Learning to Look: Visual Thinking Strategies to Support Medical Education Goals

Elizabeth Gaufberg MD MPH
Associate Professor of Medicine and Psychiatry
Harvard Medical School/Cambridge Health Alliance
Museum-based Medical Education

- Observation/interpretation
- Perspective-taking/empathy
- Medical thinking/cognitive biases
- Tolerating ambiguity/uncertainty
- Reflective practice
- Team-building
- Communication/relational skills
- Professional identity formation
- Well-being and Renewal
The VTS Questions

Question 1: What’s going on in this image?

Question 2: What do you see that makes you say that?

Question 3: What more can we find?
Methods and Strategies

- Silent Looking
- Pointing
- Paraphrasing
- Remaining Neutral
- Conditional Language
- Linking
- Closing
- Debrief
VTS as “priming” for med ed exploration

- Example: VTS with Oath of Horatii as priming for writing a new intern oath
- Example: Rembrandt’s Anatomy Lesson as priming to discuss assumptions about teaching and learning
The Power of Third Things: approaching truth on the slant

We achieve indirection by exploring …metaphorically, via a poem, a story, a piece of music, or a work of art.

Mediated by a third thing, truth can emerge from, and return to, our awareness at whatever pace and depth we are able to handle.

Learning to Look

Question & Answer