Shaping care through creativity

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Write Your Self



A creative writing resource for CUH staff

All you need is a pencil, a notebook and your imagination

CUH ARTS

Words by Ruth Cocksedge

EXPRESS YOUR SELF

Expressive Writing – as refreshing for your mind as a cool dip on a hot day.

Psychologist James Pennebaker[1] demonstrates that writing how we feel brings benefits to health and well-being.

Try his Expressive Writing method for yourself:

ACTIVITY 1

Find a quiet time and place, and your notebook. Write whatever comes to mind for 10–15 minutes. Write without stopping. Don't worry about style or grammar, just keep going. At the end close your notebook. There's no need to look at your words again.

You can turn this into a regular practice. Kate Thompson[2] (BACP Senior Accredited Counsellor) recommends journaling because it is easily available and helps us grow as people and process our feelings.



WRITE FROM MEMORY



Everyone is unique. Everyone has a voice. Everyone has a story.

Take some time to tell yours.

ACTIVITY 2

Try completing these sentences:

- *The first thing I remember is…*
- *My first day at school was…*
- *My favourite meal as a child was…*
- *When I am older, I want to remember…*
- *I want to tell my story because…*
- *What will help me with writing my story is…*

Writing from memory can evoke nostalgia – mixed feelings of joy and sadness. You may encounter unexpected difficult feelings and recollections as well as heart-warming ones. So, take care of yourself by using expressive writing and the other prompts in this leaflet.

WRITE FOR SELF-COMPASSION

Empathy is embedded in our nervous systems. This allows us to feel for others – and ourselves. Psychologist Paul Gilbert[3] has developed the compassionate mind theory to help us.

ACTIVITY 3

Here are some ways to mobilise your own built-in compassion – towards yourself.

- *Write a list of people you feel grateful to in your life – parent, sibling, friend, teacher or boss. Write a letter telling them how much you appreciate them.*
- *If I could time travel, what I'd like to say to my younger self is…*
- *Write a letter to your future self: – what are your wishes, hopes, goals for the next year? Paint a picture in words. Visualising can be a powerful starting point for realising goals.*
- *If you're feeling down on yourself, write about what you'd say to a close friend who was caught up with thinking and feeling that way.*



WRITE FROM INSPIRATION



Anything can spark ideas and open a portal to our imaginations.

ACTIVITY 4

Choose a treasured object, photograph, piece of music, a favourite poem. Spend time with your choice.

- *Describe it. Use sensory language – touch, sight, smell, hearing, taste.*
- *Write about who it is associated with.*
- *What it reminds you of.*
- *What it means to you.*
- *What metaphor encapsulates it.*

What has changed for you about your choice now you have spent time with and reflected upon it?

If you have found these ideas helpful and have started to write, keep going and see where it can take you.

Here are some resources which might help you take your writing further:

1 ***Expressive Writing – Words that Heal,*** James W. Pennebaker and John Evans (2014)

2 ***Therapeutic Journal Writing,*** Kate Thompson (2010)

3 **www.compassionatemind.co.uk** Paul Gilbert, Founder and President

If this has raised anything personal that you would like to talk with someone about, please visit the range of support services at: www.cuhconnect.nhs.uk/supporting-our-staff

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