

Thursday Memo – December 10, 2015

The Universe is Made of Stories – by Hugh Silk

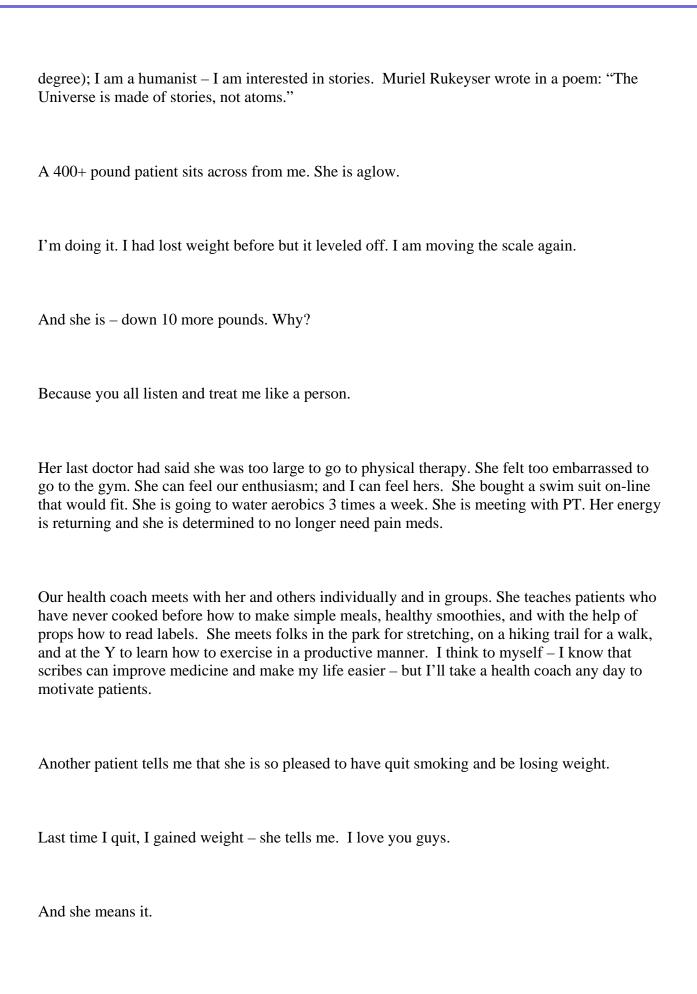
I feel guilty. I am too blessed to have too many stories to tell about clinical successes and teaching triumphs. As I reflect on my good fortune a couple of ideas bubble up.

A coach of mine once said – make your own luck. I have always been steadfast to gravitate towards that which I think will be innovative, practical, meaningful and fulfilling. I only applied to 2 colleges and 1 medical school. I knew where I wanted to be. I made some luck and I got some luck.

I now find myself gravitating towards the practical and meaningful within the realms of clinical practice and teaching. Making luck by choosing carefully; getting luck by being surrounded by thoughtful colleagues.

In my office I work with a team. I provide primary care to people with significant mental health issues in an outpatient setting where people have been getting mental health services for years. They feel safe there. My practice is the reverse of what Sandy Blount set up at UMass. I *receive* the warm hand offs rather than make them. We routinely talk about our patients as a team in the hallway, at planned meetings, by email - thereby offering people comprehensive, planned, coordinated care.

But wait – it gets better. I have a health coach, a nurse and a medical assistant. We do the now routine team huddles, team meetings, pre-planning for visits, etc. But I can't say enough about a health coach. Iora health has been doing this for years and proving that 1 doc to 2-3 health coaches improves patient wellness. We are now proving it for mental health patients. But I am not interested in numbers improving (as much as I know that this does improve health to some



Each team member shows her respect. Her goals are simple. Her life is simple. Her accomplishments to date are very small in the grand scale of things. I give her one of the baskets that Judy Savageau helped organize as a reward for her hard work. She hugs me and cries.

Later, the woman who has now dropped below 400 lbs returns for another visit and shows me a photo of her "former self". She is beautiful. In her own way – then and now. She truly is aglow. Her smile is contagious. Her story inspires us all in our office and we are giddy as we share it with one another. We vow to tell a positive story at the end of each team meeting (something we borrowed from Erik Garcia and his crew in Worcester). Our own Story Corps meets the The Moth.

I then realize – the universe truly is made of stories and only that will save us.