**Nurses’ Experiences with Storytelling: New Way to Engage, Connect, and Empower**

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**Background:** Today’s nurses face ever-increasing demands of work with rapidly changing technologies, increased documentation burdens, and more work time spent in isolation. As a result, nurses report increased burnout and decreased work engagement. To date, many programs to address burnout have not been successful. Storytelling — which promotes powerful narrative skills of radical listening and creativity — can provide opportunities to meaningfully connect with others through personal stories and experiences. However, the user experiences and acceptability of storytelling with working nurses have not yet been explored widely. Therefore, we aimed to explore nurses’ experiences with and perceptions of in-person, first-person accounts of nursing-experience storytelling workshops.

**Method:** A descriptive qualitative design to analyze themes and patterns was used. Nurses from a public health nursing organization working with first-time high-risk mothers were invited to participate in a 3-day in-person storytelling workshop. A total of 13 nurses who completed the workshop participated in the semi-structured interviews. Interviews were audio-recorded, then transcribed with all the identifiers removed.

**Results:** All participants were women; half of them were Latina or African American, aged between 30-50 years. The average years of nursing practice was 7.6 years (range between 4 and 14years). Three major themes of the experiences with storytelling emerged: 1) healing, 2) human connection, 3) ‘storytelling is nursing.’ Participants highlighted the organizational support by emphasizing the importance of such an opportunity for nurses’ wellbeing and the workshop as a safe and dedicated “space.” They also expressed their desire and willingness to participate in additional workshops even outside of work hours. Some of the barriers to participating in the workshop were time commitment and a lack of familiarity with storytelling.

**Implications for practice:** As an increasing number of organizations and individuals are seeking practical and scalable ways to decrease burnout and increase work engagements, storytelling has a great potential to heal and empower nurses. In particular, nurses also can engage and connect with one another by sharing and listening to the stories of their colleagues. Though the positive responses from the participants are promising, this was a pilot study with a small sample. Further studies using a larger sample are needed to examine the scalability and efficacy of storytelling at work.

**Other resources:**

**Expressive writing**

1. Nursing, Trauma, and Reflective Writing: <https://nam.edu/nursing-trauma-and-reflective-writing/>
2. Free Tools and Apps to Support the Mental Health and Resilience of All Nurses: <https://www.nursingworld.org/practice-policy/work-environment/health-safety/disaster-preparedness/coronavirus/what-you-need-to-know/the-well-being-initiative/>

**Story Slam**

1. Nursing Story Slam: <https://www.nursing.upenn.edu/news-events/annual-events/story-slam/>
2. Nursing Story Slams: Creating a Space for Nurses To Tell Their Stories: <https://www.myamericannurse.com/nursing-story-slam/>

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