



Honouring the Wisdom of our Elders: The Importance of Storymaking and Storytelling for Positive Aging

AN ONLINE WORKSHOP FOR HEALTHCARE & OTHER PROFESSIONALS

When: Monday, June 5th to Sunday, July 23rd, 2023 (4 weeks) ONLINE weekly at your discretion

Cost: \$240 (Students \$120) Registration Deadline: Monday, May 29, 2023

This workshop will be offered only if there is sufficient enrolment.

Adopting a strengths-based approach, the objective of this workshop is to reimagine a world in which “elder wisdom” is actively cultivated and harvested in our everyday practices, in such a way that bolsters well-being and positive development for younger and older adults alike.

In this workshop, participants will examine the meaning of wisdom in contemporary society and explore various ways that psychological scientists have gone about studying this ancient concept. This workshop will emphasize the importance of storymaking and storytelling to the development, manifestation, and transmission of wisdom, and will offer suggestions for incorporating wisdom-fostering “life story work” into practice in family, community, and applied settings.

Week 1: Defining wisdom

- Collaboratively explore definitions of wisdom among classmates
- Probe the idea that elder wisdom is an asset to individual lives and society
- Expose attitudinal, cultural, and structural barriers that have marginalized elder wisdom
- Consider cross-cultural perspectives on wisdom, including Indigenous conceptions of wisdom
- Pay tribute to exemplars of wisdom in our own lives

Week 2: Studying wisdom

- Consider the question: Can wisdom be measured and, if so, how?
- Examine dominant definitions of wisdom in the social and psychological sciences
- Explore the strengths and limitations of various measurement approaches to wisdom
- Review the main lessons that have been learned from wisdom research to date, answering the question: What do wise people know about life and how to live it?

Week 3: Developing wisdom through storymaking

- Review what is known about the development of wisdom across the lifespan
- Explore the personal and social resources that support growth in wisdom from life experience
- Introduce the framework of “narrative gerontology” as it applies to research and practice
- Discuss wisdom’s relationship to significant personal memories, life stories, and storymaking
- Discuss the special importance of life story work for supporting people living with dementia
- Review therapeutic story-based techniques that can be used to promote positive aging in family, community, and applied settings (e.g., structured reminiscence, life review, and life story books)

Week 4: Sharing wisdom through storytelling

- Explore intergenerational storytelling a context for the social transmission of wisdom
- Discuss the mutual benefits of intergenerational storytelling for both younger and older adults in terms of psychosocial development, memory, and well-being
- Discuss optimal conditions and best practices for structuring intergenerational storytelling
- Consider ways to create storytelling opportunities in our daily and professional lives



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- Review story-based intergenerational activities that can be used to promote positive aging (e.g., intergenerational storytelling, oral histories, memory walks, collaborative digital storytelling)

Instructor: Nic M. Weststrate, PhD, is an alumnus of the University of Toronto and Assistant Professor of Human Development and Learning in the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC). He is a member of the UIC Center for Research on Health and Aging in the Institute for Health Research and Policy. Dr. Weststrate's research program investigates optimal psychosocial development across the adult lifespan, including personal and collective identity, generativity, ego integrity, and, especially, the development, manifestation, and transmission of wisdom. In recent research, Nic has been exploring the influence of intergenerational storytelling on psychosocial development, which he is currently examining within the context of grandparent-grandchild relationships and the LGBTQ community.

Registration and payment available online at <https://aging.utoronto.ca/642-2/>