



METAPHOR

THE LANGUAGE OF PAIN

A BRIDGE BETWEEN EXPERIENCE AND UNDERSTANDING

A metaphor is a figure of speech that compares two unrelated objects or concepts which share a specific characteristic.

- She was boiling mad.
- His words were pearls of wisdom.
- My appointment was a breeze.

Someone cannot literally boil, but it's an apt description because most people know what water looks like when it boils.

Words cannot be pearls, but many people are familiar with pearls and their worth, so the metaphor works.

An appointment cannot be a breeze, but because we know what a breeze is, the metaphor clearly shows that the appointment was delightfully easy.

Chronic illness, mental illness, chronic pain, and disability can be challenging for us to explain and equally difficult for others to understand, but metaphors can help bridge that distance.

The oldest and most commonly used metaphors in medicine are military metaphors:

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|---------------------|----------------|--------------------|
| • battle | • magic bullet | • plague |
| • enemy | • invasive | • grey |
| • siege | • vulnerable | • ashen |
| • warrior | • conqueror | • lead balloon |
| • weapons | • battleground | • washed out |
| • fight | • dance | • voyage |
| • soldier | • journey | • malfunction |
| • survivor | • puzzle | • cocoon/butterfly |
| • ticking time bomb | • pummeled | • attack |
| • struggle | • shadow | • ghost |



Visit chronic-joy.org for more resources.

Metaphors have a way of holding the most truth in the least space.
(Orson Scott Card)

WRITING METAPHORS

Begin with a bit of brainstorming. How can you describe your symptoms, losses, or pain to others using a familiar object or idea? Think about colors, textures, physical properties, seasons, weather, cooking or baking terms, sports terms, or construction words.

- What are you describing (pain, fatigue, nausea, brain fog, etc.)?
- What characteristics does it have?
- How does it make you feel?
- Does it have a smell or taste associated with it?
- Can you see it?
- What object or idea shares some of the qualities of your pain or symptom? Challenge yourself to stretch beyond the commonly used metaphors for pain/symptoms.
- Is there a tone or mood you want to convey? Does a color, shape, or physical characteristic help establish that?

GETTING CREATIVE

With your brainstorming complete, choose an object or concept to develop into a metaphor to give a clearer picture of your pain or illness.

Have fun with this. Play with your ideas. Let the words simmer and percolate.

Need a little more inspiration? Look no further than the pages of Scripture.

METAPHORS IN THE BIBLE

- *I am the bread of life.* (John 6:35)
- *I am the vine; you are the branches.* (John 15:5)
- *I am the gate for the sheep.* (John 10:7)
- *We are the clay, and you are our potter ...* (Isaiah 64:8)
- *Your word is a lamp to my feet, a light on my path.* (Psalm 119:105)
- *The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life ...* (Proverbs 13:14)
- *You are a lion's cub, Judah ...* (Genesis 49:9)
- *You are the salt of the earth.* (Matthew 5:13)
- *For the Lord God is a sun and shield ...* (Psalm 84:11)
- *The wind blows wherever it pleases.* (John 3:8)



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