

Book Review of: LeNavenec, C., & Bridges, L. (Eds.). (2005).
Creating Connections Between Nursing Care and the Creative Arts Therapies.
Springfield, IL: Charles C Thomas, 377 pages
[ISBN 0-398-07557-7, Hard cover; 0-398-07556-7: Paperback version: \$ 53.95]

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Like Pinocchio, *Creating Connections between Nursing Care and the Creative Arts Therapies* documents the process of becoming human. As implied in the illustrative graphics on the cover, the book contains nineteen stories of a variety of caregivers and those they serve as they collaboratively struggle to give meanings to their lives in the face of adversity. While well documented and research focused, it celebrates the power of the human spirit that would be a valuable read for a general audience. We come to know the lived-experience of a teen living with cancer, a group of adolescents in an alternative school overcoming anger, the bringing of joy to seniors through music, and burnout as a caregiver to name a few. As we vicariously share in these experiences, we too can be transformed in our practices as nurses, social workers, doctors, teachers, and those in other helping professions. It is an inspiration for one and all.

The book, which was edited by a nursing professor (LeNavenec, who has a PhD in Clinical Sociology and Family Studies) and a dance/movement therapist (Bridges, who has a Master's degree in Psychology), is well organized with a valuable Table at the beginning that lists the art form used, the population of the case study, the life stage of the participants and the chapter author's profession. This makes it a strong textbook and resource as one can choose a chapter that is relevant to a particular field and/or topic. It crosses the professions of nursing, social work, education and occupation and therapeutic recreation through visual art, music, dance/movement and drama therapies, weaving a tapestry of healing and growth. Ultimately, it

is a story of journeys to self as individuals rediscover/remake themselves using the expressive arts.

What is refreshing about the book is that its chapters are not prescriptive. The researchers/help-providers tell their own narratives as they come to understand their own practices in the service of others. The book works against the standard meta-format as chapters are permitted to follow their own unique structures. Each contains a strong literature review, description of the context, and personal narratives that are guided by philosophical beliefs, but, each in its own way. The authors were not straight-jacketed to fit a unified form that is antithetical to both art and the care-giving professions. Implicitly it understands the politics of knowledge and takes a social constructivist stance as the authors demonstrate that meanings are not disseminated but constructed. The constructivist approach that they use with their clients they also use with their readers.

Readers witness the struggles and celebrations of practitioners in their always uncertain and emergent craft, and are left with the hope anyone can take some control over uncontrollable life situations through the use of an expressive art. The book offers a buffet of possibilities that one may implement in her/his own situation as each chapter documents the strife of individuals trying to make life as happy and as fulfilling as is possible.

I would recommend this book for those in arts education to expand their pallets and repertoires, to qualitative researchers to assist them in understanding the interrelationship of meaning and form, to care-givers so that they may find other means of holistically living along side of those they serve, and finally, to all those who seek a variety of ways of giving meaning to existence. We need more books that celebrate the power of the human spirit and imagination.

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