

A Ruffled Mind

Category: Sleep

written by Debbie Hall | February 7, 2018

A ruffled mind makes a restless pillow. –Charlotte Bronte

A few years ago, after retiring from a long career as a psychologist, and when I was deep into an MFA program in writing, I wrote a poem exploring the reasons, past and present, for my intermittent, middle-of-the-night insomnia.

As a psychologist, I had worried over patient-centered concerns. I'd lie there thinking about the reliability of a suicide safety contract, imagining my patient standing at the edge of a cliff. Or, I might replay another patient's unloading of an abusive, traumatic childhood. I'd lie awake, wondering how much good therapy could do within the constraints of a managed care timeline.

Although these ruminations about my patients did not instantly vanish as a result of retirement, they were gradually replaced by middle-of-the-night searches for words. Words that could express the inexpressible. Words that could form lines of poetry that might resonate with others on an emotional level.

As I write this now, I am struck by the parallels between past and present. What still drives me, sometimes keeps me awake at night, is the desire for deeper human communication and connection, be it through a helping profession or making art that in some way matters to others.

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