To: Candidates in the Writing Seminar, Year III

From: Peggy Warren, MD and Jonathan Kolb, MD

Date: March 3, 2020

Re: Spring Semester Writing Seminar

Dear class participants,

We want to welcome you to the spring semester Writing Seminar that begins on April 16, 2020. This course will be taught by Peggy Warren, MD and Jonathan Kolb, MD. We are looking forward to meeting and working with all of you. In order to be able to have everyone present, we have divided the group into two sections. The section lists are below.

The goal of this seminar is to foster more experience in the writing of clinical material by actually writing. It is always a challenge to describe the course of an analysis or psychotherapy, but the foundation of clinical writing is based upon bringing the clinical work to life on the page.

This class is designed for everyone to have a chance to write and present their work for discussion. Because there are ten people, the group has been divided into two sections with five people each. This allows everyone time to present. Our hope is to form two supportive writer’s groups to refine and discuss each participant’s clinical writing.

We want to meet the needs of all ten of you, and are interested to hear if there are specific goals you would like us to meet. Please feel free to contact us before the course begins with your ideas. The structure of the course can be changed to include additional or alternative readings you may want to utilize. Some people may wish to use this course to develop a case write up beyond the vignette they present in class, others may want to work with bringing a character to life, or describe the dynamics of a relationship. If you learn more by using non-clinical material, that can be discussed as well. The goal is to write, practice writing, and try to make the story come alive.

Before the first class, please read a very short story: GIRL by Jamaica Kincaid (linked here) so we can begin to discuss the use of language and human experience. Through a set of instructions, and an economy of words, Kincaid creates a portrait of a mother, daughter, and culture—a good way to begin our discussion about writing. If you are moved to write something about the story, feel free to bring that in as well. We will discuss the story, your responses to it, and
decide the schedule of presenters for the classes. Again, let us know if there is something specific you hope to gain from the course so we can include it.

For the second class meeting on April 23rd, please read Stephen Bernstein’s paper “Writing About the Psychoanalytic Process,” (2008), Psychoanalytic Inquiry. 28: 433-449 [PEP Web Link]. This will be the class meeting where we begin to present the first piece of writing. Think of this write up as a small portion of a first draft. It can be two to three pages, double spaced, about something from your analytic work or a psychotherapy. It can be a vignette about an interaction with a patient, a dream, a difficult session, something confusing—anything that caught your eye. Each week one candidate will present, and we will discuss the writing. This is not a discussion to formulate the treatment, or supervise the clinician. It is more to discuss what the reader took from the writing, and if the author’s meaning actually reached the reader.

By week seven, we hope everyone has had a chance to present, but we have left it open for continued discussion of a case, or an extra class that might be needed for a presenter. Week eight, (June 4th), we will wrap up and talk about your ideas for improving the course.

For background reading, we suggest Thomas Ogden’s paper “On Psychoanalytic Writing,” (2005), IJP 86:15-29 [PEP Web Link].

If there are any questions or concerns about confidentiality, please do not hesitate to contact us.

We are both looking forward to seeing you on April 16th.

Peggy Warren, MD
Jonathan Kolb, MD

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

1) At the conclusion of the session, the participant will be able to identify the three components of Dr. Stephen Bernstein’s model for presenting analytic process in writing.
2) At the conclusion of the session, the participant will be able to demonstrate two ways of presenting clinical process in written form.
3) At the conclusion of the session, the participant will be able to demonstrate a clinical moment actively described in writing.
4) At the conclusion of the session, the participant will be able to identify two ways to convey the process of change over time in writing.
5) At the conclusion of the session, the participant will be able to identify three strategies for the selection of clinical moments that effectively convey the analytic process.
6) At the conclusion of the session, the participant will be able to demonstrate two ways of developing and articulating a clinician’s voice.
7) At the conclusion of the session, the participant will be able to identify two strategies for the avoidance of jargon or vague language.
8) At the conclusion of the session, the participant will be able to demonstrate how they have arrived at their writing preferences both in style and content.