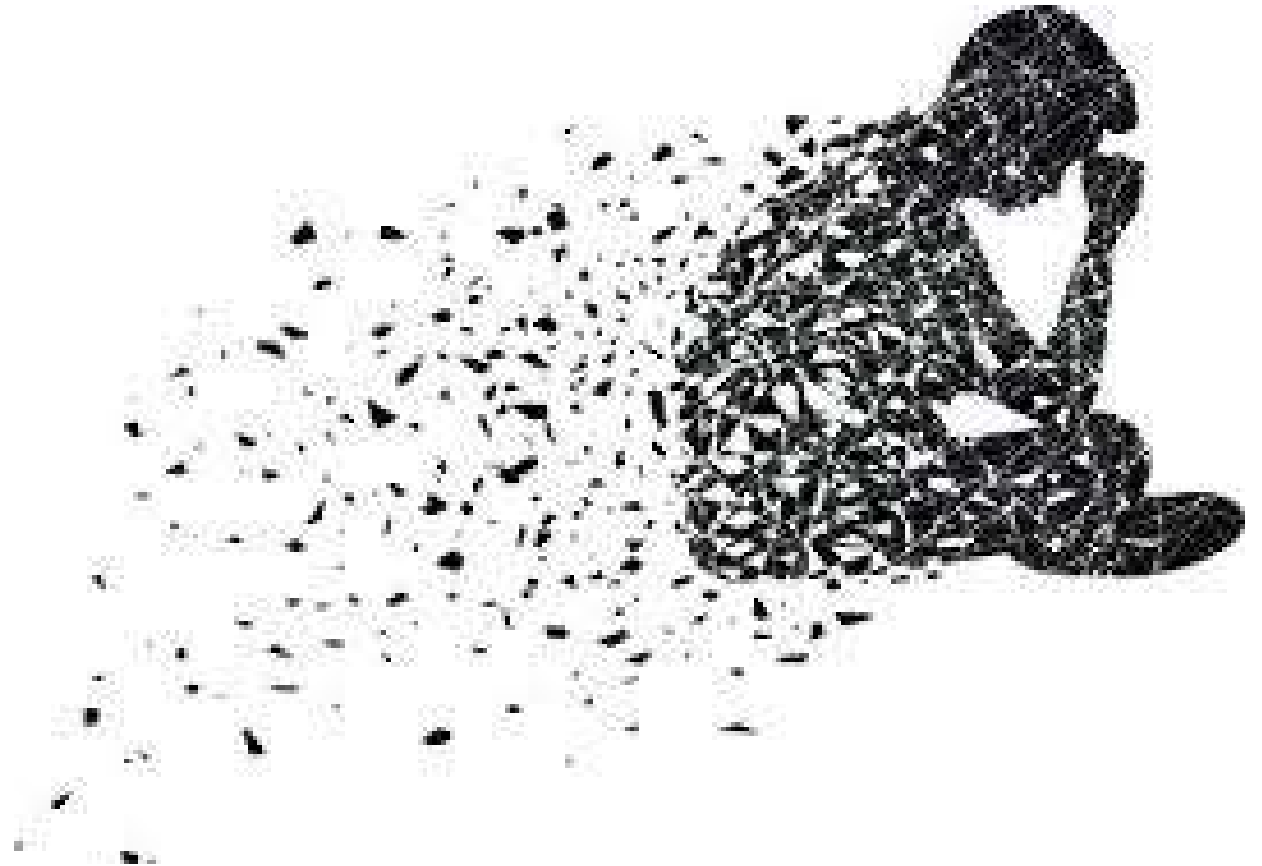




# A call for Reflections of a wounded-healer

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**28 May 2019**



## UCT'S PROF BONGANI MAYOSI SUFFERED FROM DEPRESSION BEFORE HIS DEATH - REPORTS

Through a statement which appears to be from the Mayosi family, it has been revealed that the much-loved UCT professor has been struggling with depression for the past two years.



Professor Bongani Mayosi. Picture: @SAHeart ZA/Twitter.

## Wits mourns student death, demand intervention to tackle depression

25 October 2018 - 09:20 BY NOMAHLUBI JORDAAN AND NONKULULEKO NJILO




Students voice their frustration over a perceived lack of support from the institution.  
*Image: Raymond Preston*

## Doctors can't ignore their own mental health – top psychiatrist warns about doctor burnout

A top psychiatrist warns of doctor burnout in SA, especially with the chronic shortages of medical professionals in the country.

**health24**

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- Concept of a wounded healer**
  - Formulation of a health care professional**
    - Discourse and identity of a health care professional**
    - Defense mechanisms**
    - State of severity and resentment**
    - Normalising discourses of vulnerability**

## **Concept of a wounded healer**

- Carl Jung- It is our own hurt, trauma or suffering that serve as a motivation to heal others. Our wounds become a resource to help others heal
- From psychological lenses, studies show that individuals develop a desire to enter a field in the helping profession such as: medicine, nursing, occupational therapy, social work, psychology etc. as a consequence of their own woundedness, be it consciously or unconsciously
- It is common for individuals to venture in professional spaces where they can assume a curer role because of their own woundedness than not

# Formulation of a health care professional

*Unconsciously or consciously:*

- Desire to help as a means to fulfil what was not met in childhood/  
past traumatic experiences
- To be rescuers/heroic and be admirable/ ego
- To surpass one's own wounds
- To escape one's own personal difficulties by focusing on resolving  
the problems of others

## **Formulation of a health care professional (Cont....)**

*Discourses and intellectual identity in the early years of life-  
Internalisation:*

- “You are cream of the crop”
- “You cannot afford to be second best”
- “You cannot break down”
- “The field has always been like this, get on with it”
- “There is no time to nurse one’s emotions”
- “You resemble economic emancipation”

## Formulation of a health care professional (Cont....)

### *Defense mechanisms:*

- Sigmund Freud: Repression/ Suppression/Denial of wounds in childhood, early adulthood/during academic training
- Wounded-healers' sense of control and position of power may grow stronger, and therefore increased dependency for self-esteem
- Bipolarity perception in the helping field:

"the first distortion of truth in the myth of the analytic situation" is that analysis is an interaction between a sick person and a healthy one" (Racker, 1968).

## Formulation of a health care professional (Cont....)

### *Defense mechanisms:*

-Rationalization: “I must be well if I help others”, a minimization of one’s own wounds

Intellectualization: Creates short-sightedness to the depth of the wound

-Initially there might be a false believe that one is immune to significant psychological depletion. Out of fear, there is withdrawal from admitting to emotional suffering/ difficulty coping to our colleagues, friends or family due to feelings of shame

-Significant association between personal life adversities and feelings of incompetency

## Formulation of a health care professional (Cont....)

*Sever state, resentment and compassion fatigue:*

-Working/training in highly pressured conditions results to manifestation of psychological difficulties resonating from past personal wounds

-Triggers of woundedness during training, e.g. psychiatry rotation- "with each new patient we are brought down again into fresh regions of darkness. Complacency is a sure sign that we have ceased to grow and our link with the depths is broken" (Kirmayer,2003: 271)

## **Formulation of a health care professional (Cont....)**

*Sever state, resentment and compassion fatigue:*

- Literature in the context education and training:
  - Medical students are documented to significantly present with depression, suicidal ideation, burnout and greater concerns about the stigma of mental illness compared to the general population
- Literature in the context of post-qualification:
  - Physicians, Nurses, nursing assistants, social workers, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, psychologists, dental nurses and hygienists, etc. -More depression and anxiety, more sleep disturbance and impaired memory.

## **Formulation of a health care professional (Cont....)**

### *Reconstruction of discourse that allow vulnerability*

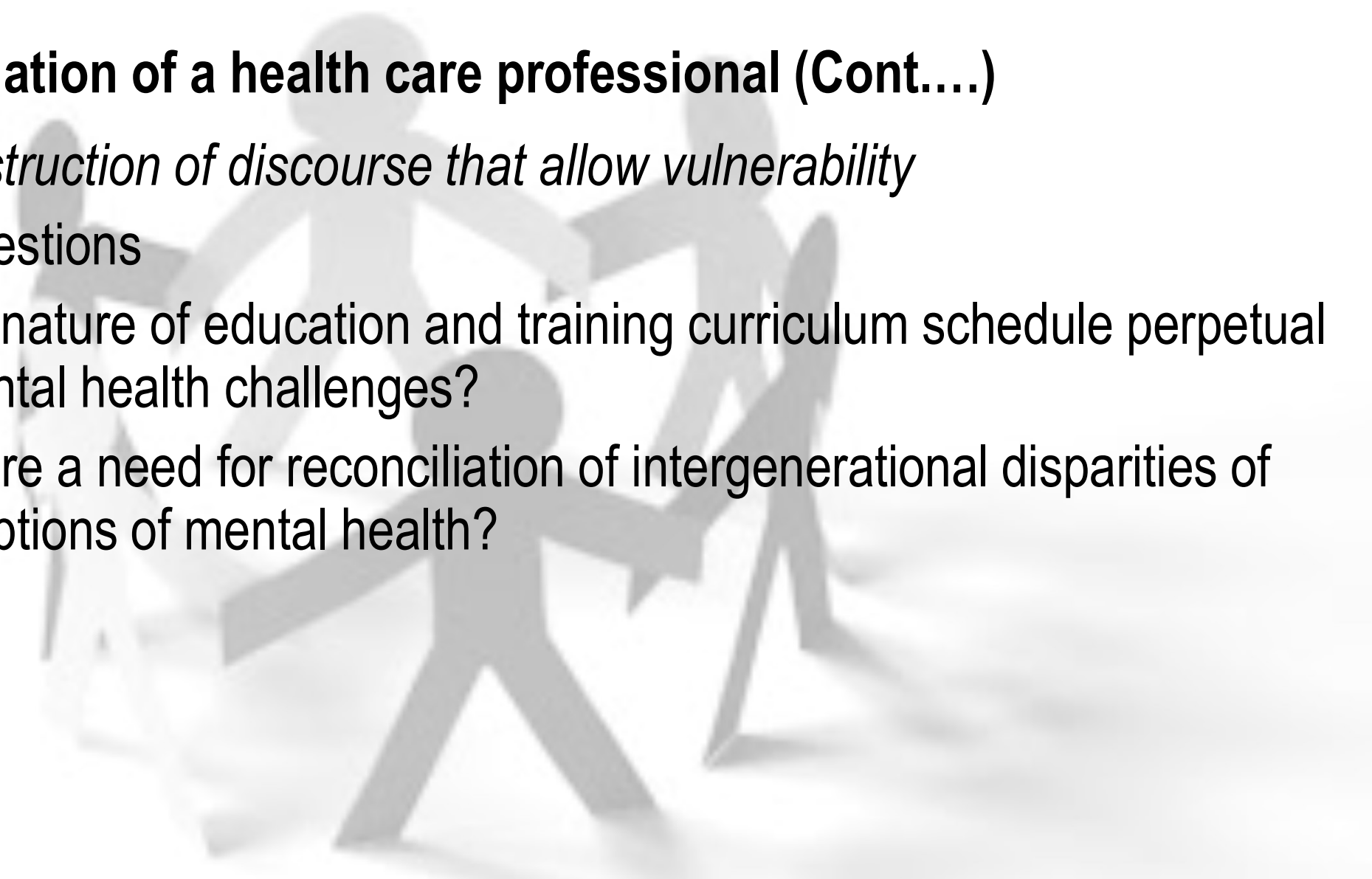
- As early as education and training journey, individuals need to know they are not invulnerable and that it is okay to say they need help without fear of discrimination
- Creation of spaces for recovery by seeking help to process one's own wounds/ suffering and to soothe
  - Academics
  - Supervisors
  - Colleagues
  - The community of health care professionals

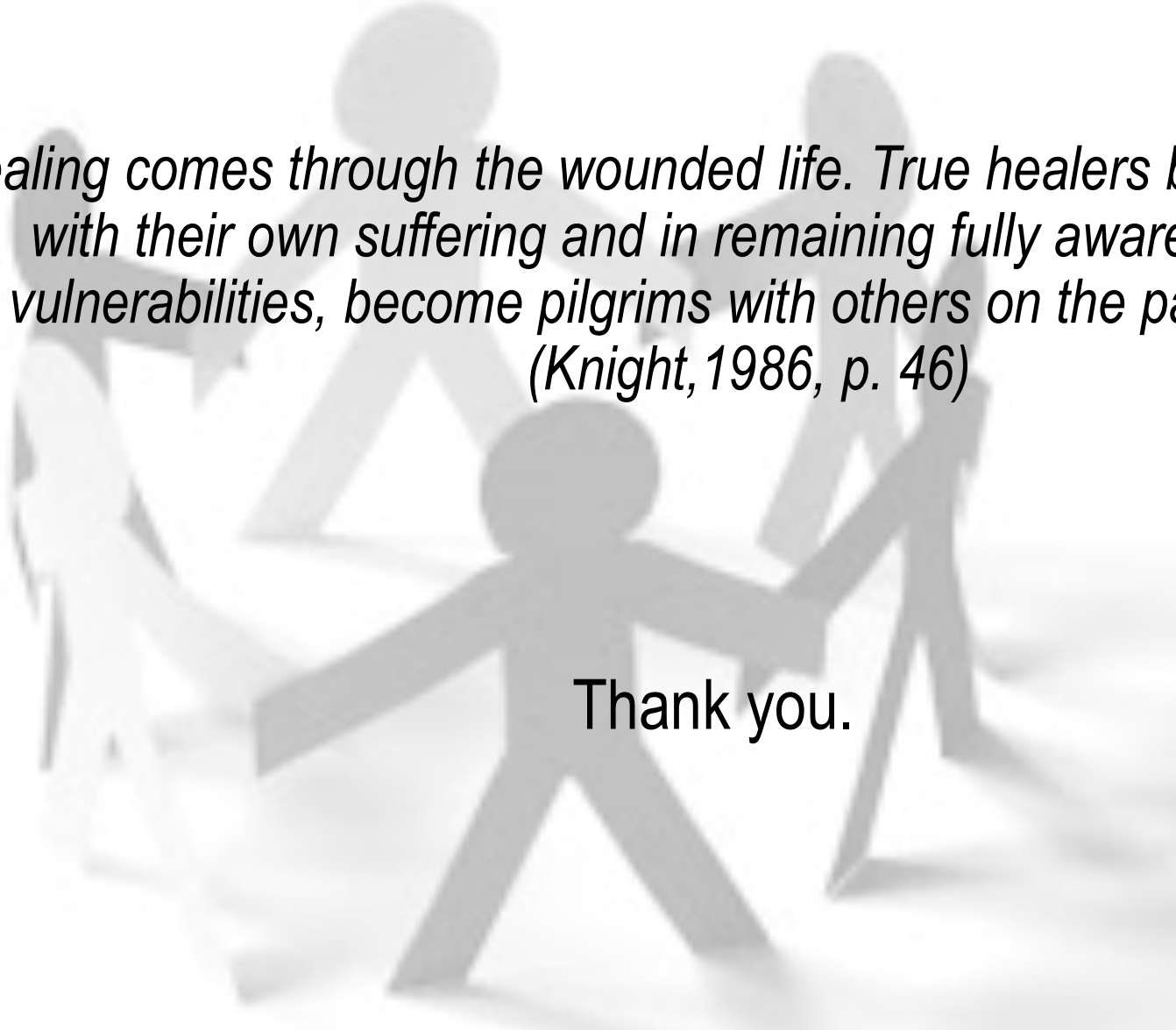
## **Formulation of a health care professional (Cont....)**

*Reconstruction of discourse that allow vulnerability*

Key questions

- Is the nature of education and training curriculum schedule perpetual to mental health challenges?
- Is there a need for reconciliation of intergenerational disparities of perceptions of mental health?





*“Healing comes through the wounded life. True healers by virtue of coping with their own suffering and in remaining fully aware of their own vulnerabilities, become pilgrims with others on the path to healing”  
(Knight, 1986, p. 46)*

Thank you.