

Communicating Pain

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Introduction

This session comes out of my recent experience of back pain, and how it impacted on my life and outlook.

Pain

- can be physical or emotional
- wreaks havoc with mindfulness
- has a relationship with drugs
- affects our interaction with other people – perhaps we expect of sympathy
- is personalised – like seeing colour
- has its purpose
- gives rise to indignation – can we really expect to spend our lives pain free?
- can be managed
- can be anticipated
- can have positive outcomes
- can have negative outcomes, such as self harm

On Pain

Your pain is the breaking of the shell that encloses your understanding.
Even as the stone of the fruit must break, that its heart may stand in the sun, so
must you know pain.
And could you keep your heart in wonder at the daily miracles of your life, your
pain would not seem less wondrous than your joy;
And you would accept the seasons of your heart, even as you have always
accepted the seasons that pass over your fields.
And you would watch with serenity through the winters of your grief.

Much of your pain is self-chosen.
It is the bitter potion by which the physician within you heals your sick self.
Therefore trust the physician, and drink his remedy in silence and tranquillity:
For his hand, though heavy and hard, is guided by the tender hand of the Unseen,
And the cup he brings, though it burn your lips, has been fashioned of the clay
which the Potter has moistened with His own sacred tears.

Kahlil Gibran

Writing Prompt 1: Word Association

The first writing prompt is the word pain itself. Just write down words you associate with the word pain.

Think of different types of pain

- physical
- emotional
- sharp
- dull
- healing

Discussion

- Are there solutions to our pain?
- How do we communicate pain?
- What is the role of suffering?

Writing Prompt 2: My Own Pain

Write about your own particular pain or painful incident. Think about

- the purpose of pain
- personalised pain
- the relationship of pain to drugs
- the gifts of pain

Writing Prompt 3: After Pain

Share and discuss the following poems.

After great pain, a formal feeling comes –
The Nerves sit ceremonious, like Tombs –
The stiff Heart questions ‘was it He, that bore,’
And ‘Yesterday, or Centuries before’?

The Feet, mechanical, go round –
A Wooden way
Of Ground, or Air, or Ought –
Regardless grown,
A Quartz contentment, like a stone –

This is the Hour of Lead –
Remembered, if outlived,
As Freezing persons, recollect the Snow –
First – Chill – then Stupor – then the letting go –

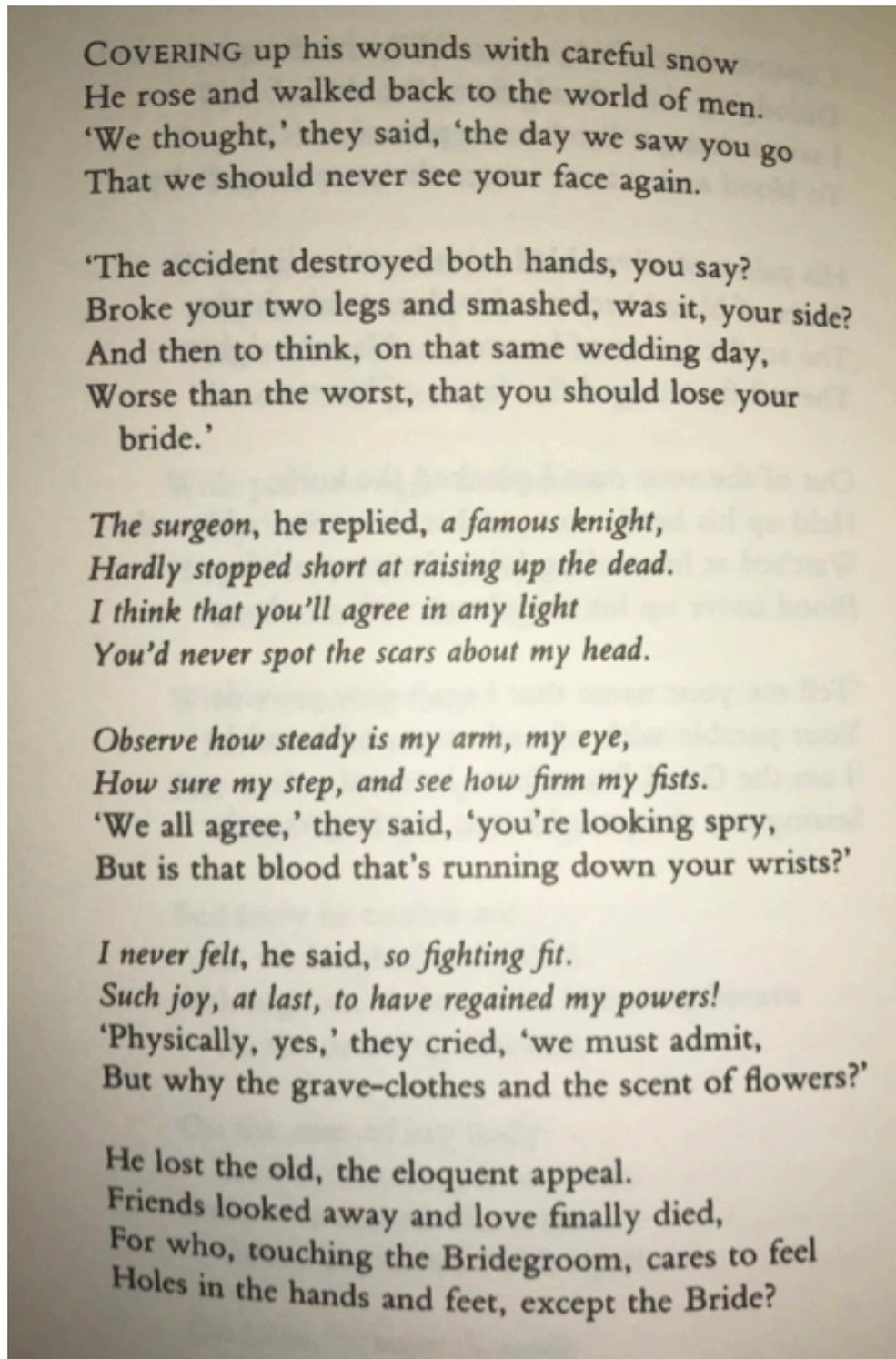
Emily Dickinson

A Baby Asleep After Pain

As a drenched, drowned bee
Hangs numb and heavy from a bending flower,
So clings to me
My baby, her brown hair brushed with wet tears
And laid against her cheek;
Her soft white legs hanging heavily over my arm,
Swinging heavily to my movement as I walk.
My sleeping baby hangs upon my life,
Like a burden she hangs on me.
She has always seemed so light,
But now she is wet with tears and numb with pain
Even her floating hair sinks heavily,
Reaching downwards;
As the wings of a drenched, drowned bee
Are a heaviness, and a weariness.

D. H. Lawrence

And to finish, read the poem 'After the Accident' by Charles Causley



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