



Narrative Medicine: The Use of History and Story in the Healing Process

Lewis Mehl-Madrona

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Seeks to restore the pivotal role of the patient's own story in the healing process

- Shows how conventional medicine tends to ignore the account of the patient
- Presents case histories where disease is addressed and healed through the narrative process
- Proposes a reinvention of medicine to include the indigenous healing methods that for thousands of years have drawn their effectiveness from telling and listening

Modern medicine, with its high-tech and managed-care approach, has eliminated much of what constitutes the art of healing: those elements of doctoring that go beyond the medications prescribed. The typically brief office visit leaves little time for doctors to listen to their patients, though it is in these narratives that disease is both revealed and perpetuated--and can be released and treated.

Lewis Mehl-Madrona's *Narrative Medicine* examines the foundations of the indigenous use of story as a healing modality. Citing numerous case histories that demonstrate the profound power of narrative in healing, the author shows how when we learn to dialogue with disease, we come to understand the power of the "story" we tell about our illness and our possibilities for better health. He shows how this approach also includes examining our relationships to our extended community to find any underlying disharmony that may need healing. Mehl-Madrona points the way to a new model of medicine--a health care system that draws its effectiveness from listening to the healing wisdom of the past and also to the present-day voices of its patients.

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