



**TELL YOUR STORY:
USING 55 WORD
STORIES FOR
TEACHING AND
REFLECTION**

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WHEA

Educators Sa



Learn a simple reflective writing tool



Gain insight into key moments in the art and practice of medicine



Practice and be able to teach 55 word stories



Learn how to debrief 55 word stories

OBJECTIV

WHAT ARE 55 WORD STORIES?

- “Brief pieces of creative writing that use elements of poetry, prose, or both encapsulate key experiences in health care”
- Writers and readers gain insight
- The brevity adds to the writing and the impact
- Stimulate personal reflection and professional growth

Reference: Colleen T. Fogarty, “Fifty-five Word Stories: “Small Jewels” for Personal Reflection and Teaching,” *Family Medicine*, 42 (June, 2010): 400-402.

2am, an urgent call
when we show up, her sheets are already soaked
a chaotic rush to delivery
translator yelling through the phone

I have never seen so much blood.

I only know enough to be paralyzed.
She only knows enough to push through.

One still moment
Dad pleads, "baby?"
With sharp wailing, baby answers

Trauma Alert: 25YOM, GSW HEAD

EMS reports self-inflicted 9 mm submandibular explosion; now intubated, unresponsive.

Heart stopped en route, brought him back; now arrived, unstable vitals, open skull.

We work feverishly to resuscitate, stabilize. But why? It's clearly futile. He chose this; let him die.

The reaper appears: "Is he a donor?"

Ahhhh, epiphany...fatality, finality yields harvest, hope.

A HOW-TO GUIDE

1. Introduce the notion of 55 word stories with examples
2. Provide a prompt
 1. A compelling health care story from your own experience
 2. It can be funny, sad, charming, hard....
 3. OMG, I see you, I'm sorry, I regret
3. Spend 10-15 minutes writing down everything you can think of about it
 1. Don't edit at this point.
 2. Write keywords, phrases, images

A HOW-TO GUIDE, CONT'D

4. Edit it down to exactly 55 words (10-15 minutes)
 1. The title doesn't contribute to the word count
 2. Contractions count as single words. Consider eliminating articles.
 3. If this doesn't help get it down, you may be trying to tell too much
5. Experiment with format, line length, use of white space, etc.
6. Read your story out loud – twice; then move on to the next person
 1. Reading aloud encouraged but not required.
 2. If time permits, allow the reader to provide context
 3. Practice appreciative inquiry



Write your own stories

Spend 10 minutes writing

**Spend 10 minutes refining and editing
55 words**

**We will then go to Breakout Room
share and debrief your stories**

Return together for final thoughts

PROMPTS

A memorable student

What I learned...

Health and disease in the time of COVID



Common themes

The 55 word requirement

The power of sharing stories

How these stories differ from ones we regularly tell in media

The 6 word option