

Narrative Walks Manitoba

Further information and Frequently Asked Questions

Do you have a problem or concern that needs to be taken for a walk?

Do you have a problem or concern in your life keeping you up at night and/or infiltrating your moments of peace?

Do you enjoy quiet time to reflect in nature?

Are you able to walk on trails?

Are you willing to engage in a process of reflection?

Are you willing to join in supportive circles with others sharing stories (as you chose to) and hearing stories from others?

Then joining a Narrative Walk could be for you!

We hope Narrative Walks might be of good use to folks who are interested in engaging in an activity in nature. We planned these groups before Covid-19, but we think this activity, being that it has always meant to take place outside, naturally allows us to incorporate physical distancing without taking away from the overall experience. Also, we wanted to mention that this activity has always been about ‘bringing on a walk’ whatever it is that feels important to spend time with. It could be you are experiencing problems in new or different ways presently, and/or that you are experiencing some kind of re-orientation to your life as a result of recent events – and whatever it is that you think could benefit from being taken for a walk, is welcome here.

What does a Narrative Walk look like?

Narrative Walks are therapeutic group walks that take place in nature. We will journey through and with nature, on foot, and each with a problem or concern unique to us. We will walk with our concern while reflecting on questions. The questions posed will invite us to consider different perspectives of a problem story in our lives and ask us to reflect on preferred stories and paths we want to take in life. Walking and journeying are powerful metaphors that we take up and experience in this group, and we invite people to engage with the questions in their own way. The facilitators support the group with guidance and encouragement through the walks, and they also take up a ‘de-centered’ role which allows for folks to lead their own journeys. Group circles will be also held in every walk, where people will be invited to share short parts of their stories with others, entirely as they choose to. The circles will be a place where people will be invited to listen to, and witness, the stories and the preferred paths of others.

Longer day-long groups will involve spending time with 15 questions spread out along a trail, while shorter evening groups, will involve spending time with a few questions, as decided by

the facilitators, that fit for that particular group/theme. In all of the groups, we will experience what walking and nature have to teach us about change.

What kinds of problems or concerns can come for a walk?

The problem or concern that you decide to bring to a group, could be basically anything. It could be a recent problem or concern, or one that a person has a history with. It could be a concern related to any changes that Covid-19 has brought into your life, or not. It could be related to stress, illness, change, grief, and/or identity. It could be related to anxiety, depression, or trauma. It could be related to creativity, inspiration, or spirituality. It could be connected to a family or relationship concern.

Also, a person does not need to have the name of a problem entirely pinned down before joining in a walk, although it is okay too, if someone has a name of a problem that is clear to them. We ask that each person bring one problem, as compared to many at once, but it is okay to bring a problem that feels like an unnamed force or blob, for example. There is room during the walk to sort out our own descriptions of things as we go along – and this is part of the intention of the walk. The important part is that the language we use is our own and that it is used on our own terms.

Who can attend the walk?

- Anyone who is willing to engage in a process of reflecting on questions.
- Anyone who can walk on trails and be outside. Longer full day groups will require of folks to be able to walk for up to 14 kms, while shorter evening groups, might involve 2 kms (approx.). Walks are paced (day long walks include stops and food breaks) and are intended to be accessible for a range of abilities and bodies – but they do require the physical ability to walk. We do also, however, offer a specific group on a trail at Bird's Hill Park that is wheelchair accessible on particular dates.
- Anyone who is willing to engage in a small amount of group reflection and storytelling, as decided by each person. We ask that people be willing to be genuinely supportive of others - if even by your presence, without many words.
- Anyone who enjoys quiet reflective time in nature.
- The groups open to people who are 18 years old and up and are open to people of all genders and backgrounds. Youth focused Narrative Walks are being planned for the near future. We have found, over and over, that groups that are diverse in the ages, genders, and backgrounds of the people attending, allow for a rich experience for all.

- The group was intentionally developed to open to a range of people and concerns. If you are interested but have any questions about if your ability to participate in any parts of the groups, please let us know.

Who are the guides of Narrative Walks?

Lise Brown is an outdoor educator, guide, and therapist, and is a facilitator and owner of Momenta Inc. Since 2002, she has facilitated groups in urban and wilderness environments all over Manitoba that focus on meaningful activities, physical and emotional safety, successful participation, and fun.

Candace Neufeld is a narrative therapist in independent practice who is committed to social justice in her work. Since 2003, she has been developing and hosting therapeutic groups for youth and adults and she believes that groups can be deeply transformative and can be offered in a way as to honor the process and wisdom of each person attending.

How do I register and what are the fees?

Registration involves completing the online registration form. Once you complete your registration, you will receive a confirmation email with additional information about what to expect with the specific group you registered for, where we are meeting, advice about what to wear, etc.

Our monthly evening community group is being offered by donation and we welcome folks to donate what they can (suggested donation, \$20) and we also welcome folks to attend at no cost. Also, with the monthly evening community group, people are asked to register for the first evening they attend, but not for any subsequent evenings (once registered for this particular group, people are welcome to drop-in for the following monthly evenings, as they like). The cost varies per person with the other groups we offer.

How much group discussion is there? I'm not sure I'm good in groups.

The group reflections can be minimal (all groups involve independent reflection as we walk) and decided by each person, but we ask that people participate as best they can in the group circles, in good spirits. People who attend find the group reflections to be an important and meaningful part of the walks. The group reflections are facilitated and structured, so that what is asked of people to share is clear and often relatively brief. The questions posed in the group reflections intentionally allow for choice and unanimity in what is shared.

Where did this idea come from and why this approach?

Narrative Walks was created by a therapist in Australia, Chris Darmody, who wanted to develop a program to engage with people who may not be interested in conventional methods of therapy. The activity was developed to be in nature, story-based, participant led, hopeful, and non-pathologizing. It offers walking and journeying as powerful metaphors for life and change.