

WRITING YOUR WAY TO HEALTH AND HEALING:
AN INTERACTIVE WORKSHOP
An Online Workshop for nurses or students with disabilities

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Motivational Speaker, Holistic Coach, Stroke Survivor.

(This workshop offers nurses 4 CEU's)

“We are important really, and the details of our lives are worthy of being recorded.”

Natalie Goldberg, “Writing Down The Bones”

This is an interactive workshop. Throughout the session you will be encouraged to do some simple writing assignments. To participate, it's important that you have a journal, a pen and some stickers. Stickers help us to tap into our inner child. And that is the part of us that loves to receive rewards for doing special assignments. Stickers are a fun way to reach and honor our *inner child*. No matter how old we are, it feels good to give ourselves these rewards. So, give yourself another one.

To receive continuing education credit for this course, you will need to send a check for \$32.00 to ExceptionalNurse.com at 13019 Coastal Circle, Palm Beach Gardens, Florida 33410 (Include your name, address, telephone and email address).

Or pay using the Amazon.com Honor system.

Happy Writing, Connie Adleman

Ready, open your journal, aim your pen or pencil and get ready to write.

Goal of the Workshop:

To convey an understanding of the healing process and sense of inner peace that occurs when writing about an illness and or a disability.

Objectives of the Workshop:

At the completion of this interactive writing workshop, participants will be able to:

1. identify the healing techniques listed in my article, *Recovery from Stroke: A Journey Towards Health* written for the Finger Lakes Times, May 22, 2005 found on the "Related articles" page of the web site.
2. list some of the benefits of establishing an expressive writing practice in relation to being a nurse with a disability.
3. record their emotional feelings about their disability in a journal.
4. practice writing techniques.

Objective # 1:

Identify the healing techniques listed in my article, *Recovering from Stroke" A Journey Towards Health*. The article can be found on the "Related articles" page of the web site.

Practice Session #1 Reading my article: Please read the article about my recovery; *Recovering From Stroke: A Journey Towards Health*. You will find many healing techniques that I've written into this article that are applicable to any disability. When you're done, give yourself a sticker.

Key quotes related to healing contained in the article:

- 1) "My first reaction was fear and despair, followed by more pain and sadness... I felt as though I had lost myself."
- 2) "As a psychiatric nurse, I valued the benefits of expressing feelings as a way of healing."
- 3) "Using affirmations consistently helped shift my consciousness from stark fear to the possibility that I could recover."
- 4) "Realizing what you have to live for makes all the difference."

- 5) “Sometimes using deep breathing exercises and relaxation techniques helped me to calm down.”

Practice Session #2: Writing in your journal.

Please open your journal.

On the first page, write down a name for your use of this journal. For example, you may want to call it, “My Healing Journal.”

Now, I’d like you to write down some of your reactions to your disability. (Be gentle with yourself)

Now, write down some of the positive thoughts you have about your disability.

For example: “Having a disability has taught me the value of having to slow down and appreciate my life more.”

Choose one of these positive affirmations to write down: (you don’t have to totally believe them at first, they’re just guideposts to work towards)

‘I am more than my disability.’ ‘I accept myself exactly as I am.’ ‘I am okay.’

Make up your own affirmation and write it down. (Affirmations are written in the now, they guide you towards a goal, start them with the word ‘I’)

Objective #2

Identify some of the benefits of establishing an expressive writing practice in relation to a being a nurse with a disability:

Introduction:

Dr. Pennebaker, Ph.D, other psychologists and many prolific authors have established through research, clinical trials and or their own illness or disabilities, that writing is related to improvements in both your physical and emotional health at any time during an illness, trauma or disability.

Pennebaker states that “writing offers us a wide range of health benefits”:
For example:

Writing can become a part of your healing process.

Writing is therapeutic.

Writing helps you to cope.

Writing offers you insights into your illness or disability and your reactions to it

Writing is a form of self-help.

Writing feels empowering.

Writing consistently in a journal can help lower your stress level.

Writing helps you to gain clarity about your disability and its impact on your life.

Writing helps you to gain perspective about your disability.

Writing helps you to dissolve some of your inner turmoil.

Plus, writing is fun. And, the creative process of writing is also very fulfilling.

Background Information:

Although I had gone to nursing school when I was eighteen years old, I had always longed to be a writer. A full and busy career both practicing and teaching nursing postponed that dream.

Forty years later, I had a stroke. And, it was at this time that my husband gave me a journal and encouraged me to write down my thoughts, feelings, fears and each accomplishment related to my recovery. At first my thoughts were scattered and it was difficult for me to focus.

In the Beginning:

Initially, all I could write was the word, *cry*. A few days later, I was more able to coordinate my thinking and wrote, *need to cry*. And eventually, I wrote, *I need to cry*.

And, I did.

My sketchy journal notes have turned into a memoir that I have titled, *A Bold Stroke: Healing From Within*. It is near completion and chronicles my feelings and thoughts throughout my hospitalization, rehabilitation and recovery.

I'm happy to tell you that I've had a remarkable recovery. And, I feel that it has been due in part to all of the fear, anxiety, tension that I released through my writing along with other healing techniques that I used such as repeating positive affirmations.

Practice Session 3:

Write down some of the benefits that you would like to achieve by writing about your disability in your journal on a regular basis. When you finish your writing, give yourself a sticker.

Objective # 3:

Record some of your emotional feelings about your disability.

Background Information:

It has been documented that writing down your thoughts and feelings can help you to become healthier and may even help you to transform your life.

Writing is a powerful exercise to help you to feel as though you are being heard and acknowledged.

Expressive writing can change your experience.

Expressive writing can help you feel happier.

As someone who had practiced psychiatric nursing for years, I knew the value of expressing feelings. I knew that it was not a good idea to keep your emotions bottled up. I also knew that expressing yourself could help you to feel more in control of the situation. But, within forty-eight hours of having a stroke, my speech was slurred and it was difficult for me to articulate, let alone try and gather my thoughts which were now scattered and difficult to express. And so for me, writing in a journal was extremely helpful and became a regular part of my healing journey.

How can expressive writing help you?

Expressive writing can help you to cope more effectively with your feelings of grief and anger.

One day I was tired of being tolerant, of being so “nursey nursey” about my condition and I was just plain angry. So I wrote, *‘I hate feeling dependent.’ ‘I’m a nurse. I do not want to have a caretaker. I’m the caretaker.’ ‘Why doesn’t everyone just leave me alone.’*

A few weeks later as I was gaining more control of my situation, I wrote *‘I can walk more comfortably now. ‘I’m determined to take better care of myself.’ ‘I feel as though I can make it.’ ‘It’s okay for me not to go back to work in the hospital.’ ‘I can go back to teaching again.’*

Surviving an illness, especially one with multiple disabilities can make you feel good one day and angry the next. One constant in your life can be the use of your journal. You can use your journal to practice expressing your feelings. By faithfully doing this, you are making a commitment to yourself.

Here are more conclusions by researchers in the field about why writing is healing. I experienced all of these.

1. Writing links your feelings, to the event or situation you’ve experienced.
2. Writing changes your life
3. Writing helps you to heal your life
4. Writing helps you to focus on your healing rather than on your limitations
5. Writing offers you profound insights about what you can accomplish
6. Writing can change your perspective from illness to wellness

7. Writing can change your perspective from ‘*I’m disabled*’ to what ‘*I am able to do.*’

Sample of something I wrote:

I felt rushed by the physical therapist who was filling in for my regular therapist. She made me feel so incompetent, as though, I couldn’t climb those steps, I needed more time, why was she so impatient? I feel so sad that I have to relearn how to climb stairs. What’s going to become of me? I’m worried about my future.

That particular journal entry led me to have a great discussion with my doctor, my regular physical therapist and my husband. They gave me a great deal of support. They helped me through my feelings. They each reminded me of all of the competent things I was already doing as part of my recovery.

Here’s what I added to my journal. ‘*I can do this.*’ *It may take me more time, but, with continued practice, I’ll climb those stairs.*’

You can see the relationship of expressing my feelings through writing leading me to discussions about my feelings and eventually helping me to go forward.

(Excuse me while I give myself a sticker). Oh, and give yourself one too, just for the fun of it.

Practice Session #4

Here are three positive affirmations for you to think about before you start to write in your journal:

It is okay for me to express my feelings.

Expressing my feelings and understanding my needs can be helpful for me.

My expressions are part of my thoughts. I can always change my thoughts.

Objective #4

Practice healing writing techniques:

Now write down some of your innermost thoughts about your disability. Just let them go. If you become anxious, stop for a moment. Then write, “these are just my feelings. I am safe. It’s okay for me to express this.

It is empowering to acknowledge our feelings. It gives us a voice in our healing. And it can help us to understand, who we are and what we have to offer.

A nurse who has reviewed my book said, “even though you won’t be able to practice nursing anymore, you’ve found your clinical and nursing voice again through your book. You will still be helping patients.” Sticker Time! Give yourself one too!

My thoughts offer me insights. I love writing down my thoughts. They give me a voice in my healing and I give thanks for that.

Good for you for, participating in this workshop. Pile on the stickers. Contact me at companycsa@yahoo.com when you are finished. I will send you the post-test and evaluation.

Go for it. Love yourself. And, always know that, you are in the process of changing, healing and gaining your good.

Recommended Reading: (optional)

Writing To Heal: Guided Journal for Recovering from Trauma and Emotional Upheaval, May, 2004, New Harbinger Publications.

Dr. James. W. Pennebaker, Ph.D. Dr. Pennebaker is a Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Texas @ Austin. He has done major research and numerous clinical trials that have proven that expressive writing can boost both physical and mental health.

Writing as a way of Healing: How Telling Our Stories Transforms Our Lives, Louise De Salvo, March 2004, Beacon Press. The author is an English Professor at Hunter College, in New York City. She suffers with Asthma

that disables her. And, she has written about writing her way through this illness in her book titled *Breathless*.

Connie Adleman can be reached at: companycsa@yahoo.com

She is available to teach Writing Workshops for Nurses at your hospital.

She also offers private telephone sessions related to holistic coaching related to writing about disability.