

# Writing Therapy

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# Psychological Functions of Writing

- 1. Gaining of Perspective (+/- distancing)
- 2. Expression (“getting off chest”)
- 3. Enhances Creativity (structuring of thoughts)
- 4. Exploration and Discovery (“gratitude journal”)
- 5. Creates Coherence of “Internal Voice” (turning wandering memories into stories)

# Writing Therapy

- 1. Journaling
- 2. Letter writing
- 3. Structured/creative writing  
(autobiographical)

# Susan Dion

## Write Now: Maintaining A Creative Spirit While Homebound and Ill

- 1. Make a list of 25 things that make you laugh.
- 2. Identify 30 warm-fuzzy thoughts.
- 3. Write about something you are afraid of.
- 4. List the 10 worst things about your illness.
- 5. Write a letter to a loved one – dialogue.

# Important Ingredients:

- 1. Cover traumatic or quasi-traumatic events.
- 2. Write events in a context.
- 3. Label what you are feeling.
- 4. Shall be a daily exercise for a period of time (2 weeks, 1 month).
- 5. May include remote past, past, present.

# Arthritis Patients

- 1. Write in a notebook.
- 2. Write often -- every day even during flare ups.
- 3. Keep a medical journal (type of medications, dose, effect, diets).

# Migraine Patients: Migraine Diary

- 1. Date, day, time migraines started
- 2. Any warning signs before the headache
- 3. The place on the head where your headache was located
- 4. How strong the headache pain was
- 5. Any migraine triggers you were exposed to

# Chronic Pain Patients

- Diaries:
1. Pain patients have difficulties maintaining them
  2. Type of medications taken
  3. Quantity of pain pills
  4. Associated feelings

Structured Writing



# Research

- Spera, Buhrfeind and Pennebaker (1994):  
The Psychosomatic Theory of Inhibition
- Smyth, Stone, Hurewitz and Kaell (1999):  
61 asthmatics and 51 rheumatoid arthritics;  
4 months later approx. half of those who  
wrote improved (asthmatics improved lung  
function by 19%; arthritics had 28%  
improvement of symptoms)

# Research

- Pennebaker, J.W. : Putting Stress Into Words: Health, Linguistic and Therapeutic Implications

(Writing about trauma, construction of a coherent story together with more negative emotion words, increased use of causal and associated cognitive words – improvement in physical health)

For additional information regarding  
this subject, please contact Dr. Novac  
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