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# Using Narrative for Inter-Disciplinary Learning



Rachel Balen, Christine Rhodes & Lisa Ward



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# CAIPE definition:



*'Interprofessional Education occurs when two or more professions learn with, from and about each other to improve collaboration and the quality of care'*

CAIPE 2002 (<http://www.caipe.org.uk>)

## HUDDERSFIELD addition:

*the quality of student experience and positive engagement with the public'*





## An additional concern -

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The lack of critical thinking skills amongst undergraduates (and graduates)



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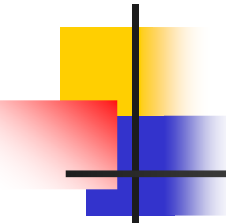
# WHY NARRATIVE ?

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Stories involve

- Inquiring into experience
- Exploring meaning
- Interpreting human experience
- Looking for `truth`
- Giving a voice to those who might be silenced, neglected or marginalised





Increasing body of evidence to show that lived experience is a meaningful learning experience for students

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- It is `memorable`
- They can relate to it as individuals
- It emphasises the humanity of the health and social care professions





# Types of narrative:

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## Romance:

- Initial challenge is overcome

## Comedy:

- Ongoing challenge and counter-challenge

## Tragedy:



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Ongoing struggle against adversity, but ultimately fails

(Murray M,2008: Telling stories and making sense of cancer )

# Inter-Disciplinary Learning Day



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*"Mental health : It's  
everybody's business"*



# Range of narrative workshop activities:

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## Target groups:

Social Work (25)

Mental Health Nursing (25)

Adult Nursing (25)

Midwives }

Occupational Therapists } (25 in total)

# Outcomes to be achieved during the workshops:

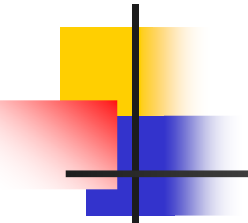
- relevant to the curriculum that students are currently engaged in.
- allow students to interact in inter professional groups.
- enjoyable and 'add value'.



## Session aims:

- understand the lived experience of mental health difficulties
- explore the perspectives of different professional groups
- consider implications for practice





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An introductory exercise followed by 3  
different narrative workshops.  
Students attended all 3 on a rotating  
basis.  
Completion of evaluation form



# Introductory exercise:

(producing their own mini-narrative)

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Interprofessional groups produced a poster, collage or haiku that reflected what `mental health` means to them.

Materials provided were flip-chart paper, felt tip pens, magazines and newspapers.





Mental health is me

It dictates who I will be

Changes like the sea

\* \* \* \* \*

Happy, sad, feel confused

Voices make me hide away

This affects us all



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## Narrative through Film

(Tragedy : Ongoing struggle against adversity, but ultimately fails)

An excerpt from a TV dramatisation of the biography of an alcoholic, homeless man with mental health difficulties - *Stuart: A Life Backwards*. This was followed by a facilitated discussion.

Alexander Masters (2006) *Stuart: A Life Backwards* HarperPerennial  
ISBN-10: 0007200374

## Narrative through drama

(Comedy : Ongoing challenge and counter-challenge)

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A theatre group of mental health service users used their personal experiences to act out a scenario concerning a woman with depression, featuring responses from family, friends and employer. This was followed by an interactive discussion.







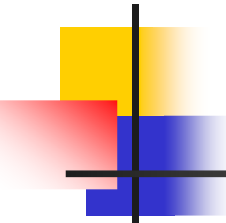
## Personal Narrative (Romance: Initial challenge is overcome )

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A service user presented a monologue based on her experience of mania following childbirth. Students explored questions and issues raised during a facilitated discussion.



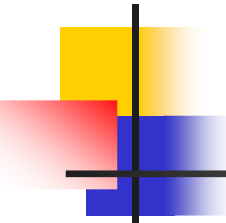
# Evaluation exercise:



Students compiled a feedback sheet answering the following questions:

- What have you learned about the lived experience of mental health difficulties?
- What have you learned from spending the day with students from other professional groups?
- What will you take away from today that you will use in practice?





## A reminder: The evidence base for using Narrative

*Increasing body of evidence to show  
that lived experience is a meaningful  
learning experience for students*

- *It is 'memorable'*
- *They can relate to it as individuals*
- *It emphasises the humanity of the  
health and social care professions*





## Session aims:

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- *understand the lived experience of mental health difficulties*
- *explore the perspectives of different professional groups*
- *consider implications for practice*



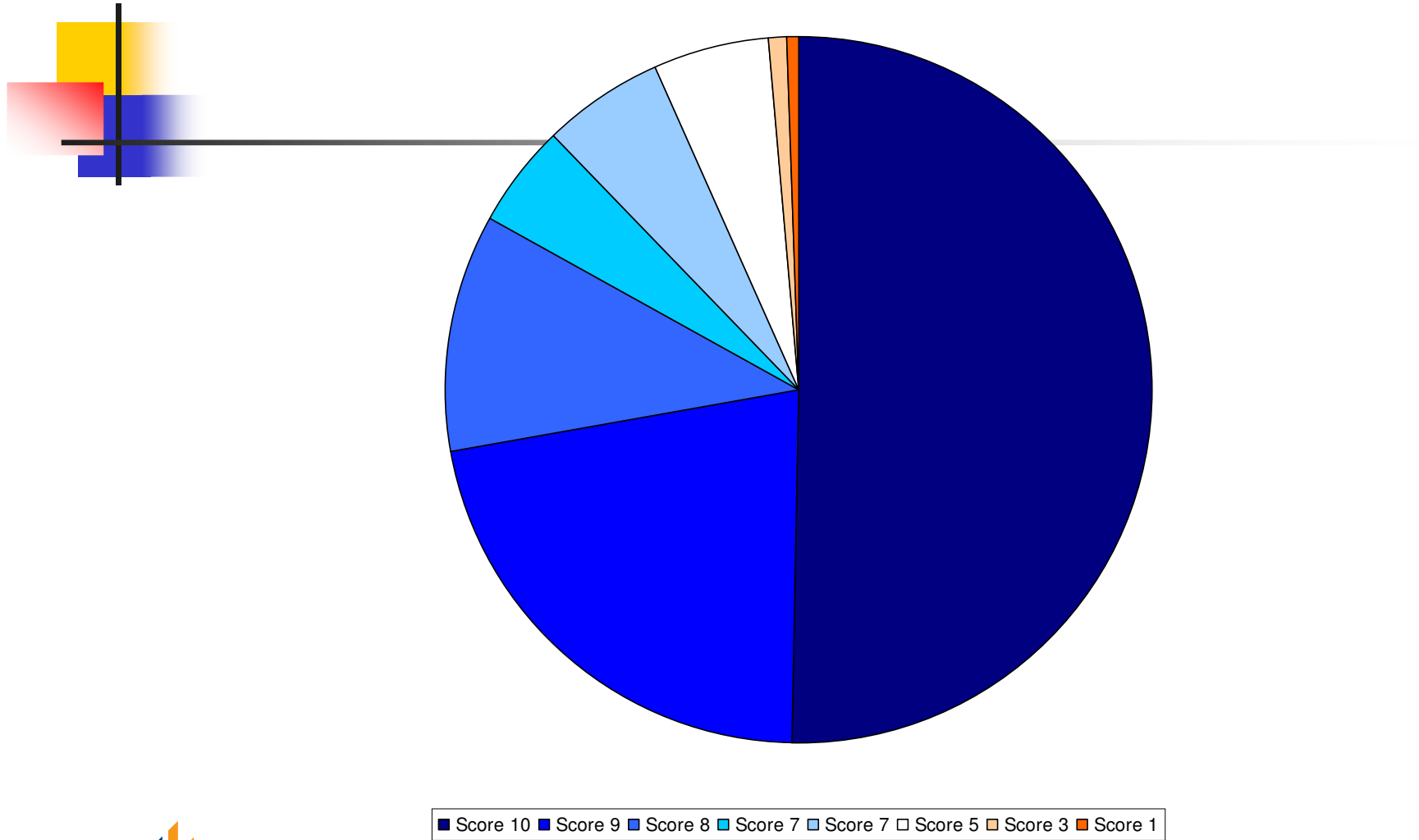


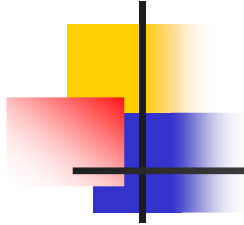
# Student responses:

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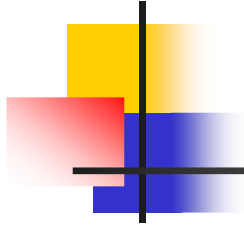
*The day managed to combine an excellent balance between group discussion, lecture, presentation and story telling which I found kept the day exciting and challenging. I really believe the University should continue to develop this multi disciplinary approach as the benefits to students are immense.*

Scores Given By Students on IPL Day



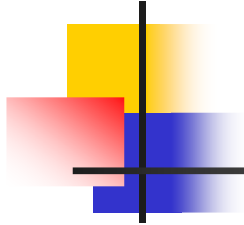


- *I didn't realise what I could learn from the OTs*
- *This will help me as I have greater awareness of mental health issues, how different professions can work together to provide effective care*



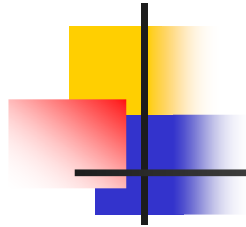
*I have never before gained such a detailed insight into mental health problems from a sufferer's perspective. It has helped me to understand the stigma and effects of such illness from an alternative viewpoint*





*Hearing or seeing first -hand experiences increases a feeling of empathy*

*I have a better understanding of how mental health affects people's lives, this can be used in my practice to empathise with people*



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