Making the Personal, Political—Using Autoethnography as a Method in Mental Health Nursing Research

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Autoethnography is method that aims to connect the researcher’s personal self to the broader cultural context. Evocative writing, where the writer shares personal stories on their own experiences, is used to extend understanding of a particular social issue. Stories convey lessons, embody experiences and connect people, perhaps inspiring a collective identity and commitment to change. In this way, an issue which may have previously been considered personal becomes political. Although autoethnography is increasingly used within social science research, it is newly emerging in mental health nursing research. In this presentation the authors, all mental health nurses, discuss the particular resonance that autoethnography combined with narrative inquiry has for mental health nursing research. We use one particular study into the experiences of adult children of parents with psychosis to illuminate insights and issues that may be helpful to other researchers considering a design to powerfully evoke the personal experience so that it is moved into the realm of political and practical change.