen ertoe. In deze samenwerking met [De Nieuwe Utrechtse School](#) en studenten van het [Utrechtse conservatorium](#) (HKU) luister je naar bijzondere muzikale vertolkingen van verhalen uit de [Verhalenbank Psychiatrie](#). Zet een koptelefoon op, laat de fragmenten op je inwerken, en reageer op je eigen manier.

# Muzikale vertolking van patiëntverhalen



verhalenbank  psychiatrie



voor beter begrip,  
beter herstel  
en betere zorg





A “third thing” is a work of art or some other object that serves as a reflective trigger or conversational mediator that generates a safe space for sharing perspectives.



# “Deadline”

Bianca Bagnarelli

“I often work during the holidays. At first, I think I’m taking advantage of small pockets of time in which the world stops, but then I realize I’m missing out on all the fun, and it can be bittersweet.”

PRICE \$8.99

THE  
NEW YORKER

JAN. 1 & 8, 2024

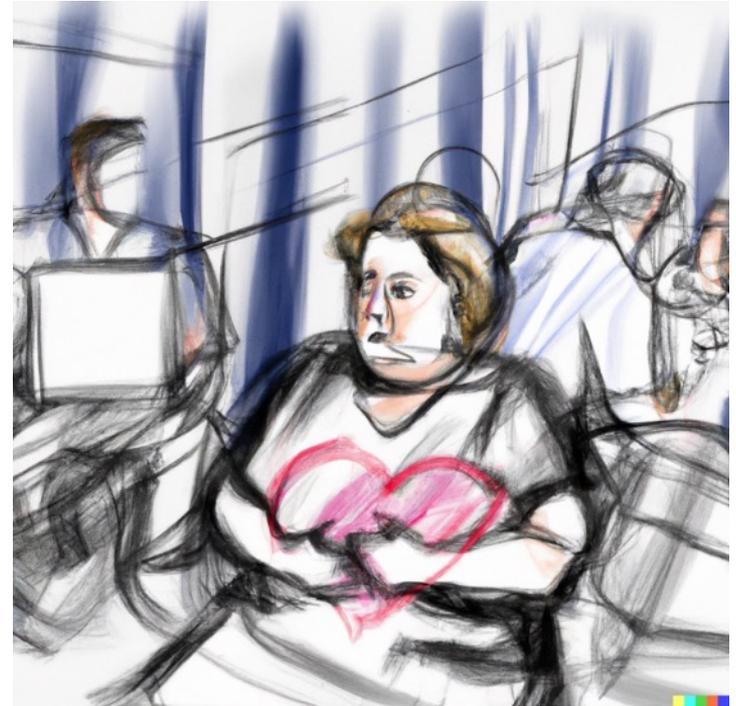


# Co-constructed narrative + DALL-E-2

Ik ben al heel mijn leven een hardwerkende vrouw, maar die  
vermoeidheid de laatste tijd.  
Het is zo druk op mijn werk de afgelopen weken, maar die  
benauwdheid de laatste dagen.  
Ik weet dat ik me eigenlijk niet ziek kan melden, maar mijn  
kracht is weg vandaag.  
Ik heb al jaren geen arts meer gezien, maar nu gaat het geloof  
ik echt mis.

Wat een hectiek hier, ik heb toch gezegd dat mijn pijn alweer  
minder is geworden?  
Volgens mij begrijpen ze mij niet, ik voel me toch niet meer  
benauwd?  
Volgens mij ziet de arts ook niet zo veel problemen, waarom  
moeten ze dan nog meer onderzoeken?  
Ik moet gedotterd worden, heb ik het aan mijn hart?

Het was een hartaanval, zeggen ze.  
Nooit ergens last van gehad, zeg ik.  
Hoe ik me voel, wordt de hele tijd gevraagd.  
Hoe lang ik hier moet blijven, vraag ik de hele tijd.  
In deze ongezellige kamer, vol met schermen en slangen.  
Hadden ze dat ballonnetje uit mijn hart niet gezellig kunnen  
ophangen?





## 5. Master storyteller and interpreter

# Narrative co-construction and symbolic healing



The physician who takes stories seriously will [...] adopt as a working hypothesis that the patient is asking a question like the following: "Something is happening to me that seems abnormal, and either I cannot think of a story that will explain it, or the only story I can think of is very frightening. Can you help me to tell a better story, one that will cause me less distress, about this experience?" If this formulation seems overly wordy, a shorter form of the patient's possible plea to the physician might be,

"My story is broken; can you help me fix it?"

Howard Brody (1994, 85)

Because they become  
good readers, they  
become good doctors.

*Prof. Dr. Rita Charon*

# NARRATIVE MEDICINE

*Honoring the Stories  
of Illness*



RITA CHARON

# Narrative Medicine



*A Vanished World*, Roman Vishniac

1. **Reveal patients' perspectives**, helping students become better attuned to suffering, improving their capacity for empathy, and making them better healers;
2. Provide a catalyst for **self-reflection**;
3. Provide **emotional support** to harried health professionals.

(Holmgren et al 2011, 261)

# Methods

## Explore a fictional world

- Close reading
- Film/audio/written art form

## Self-reflective writing

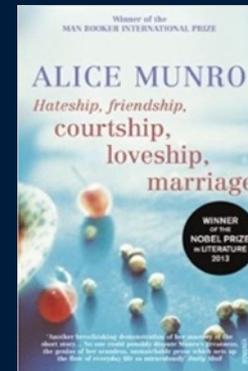
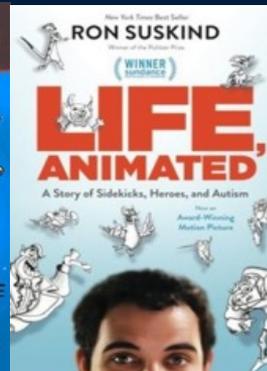
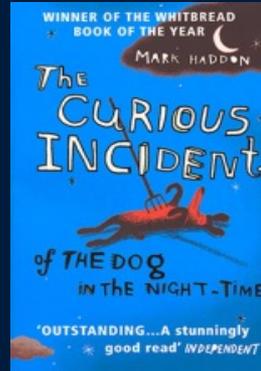
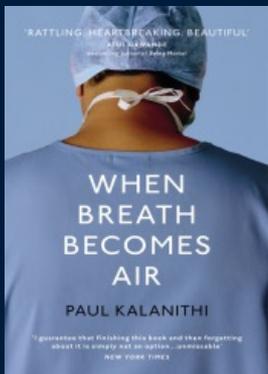
- Specific writing exercise
- “Writing in the shadow of the text”

## Active listening

- Pair share
- Group share

# Medical school book club

Educational to step into the shoes of the patient and experience how they perceive the world and how their life is structured. It's interesting to see that there are so many different manifestations of autism, and it is important to take that into account. One person with autism is not the same as another. Always consider the individuals in the immediate surroundings and how great the burden can be for them. Understand the effects and impact it has on parents to have a child with autism, and it can also pose many challenges.



# Story clinics

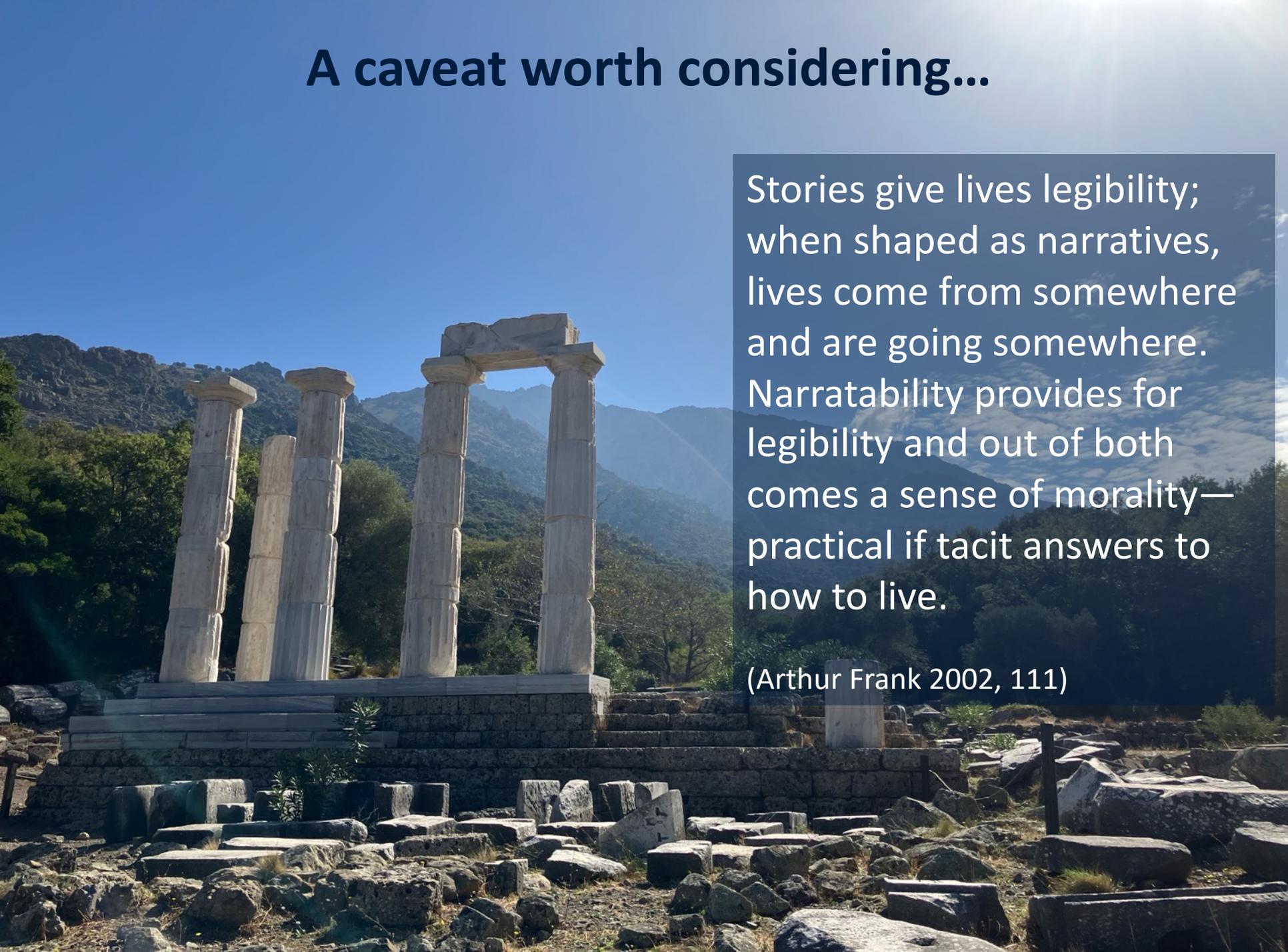
This final assignment really let us see how important it is to see someone as more than just his illness. The patient told us this when he gave us feedback at the end [of the story clinic]. For instance, he said we could have asked about his prognosis. Or we could have asked what he meant when he said that he was walking around with a 'sword of Damocles' hanging above his head. Or how it felt to attend the funerals of fellow patients.



# A caveat worth considering...

Stories give lives legibility; when shaped as narratives, lives come from somewhere and are going somewhere. Narratability provides for legibility and out of both comes a sense of morality—practical if tacit answers to how to live.

(Arthur Frank 2002, 111)



## A caveat worth considering...

I have never been persuaded by any of my friends, whoever asked or encouraged me to speak or write about these things, and so I have avoided the impossible. For it seemed to be the same as if after swimming through the whole sea under water, I should be compelled to produce records of the total number of waves, which I encountered, and how I found the sea at each one of them, and what it was that saved me.

Aristides



Ik zag de mensen in de straten,  
hun armoe en hun grauw gezicht, -  
toen streek er over de gelaten  
een luisteren, een vleug van licht.

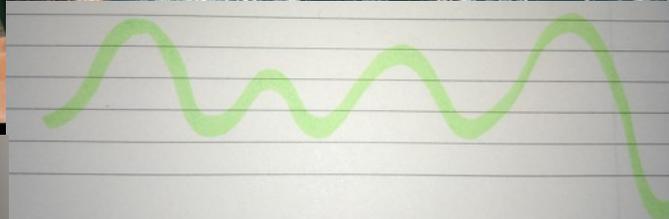
Want boven in de klokketoren  
na 't donker-bronzen urenslaan  
ving, over heel de stad te horen,  
de beiaardier te spelen aan.

Valerius: - een statig zingen  
waarin de zware klok bewoog,  
doorstrooid van lichter sprankelingen,  
'Wij slaan het oog tot U omhoog.'

En één tussen de naamloos velen,  
gedrongen aan de huizenkant  
stond ik te luist'ren naar dit spelen  
dat zong van mijn geschonden land.

Dit sprakeloze samenkomen  
en Hollands licht over de stad -  
Nooit heb ik wat ons werd ontgenomen  
zo bitter, bitter liefgehad.

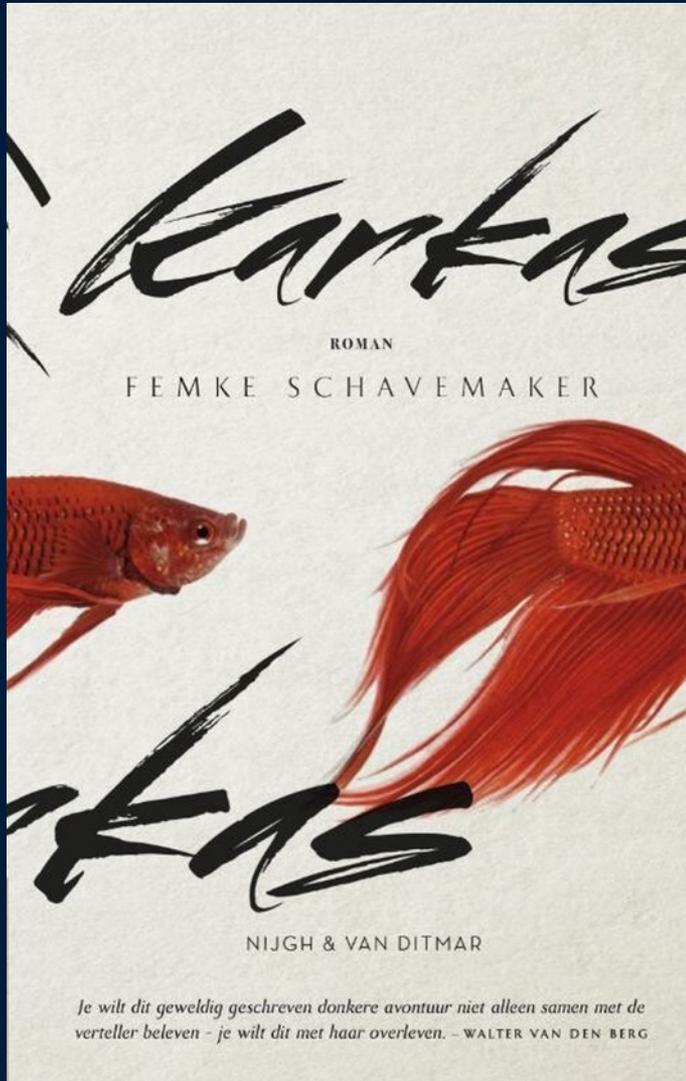
Oorlogsjaar 1941





**Where do you find  
your inspiration?**

# 'Life rules'



Never spend more than 100 Euros on one thing. With a margin of 10% (p. 248)

It's important that you never ask yourself how you feel. Especially not at 7AM. Then you'll always feel something. Somewhere (p. 210).

Observe. Copy. (p. 212)

Keep balancing. You'll walk better, stand stronger. And when you look in the mirror you'll see it too. You can believe in yourself. (p 216)



**What are your most  
important  
'life rules'?**

# Why I Am Not a Painter by Frank O'Hara

I am not a painter, I am a poet.  
Why? I think I would rather be a painter, but I am not. Well, for instance, Mike Goldberg is starting a painting. I drop in. "Sit down and have a drink" he says. I drink; we drink. I look up. "You have SARDINES in it."  
"Yes, it needed something there."  
"Oh." I go and the days go by and I drop in again. The painting is going on, and I go, and the days go by. I drop in. The painting is finished. "Where's SARDINES?" All that's left is just letters, "It was too much," Mike says.

But me? One day I am thinking of a color: orange. I write a line about orange. Pretty soon it is a whole page of words, not lines.

Then another page. There should be so much more, not of orange, of words, of how terrible orange is and life. Days go by. It is even in prose, I am a real poet. My poem is finished and I haven't mentioned orange yet. It's twelve poems, I call it ORANGES. And one day in a gallery I see Mike's painting, called SARDINES.

Why I Am a [...]

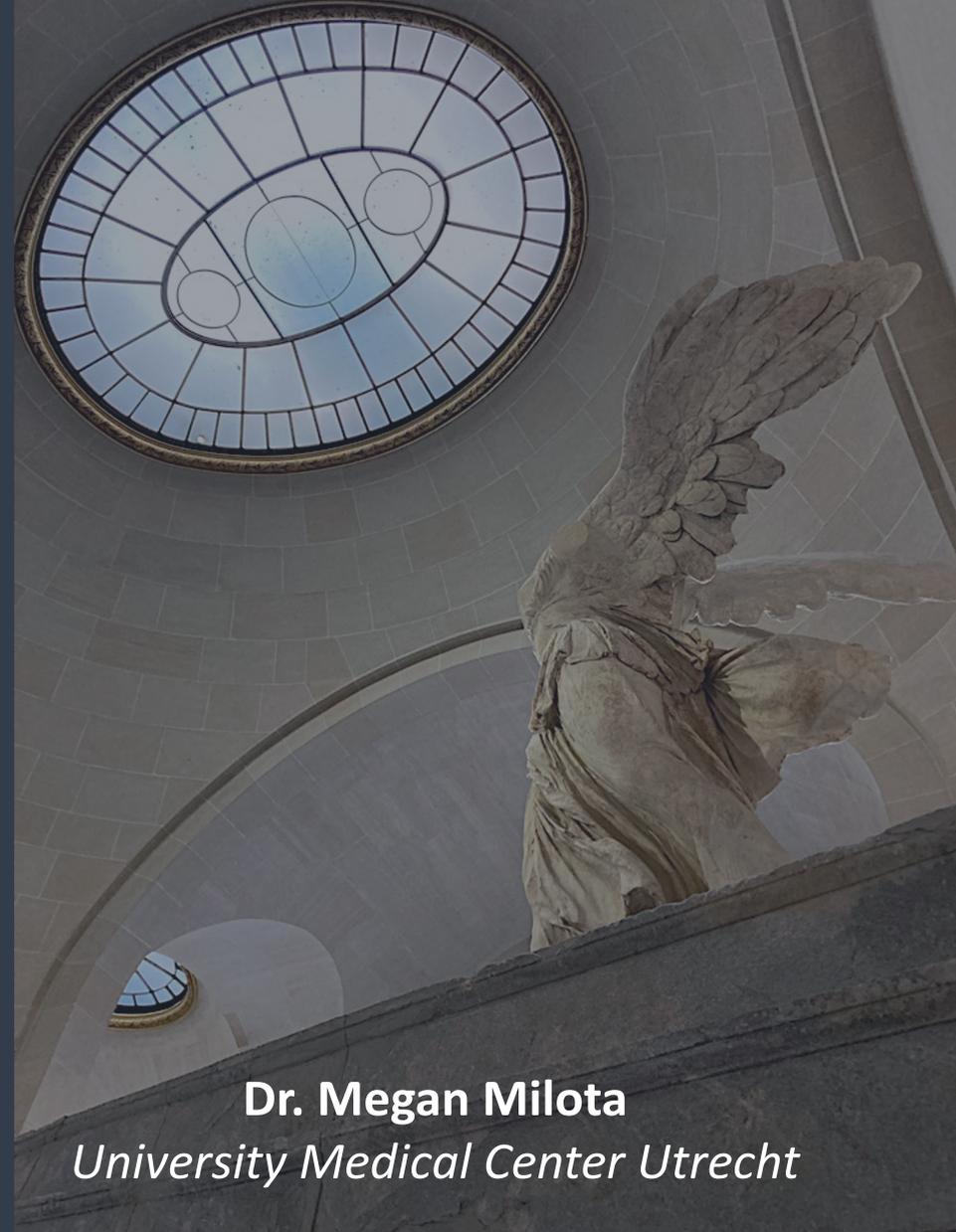


Michael Goldberg, Sardines (1955)



**How do you emulate  
Epidaurus in  
your work?**

Do better  
storytellers make  
better teachers,  
researchers &  
healers?



**Dr. Megan Milota**  
*University Medical Center Utrecht*