

# Phyllis Klein, LCSW, CPT

Welcome to the Poetic Dialogue Workshop

- My contact information:
- [therapy@phyllisklein.com](mailto:therapy@phyllisklein.com)
- [www.phyllisklein.com](http://www.phyllisklein.com) 650-921-3429
- Handouts and slides are available on my website on the Norcata Workshop page under Writing Therapy.
- Link to my writing therapy group in Palo Alto:  
<https://www.meetup.com/Palo-Alto-Writing-Therapy-Group/>
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# Warm Up

\*Write a list of words you like. Any word is ok. Call out the word--I'll write it on the white board. Notice how you might let the word come without planning or trying. Let more words flow onto your paper just like you would say them to me.

\*Write some words the critic might say and call those out. Take a breath and make some space for the flow of words and the critic.

\*Make a list of things you could plant.

\*If you planted them what would come up?

# *On Emergence* by Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer

In May I planted a whole row of beans  
along the back fence of the garden,  
pushed each of the small white seeds one inch  
into the spring-damp soil. I waited weeks.

Not one came up. Not one.

I planted them again, planted them in twos  
two inches apart. I waited weeks. Three  
came up. There were over 100 seeds.

I am trying to tell you that sometimes

what we wish for does not happen.  
Though we do everything by the rules.  
Though we have known success before.  
Though we long for our plans to take root,  
to bloom, to fruit. Then all through the rows  
emerged this spring dozens of volunteer  
cosmos.

This morning a generous riot of pink, dark pink  
and white fluttering in the spaces where  
I'd envisioned only the green of beans.

# Discuss the Poem

- What do you like? What do you not like?
- Underline words, phrases, images you find interesting, like the sound of.
- What message do you receive from this poem?  
(No right or wrong. Poems are like dreams with many interpretations.)

# What is Poetic Dialogue?

- The secret about writing as a dialogue.
- Specific dialogues: write an “answer” or imitate the style of an author.
- Ekphrastic poetry.

# Writing Prompts for *On Emergence*

- \*What do you like to plant? (real or metaphorical.)
- \*How hard do you try to reap what you have sown and how does this work out for you? (Even now when you start writing, or when you make art.)
- \*What do you do when something really important that you need isn't coming to you?
- \*What “*volunteers*” have shown up for you when you didn't expect them? Has that happened even today, perhaps?

# Giving Honest Positive Feedback

- \* What you like and why? (May need to hear it read more than once.)
- \* What ideas, images, thoughts, and emotions are in the writing. How the writing opens up ideas and commonality for you and the author.
- \* How you felt hearing the writing. How this has helped or moved you.



# Write and Read

- Take 15 minutes to write.
- If you are stuck or have a question, let me know and I'll come around to help out.
- Remember that any kind of writing is fine.
- Use the prompts given or go in your own direction. You don't need to write in response to the poem if something else wants to happen.
- Read and get positive feedback as time permits.

# Clinical Information

What is poetry therapy?

- \*Poem as springboard for discussion and writing

  - \*Choosing a poem

  - \*Clear meaning, interesting images, emotion,  
positive ending

# Poetry as a Vehicle

\*For expressing feelings, thoughts, images, sounds, rhythm.

\* Container for the difficult

\*Most often we feel better after writing something down.

# Writing a response to a poem

- Can be any form-- free writing, story, journal entry.
- Does not have to be a poem.
- Can be a poem.
- Permission.

# Developing Writing Prompts From Poems

- Underline words, phrases, images that strike you or move you.
- Ask questions related to the poem.
- Use your imagination and creativity. This can take practice.

# Honest Positive Feedback

- No critiquing
- Create a safe environment

# Soothing the Inner Critic

- Make space for the critic.
- Increase comfort with creativity and self esteem

# Closing Artwork and Poems by Devora Weinapple and me





# Ode to the Pears Drawn by Devora

How naturally they settle  
together in their bowl,  
snuggled and safe,  
but if I could, I would  
eat the one with  
the blush, or at least  
take a bite.

After she drew them,  
did she realize  
her caress of pink  
was an embrace,  
her pencils on the  
paper  
making them ready  
for anything.

# Standing Invitation

How we can settle here  
together in our bowl,  
safe to say what comes, to see our  
pinks, our blues, our pearskin  
colors as beautiful and delicious.

How I can open  
the window so the curtains  
can dance into our room  
and all this in less than ninety  
minutes. I'll have to bring a wand.  
Hope you can make it.