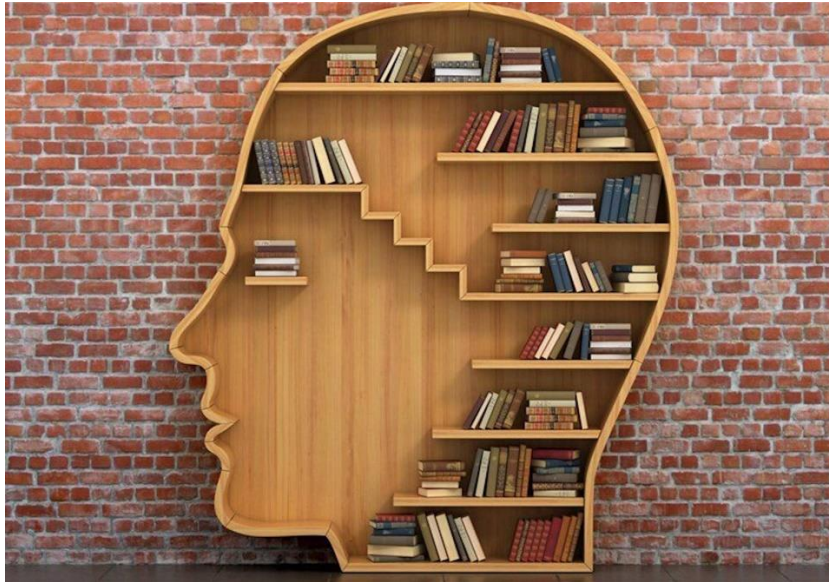


A Novel Life: Workshop Proposal



Workshop Title: A Novel Life: Book Therapy for Teens and Young Adults

Workshop Facilitators: Susan Nadathur, MA and Sita Nadathur, MA

Statement of Need: Today's teens are facing serious psychological, emotional, and spiritual challenges that are growing every day more worrisome to parents and educators. In Susan's work as an author of young adult literature, and Sita's work as a clinical therapist, we have interacted with hundreds of young people. And one thing we have learned: many of these young people are reluctant to share the painful realities of their lives with the teachers, parents, counselors, and others who are there to help them. Why would they? Let's think of it from a teen's perspective. What teenage boy (or girl) wants to share what is happening in his world with adults who might, despite all good intentions, offer advice, quote the Bible, and/or tell them what to do?

Workshop Premise: Perhaps an alternative to talking with young people about the life challenges they face is to talk about the struggles others face—through the safety net of literature. We can help young people to understand the spiritual, emotional and psychological challenges they encounter through the experiences of well-crafted fictional characters. Through books and story, young people can perceive how others have coped with and resolved problems that cause sadness, stress, fear and uncertainty. Through literature, they can understand that they are not alone in encountering heartache, rejection, loneliness and fear. Books can do so much more than support reading comprehension and model good writing. They can help students relate to their world and consider the complexities of the human experience. Once a teen sees himself represented in a book, his experience is validated. Feeling part of something bigger, something universal, can be a powerful tool in combating spiritual confusion, depression, feelings of worthlessness, and negative emotional impulses.

Workshop Objective: By the end of this presentation, students will feel more comfortable talking about themselves and their problems by identifying with the challenges and struggles of others as presented through relevant young adult literature, the works of renowned Christian writers (C.S. Lewis) and therapeutic, arts-based activities that inspire character building, creativity, peace, and harmony. Students will be better able to look inside themselves to find their personal resources, challenge their intellect, inspire their imagination, and empower their emotions.

Workshop Description: Using the platform of young adult and Christian literature to navigate the challenges of being young, this workshop is designed to introduce young men (and women) to life-changing, eye-opening, thought-provoking works of literature that have the power to enrich, inspire and heal. “A Novel Life” offers a way to understand and process the often confusing adolescent strongholds of relationship stress, low self-esteem, depression, bullying, and sadly but all too common, suicidal ideation. We as educators have a general sense that books can teach us things, make us value our everyday lives, and even shape the way we think. But books as therapy is rarely considered. This workshop introduces a new way of healing as it probes into the vulnerable corners of young adulthood. Ultimately, it offers hope by shining light into the dark corners of a young man’s mind where unhealthy thoughts can grow into tragic decisions.

Learning Outcomes: After participating in this presentation, students can expect to 1) learn to look inside themselves for the tools they need to grow; 2) identify coping strategies that work for them; and 3) rely on the power of story to be heard and understood.

Sample Activities: Self-Confidence Worksheet, Self-Esteem Worksheet, Emotional Support through Art, Literature, and Writing, Exploring Identity Through Art, Literature, and Writing, Helping Children and Teens to Develop Spiritual Awareness and Self-Esteem

Timeframe: Workshops are scheduled in two-hour timeframes, ranging from a two-hour intensive to extended trainings twice a week over a period of four weeks.

Target Students: Grades 7-12 (ages 13-18)

Supplies Required: Photocopies of selected readings, worksheets, and interactive activities

AV Equipment Required: PowerPoint Projector, screen, sound system

Post-Workshop Follow-through: After the workshop, students will be left with a list of suggested books based on individual need. Continued contact with the facilitators and others students is made possible through “A Novel Life” Facebook group.

Facilitators Fee: The sharing of the talents and skills that God bestowed upon us is our gift to the world. For this reason, we have no specific monetary charge. Any donation is at your own discretion and may include either a modest honorarium, or simply the cost of providing accommodation, local transportation, and meals for the duration of the time we spend with you.

Instructor Bio: Susan Nadathur is a young adult author whose work focuses on the vulnerable corners of young adulthood. She is actively involved in book therapy and teen suicide prevention programs which incorporate books, stories, and the creative arts. Susan lives and works in Lajas, Puerto Rico, but divides her time between the island and her second home in Connecticut. For more information about Susan and her work, you may link to www.SusanNadathur.com.

Instructor Bio: Sita Nadathur is a doctoral candidate at the University of Hartford in Hartford, Connecticut. Originally from Puerto Rico, Sita now resides in the United States, where she provides therapy and neuropsychological testing to culturally diverse clients. Her research and speaking interests focus on the exploration of cultural and spiritual values, and the incorporation of those values as therapeutic interventions enhancing both engagement and treatment adherence.

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"I can shake off everything as I write, my sorrows disappear, my courage is reborn."
Anne Frank