



# THE BENEFITS OF WRITING

## THE POSITIVE EFFECTS OF SELF-EXPRESSIVE WRITING ARE:

- A significant healing effect in individuals who have experienced a traumatic or extremely stressful event. Participants in a study who wrote about their most traumatic experiences for 15 minutes, four days in a row, **experienced better health outcomes up to four months later** (Baikie & Wilhelm, 2005).
- Over 100 asthma and rheumatoid arthritis patients showed similar results as above. Participants who wrote about the most stressful event of their lives **experienced better health evaluations related to their illness** (Smyth, Stone, Hurewitz, & Kaell, 1999).
- A recent study suggested that expressive writing **may even improve immune system functioning**, although it may need to be sustained for the health benefits to continue (Murray, 2002).
- In a study by Burton and King (2004), Mood measures were taken before and after participants wrote about either an intensely positive experience (IPE) or a neutral topic for 20 min each day for three consecutive days. The results showed that writing about IPEs was associated with an **enhanced positive mood along with significantly fewer health centre visits for illness, compared to controls**.

In addition to these more concrete benefits, regular therapeutic writing can help the writer:

- Find meaning in their experiences, view things from a new perspective, and see the silver linings in their most stressful or negative experiences (Murray, 2002).
- Experience important insights about themselves and their environment that may be difficult to determine without focused writing (Tartakovsky, 2015).



Writing therapy has proven effective for many different conditions or mental illnesses, including:

- Posttraumatic stress
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Obsessive-compulsive disorder
- Grief and loss
- Chronic illness issues
- Substance abuse
- Eating disorders
- Interpersonal relationship issues
- Communication skill issues
- Low self-esteem (Farooqui, 2016)

and

- Increased feelings of well-being
- Reduced physician visits
- Reduced absenteeism from work
- Improved academic grades
- Enhanced immune system functions

(Lepore & Smyth, 2002; Pennebaker, 1997, 2004).

In summary, there are great therapeutic benefits to writing and writing therapy. Keeping a journal can be extremely helpful for the user. It is a low-cost, easily accessible, and versatile form of therapy. It can be done individually or guided by a mental health professional. It can be practiced within a group and even added as a supplement to another form of therapy.

These benefits are certainly not trivial, the potential positive outcomes of self-expressive writing therapy reach much further and deeper than simply writing in a diary.