



CREATIVE WRITING TOOLS FOR YOUNG TRAUMA SURVIVORS



INTERACTIVE
BOOK

CREATORS: Courage Reborn - Creative writing Tools for young Trauma Survivors (2022-2-RO01-KA220-YOU-000100459)



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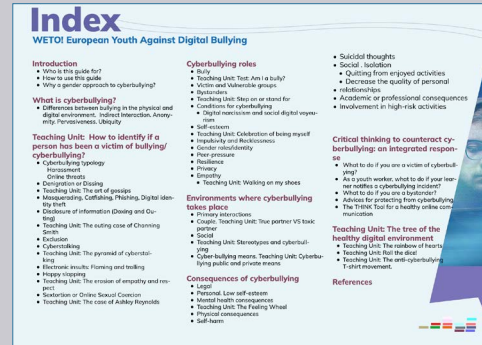
How to use this Book



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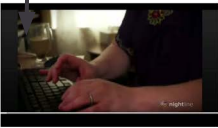
Teaching Unit: The pyramid of cyberstalking

Duration: 90 minutes

The main aim of the exercise is to raise awareness about the alarming and fast escalation of cyberstalking behaviors. Learners will be able to review the consequences that these obsessive behaviors cause in victims.

Step 1: Ask your students to watch the video made by the ABC News, Nightline, published by Kenyanese:

Nightline A Woman's Affair that Morphed into Cyber-stalking Horror. A video that explains the case of Courtney Allen, a woman who was a victim of cyberstalking that caused damaging consequences in her life and family.



ABC News, Nightline. Kenyanese YouTube Channel. Nightline A Woman's Affair that Morphed into Cyber-stalking Horror. [Link](#)

Step 2: Ask your participants to analyse the cyberstalking behaviours from the video and classify them into the main levels of the cyberstalking pyramid:




Figure 13. The cyberstalking pyramid. Own creation. Own source

Step 3: Show results among the group.

Step 4: Ask to the group the following reflection questions:

- What do you think about the escalation of this case?
- At what level do you think is important to take counteractive measures? Why?
- Do you think cyberstalking happens more frequently in persons from a specific sex or gender identity?
- Do you think cyberstalking cause real life repercussions?
- Why is important to take counteractive measures as soon as possible?

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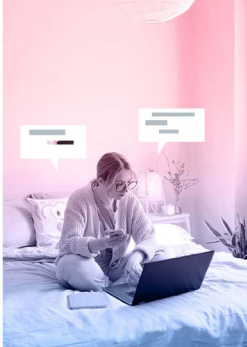
Happy slapping

The Cambridge Dictionary defines happy slapping as 'The activity of attacking someone and filming the attack, especially with a mobile phone.'

Why happy slapping is a concern in our modern society?

Save the Children provides some concerning figures in their website:

- Approximately 76,643 young people in Spain have been victims of happy slapping during their childhood.
- 61% of cases happy slapping, the aggressors are friends or colleagues.
- The average age at which they suffered happy slapping for the first time was 14 years old.



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Introduction

0

1. The purpose of this book
2. Preface: Acknowledging the event
3. Introduction: Essential tools and techniques for emotional regulation.

1- The purpose of this book.

We want to start by saying that we're here to support you on your journey of self-exploration and personal growth. This book is designed to provide guidance, inspiration, and exercises to help you understand yourself better and navigate through various aspects of your life, especially the most difficult ones. However, it's important to understand the limitations and scope of this book.

First and foremost, we want to emphasize that this book is not a substitute for professional help or therapy. If you are struggling with depression, anxiety, or any other mental health condition, it is crucial that you seek the assistance of a qualified mental health professional. They are trained to provide the specialized care and support that you may need.

While the content in this book is intended to be helpful and insightful, it is not intended to diagnose, treat, or cure any mental health condition. The exercises and techniques described in this book are meant to be used for self-exploration purposes only. They may provide you with valuable insights and tools for personal growth, but they should not be seen as a replacement for professional advice.

It's also important to remember that everyo-

ne's journey is unique. The experiences and perspectives shared in this book may not necessarily apply to your specific circumstances. Each individual is different, and what works for one person may not work for another. Therefore, it's essential to approach the content with an open mind and adapt it to your own needs and preferences.

Furthermore, we want to stress the importance of self-care. If at any point during your exploration, you find yourself feeling overwhelmed, triggered, or experiencing emotional distress, it is vital to take a step back and prioritize your well-being. Self-exploration can sometimes bring up challenging emotions and memories, and it is important to have healthy coping mechanisms in place.

If you have any doubts or concerns about your mental health or emotional well-being, we strongly encourage you to seek professional help. A qualified mental health professional can provide you with the appropriate support, guidance, and treatment that is tailored to your specific needs.

Remember, you are not alone on this journey. Reach out to the necessary professionals and loved ones who can provide the support and care you need. Take care of yourself and

approach self-exploration with a mindful and compassionate mindset.



2- Preface: Acknowledging the event

It may seem to us that forgetting about a traumatic event and simply just moving forward is the best one can do. Our brain will probably do everything in its power to bury the memory of it deep inside of us, as it will help us survive in that particular moment. Maybe that's why in certain communities (such as spiritual and new age), there can be a tendency to focus on positive thinking, spiritual growth, or higher consciousness without adequately addressing or acknowledging trauma. This can lead to a form of bypassing, where people try to avoid or minimize the impact of their trauma through spiritual practices or beliefs. While spiritual practices can be beneficial for personal growth and well-being, it is essential to address and process trauma in a comprehensive and appropriate manner.

Not properly acknowledging trauma can be problematic, causing:

Suppression of emotions

1. **Vindecareă incompletă**
2. **Incomplete healing**
3. **Invalidating experiences**
4. **Reinforcing spiritual bypassing patterns:**



1

Suppression of emotions: Bypassing trauma may involve suppressing or avoiding difficult emotions associated with the traumatic experience. By doing so, you may not fully process and integrate your emotions, which can lead to unresolved trauma resurfacing later or manifesting in other ways.

2

Incomplete healing: Trauma requires deep healing work that involves addressing the emotional, psychological, and physiological aspects of the experience. Simply focusing on positive thinking or spiritual practices may not provide the comprehensive support needed for complete healing.

3

Invalidating experiences: Bypassing trauma can inadvertently invalidate or dismiss the experiences of those who have suffered. It can send a message that their pain or trauma should be ignored or forgotten, which can be detrimental to their healing process and overall well-being.

4

Reinforcing spiritual bypassing patterns: Engaging in bypassing behaviors can perpetuate a cycle of avoiding difficult emotions and experiences. This can hinder personal growth and prevent individuals from truly understanding and integrating their trauma into their healing journey.

Acknowledging trauma is a crucial first step towards healing. Traumatic experiences can have a profound impact on our emotional and psychological well-being. By acknowledging their presence, we validate our experiences and give ourselves permission to begin the healing process.

Seems easy enough, but it requires a high grade of self-honesty and courage. Here are a few key reasons why acknowledging trauma is essential for healing:

1 Validating your experiences: Acknowledging trauma is acknowledging the pain and suffering you have endured. It's common for people to downplay or dismiss their own traumatic experiences, but by recognizing them, you validate the impact they have had on your life.

2 Breaking the cycle of denial: Denial is a coping mechanism that can temporarily protect us from overwhelming emotions. However, prolonged denial can hinder healing and perpetuate the effects of trauma. Acknowledgment breaks the cycle of denial and allows you to confront the reality of what you have been through.

3 Gaining a sense of control: Traumatic experiences often leave individuals feeling helpless and out of control. Acknowledging trauma is a step towards reclaiming control over your narrative and healing journey. It empowers you to take proactive steps towards recovery.

4 Opening up to support: Acknowledging trauma allows you to reach out for help and support. Sharing your experiences with trusted people, such as friends, family, or mental health professionals, can provide invaluable support and guidance throughout the healing process.

5 Developing self-compassion: Trauma can leave people feeling a range of emotions, including shame, guilt, or self-blame. By acknowledging trauma, you can cultivate self-compassion and understand that you are not defined by what happened to you. This self-compassion is crucial for healing and moving forward.

While acknowledging trauma is a significant step, it's important to remember that healing is a gradual and individual process. Seeking professional help from therapists or counselors who specialize in trauma can provide you with the guidance and support necessary for your healing journey.

It's important to approach traumatic experiences with a balanced perspective, recognizing that healing trauma requires both self-reflection and inner work. Integrating trauma-informed approaches into spiritual practices can be beneficial. Seeking support

from mental health professionals who are well-versed in trauma can also provide valuable guidance and resources for navigating the healing process effectively. Remember, it is essential to prioritize your well-being and give yourself permission to address and heal from trauma in a comprehensive and compassionate manner.

3- Introduction: Essential tools and techniques for emotional regulation

Before we dive into the creative writing trauma work, it is highly recommendable that you learn techniques for self-soothing and regulating difficult emotions. It is possible that we are about to touch parts of us that we were working very hard to hide from the world, and those parts might become sensitive or painful. They also might bring an image of reality that could result quite difficult to bear. This is due to the survival mode we go into when we experience trauma - our bodies work hard to keep us alive, and cut the access to memories that they consider too difficult, so difficult they put our survival under a question mark.

Memories and brain

Before we carry on to the actual exercises, we would like to give a little scientific background to what is the connection between time, memories and their processing in our brains. We find sharing this type of information with trauma survivors extremely helpful - this way they can understand that there's a reason their difficult experiences are coming back again and again, and that there is nothing wrong with them - it's pure physiology and the way we are wired.

The brain has the ability to distinguish between events that have occurred in the past and those that are happening in the present. It has specialized regions and neural networks that process and organize information related to time and temporal sequencing. These areas work together to create a sense of temporal awareness and allow us to differentiate between past experiences and current perceptions.

One key brain structure involved in this process is the hippocampus. The hippocampus plays a crucial role in memory formation and retrieval, helping us encode and consolidate new memories while also retrieving stored

memories. It aids in contextualizing events within a temporal framework, allowing us to remember the order and timing of past experiences.

Additionally, the brain receives real-time sensory information through our senses, such as sight, sound, touch, and smell. These sensory inputs are processed by different regions of the brain, which contribute to our awareness of the present moment. This integration of sensory information with our memory and temporal processing systems helps us distinguish between past events and the ongoing present.

However, it is important to note that in certain situations, such as vivid flashbacks or intrusive memories associated with conditions like post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), the brain may temporarily blur the distinction between past and present. This can lead to a heightened emotional and sensory experience as if the traumatic event is happening again. These experiences highlight the intricate relationship between memory, perception, and the brain's response to trauma.

So, what to do with those emotions brought back to life?

First and foremost, try to ground yourself in the present. As much as you feel your emotional state to the bone, the reality is that the situation that caused it is in the past, and you are here, safe.

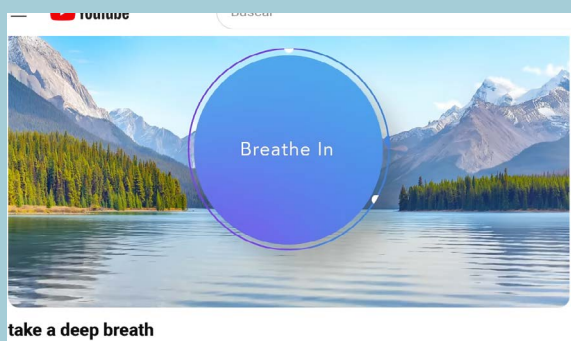
Employ simple breathing exercises:

Breathing exercises are a powerful tool for regulating emotional responses and promoting a sense of calm and relaxation. The key to these breathing exercises is to focus on slow, deep breaths and to engage in them regularly. As you practice these exercises, you may notice a sense of calmness and a reduction in emotional intensity. Feel free to experiment with different techniques and find the ones that work best for you.

1

Deep belly breathing:

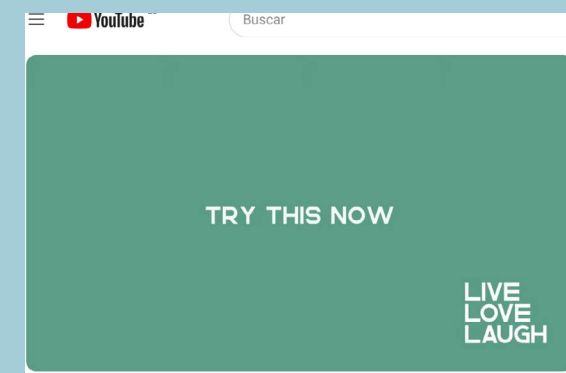
- Find a comfortable sitting or lying position.
- Place one hand on your abdomen, just below your navel.
- Take a slow, deep breath in through your nose, allowing your belly to rise and expand.
- Exhale slowly through your mouth, letting your belly fall inward.
- Repeat this deep belly breathing for several breaths, focusing on the sensation of your breath and the rise and fall of your abdomen. Here's a deep breathing session, if you want to try it out:

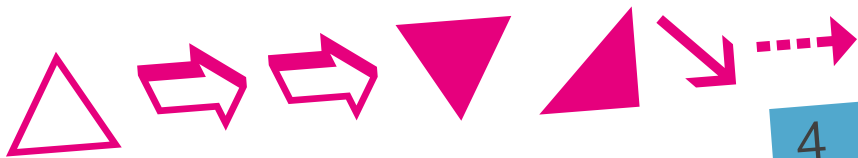


2

2. 4-7-8 breath:

- Sit in a relaxed position and place the tip of your tongue against the roof of your mouth, just behind your front teeth.
- Take a slow, deep breath in through your nose for a count of 4.
- Hold your breath for a count of 7.
- Exhale slowly and completely through your mouth for a count of 8, making a whooshing sound.
- Repeat this cycle for a few minutes, allowing each breath to become slower and deeper. You can perform this exercise following this video in real time:

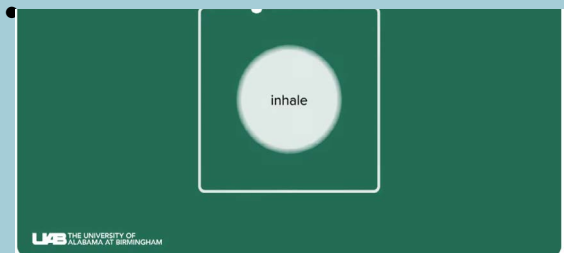




3

Box breathing:

- Visualize a square shape in your mind.
- Inhale slowly through your nose while counting to 4, tracing one side of the square in your mind.
- Hold your breath for a count of 4, tracing the second side of the square.
- Exhale slowly through your mouth for a count of 4, tracing the third side of the square.
- Hold your breath for a count of 4, completing the square.
- Repeat this cycle for several rounds, focusing on the visualization and maintaining a steady breath rhythm. You can follow along this video, if you wish:



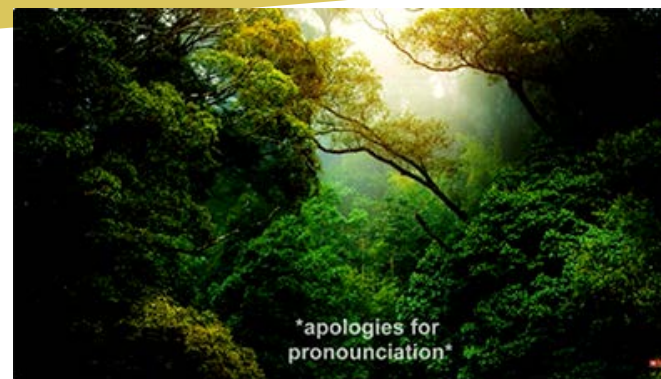
Square Breathing Visual

4

Alternate nostril breathing:

- Close your right nostril with your right thumb and take a deep breath in through your left nostril.
- Close your left nostril with your ring finger, release your right nostril, and exhale through your right nostril.
- Inhale through your right nostril, then close it with your thumb again.
- Release your left nostril and exhale through your left nostril.
- Continue alternating between inhaling through one nostril and exhaling through the other, focusing on the breath flow and the sensation of air passing through each nostril. Here's a guided alternate nostril breathing session:

There are loads of mobile apps to help you count the breaths for you. Some of them are free of charge: “Cohera - Cardiac Coherence”, “Prana Breath”, “Meditation by Down Dog”, some are subscription based: “Calm”, “Headspace”, “Tide”, but also offer a free version or a trial one. Feel free to experiment and find if this type of tool is for you. Try not to get lost in the technology and let it consume the real purpose of the exercise, that is grounding or coming back to the body.



Fincham, G.W., Strauss, C., Montero-Marin, J. et al., 2023, “Effect of breathwork on stress and mental health: A meta-analysis of randomised-controlled trials.” Sci Rep 13, 432

Ground yourself with the “Name 5” technique

By engaging your senses and actively naming things in your environment, you redirect your attention to the present moment and ground yourself in the here and now. This technique can help you regain a sense of control, reduce anxiety or overwhelming emotions, and bring a greater sense of calm. Remember to practice it whenever you feel the need to anchor yourself in the present.

1- Look around you, find and:

- Name 5 things you can see. For example, a chair, a book, a tree, a lamp, and a pen.
- Take a moment to observe each item, noticing its color, shape, and any other details.

2- Listen carefully, identify and:

- Name 5 things you can hear. It could be the sound of a clock ticking, birds chirping, traffic outside, the hum of an appliance, or people talking.
- Pay attention to the different sounds and their qualities.

3- Notice, acknowledge and:

- Name 5 things you can feel physically. This can include the sensation of your feet on the ground, the texture of your clothing, the temperature of the air, the pressure of your body against a chair, or the feeling of an object in your hand.
- Bring your awareness to each physical sensation, allowing yourself to fully experience it.

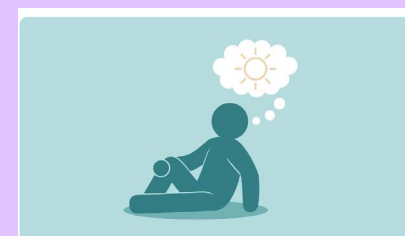
4- Engage your sense of smell, identify and:

- Name 5 things you can smell. It could be the scent of flowers, freshly brewed coffee, a familiar perfume, the aroma of food, or the smell of nature.
- Take a moment to inhale deeply and connect with each scent.

5- Engage your sense of taste, identify and:

- Name 5 things you can taste or imagine tasting. It could be the lingering taste of a recent meal, the flavor of a favorite snack, a refreshing drink, or the memory of a particular taste you enjoy.
- Allow yourself to savor each taste in your mind or, if possible, take a small bite or sip of something to experience it in the present.

Here’s a short animated video further explaining this grounding exercise:



The 5-4-3-2-1 Method: A Grounding Exercise to Manage Anxiety

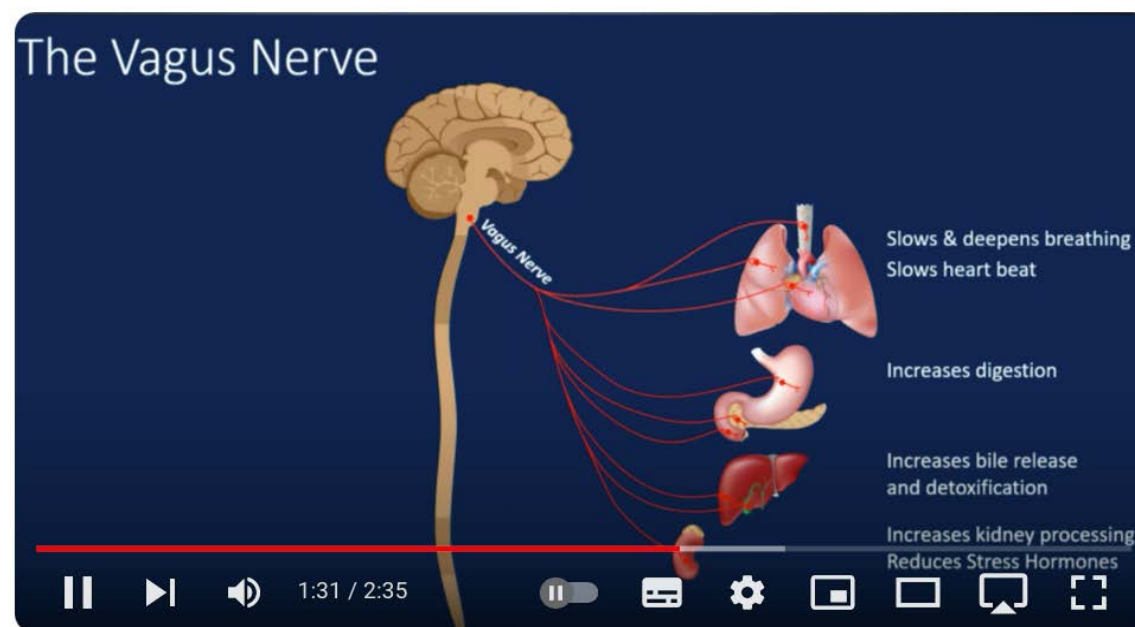
Cold water splash

Splashing cold water on your face is a simple yet effective technique to help soothe and regulate emotional responses.

1. Find a clean basin or sink with cold water. Make sure the water is not too cold to avoid discomfort.
2. Take a deep breath and prepare yourself to engage in the activity consciously.
3. Cup your hands together and scoop up some cold water from the basin or let the water flow directly onto your face.
4. Gently splash the cold water onto your face, focusing on your forehead, cheeks, and the back of your neck. Allow the water to make contact with your skin. You can even opt for submerging your face fully in the water, while holding your breath for a couple of seconds.
5. As you feel the coolness of the water, take a moment to pay attention to the physical sensation it creates. Notice the temperature and how it feels on your skin.
6. Take a few deep breaths between the splashes or full face submersions, allowing yourself to be present in the moment and fully experience the sensation.
7. Slowly pat your face dry with a towel, taking note of any lingering coolness or refreshed feeling.

The act of splashing cold water on your face serves as a sensory experience that can help interrupt and reset your emotional response. The sudden change in temperature stimulates your body and mind, promoting a sense of alertness and grounding. It can help alleviate anxiety, reduce tension, and provide a momentary distraction from overwhelming emotions.

Here's more about why this works:



ANXIETY HACK: Reduce stress and anxiety using the Mammalian Dive

Vagus nerve massage

The vagus nerve is a major nerve in the body that plays a vital role in regulating various bodily functions and connecting the brain to different organs, including the heart, lungs, and digestive system. It is part of the parasympathetic nervous system, which is responsible for promoting relaxation and calming the body.

Massaging the vagus nerve, particularly in the neck area, can help activate its calming response and promote relaxation. Here's a simple explanation of how it works:

1. **Locate the vagus nerve:** The vagus nerve runs from the brainstem down through the neck and into the chest and abdomen. It can be accessed by gently applying pressure or massaging the sides of the neck.
2. **Stimulate the nerve:** Using gentle, circular motions, apply light pressure with your fingertips to the area where the vagus nerve is located on both sides of your neck. Be sure to use a comfortable amount of pressure that feels soothing rather than painful.
3. **Deep breathing:** While massaging the vagus nerve, focus on taking slow, deep breaths. Breathe in deeply through your nose, allowing your abdomen to expand,

and then exhale slowly through your mouth. This deep breathing technique helps activate the relaxation response and further calms the body and mind.

4. **Mindfulness and relaxation:** As you massage the vagus nerve and engage in deep breathing, bring your attention to the present moment. Practice mindfulness by observing any sensations, thoughts, or emotions that arise without judgment. Allow yourself to relax and let go of any tension or stress you may be holding onto.

For a short visual explanation on how to perform this massage, click

Massaging the vagus nerve helps stimulate the parasympathetic nervous system, promoting a state of calmness and relaxation. This technique can help reduce anxiety, lower heart rate and blood pressure, improve digestion, and increase overall feelings of well-being.

Those are only a few of many relaxation and grounding techniques available. They are very effective in bringing your mind and body back to the present moment after an emotional trigger. We encourage practicing

them when you are calm and collected, before the trigger occurs. This will help to slowly build muscle memory necessary to remember to use the technique when actually triggered. We also invite you to explore the world of grounding techniques on your own, to see which ones work best for you. We are all different, for example some of us might have health conditions such as asthma that will make it harder to employ breathing techniques. The key here is exploration and personalisation of what we know that works for us. Good luck!



Vagus Nerve Massage for Stress & Anxiety Relief

Getting back to emotional safety

1

1. The Evolutionary Roots of Emotional Safety
2. The Impact of a Lack of Emotional Safety
3. How does an emotionally secure person behave?
4. Tool 1: Free Thought Flow
5. Tool 2: Safe space

1. The Evolutionary Roots of Emotional Safety

Why is emotional safety so important? Because it's based on a need that's even more elemental: physical safety.

For every creature on Earth, the prime directive is safety. Food and procreation are important, but survival tops the list. And survival is rarely easy. To survive in an environment full of things that can hurt you, you need a very well-tuned system for staying safe. Survival, with its concomitant need to maintain safety, is still our most powerful instinct.

What does this have to do with emotional safety?

As human beings, we find ourselves among the most helpless and susceptible creatures on Earth. Devoid of claws, sharp teeth, or protective quills, our physical capabilities are limited, and we lack swiftness in our movements. Especially during the initial 12 years of our lives, and even more so during the first six, self-preservation and self-care are difficult tasks.

Our survival strategy revolves around maintaining close physical proximity and connection with fellow human beings. This fundamental aspect is often overlooked in our contemporary society, where we can lead

as explained by LeDoux in "Evolution of human emotion: a view through fear." Prog Brain Res. 2012

solitary lives akin to cats, yet still feel secure and have our basic needs met. However, this solitary and "modern" way of existence goes against our innate design. For the overwhelming majority of the time Homo Sapiens has inhabited this planet, living apart and isolated from others was simply not a viable option.

To endure and collaborate over extended periods—typically, throughout one's entire lifetime in the past—humans had to develop a mechanism for sustaining such a tightly-knit

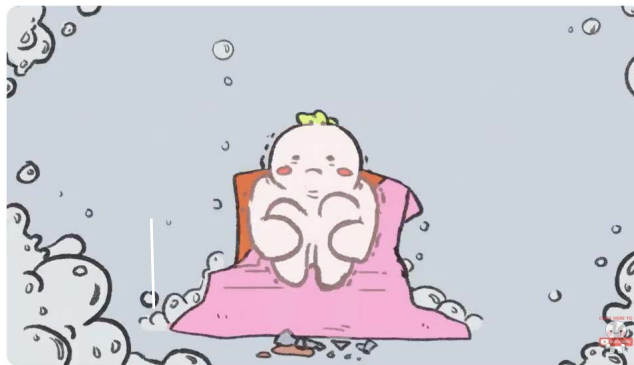
system and recognizing when it was faltering. That mechanism, the regulator responsible for upholding the collective functioning and ensuring our survival, resides within our emotions. And it remains so to this day. Our emotions—love, anger, fear, sadness, happiness, shame, and disgust—are the currencies we employ to maintain close bonds or to signal when something has disrupted the connection.



2. The Impact of a Lack of Emotional Safety

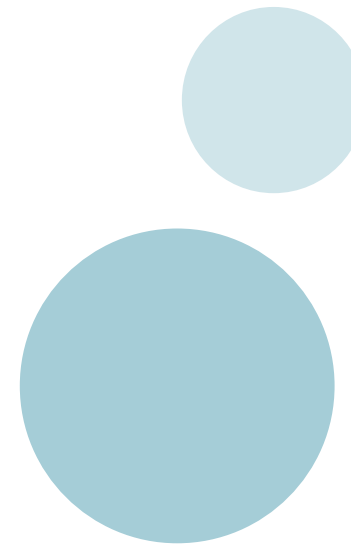
When you feel emotionally safe, it means you feel loved and accepted for who you are, including your emotions. On the other hand, feeling emotionally unsafe stems from the opposite experience: the belief that either the people who matter to you or those you rely on for survival reject the authentic you, along with your genuine needs and emotions. It involves being emotionally assaulted, diminished, or simply disregarded. Emotional insecurity can also arise from a lack of physical touch and comfort, especially when it is disregarded, withheld, or denied.

When you lack emotional safety, you feel emotionally threatened, triggering the same bodily reactions as when you feel physically endangered. You become “frozen,” holding your breath and tensing your body. Alternatively, you may enter attack mode or shut down entirely. Scientific studies have revealed that social rejection activates the same brain regions associated with physical pain. To your brain, physical and emotional distress are essentially indistinguishable. If you cannot quickly restore a sense of safety and acceptance, you essentially exist in a state comparable to ongoing physical danger. Here’s a short animated video showing how to spot signs that point out that you might not be feeling emotionally safe enough: [click](#)



5 Signs You Feel Emotionally Unsafe

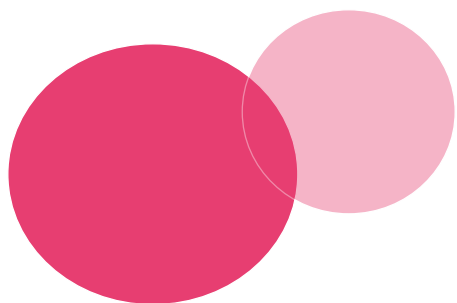
Life is replete with such experiences, both in the past and present. It could have occurred in a previous job or in your current one. It might have happened during your school days, where you were at the mercy of bullies or encountered “mean girls.” It could manifest in an abusive relationship, or perhaps you felt emotionally insecure throughout your childhood. These encounters leave emotional wounds, often expressed through protective reactions aimed at shielding you from ever enduring that type of pain again or risking further attacks or rejection.



3. How does an emotionally secure person behave?

We could explain emotional safety as a sense of security and comfort you feel when an environment or a relationship enables your freedom to express emotions without fear of judgment, rejection, or harm. Emotional safety involves feeling heard, respected, and valued for one's thoughts, feelings, and needs, and knowing that they will be met with empathy and understanding rather than criticism or invalidation. We can foster it through open communication, active listening, mutual trust, and supportive interactions, as an essential component of healthy relationships and personal well-being, allowing people to explore and express themselves freely without fear of negative consequences.

So, how does a young person who feels safe emotionally behave?



In general, they show a range of behaviors and characteristics that reflect their sense of security and trust in their environment.

1. They are able to express their emotions:

A young person is more likely to be open and honest about their feelings and needs, even if they are difficult or uncomfortable.

How might it go?

Little Johnny was feeling angry towards his parents because they had told him he couldn't watch his favourite TV show. Johnny wanted to express his anger, but he didn't know how. deți să vedem un exemplu.

His parents noticed that he was upset and asked him what was wrong. Johnny took a deep breath and said, "I'm angry because I really wanted to watch my show, and now I can't."

His parents listened to him and acknowledged his feelings. They explained why they made the decision and offered an alternative activity they could do together. Johnny was still feeling angry, but he appreciated that his parents were listening to him and trying to find a solution.

2. They engage in positive relationships:

When you feel emotionally safe, you are more likely to have healthy and supportive relationships with friends, family members, and even unrelated people you meet during their day-to-day activities.

An example of a supportive relationship with emotional safety as a base:

Emma and Rebeca had been best friends since they were little. They were always there for each other, no matter what. One day, Emma was feeling really down. She had failed a test and was worried about what her parents would say.

Rebeca noticed that Emma was upset and asked her what was wrong. Emma explained the situation, and Rebeca listened patiently, offering words of encouragement and support.

Rebeca reminded Emma that one test didn't define her and that she was capable of doing great things. She also offered to help Emma study for the next test and to be there for her no matter what.

Emma felt much better after talking to Rebeca. She knew that she had someone who believed in her and was willing to support her through anything.

3. They communicate effectively:

You can tell someone feels safe with their emotions when they are more likely to be able to communicate their thoughts and opinions effectively, and to listen to others with empathy and understanding.

By clicking on [this link](#), you will find out what effective communication could look like - in this case, in a workplace.



4. They are more resilient:

Emotionally safe people are better equipped to handle challenges and setbacks, as they have a strong support system and a sense of self-worth and confidence.

[Here's](#) a short-animated story by Lucy Hone, the director of the New Zealand's Institute for Wellbeing and Resilience, about resilience and how to develop it.



5. They have a positive self-image:

Emotional safety can help young people develop a positive self-image, which can lead to increased self-esteem, self-confidence, and a greater sense of autonomy.

No need for an external source of increasing your own self-worth! Take a peek here how it can be done.



The Reflection in Me HD

Some people, especially those who are more sensitive than others, might argue that those if we had to pinpoint the culprits of the lack of emotional safety in young people, we would point our fingers at:

1. **Childhood trauma:** Experiences of abuse, neglect, or other traumatic events during childhood can leave a lasting impact on one's sense of emotional safety.
2. **Bullying:** Being the target of bullying, either in person or online, can make you feel un-safe and emotionally vulnerable.
3. **Unstable home environment:** Growing up in a household where there is frequent conflict, substance abuse, or other forms of instability can create a sense of unpredictability and insecurity for a young person.
4. **Parental neglect:** When parents are emotionally unavailable or neglectful, children may feel unsupported and insecure in their attachment relationships.
5. **Cultural or societal factors:** Youth who belong to marginalized groups or who experience discrimination or prejudice based on their race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, or religion may feel emotionally unsafe in their environments.

It is important to note that these factors are complex and interrelated, and that there are many other potential causes of a lack of emotional safety in youth. Creating safe and supportive environments for young people requires a holistic and nuanced approach that takes into account a wide range of factors.

4. Tool 1: Free Thought Flow

In the journey of healing and personal growth, various practices can support us in processing and transforming our emotions and thoughts. One such powerful exercise is called “free thought flow,” where the central rule is not to judge or censor oneself.

Understanding Free Thought Flow:

Free thought flow is a writing exercise that encourages the unrestricted expression of thoughts and emotions without the fear of judgment or criticism, especially coming from oneself. It provides a safe and private space to explore the depths of one’s mind, allowing thoughts to flow freely onto paper or a digital medium. We recommend handwriting, because of numerous studies confirming the connection of the hand movement to the brain and forming new, desired neural connections.

Writing by hand vs typing:

The use of real paper as it provides “more concrete encoding information” compared to technology like a tablet or phone where information on the same screen can be instantly erased. The actual process of writing it down on paper you can touch that can’t easily be erased creates deeper encoding, engaging the brain more deeply and thus creating a stronger memory of the information. Here’s a video explaining more benefits of handwriting: [click](#).

Daily frequency and ideal time:

The frequency of engaging in free thought flow writing can vary depending on personal preference and availability. However, committing to a daily practice can bring about the most profound effects. Setting aside 15-30 minutes each day for this exercise can be a realistic and beneficial goal.

Choosing the time of day that works best for you is crucial. Some individuals find that writing in the morning helps set a positive tone for the day, while others prefer evenings to reflect on their experiences. Ultimately, select a time when you feel most relaxed, focused, and undisturbed.

Benefits of Free Thought Flow:

1. Exploring trauma: Free thought flow creates a safe container for delving into the depths of one’s trauma. By providing an open space to express raw emotions and memories, this exercise allows for a cathartic release and a deeper understanding of the traumatic experiences.

2. Uncovering subconscious patterns: Our subconscious mind holds powerful insights and patterns that influence our thoughts, behaviors, and emotions. Free thought flow can act as a gateway to tap into these subconscious realms, bringing hidden patterns

and beliefs to light. By doing so, we can gain awareness and make conscious choices to transform and heal.

3. Embracing authentic expression: Many of us internalize societal expectations, judgments, and self-criticism, which can stifle our authentic expression. Free thought flow encourages a non-judgmental attitude, enabling us to bypass these barriers and embrace our true selves. It allows us to express ourselves freely, without concern for grammar, coherence, or structure, fostering self-acceptance and self-compassion.

4. Ordering emotions and thoughts: Writing in free thought flow allows our emotions and thoughts to find coherence and structure on the page. As we release them onto the paper, we gain clarity and perspective. This process helps us organize and understand our experiences, making it easier to identify recurring patterns, triggers, and areas that require healing.

5. Transforming thoughts and emotions: Free Thought Flow offers a powerful transformational potential. By allowing ourselves to explore and express our emotions and thoughts honestly, we create an opportunity to reframe, reprocess, and transmute them into something different. It opens the door to new insights, perspectives, and narratives that support growth and healing.

To maximize the benefits of free thought flow, it can be helpful to follow these guidelines:

1. Create a safe space: Choose a quiet and comfortable environment that feels safe and nurturing. Consider using a dedicated journal or a digital platform solely for this exercise.

2. Let go of judgment: Embrace a non-judgmental attitude towards yourself and your writing. Remember that there are no right or wrong thoughts in free thought flow—every expression is valid.

3. Flow without interruption: Write continuously without pausing to edit, revise, or analyze your words. Allow the stream of consciousness to guide you, even if it feels messy or nonsensical at times.

4. Honor self-care: Engaging in deep emotional exploration can be intense. Prioritize self-care activities such as mindfulness, grounding exercises, or seeking support from a therapist or trusted individual.

Free thought flow is a transformative writing exercise that allows for the uninhibited exploration of one's thoughts and emotions. By embracing this practice without judgment, we can start the process of healing trauma, ordering their emotions and thoughts,

and transforming them into something different. Regular engagement in free thought flow can pave the way for personal growth, self-understanding, and a profound journey towards healing and transformation.



5. Tool 2: Safe space

We have already recognized writing as a therapeutic tool for self-expression, reflection, and healing. One particularly effective writing exercise is called “safe space,” which involves creating an imaginary realm where one feels secure, supported, and free to explore their emotions. In this chapter, we will explore the concept of the safe space writing exercise and its profound benefits in working with trauma, grounding oneself, and fostering emotional well-being. We will also delve into the scientific research supporting the efficacy of this practice and provide examples of experiments that demonstrate the transformative potential of creating a safe space through writing.

Understanding the Safe Space Writing Exercise:

The exercise involves using your imagination to construct an ideal environment in which you feel completely safe, supported, and

emotionally secure. It is a sanctuary within the mind where you can freely express and explore your emotions, thoughts, and desires without fear of judgment or harm. Through vivid descriptions and sensory details, the safe space becomes a tangible and accessible realm that provides comfort, solace, and an opportunity for personal growth.

Instructions:

1. Find a quiet and comfortable place where you can focus without interruptions.
2. Take a few deep breaths to ground yourself in the present moment and bring awareness to your body and surroundings.
3. Close your eyes and imagine a safe and nurturing space in your mind. This space is your personal sanctuary, a place where you can escape from the overwhelming world or work through your difficult experiences.
4. Explore the details of your safe space. What does it look like? How is it arranged? Are there any specific objects or elements that bring you comfort and security? Take your time to envision every aspect of this space.
5. Now, open your eyes and grab a notebook or a blank sheet of paper and a pen.
6. Begin describing your safe space in writing. Use kind and gentle language to

paint a vivid picture of what it looks like, how it feels, and what makes it a place of safety for you. Focus on sensory details, such as colors, textures, scents, and sounds.

7. As you write, let your emotions flow onto the page. If there are any specific difficulties or experiences you want to address in this safe space, feel free to include them. Remember, this is a space where you can safely unpack and work through your emotions.
8. Explore the different activities you can engage in within your safe space. Is there a cozy reading nook? A writing desk? A space for artwork or crafts? Describe these activities and how they contribute to your healing process.
9. Reflect on the emotions that arise as you write about your safe space. Notice how it makes you feel and the sense of safety and comfort it provides.
10. Take your time with this exercise. There is no rush. Allow yourself to fully immerse in the process of creating and describing your safe space.
11. Once you have finished writing, take a moment to reread what you have written. Let the words sink in and remind yourself that this safe space is always available to you, both in your imagination and as a symbol of your inner strength and resilience.

12. Whenever you feel overwhelmed or in need of a safe escape, return to your written description and imagine yourself in that nurturing space. Let it serve as a reminder that you have the power to create a safe haven within yourself.
13. Remember that healing takes time and patience. Your safe space is a tool that can support you on your journey, but it's important to seek professional help and support if you are struggling with trauma or difficult experiences.
14. Take a moment to appreciate yourself for engaging in this exercise and acknowledging your need for a safe space. Honor your strength and resilience as you continue to navigate your healing journey.



Traumatic experiences can leave deep emotional wounds and disrupt one's sense of safety and well-being. The safe space writing exercise can serve as a powerful tool for working with trauma by providing a nurturing environment to process and heal. Here's how it can be beneficial:

1. **Creating emotional safety:** Trauma can make us feel emotionally vulnerable and on edge. By immersing oneself in a safe space through writing, one can cultivate a sense of emotional safety, allowing for the exploration and release of suppressed emotions.
2. **Expressive freedom:** Trauma often restricts self-expression due to fear, shame, or a sense of powerlessness. The safe space exercise encourages unrestricted self-expression, enabling us to give voice to their emotions, thoughts, and experiences.
3. **Reclaiming control:** Trauma can leave us feeling powerless and out of control. By creating and inhabiting a safe space through writing, individuals can regain a sense of agency and control over their emotional landscape, facilitating the healing process.
4. **Anchoring in the present:** Writing about and immersing oneself in the details of a safe space can ground individuals in the present moment, diverting their attention from past traumas or future anxieties.
5. **Emotional regulation:** The act of engaging with the safe space through writing can regulate emotions by providing a calm and reassuring mental anchor. It allows individuals to access a sense of stability, comfort, and inner peace.
6. **Stress reduction:** The safe space exercise activates the relaxation response, reducing stress, and promoting a sense of overall well-being. It can be particularly helpful in moments of heightened anxiety or emotional distress.



Harnessing imagination for creating the life of your dreams:

The safe space writing exercise not only supports healing and emotional well-being but also serves as a powerful tool for manifesting a desired future and creating the life of your dreams. Writing about a safe space allows you to envision and articulate the life you desire. It clarifies your intentions, goals, and aspirations, serving as a blueprint for manifesting positive change.

As you immerse yourself in the safe space, you connect with the positive emotions associated with your desired life. This emotional alignment can enhance motivation, resilience, and focus, propelling you towards the realization of your dreams.

Engaging in vivid and positive imagery through the safe space exercise stimulates the brain's reward centers and activates the formation of new neural pathways. This rewiring of the brain reinforces positive thinking, optimism, and a belief in the possibility of your dreams coming true.

Several experiments have demonstrated the transformative potential of creating a safe space through writing. Therapists and counselors often incorporate safe space exercises into their work with trauma survivors. Participants are encouraged to imagine and describe their safe spaces in writing, sharing

their experiences in a supportive group setting. This practice fosters a sense of community, validation, and healing.

Individuals who practice personal journaling can employ the safe space exercise as a regular component of their writing routine. By revisiting and expanding upon their safe space descriptions over time, they deepen their connection with their imagination, emotional well-being, and personal growth.

The safe space writing exercise harnesses the power of imagination, providing a transformative and therapeutic tool for working with trauma, grounding oneself, and manifesting positive change. Through vivid descriptions and sensory details, this exercise creates a sanctuary within the mind where emotions, thoughts, and desires can be explored freely, fostering healing and personal transformation. Supported by scientific research and numerous experiments, creating a safe space through writing has proven to be a powerful and accessible practice for enhancing emotional well-being, processing trauma, and manifesting the life of your dreams.

Kisfalvi V., David O., 2015, "Creating and Maintaining a Safe Space in Experiential Learning", Journal of Management Education



Looking for identity

2

1. Why is it important to look for an identity?
2. How young people are typically looking for their identities?
3. What is the difference between adopting an identity and creating it?
4. Tool 1: Trusting yourself
5. Tool 2: The Mirror Image

Let's start with a short, animated video from TedEd about what an identity actually is from a philosophical point of view: [click](#).



¿Quién soy? Una investigación filosófica - Amy Adkins

1. Why is it important to look for an identity?

Identity is a fundamental aspect of human existence that shapes how we think, feel, and act. It is the unique combination of characteristics, experiences, and values that make each of us who we are. Developing a sense of identity is an important part of growing up, and it plays a critical role in shaping our lives and relationships .

There are many reasons why it is important to look for an identity. Here are some of the most significant:

It provides a sense of belonging

Identity helps us to find a sense of belonging and connection with others. When we develop a strong sense of identity, we feel like we belong to a particular group or community of people who share our interests, beliefs, or values. This sense of belonging can provide us with a feeling of security, stability, and comfort that we might not find elsewhere.

It defines our purpose

Having a clear sense of identity can also help us to define our purpose in life. When we understand who we are and what we stand for, we are more likely to pursue activities and goals that align with our values and beliefs. This can provide us with a sense of direction and purpose, which can be essential for leading a fulfilling and meaningful

life.

It enhances self-esteem

A strong sense of identity can also enhance our self-esteem and self-confidence. When we have a clear understanding of who we are and what we stand for, we are more likely to feel good about ourselves and our abilities. This can provide us with the courage and confidence to take risks, pursue our passions, and achieve our goals.

It promotes resilience

Identity can also promote resilience, which is the ability to recover from setbacks and overcome adversity. When we have a strong sense of identity, we are better equipped to navigate difficult situations and overcome challenges. We are more likely to have a sense of purpose and direction that can help us to stay focused and motivated in the face of adversity.

It facilitates healthy relationships

Having a clear sense of identity can also facilitate healthy relationships with others. When we know who we are and what we stand for, we are better able to communicate our needs and boundaries to others. We are also more likely to attract people who share our values and beliefs, which can lead to more fulfilling and satisfying relationships.

It fosters creativity

Identity can also foster creativity and innovation. When we have a strong sense of identity, we are more likely to be open-minded and receptive to new ideas and experiences. This can help us to generate innovative solutions to problems and develop new and exciting projects and initiatives.

It promotes social change

Having a clear sense of identity can also promote social change. When we know who we are and what we stand for, we are more likely to stand up for what we believe in and advocate for social justice and equality. This can help to create a more just and equitable society for all.

Developing a strong sense of identity is a critical aspect of human growth and development. It can provide us with a sense of belonging, define our purpose, enhance our self-esteem, promote resilience, facilitate healthy relationships, foster creativity, and promote social change. While the process of developing an identity can be challenging

and complex, the benefits are well worth the effort. By taking the time to explore who we are and what we stand for, we can create a more fulfilling, meaningful, and purposeful life.



2. How young people are typically looking for their identities?

Young people tend to look for their identities in a variety of ways, and the process can be different for each person. For example:

1. **Exploring interests and hobbies:** We use our interests and hobbies to define ourselves. We may be passionate about music, art, sports, or other activities that help us feel unique and special.
2. **Seeking validation from others:** We often seek validation from our peers or other important figures in our lives, such as parents, teachers, or coaches. We may look for approval and recognition for our accomplishments or personality traits.
3. **Defining ourselves through relationships:** Relationships with family, friends, and romantic partners can play a significant role in shaping our sense of self. We may seek to define ourselves by our social circle or the people we associate with.
4. **Exploring personal values and beliefs:** As we mature, we begin to question our values and beliefs and explore new ideas. We seek to define ourselves based on our moral or spiritual convictions.
5. **Experimenting with different identities:** It's not uncommon to try on different identities before settling on one that feels right. We explore different styles, attitudes, or behaviors as we try to figure out who we are and who we want to be.

There are many different modern identities that a young person might develop, and the list is constantly evolving as society changes. And so, there is a variety of modern identities that young people might adopt. With greater awareness and acceptance of diverse gender identities, people are exploring different expressions of gender. This includes non-binary identities, genderqueer, genderfluid, and more. People are becoming more aware of their racial identity and the impact of systemic racism. This includes identifying as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) and exploring what it means to belong to a specific racial group. Young people are exploring their sexual orientation and identity, including identifying as LGBTQIA+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, and others). Also, people may identify with a particular cultural group, whether that's based on nationality, religion, or other shared characteristics, or may develop a political identity based on their beliefs and values, including left-leaning, right-leaning, or centrist ideologies.

While exploring these identities can be empowering and liberating for young people, there are also some dangers associated with them, such as experiencing stigma. Some modern identities are still misunderstood, leading to discrimination or marginalization. For example, LGBTQIA+ youth may

face bullying or harassment from peers, and BIPOC youth may experience racial profiling or discrimination. Another danger is going into an identity crisis: As young people explore different identities, they may experience confusion or a sense of disorientation. They may struggle to find their place in the world or feel pressure to conform to certain expectations. In today's polarized political climate, identifying with a particular political identity can lead to a sense of "us versus them" and contribute to divisiveness. Exploring different identities can also lead to pressure to conform to certain expectations. For example, some LGBTQIA+ youth may feel pressure to adopt a certain "look" or identity in order to fit in with a particular community. Last, but not least, young people who adopt identities associated with cultures that are not their own may inadvertently engage in cultural appropriation, which can be harmful and disrespectful.

Sometimes our identities are shaped without us even knowing, by our experiences. It works great if those experiences are positive or challenging, just enough for us to learn our lessons and get stronger. But what if those experiences are negative? Their impact on a person's sense of identity might be enormous, leading to living a life we would not consciously choose.

Here are some examples of negative experiences that can shape a person's identity:

1. **Trauma:** Traumatic experiences, such as abuse, neglect, or violence, can deeply affect a person's sense of self. It can lead to feelings of shame, guilt, and self-blame, and may cause the person to question their worth or value.
2. **Discrimination:** Experiencing discrimination or marginalization based on one's identity, such as racism, homophobia, or sexism, can lead to internalized oppression and a sense of not belonging. It can also reinforce negative stereotypes and lead to self-doubt and low self-esteem.
3. **Bullying:** Being bullied or harassed by peers can lead to feelings of isolation and worthlessness. It can also reinforce negative self-beliefs and cause the person to question their identity or place in the world.
4. **Identity crisis:** Going through a period of identity crisis, such as questioning one's sexuality or gender identity, can be a difficult and challenging experience. It can cause confusion, anxiety, and uncertainty about the future.
5. **Social pressure:** Feeling pressure to conform to societal expectations, whether

it's related to appearance, behavior, or identity, can lead to feelings of inadequacy or shame. It can also cause the person to question their values and beliefs.

6. **Family conflict:** Conflicts within the family, such as divorce, abuse, or neglect, can deeply affect a person's sense of identity. It can lead to feelings of abandonment, betrayal, and insecurity, and may cause the person to question their worth or value.

While it is valuable to learn from our past experiences and use them as a reference point, it is equally important to remain open-minded, adaptable, and willing to embrace new possibilities. Balancing past lessons with present awareness and future-oriented thinking enables us to navigate the complexities of life more effectively.



Allowing our past experiences to solely shape our future can be potentially dangerous: it limits our perspective, leads to cognitive biases and self-limiting beliefs, among others:

Limited perspective

Relying exclusively on past experiences can limit our perspective and prevent us from considering new possibilities or alternative approaches. Each moment is unique, and the future may present different circumstances that require fresh thinking and adaptation. Failing to recognize this can result in missed opportunities or poor decision-making.

Cognitive biases

Our past experiences are subjective and influenced by our personal biases, emotions, and interpretations. Depending solely on these experiences can lead to cognitive biases, such as confirmation bias or anchoring bias, where we only seek information that confirms our preconceived notions or make decisions based on irrelevant or outdated information. This can hinder our ability to make objective and rational choices.

Changing contexts

The world is constantly evolving, and circumstances change over time. What worked in the past may not be applicable or effective in the present or future. Technological advancements, cultural shifts, and societal changes can all impact the relevance and applicability of our past experiences.

Failing to adapt to new contexts can result in stagnation or being ill-prepared for emerging challenges.

Self-limiting beliefs

Relying heavily on past experiences can reinforce self-limiting beliefs. If we have experienced failures or setbacks in the past, it may lead to a fear of taking risks or trying new things. This fear can prevent personal growth and hinder our ability to reach our full potential. It is important to challenge these beliefs and embrace a growth mindset that allows for learning, exploration, and adaptation.

Overgeneralization

Our past experiences are often based on a limited sample size, and it is risky to generalize those experiences to predict future outcomes. Making broad assumptions or generalizations based on a few instances can lead to flawed expectations and faulty decision-making. It is crucial to recognize the uniqueness of each situation and gather a more comprehensive understanding before



3. What is the difference between adopting an identity and creating it?

The process of developing an identity can take many different forms, and there are different ways to deal with it. One approach is to adopt an identity, while another is to create one. While these two approaches share some similarities, there are also some important differences.

Adopting an identity involves taking on the characteristics and traits of an existing identity. This could be a cultural, ethnic, or religious identity, for example. When someone adopts an identity, they are typically accepting the values, beliefs, and behaviors associated with that identity. They may feel a sense of connection to the group that shares that identity and may seek to conform to the group's norms and expectations.

Creating an identity, on the other hand, involves actively shaping and defining one's own identity. Rather than simply accepting an existing identity, someone who is creating an identity is more likely to think critically about what values, beliefs, and behaviors are important to them. They may draw on a range of influences, including their family background, personal experiences, and cultural or social influences. The end result is an identity that reflects their unique characteristics, values, and experiences.

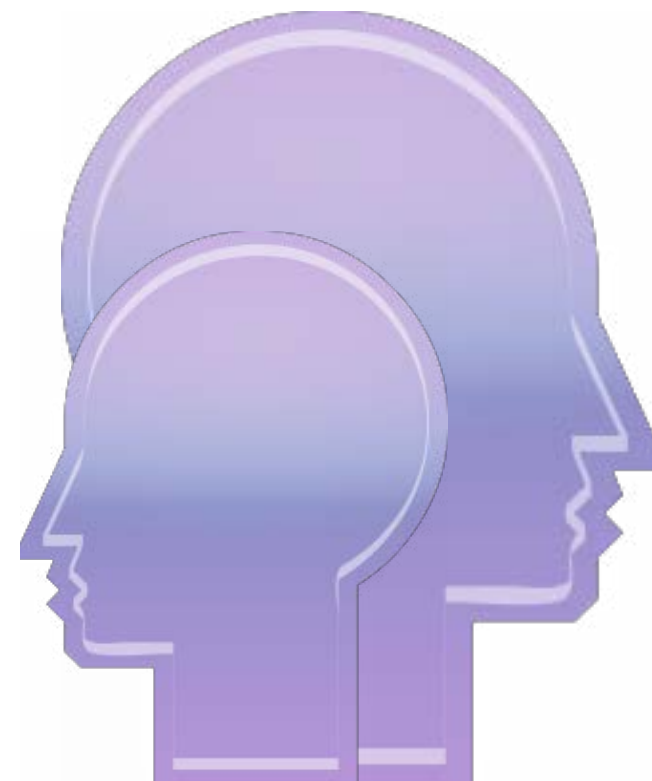
One of the most significant differences is agency. When someone adopts an identity, they are often doing so because they feel like they should or because it is expected of them. In contrast, someone who is creating an identity is taking an active role in shaping who they are and what they stand for.

Another key difference is the level of critical thinking involved. When someone adopts an identity, they may not always think critically about the values and beliefs associated with that identity. Instead, they may simply accept them as a given. In contrast, someone who is creating an identity is likely to engage in more critical thinking about what values and beliefs are important to them.

Finally, there is a difference in terms of individuality. When someone adopts an identity, they may feel a sense of connection to the group, but they may also feel a pressure to conform to the group's norms and expectations. In contrast, someone who is creating an identity is more likely to be focused on expressing their unique characteristics and values, rather than conforming to external expectations.

Both adopting an identity and creating one can be valid ways of developing a sense of

identity. However, there are important differences between the two approaches. Adopting an identity involves taking on the characteristics and traits of an existing identity, while creating an identity involves actively shaping and defining one's own identity. The choice of approach will depend on individual preferences, circumstances, and goals.



4. Tool 1: Trusting yourself

When we are born, we have an unlimited trust in ourselves - how else would we be able to learn how to walk and talk? Yes, there is a primitive instinct at play as well, and a supportive environment helps enormously - by providing safe conditions for early walking, muscle development, giving lots of playtime and encouraging the baby to move around independently and experiment, the caregivers can aid the development of the child.

Environment giveth, environment taketh it away

We all agree that a supportive, non-judgmental environment can help, but what happens if it's not supportive at all, for whatever reason? (This reason, mind you, might be totally external, but it is often internal, meaning that our own mind, led by our emotions and chemicals produced by feeling them will convince us that we are not worthy of that thing we consider is important for us to reach happiness). Well, we might, little by little, lose the confidence we were naturally born with.

Lack of experience

We may become convinced that we lack extensive life experience and may not have had many opportunities to test our abilities or make independent decisions. While this can be true to some extent, self-doubt and a

lack of confidence in our own judgment can go well into our adulthood.

Comparison with others

We often compare ourselves to our peers or societal expectations, which can lead to feelings of inadequacy or self-doubt. The comparison approach is often fostered by the culture, peers or unaware caregivers. Constantly comparing oneself to others can erode self-confidence and make it difficult to trust one's own abilities and choices.

Fear of failure

We may develop a fear of failure, often fueled by high expectations from parents, teachers, or society. This fear can hinder our self-belief and prevent us from taking risks or pursuing their goals wholeheartedly.

Negative experiences or criticism

Negative experiences, such as failures, rejections, or harsh criticism, can significantly impact our self-confidence. If we receive consistent negative feedback or face significant setbacks, we may start doubting our abilities and lose trust in ourselves.

Pressure to conform

Societal pressures, peer pressure, and the desire to fit in can influence us to suppress our own instincts, opinions, and aspirations. The fear of being judged or ostracized may

lead them to doubt our own thoughts and decisions, eroding our self-trust.

Lack of support and validation

If we do not receive adequate support, encouragement, and validation from our family, friends, or mentors, it can undermine our self-confidence. Feeling unsupported or unheard can make us question our own capabilities and worth.

Mental health issues

Mental health challenges, such as anxiety or depression, can significantly impact our self-trust. These conditions can distort our perception of ourselves and our abilities, leading to self-doubt and a lack of confidence.

These factors can vary from person to person, and each individual's experience is unique. Building self-trust requires self-reflection, self-compassion, and nurturing a supportive environment that encourages personal growth and resilience.

The “Rebuilding Trust” exercise is a first step towards trusting ourselves again. It is very easy to do, and, if done consistently, over time it will greatly improve your sense of trust.

1. **Create a safe and supportive environment:** Find a quiet and comfortable space where you can focus without interruptions. Gather writing materials, such as a notebook and pen, and ensure privacy to foster a sense of safety.
2. **Reflect on traumatic experiences:** Take time to reflect on the traumatic experiences that have led to the erosion of self-trust. Allow yourself to acknowledge the emotions, thoughts, and beliefs associated with these experiences. Remember to use the grounding techniques explained at the beginning of this book, and do not force yourself to do anything that feels too difficult to go through. You are the main character here, and only you can decide how far it is safe to push yourself to.
3. **Engage in stream-of-consciousness writing:** Set a timer for 15-20 minutes and begin writing without judgment or self-censorship. Write freely, allowing your thoughts and emotions to flow onto the paper. Focus on your inner dialogue and explore any self-doubt or lack of trust that has developed.
4. **Identify negative self-beliefs:** After the stream-of-consciousness writing, review

what you have written and identify any negative self-beliefs or self-critical thoughts that have emerged. Start small - choose maximum 3 beliefs you see manifested in your writing. Recognize the patterns of self-doubt and mistrust that you have internalized.

5. **Challenge negative self-beliefs:** Take a fresh page in your notebook and write down each of the 3 negative self-beliefs you have identified. Next to each belief, write a counter-statement that challenges or refutes the negative belief. For example, if your negative belief is “I am unworthy,” the counter-statement could be “I am deserving of love, respect, and self-acceptance.” Then breathe deeply for a minute, noticing any subtle changes in your body happening when you switch from the negative self belief to its counter-belief.
6. **Practice self-compassion:** When writing, try to leave the negative self-talk out of your sheet of paper. Instead, cultivate a kind, compassionate approach, addressing the pain you have experienced and acknowledging the strength and resilience you possess. Offer words of support, encouragement, and understanding to yourself.
7. **Set small, achievable goals:** Transform your list of negative beliefs and their more positive versions, into small, achievable goals that align with rebuilding self-trust. We recommend using the

SMART framework: goals should be specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound. For example, a statement “I am deserving of love, respect, and self-acceptance” could transform to “I will practice self-love by engaging in a gentle stretching activity for 5 minutes each day for the next week.” The smaller the goal and the less time it takes to accomplish, the more chance you get to be able to follow through. If the goal is too big (we tend to set big goals, as the society always tells us motivational phrases such as “go big or go home”) there’s a big chance it will be abandoned, and our self-worth constructed with it.

8. **Regularly reflect and update:** Allocate regular time to reflect on your progress and update your goals. Use writing as a tool to track your growth, celebrate achievements, and adapt your approach as needed.



What benefits can you expect from engaging in this exercise?

First and foremost: restoring self-trust

This exercise can help restore their self-trust by exploring and challenging negative self-beliefs and fostering self-compassion.

Emotional healing

Writing about trauma allows for emotional expression, helping process and release pent-up emotions related to the traumatic experiences.

Increased self-awareness

Through self-reflection and introspection, this exercise promotes self-awareness by shedding light on the impact of trauma on self-trust and identifying patterns of negative self-beliefs.

Strengthening resilience

The act of rebuilding trust in oneself cultivates resilience, enabling us to develop a more positive outlook, enhance problem-solving abilities, and adapt to future challenges.

Improved well-being

By addressing and working through the barriers to self-trust, we can experience improved psychological well-being, reduced stress levels, and enhanced overall life satisfaction.

The “Rebuilding Trust” writing exercise offers a powerful and accessible tool for restoring self-trust and healing after trauma. Drawing on the scientific benefits of writing, this exercise allows us to process emotions, challenge negative self-beliefs, and foster self-compassion. By engaging in regular reflective writing, we can rebuild their trust in ourselves, enhance their emotional well-being, and cultivate resilience. The journey towards self-trust and healing is unique to each one of us, and this exercise provides a structured and empowering framework to support this transformative process.



5. Tool 2: The Mirror Image

The Mirror Image writing exercise is a profound and introspective practice that encourages individuals to observe themselves in a mirror as though they were viewing another person. By adopting a detached perspective and resisting self-criticism, participants can explore their own identity and experiences through the creation of a fictional character. The benefits of this practice include increased self-awareness, empathy cultivation, and personal growth potential.

The Mirror Image writing exercise involves the following steps:

1. **Setting:** Find a quiet and comfortable space where you can stand or sit in front of a mirror for approximately 10 minutes. It doesn't have to be a big mirror, in fact, it can be quite small.
2. **Observation:** Look at your reflection as though you are observing another person. This helps to maintain a dispassionate and non-judgmental stance, resisting the temptation to focus on perceived flaws or criticize yourself. As we tend to be more critical with ourselves than with others, you might even find out that some traits spotted in the mirror that you would perceive as flaws within yourself, transform into strong points or advantages when attributed to another person.

Approach the observation with curiosity and a sense of detachment.

3. **Reflective writing:** After the observation period, take a notebook or journal and begin writing about the person you observed in the mirror. Provide biographical details such as a name (not your own), a place, an occupation, relationships, and a back-story. Approach this writing as if you were creating a fictional character, exploring their experiences, emotions, and motivations.



Benefits of the Mirror Image writing exercise:

Conștiința de sine

Exercițiul "imaginea în oglindă" susține autocunoașterea, încurajându-ne să ne observăm obiectiv. Leșind din experiența noastră subiectivă, dobândim o perspectivă asupra aspectului nostru fizic, a limbajului corporal și a indiciilor non-verbale. Această conștientizare mărită a sinelui poate duce la o înțelegere mai profundă a propriei persoane și a relației cu ceilalți.

Cultivarea empatiei

Tratându-ne pe noi înșine ca pe o entitate exterioară prin exercițiul "Imaginea în oglindă", dezvoltăm empatia. Leșirea din propria perspectivă ne permite să cultivăm compasiunea și înțelegerea propriilor noastre lupte, provocări și nesiguranțe. Această practică se poate extinde dincolo de empatia față de propria persoană, influențând modul în care ne raportăm și empatizăm cu ceilalți.

Sfidarea judecății de sine

Exercițiul "Imaginea în oglindă" ne încurajează să rezistăm criticii și percepției negative despre sine. Observându-ne în mod conștient, fără a ne judeca, creăm spațiu pentru acceptare și compasiune față de noi înșine. Această practică poate pune la îndoială ti-

parele negative profund înrădăcinate de critică de sine și poate favoriza o relație mai pozitivă și mai hrănitore cu propria persoană.

Explorarea identității

Crearea unei narațiuni biografice despre persoana observată în oglindă permite o explorare a identității personale. Luând în considerare diferite nume, ocupații, relații și povești, putem să ne scufundăm în diverse arii de interes, să descoperim dorințe sau aspirații ascunse și să dobândim o perspectivă mai largă asupra propriului nostru parcurs de viață.

Dezvoltare și transformare personală

Exercițiul servește drept platformă de dezvoltare și transformare personală. Prin explorarea propriei identități - ca și cum am crea un personaj, ne deschidem către noi perspective, către reflecție și activăm potențialul de schimbare pozitivă. Această practică ne poate inspira să ne orientăm acțiunile, alegerile și aspirațiile spre o cale mai autentică și mai împlinită.

Dishon N., Oldmeadow J., Critchley C., Kaufman J. , 2017, "The Effect of Trait Self-Awareness, Self-Reflection, and Perceptions of Choice Meaningfulness on Indicators of Social Identity within a Decision-Making Context", Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Volume 8



Examples of the Mirror Image writing exercise in practice::

1. **Character development:** Writers often utilize this exercise as a tool for character development. By observing themselves in the mirror and creating biographical details for the observed person, writers gain a deeper understanding of their characters' motivations, desires, and conflicts. This exercise enhances the authenticity and depth of fictional characters in their writing. You can benefit from this approach and create yourself as you would create a fictional character if you were a writer; you can give yourself any traits you wish, especially including those you think you lack. It will not give you 1.50 cm height and black, curly hair if you are 1,70 blonde, but acting accordingly, "as if it was true" will unblock your mind and push its comfort zone a little further away, giving you space for your identity development.
2. **Self-exploration in therapeutic settings:** Therapists and counselors incorporate this exercise in therapeutic settings to encourage self-exploration and self-compassion. You can guide yourself through the process of observing yourself objectively and creating a biographical narrative, facilitating personal insight, emotional healing, and self-acceptance.
3. **Overcoming body image issues:** By ob-

serving oneself in a non-judgmental and compassionate manner, we can challenge negative self-perceptions and develop a more positive relationship with our physical appearance. The process of creating a fictional character with a different perspective on beauty and self-worth can provide a fresh outlook and promote self-acceptance.

4. **Cultivating empathy and compassion:** By adopting a perspective of observing yourself as another person, you develop a greater understanding of your own vulnerabilities, struggles, and strengths. This enhanced empathy can extend to your interactions with others, promoting more compassionate and understanding relationships.

Scientific Research on the Mirror Image writing exercise:

Scientific research supports the benefits of reflective writing exercises like The Mirror Image. Studies have shown that self-reflection and imaginative processes contribute to enhanced self-awareness, emotional regulation, and empathy. For example:

- In a study published in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, researchers found that self-reflection increased self-awareness and enhanced moral reasoning, leading to greater empathy and prosocial behavior.

- Research conducted by the University of California, Berkeley, revealed that imaginative processes, such as creating fictional characters, activate the same brain regions responsible for empathy and social cognition. These findings suggest that engaging in imaginative writing exercises like The Mirror Image can contribute to empathy development.

The Mirror Image writing exercise offers a unique and transformative approach to self-reflection and self-compassion. By observing oneself as though looking at another person and creating a biographical narrative, individuals gain insights into their own identity, emotions, and motivations. This exercise promotes self-awareness, empathy development, and personal growth. The Mirror Image exercise can be applied in various contexts, such as character development for writers, therapeutic settings, body image issues, and empathy cultivation. The Mirror Image serves as a valuable tool for exploring self-perception, cultivating empathy, and fostering personal transformation.

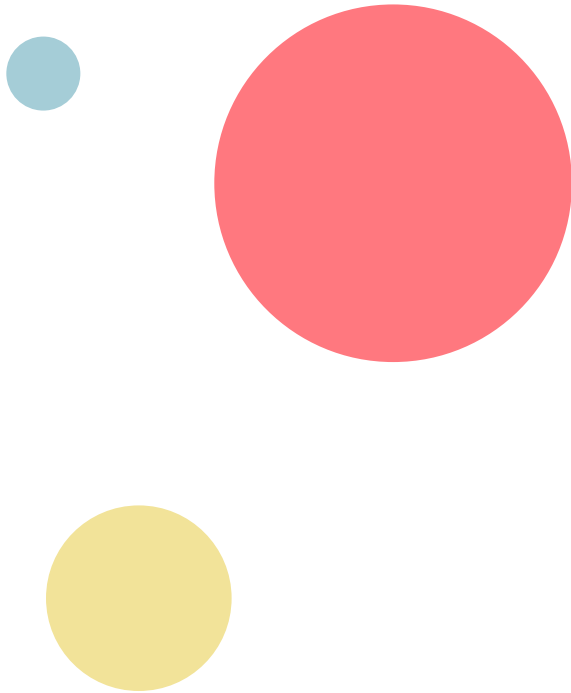


Reclaiming creativity

3

1. Creativity
2. Trauma and creativity
3. Tool 1: I am a creator: a group poem
4. Tool 2: I will survive

1. Creativity



How often do you catch yourself saying “Creativity is for artists, such as painters or musicians, I have nothing to do with it”?

Are all people creative?

Yes, all people are inherently creative to some degree. Creativity is a fundamental aspect of human nature and is not limited to artistic or musical expression. People can be creative in many different ways, such as problem-solving, critical thinking, innovation, and communication. Creativity can be expressed through various mediums, including writing, painting, sculpting, music, dance, cooking, and even in everyday activities like parenting, teaching, and entrepreneurship. However, the degree to which individuals express their creativity can vary based on their personal interests, experiences, and environment.

Ce este, de fapt, creativitatea?

What is creativity, really?

Creativity is the ability to generate new and valuable ideas, concepts, or associations that are original and useful in solving problems or satisfying needs. It involves thinking outside the box, combining seemingly unrelated elements, and breaking free from established patterns and conventions.

Creativity can manifest in various domains, such as art, music, literature, science, engineering, business, and many others. It can involve the creation of something tangible, such as a painting, sculpture, or product, or something intangible, such as a new idea, strategy, or concept.

At its core, creativity involves a combination of cognitive processes such as imagination, curiosity, intuition, and problem-solving. It requires the ability to think flexibly and adapt to changing situations and challenges, as well as the willingness to take risks and experiment with new ideas. Creativity is a vital human ability that has contributed to the advancement of society in countless ways.

Here’s a short animated video further explaining the subject of creativity: [click](#).



Everyone Can Be Creative

2. Trauma and creativity

Trauma and creativity

Trauma can have a significant impact on a person's ability to think creatively. Traumatic experiences can trigger the body's stress response, leading to increased levels of cortisol and adrenaline, which can impair cognitive function and make it difficult to think clearly and creatively.

Additionally, trauma can cause emotional distress and mental health issues such as anxiety and depression, which can further inhibit a person's ability to think creatively. Trauma can also lead to feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, and a lack of motivation, which can stifle creative energy and inspiration.

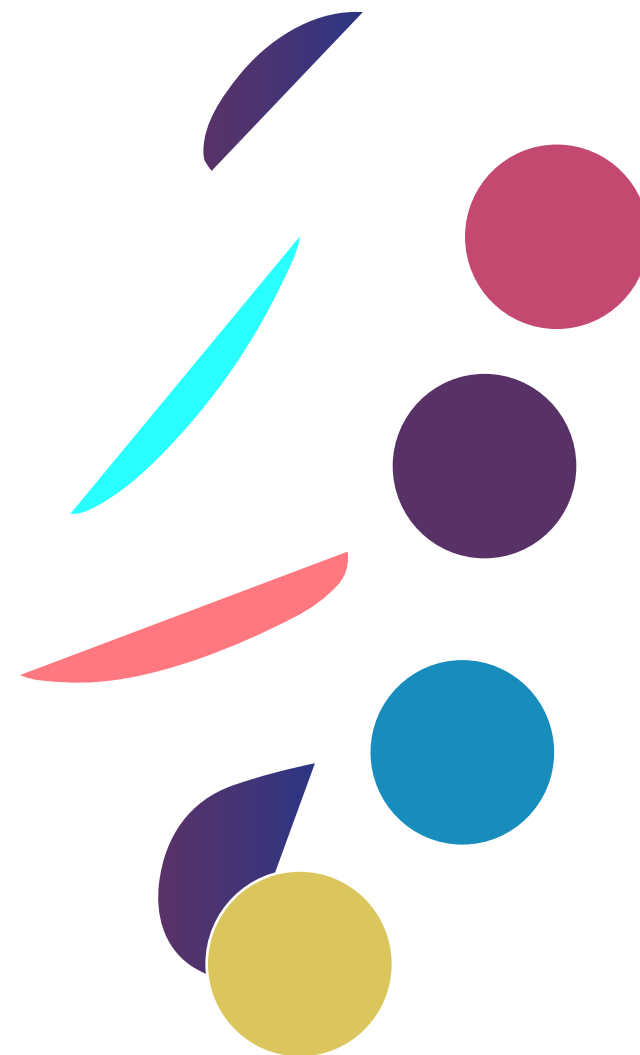
Moreover, people who have experienced trauma may struggle with trust and vulnerability, which are essential components of the creative process. Trauma can make it difficult for individuals to express themselves freely and openly, leading to a stifling of creativity.

It's important to note that everyone responds to trauma differently, and not all individuals who have experienced trauma will experience a loss of creativity. However, trauma can be a significant obstacle to creativity for some people, and it's important to seek support and treatment if you are struggling

with the effects of trauma. Therapy, medication, and other forms of support can help individuals cope with trauma and regain their creative abilities.

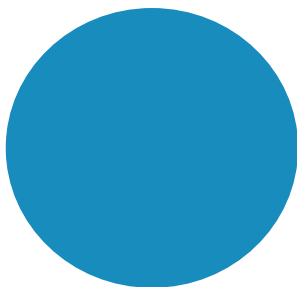
Trauma can affect the creative mind in various ways. Traumatic experiences can trigger the body's stress response, which can impair cognitive function, including the ability to think creatively. Emotional distress and mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) can completely inhibit creativity. Trauma can cause a sense of disconnection from oneself, others, and the world, or hypervigilance, which is a state of constant alertness, and can make it difficult to relax and engage in creative activities. Negative self-talk and self-doubt, often being the result of trauma, can also hinder creativity, not to mention reduced motivation and trust issues (feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, difficulty to trust others, which can stifle collaboration and teamwork).

It's important to note that not all individuals who have experienced trauma will experience a loss of creativity. However, trauma can be a significant obstacle to creativity for some people, and it's essential to seek support and treatment if you are struggling



with the effects of trauma. Therapies such as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), art therapy, and mindfulness-based interventions can help individuals cope with trauma and regain their creative abilities.

Fortunately, we can develop and engage in everyday, small practices that will open us up to creativity. And so, you might enjoy the following:



Explore new experiences and perspectives

Trying new things and exposing yourself to different perspectives can spark your imagination and inspire new ideas.

Keep an open mind

Being receptive to new ideas and willing to challenge your assumptions can help you break out of established patterns of thinking and come up with fresh insights.

Engage in brainstorming

Taking the time to generate a large number of ideas without self-censorship can help you discover novel solutions to problems and uncover new possibilities.

Take breaks and engage in mind-wandering

Stepping away from your work and engaging in activities that allow your mind to wander can help you recharge your creative energy and come up with fresh perspectives.

Practice creative exercises

Engage in activities such as drawing, writing, or improvisation that help you develop your creative skills and hone your ability to generate new ideas.

Collaborate with others

Working with others who have different skills and perspectives can help you generate new ideas and explore different solutions to problems.

Embrace failure

Recognizing that failure is a natural part of the creative process can help you overcome fear of failure and take more risks in your creative endeavors.

3. Tool 1: I am a creator: a group poem

Here, we are going to create a poem, but not just a regular one; This poem will be open sourced and will include the vision of other people, which can lead to two things. The first one is your trust in others and the environment expanding. As you share your initial idea for a poem with others, you must let go of your artistic vision and trust others and the process. The other thing is that when your initial idea gets enriched by the vision of others, you might perceive it as something even better, or something that will open a new patch for you to pursue your creative ways.

Crafting a poem collaboratively with a group of individuals fosters an environment where people can openly express their perspectives, emotions, and life encounters while collaborating harmoniously to merge their written words into a single, unified voice. We utilize group poems to creatively establish connections between community members. Furthermore, this technique can also be employed as a team-building exercise during dynamic interaction sessions.

How to engage in group poem writing

1. Assemble a group of people (friends, family, classmates, you can even do it online through a group chat or a virtual meeting. Those people do not have to be your acquaintances; If you prefer to do the exercise alone, we recommend connecting with people with interest in creativity and writing online (you can find some on the All Poetry website, here). Introduce a broad theme upon which they will write (for example, “trauma”).
2. Share a sample poem (examples below) centered around the chosen theme to inspire the group.
3. Allocate 10-15 minutes for each participant to independently write their thoughts on the theme.
4. Encourage each member to share their individual poems, going around the circle.
5. As we share, let us jot down our favorite lines from the narratives of other group members.
6. Once everyone has read their creations aloud, create an inclusive space for participants to vocalize their preferred lines from their peers’ poems, allowing the voices to merge organically in an overlapping fashion.
7. Ask each person to select their favorite

line from their own poem and inscribe it on a whiteboard, blackboard, or a small piece of paper.

8. Collaboratively work as a group to weave together and arrange each individual’s chosen line, constructing a unified poem that inspires new meanings and strengthens community bonds.



The significance of writing group poems

Storytelling, remembrance, connection, creation, and sharing through literacy performances play a pivotal role in preventing communities from turning inward and succumbing to a desire for demise due to the afflictions they face. These desires often stem from a combination of different types of trauma, often stemming from childhood. However, instead of allowing such challenges to dismantle our communities, group poems and storytelling circles serve as lifelines, keeping communities vibrant and interconnected despite their struggles. The process of writing group poems encourages people to attentively listen to one another's narratives and discover commonalities in their experiences through the power of words.

Group Poem example:

The ensuing poem, titled "My Burden," comprises distinct lines penned by different individuals. Curated lines from one of our creative writing workshops transformed into a poem titled "My Burden":

My Burden

*Within me resides the love that binds my kin,
Even amidst our discordant days.*

*My thoughts often wander towards my mother,
Recalling the moments we shared together.*

*Within me resides her frailty and vulnerability,
Exemplified tenfold when I observe my own offspring.*

*Guiding my children towards a more joyful existence,
Uplifting their spirits, fostering a positive demeanor—
In their company, I find solace.*

*Within me, tears cascade down craggy cliffs,
Allowing emotions to be transcribed onto paper,
Aiming to be an exemplar and lead by action,
Honoring commitments with unwavering resolve.*

Who could fathom that poems could bear such weight?

In the genesis of my journey, I triumphed over past tribulations,

Shielding my dignity and selfhood.

*I carry all that I am destined to bear,
Bound together, tightly entwined,
Forced upon me without recourse.*

The impact of group poetry

This technique unites individuals grappling with trauma. The experience we gained as writing instructors speaks for itself. We witnessed firsthand how group poems can foster deep listening and forge connections within communities. Focusing on a specific topic of a group poem has an enormous potential for healing in the chosen area. For example, a topic can be a single word, such as "Home" or "Memory". Those are general enough, and every group participant will have some individual experience and will be able to share their insights. Those insights, in turn, will bring back other participants' experiences and enable real community healing. By transforming stories into group poems, we compose verses that encapsulate our collective experiences.

Participants in group poetry workshops often hail from diverse backgrounds. While we may not share a common traumatic heritage, the struggles and reflections we present gain tremendous power through our collective act of composition. We wholeheartedly encourage you to embrace this group poem exercise within your own communities to foster connections, cultivate empathy, and foster a profound sense of understanding among individuals.

If, however, you happen to live in conditions that are not supportive towards connection with other humans, or simply you are not in the place where you are ready for connection, there are some writing exercises that you can perform on your own and create a place for healing wherever you are.



1. Concrete Feelings Poetry

Abstract feeling words, like “sad” or “angry,” often fall short when it comes to capturing the profound depth of our emotions. Concrete feelings poetry offers a transformative activity that harnesses the power of concrete language to vividly depict our innermost feelings. By using sensory details and imagery, this exercise enables us to delve into our emotions and convey them in a tangible and evocative manner.

Implementation step-by-step guide:

Explaining the limitations of abstract words:

To initiate the Concrete Feelings Poetry exercise, it is essential to first explain the limitations of abstract words in capturing the full complexity of emotions. Abstract words tend to be general and lacking in specificity, often failing to encapsulate the intricate nuances and intensity of our feelings. By transitioning from abstract to concrete language, you can tap into a deeper level of self-expression and provide a more vivid and relatable experience for yourself.

Choosing an abstract feeling word:

Select an abstract feeling word, such as “depressed,” and write it on the piece of paper.

By choosing a word that carries significant emotional weight, you can explore the process of transforming it into a concrete representation. This step sets the foundation for the subsequent stages of the activity.

Creating visual connections:

Encircle the chosen abstract feeling word and draw lines radiating outward from it. These lines act as pathways to connect the abstract word with more tangible and sensory experiences. The visual representation helps you to make explicit connections between the abstract feeling and its concrete manifestations.

Concretizing the feeling:

Along each line, write words or phrases that concretize the chosen feeling. Focus on sensory details and appeal to the five senses—sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell. By using specific and descriptive language, you can evoke a sensory experience for yourself, making the emotions more tangible and relatable.

Crafting individual poem:

Demonstrate the process of transforming abstract feelings into vivid imagery by crafting a free verse poem using the words and phrases generated in the previous step. Incorporate sensory details and engage the

senses, providing a more immersive experience of the emotion being conveyed.

Sharing and reflection:

You can share your poem if you feel you would like to, with your peers, if the environment created by them is safe. But if you do not dispose of such support at the moment, it may be helpful to stand in front of the mirror and read the poem to yourself out loud, being your own audience. This way you work on your confidence and soft skills such as public speaking: silly as it may sound, your brain does not distinguish the difference between emotions caused by real life events and stress, and events that only take place in our imagination.

Reflect on the power of concrete language in conveying emotions, and on how the exercise influenced your understanding of your own feelings.

2. Emulation poetry:

Poetry might seem intimidating at first, but it doesn't have to be! Emulation is a fantastic technique that can inspire you to create impactful and therapeutic poetry. Here, we will guide you through the approach of emulation, which involves drawing inspiration from existing works without copying them directly. By following these steps, you can unlock your creativity and compose unique and meaningful poems.

Selecting relatable poems:

Begin by choosing poems that resonate with you on a personal level. Look for relatable works, such as slam poetry or rap songs, that capture your attention and evoke emotions. These poems will serve as a starting point for your emulation process, providing a foundation to build upon.

Introducing the concept of emulation:

Understand that emulation is about finding inspiration from existing works without copying them word for word. It's like using them as a springboard to create something new and personal. By embracing the essence and style of the original piece, you can infuse your own creativity and experiences, resulting in a poem that reflects your unique voice.

Modeling the emulation process:

To understand how emulation works, con-

sider selecting specific aspects of the poem that resonate with you. It could be the rhythm, the tone, the vivid descriptions, or the emotional impact. By identifying these elements, you can begin to incorporate them into your own work while adding your personal touch. This process allows you to retain what captivated you about the original poem while expressing yourself authentically.

Exploring different poems and authors:

Don't limit yourself to a single poem or author. Emulation provides an opportunity to explore various poems and authors, allowing you to discover different styles, themes, and voices. By broadening your exposure, you can gain a deeper understanding of poetic techniques and find inspiration from a diverse range of sources. Emulation serves as a catalyst for your own unique compositions, enabling you to explore your creativity in new and exciting ways. It is a wonderful approach that makes the process of creating poetry less intimidating. By selecting relatable poems and understanding the concept of emulation, you can draw inspiration without copying directly. Through this process, you'll learn to infuse your own creativity and experiences, resulting in powerful and healing poems that reflect your unique voice. Don't be afraid to explore different poems and authors, as this will broaden your horizons and provide a rich source of inspiration. Embrace the joy of emulation, and let it guide you on your poetic journey.

3. Conflicting voice poetry:

When faced with trauma, it is common for conflicting thoughts and emotions to arise within individuals as they try to make sense of their experiences. Conflicting voice poetry provides a creative outlet to express these contrasting narratives and gain a deeper understanding of internal conflicts. By following the steps detailed below, you can delve into the complexities of your emotions and thoughts, fostering self-reflection and personal growth.

Choosing a topic:

Begin by selecting a topic that evokes conflicting emotions or confusion within you. It could be a personal experience, a societal issue, or an abstract concept. The key is to choose something that stirs up contrasting thoughts and feelings, as this will fuel the exploration of conflicting voices in your poetry.

Creating a three-column table:

Next, create a table with three columns. Label the left and right columns with opposing perspectives or voices, and name the middle column “both.” This table will serve as a visual tool to organize your conflicting thoughts and help you develop your poem.

The process:

Start by describing one side of yourself or an emotion related to the chosen topic. Write

a brief statement or sentence in one of the columns, expressing the perspective or emotion you want to explore. For example, if your topic is “love,” one side could be “romantic love” or “desire.”

Completing the Tables:

Continue filling out the table by exploring conflicting voices and perspectives on your chosen topic. In the left column, express one viewpoint or emotion (e.g., “romantic love”). In the right column, provide another perspective or emotion that opposes the first one (e.g., “possessive love”). In the middle column, identify aspects that resonate with both perspectives or emotions, highlighting the common ground (e.g., “nature, human nature, relationship”).

4. Exploring conflicting voices:

The beauty of conflicting voice poetry lies in the freedom to explore any subject that sparks conflicting thoughts or emotions within you. Whether it's societal issues like justice and inequality, personal dilemmas such as identity and self-worth, or abstract concepts like hope and despair, the tables can accommodate a wide range of topics. Feel free to experiment and delve into the complexities of your internal conflicts, embracing the opportunity for self-discovery and growth.

Conflicting voice poetry offers a powerful means of exploring the internal conflicts that arise from trauma and other life experiences. By choosing a topic that elicits conflicting emotions, creating a three-column table, and filling it out with opposing perspectives and common ground, you can develop a deeper understanding of your conflicting voices. This creative process allows you to express your thoughts and emotions in a structured and reflective manner, promoting self-awareness and personal growth. Remember that the possibilities for exploration are endless, and you can apply this technique to any subject that evokes conflicting thoughts or emotions within you. Embrace the journey of conflicting voice poetry and allow it to guide you toward a greater understanding of yourself.

By incorporating these poetry activities into your healing process, you can create your own space for healing, self-expression, and resilience. It is essential to remember that these exercises can benefit and nurture your own well-being. As you embark on this journey of healing through poetry, you become empowered to find solace and meaning in your own experiences, fostering growth and resilience for years to come.

4. Tool 2: I will survive

The title of this exercise comes from an all-time favorite song for healing broken hearts (one of the possible trauma sources): “I will survive” by Gloria Gaynor (click here for some survival inspiration). The exercise itself is an empowering creative writing drill that harnesses the healing potential of both music and personal expression. In this exercise, you will have the opportunity to use your favorite songs as a tool for healing from trauma. By rewriting these songs and infusing them with your own emotions and experiences, you can embark on a transformative journey of self-discovery and healing.

To benefit from this exercise, you don't need to know music theory, nor play any instruments. Your creativity is sufficient! But first, a little bit of theoretical background:

The power of written text and voiced expression:

Expressing your thoughts and feelings through written text can be a powerful way to access and process emotions, memories, and trauma. When you write, you give voice to your innermost thoughts and experiences. Writing allows you to explore and make sense of your emotions in a safe and private space. But the power doesn't stop there. When you voice your written words,

you raise the emotions to a new level. Speaking them out loud adds depth and intensity to your healing process, helping you release pent-up emotions and find catharsis.

The connection between music and emotion:

Music has a remarkable ability to evoke deep emotions and memories. Certain songs can transport us back in time, triggering a range of feelings associated with our past experiences. By understanding this connection, you can harness the therapeutic potential of music to express and heal from your trauma. When you combine the emotional impact of music with the power of your own words, you create a unique pathway for healing and self-expression.

The exercise:

1

1. Choose your favorite song:

Select a song that holds personal significance for you. It could be a song that reminds you of a specific time in your life, or one that resonates with your emotions related to your trauma. Listen to the song multiple times, allowing its lyrics, melody, and overall mood to sink in.

To give you an example for the sake of this explanation, we chose a song named... you guessed it! It's “I will survive”. Here's the original lyrics:

Versuri originale	Versuri traduse
At first, I was afraid, I was petrified Kept thinking I could never live without you by my side But then I spent so many nights thinking how you did me wrong And I grew strong And I learned how to get along And so you're back From outer space I just walked in to find you here with that sad look upon your face I should have changed that stupid lock, I should have made you leave your key If I'd known for just one second, you'd be back to bother me Go on now, go, walk out the door Just turn around now 'Cause you're not welcome anymore Weren't you the one who tried to break me with goodbye? You think I'd crumble? You think I'd lay down and die? Oh no, not I, I will survive Oh, as long as I know how to love, I know I'll stay alive I've got all my life to live And I've got all my love to give and I'll survive I will survive, hey, hey It took all the strength I had not to fall apart Kept trying hard to mend the pieces of my broken heart And I spent oh-so many nights just feeling sorry for myself I used to cry But now I hold my head up high And you see me with somebody new I'm not that chained-up little person still in love with you And so you felt like dropping in and just expect me to be free Well, now I'm saving all my love for someone who's loving me Go on now, go, walk out the door Just turn around now 'Cause you're not welcome anymore Weren't you the one who tried to break me with goodbye? You think I'd crumble? You think I'd lay down and die? Oh no, not I, I will survive Oh, as long as I know how to love, I know I'll stay alive	La început, mi-a fost frică, am fost împietrită Mă tot gândeam că nu aş putea trăi fără tine lângă mine Dar apoi mi-am petrecut câteva nopţi gândindu-mă cum m-ai nedreptăţit Şi am devenit puternică Şi am învăţat cum să mă descurc Şi aşa te-ai întors Din spaţiul cosmic Toamna am intrat şi te-am găsit aici cu privirea aia tristă pe faţă Ar fi trebuit să schimb încuietorea aia stupidă, ar fi trebuit să te pun să îţi iei cheia Dacă aş fi ştiut măcar pentru o secundă că te-ai fi întors să mă deranjezi Du-te acum, du-te, ieşi pe uşă Întoarce-te acum Pentru că nu mai eşti binevenit Nu tu ai fost cel care ai înecat să mă rănească cu "te revedere?" Crezi că m-as prăbuşi? Crezi că m-as întinde şi aş muri? Oh, nu, eu, eu, eu voi supravieţui Oh, atâta timp cât ştiu să iubesc, ştiu că voi rămâne în viaţă Am toată viaţa mea de trăit Voi supravieţui, hei, hei, hei A fost revole de toată puterea pe care o aveam ca să nu mă prăbuşesc Am continuat să lucr: din răguşituri să repar buchi din inimă mea frântă Şi mi-am petrecut câteva nopţi simţind milă faţă de mine Obişnuam să plâng Dar acum în tinutul sus Şi mă vezi cu cineva nou Nu sunt acea persoană mică şi îndurată care încă te iubeste Aşa că te-ai simţi că şi cum ai vrea să vii şi să te aştepţi ca eu să fiu liberă Ei bine, acum îmi păstrez toată dragostea pentru cineva care mă iubeste Du-te acum, du-te, ieşi pe uşă Întoarce-te acum Pentru că nu mai eşti binevenit Nu tu ai fost cel care ai înecat să mă despartă cu un adio? Crezi că m-as prăbuşi? Crezi că m-as întinde şi aş muri? Oh, nu, eu, eu, eu voi supravieţui Oh, atâta timp cât ştiu să iubesc, ştiu că voi rămâne în viaţă Am toată viaţa mea de trăit Şi am toată dragostea mea de oferit şi voi supravieţui Voi supravieţui.

Original lyrics

At first, I was afraid, I was petrified
Kept thinking I could never live without
you by my side
But then I spent so many nights thinking
how you did me wrong
And I grew strong
And I learned how to get along
And so you're back
From outer space
I just walked in to find you here with that
sad look upon your face
I should have changed that stupid lock, I
should have made you leave your key
If I'd known for just one second, you'd be
back to bother me
Go on now, go, walk out the door
Just turn around now
'Cause you're not welcome anymore
Weren't you the one who tried to hurt
me with goodbye?
You think I'd crumble?
You think I'd lay down and die?
Oh no, not I, I will survive
Oh, as long as I know how to love, I
know I'll stay alive
I've got all my life to live
And I've got all my love to give and I'll
survive
I will survive, hey, hey
It took all the strength I had not to fall
apart
Kept trying hard to mend the pieces of
my broken heart

And I spent oh-so many nights just feeling sorry
for myself
I used to cry
But now I hold my head up high
And you see me with somebody new
I'm not that chained-up little person still in love
with you
And so you felt like dropping in and just expect
me to be free
Well, now I'm saving all my lovin' for someone
who's loving me
Go on now, go, walk out the door
Just turn around now
'Cause you're not welcome anymore
Weren't you the one who tried to break me with
goodbye?
You think I'd crumble?
You think I'd lay down and die?
Oh no, not I, I will survive
Oh, as long as I know how to love, I know I'll stay
alive
I've got all my life to live
And I've got all my love to give and I'll survive
I will survive

2

Reflect on your emotions:

Take a moment to reflect on the emotions that the song evokes within you. Consider how these emotions connect to your trauma and the experiences you went through. Journal about your thoughts and feelings, exploring the impact the song has on your healing journey.

So, what kind of emotional response might this song trigger? It can be a variety of things, including:

- **Empowerment:** The song's lyrics and upbeat melody can make you feel empowered, giving you a sense of strength and courage to overcome challenges.
- **Resilience:** The lyrics talk about bouncing back and not letting difficulties bring you down. This can evoke feelings of resilience, reminding you that you have the ability to endure and thrive.
- **Determination:** The song's message of perseverance can ignite a sense of determination within you. It encourages you to keep going and not give up, no matter what obstacles you face.
- **Confidence:** As you listen to the song's uplifting lyrics, you may feel a surge of confidence and self-assurance. It re-

minds you of your worth and capabilities.

- **Liberation:** "I Will Survive" can also evoke a sense of liberation and freedom. It encourages you to break free from negativity or past traumas and embrace a brighter future.
- **Joy:** The catchy rhythm and infectious energy of the song can fill you with a sense of joy and celebration. It may uplift your spirits and bring a smile to your face.

Remember that everyone's emotional response to a song can vary, as we all have unique experiences and associations. It's important to listen to songs that resonate with you personally and evoke positive emotions that contribute to your healing and well-being.

3

Rewrite the lyrics:

Using the original song lyrics as a foundation, rewrite the lyrics to reflect your own emotions and experiences. Infuse the words with the specific details and feelings related to your childhood trauma. Don't be afraid to be honest, raw, and vulnerable in your writing. This is your opportunity to reclaim your narrative and express yourself authentically.

Example:

Imagine you are Lucy, a 17 year old girl who just recently split up with her boyfriend. How would you rewrite the "I will survive" song lyrics so it would reflect your traumatic (as a breakup might be) experience? It might go something like this:

*At first, I was afraid, I was petrified,
Thinking I couldn't live without you by my side.
But then I spent so many nights thinking it through,
And I grew strong, realized I didn't need you.*

*And now I'm back, from the breakup,
Got my own space, I've had enough.
I will survive, oh, as long as I know how to love,
I know I'll stay alive, I've got all my life to*

*live,
I will survive, hey, hey.*

*He used to try to break me with his hurtful words,
But now I hold my head up high, I won't be hurt.
He tried to crush my spirit, make me feel so small,
But I've found my worth, and I'm standing tall.*

*And now I'm back, from the breakup,
Got my own space, I've had enough.
I will survive, oh, as long as I know how to love,
I know I'll stay alive, I've got all my life to live,
I will survive, hey, hey.*

*Oh yeah, now go,
Walk out the door,
Just turn around now,
'Cause you're not welcome anymore.
Weren't you the one who tried to break me with goodbye?
Did you think I'd crumble? Did you think I'd lay down and die?
Oh no, not I, I will survive,
Oh, as long as I know how to love, I know I'll stay alive.
I've got all my life to live,
I will survive, hey, hey.*

Note that not every word is changed, there's no need for that; nor does it have to rhyme. Only you know what you went through, which emotions you felt then (and you probably are feeling again right now as the memory comes back to you vividly), so only you can express them into a song. There's no right or wrong. It's highly recommended to let go of all expectations that might arise for the results of this exercise: we are working with your individual creativity, making art! Allow yourself to let go and see where the exercise gets you without prejudice.

4

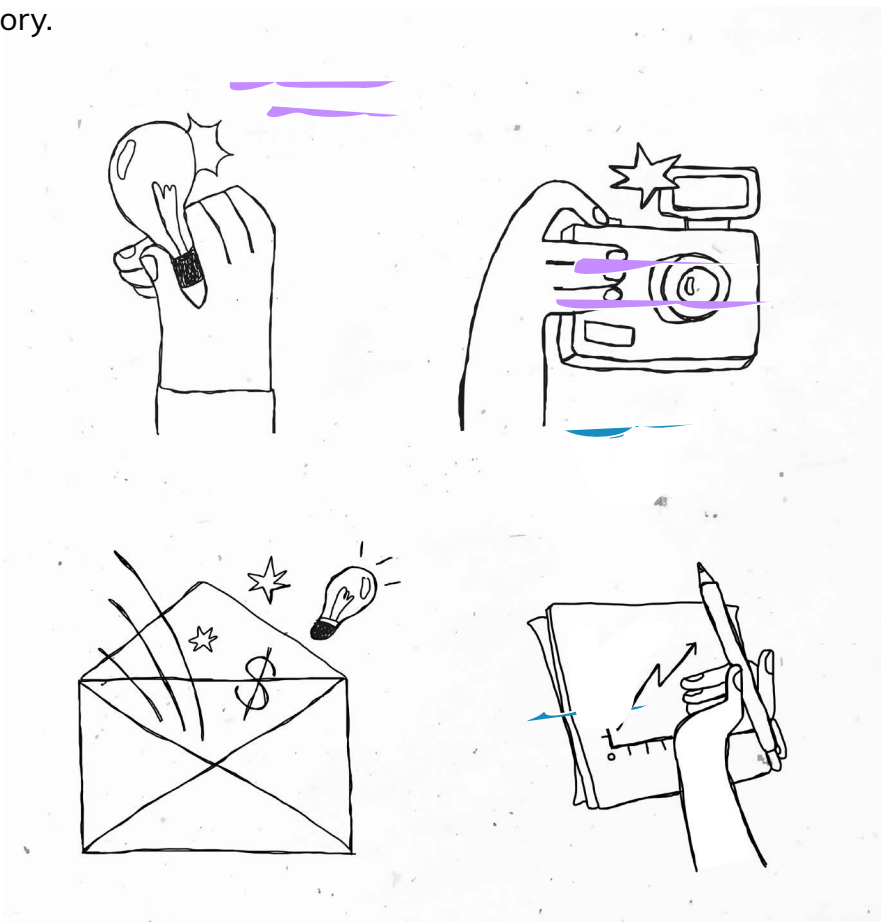
Voicing and sharing your rewritten song:

Once you have rewritten the lyrics, take the courageous step of voicing and sharing your song. Find a safe and supportive space where you feel comfortable sharing your creation. You can choose to share it with a trusted friend, a supportive community, or even record yourself singing it privately. The act of voicing your emotions through your rewritten song will amplify their impact and facilitate a deeper sense of release and healing.

Remember to prioritize self-care throughout this exercise. Take breaks when needed, seek support from trusted individuals, and be gentle with yourself as you navigate your healing journey.

By rewriting your favorite songs and infusing them with your own emotions and experiences, you have taken a significant step towards healing and self-discovery. The therapeutic benefits of expressing your emotions through written and voiced words are immense, and this exercise opens up a unique and empowering avenue for your healing process. Continue exploring this exercise with different songs, allowing your emotions and experiences to guide you. Through your rewritten songs, you can reclaim your voice,

find solace, and transform your trauma into resilience and strength. Remember, you are not alone on this journey, and there is support available to you. Keep writing, keep voicing, and keep embracing the healing power of your own voice and story.



Reconquering internal integrity

4

1. What does internal integrity mean?
 1. Integrity vs trauma
 1. Tool 1: Metaphor construction
 1. Part 1: Using metaphors to work with a specific experience
 1. Part 2: Using metaphors to dream your Future Self
 1. Tool 2: Repurposing words to repurpose experiences

1. What does internal integrity mean?

Internal integrity refers to an individual's sense of coherence and consistency in their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. It encompasses a range of qualities, such as honesty, authenticity, and moral fortitude. When someone has a strong sense of internal integrity, they generally feel good about themselves, have a clear understanding of their values and beliefs, and act in accordance with those principles.

Having a strong sense of internal integrity can help individuals make better decisions, build stronger relationships, and navigate life's challenges more effectively. It can also contribute to a sense of inner peace and contentment.

On the other hand, when someone lacks internal integrity, they may experience inner turmoil and conflict. They may struggle to make decisions, experience cognitive dissonance, and have difficulty trusting themselves or others. Additionally, a lack of internal integrity can make it difficult to maintain healthy relationships and achieve personal goals.

It is an essential component of psychological well-being and a key factor in leading a fulfilling life.

So, if there is an internal integrity, what about the external one? Are there any differences?

Internal integrity and external integrity are two related but distinct concepts.

Internal integrity refers to an individual's sense of coherence and consistency in their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. It relates to an individual's personal values, morals, and ethics and how well they are able to align their actions with these values. It is essentially about being true to oneself.

On the other hand, external integrity refers to an individual's adherence to external rules, norms, and laws. It is about being honest, trustworthy, and reliable in one's dealings with others, and it is a key aspect of building and maintaining relationships.

While internal integrity is about being true to oneself, external integrity is about being accountable to others. External integrity involves behaving in a way that is consistent with social norms and expectations, and it is an essential component of functioning effectively in society.

Both internal and external integrity are im-

portant for leading a meaningful and fulfilling life. An individual with strong internal integrity is likely to have a greater sense of purpose and self-worth, while someone with strong external integrity is more likely to be respected and trusted by others. Ultimately, cultivating both internal and external integrity can help individuals live more authentic, fulfilling, and harmonious lives.



2. Integrity vs trauma

Trauma can have a profound impact on the internal integrity of young people. Their sense of safety and security can be shattered, which can lead to a variety of negative consequences. Some potential effects of trauma on young people's internal integrity include:

Psychological distress

Trauma can cause intense psychological distress, such as anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). These conditions can interfere with a young person's ability to function in their daily life and can impact their relationships with others.

Changes in behavior

Young people with difficult experiences might act out or engage in risky behaviors. They may become withdrawn, avoid social situations, or become excessively aggressive.

Physical health problems

Trauma can also have negative physical health effects, such as headaches, stomachaches, and other somatic symptoms.

Altered perception of the world

People who experience trauma may develop a negative perception of the world around them. They may lose trust in others, feel constantly threatened, or develop a sense of hopelessness.

Difficulty forming relationships

Trauma can make it challenging for young people to form close relationships with others. They may struggle with attachment issues, trust issues, and emotional regulation.

It is in the process of reclaiming our integrity we uncover our true selves. We discover hidden strengths, untapped passions, and a profound empathy for others who have faced similar challenges. Through our own healing, we become catalysts for change, using our experiences to uplift and empower those around us.

Regaining our integrity is not about erasing the scars or pretending the trauma never happened. It is about embracing our whole selves, scars and all, and finding meaning in the midst of adversity. It is about acknowledging the lessons we've learned, the resilience we've developed, and the compassion that has blossomed within us.

So, if you have experienced trauma, know that you have the power to reclaim your integrity. Embrace your journey of healing with courage and grace. Trust in your innate ability to overcome and rebuild. And always remember that you are never alone on this path.



Tool 1: Metaphor construction

Metaphors can be incredibly powerful tools for understanding ourselves better because they allow us to express complex emotions, experiences, and thoughts in a more accessible and relatable way. According to Amendola (1998), “Metaphor provides an altered frame of reference that allows the client to entertain a novel experience without physiological hyper-arousal and attending to negative affect.” Here’s a short-animated video from Ted Ed, further describing the amazing metaphor world: [click](#)



Apart from all the great things, metaphors bring us, they also can help us gain deeper insights into ourselves. Here’s how:

Personal reflection

They provide a bridge between the abstract and the concrete. By comparing something abstract or intangible to something familiar and tangible, metaphors help us grasp the essence of our inner experiences. For example, describing a heartache as a “broken glass” or “shattered mirror” gives us a visual

representation of the pain and fragility we feel, making it easier to understand and process.

Emotional awareness

They have the ability to capture the nuances and complexities of our emotions. They can convey layers of meaning and subtleties that may be difficult to express directly. For instance, saying “my heart is a stormy sea” suggests not only turmoil but also the unpredictable nature and depth of our emotions. Metaphors allow us to delve into the emotional landscape within us and gain a clearer understanding of our inner world.

Self-discovery

Metaphors can uncover hidden aspects of our identity and help us explore different facets of ourselves. They offer fresh perspectives and invite us to look beyond our usual ways of thinking. When we use metaphors to describe ourselves, we may discover new dimensions, strengths, or vulnerabilities that were previously unrecognized. By seeing ourselves through different metaphoric lenses, we can gain deeper insights into who we are and what shapes our experiences.

Empathy and connection

They create a shared language that promotes empathy and understanding. When we use metaphors to communicate our feelings

and experiences, others can relate on a deeper level. Metaphors evoke imagery and emotions that resonate universally, fostering connection and a sense of belonging. Through metaphors, we can bridge the gap between our internal world and the external world, facilitating meaningful connections with others.

Problem-solving and growth

They can assist us in navigating challenges and finding solutions. By framing a problem or obstacle in a metaphorical context, we can gain a fresh perspective and consider alternative approaches. Metaphors allow us to view situations from different angles, opening up new possibilities for growth and transformation. They spark creativity and innovation, enabling us to reframe our experiences and find empowering meanings within them.

Ok, ready to dive into the actual exercise? We divided it into 2 parts: the first one shows how to harness the benefits of metaphors working with a difficult experience or trauma; The second one is a mini guide to transforming yourself into someone you would like to become through metaphorical language.

Amendolia, R. (1998). A Narrative Constructivist Perspective of Treatment of PTSD with Ericksonian Hypnosis and EMDR. Academia Americana de Expertos en Estrés Traumático, Inc.

4. Part 1: Using metaphors to work with a specific experience

Welcome to the transformative world of metaphors, where words become bridges that guide us on a healing journey. As we said before, metaphors have the power to illuminate our experiences, giving us new perspectives and a language to express our emotions. In this creative writing exercise, we will explore the therapeutic potential of metaphors in healing from trauma. Let your imagination soar as we embark on this healing adventure together.

Instructions:

Find a quiet and comfortable space where you can focus and reflect. Grab a pen and paper, or open a blank document on your computer. Allow yourself to be fully present in this moment, embracing the opportunity to explore and heal.

1: Reflecting on your trauma

Close your eyes and take a deep breath. Allow yourself to recall a specific traumatic event or experience from your past. Take your time; it's important to approach this exercise at your own pace. Remember that you are in control of your emotions, and it's okay to pause or stop if you feel overwhelmed. If you do, please ground yourself using any of our emergency grounding exercises

described at the beginning of this book, or any other one of your choice.

Write a description of the trauma you experienced. Use simple and concise language to capture the essence of what happened. Focus on the emotions, sensations, and thoughts that arise as you revisit this event. Be gentle with yourself as you delve into these memories, knowing that healing begins with acknowledging and understanding your pain.

Hint: it might be helpful to start with an experience that does not trigger an emotional response in us, practice a little bit with something more neutral, and then dive into the deep waters of our consciousness.

2: Embracing metaphors

Now, let's introduce metaphors as a tool for healing. Imagine that your trauma is a landscape, and you are the explorer seeking to understand its contours and find solace within it. Consider the following questions:

1. What objects, elements, or forces in nature can symbolize your trauma?
 - Is it a raging storm, a turbulent ocean, or a dense forest?

- Does it resemble a broken bridge, a tangled knot, or a dark cave?

2. How does your trauma make you feel physically and emotionally?
 - Does it feel heavy like a boulder, constricting like a snake, or suffocating like quicksand?
 - Does it manifest as a wildfire, a thunderous roar, or a relentless rain?
3. What metaphors can you use to describe your journey towards healing?
 - Are you a resilient flower breaking through concrete, a soaring bird finding freedom, or a gentle stream flowing towards tranquility?

Take your time to brainstorm and write down a list of metaphors that resonate with your experience of trauma. Let your creativity flow and don't worry about judgment or perfection. This is your personal exploration, and your metaphors are unique to you.

3: Writing your healing metaphor

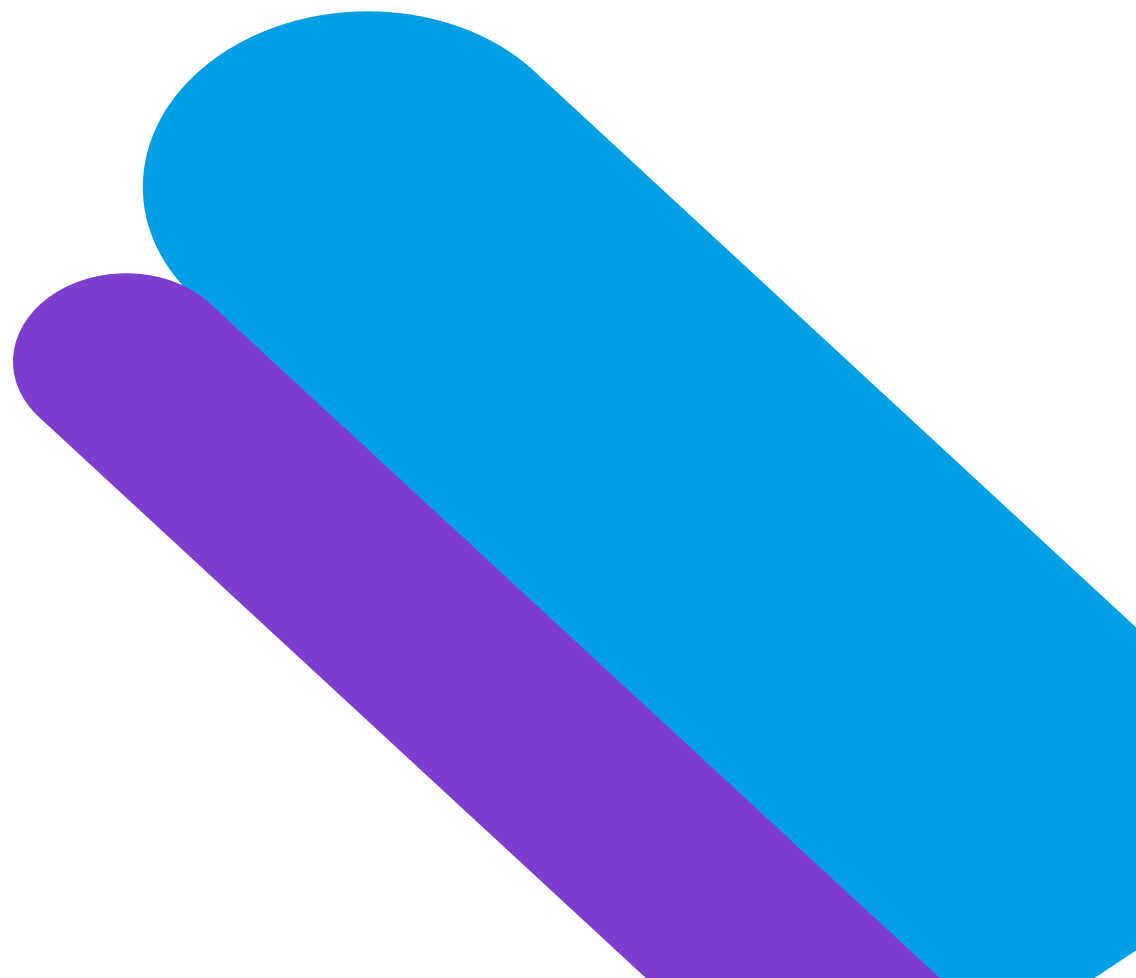
Choose one metaphor from your list that resonates the most with your journey towards healing. Dive deeper into this metaphor, expanding upon it to create a poem, a short story, or a personal reflection. Use vivid language and imagery to bring your meta-

phor to life. Allow your emotions to guide your writing, expressing the pain, hope, and transformation that reside within you.

After the healing metaphor has been written, read it out loud a couple of times. This will create a relevant “muscle memory” which will make this metaphor more available every time you recall it. This means that eventually you will be able to consciously contrast the traumatic memory with its new version and choose the one that is the most supportive to your growth at the moment.

Remember, healing takes time, and this exercise is just the beginning of your journey. You have the power to rewrite your narrative and find strength in your metaphors.

As you conclude this creative writing exercise, take a moment to reflect on your experience. Metaphors have the ability to unveil hidden truths, provide a language for healing, and connect us to others who may share similar experiences. Continue exploring metaphors in your writing, allowing them to be companions on your healing path. Embrace the transformative power of words and trust in the resilience of your spirit.



5. Part 2: Using metaphors to dream your Future Self

Metaphors have a magical way of turning our thoughts and experiences into vivid pictures, helping us see ourselves in new ways. They can be powerful tools in transforming difficult experiences and envisioning the person we aspire to become. In this exploration of metaphors, we will discover how they can help us dream a version of ourselves that we would like to embrace. Let's embark on this journey of growth and transformation together.

1. Discovering your metaphorical vision

Think about the qualities and characteristics you admire in others or dream of possessing yourself. Close your eyes and imagine your ideal self. What attributes would you like to cultivate? What kind of person do you aspire to be?

Now, consider objects, animals, or forces in nature that symbolize these qualities. For example:

- If you desire strength and resilience, you might envision yourself as a towering oak tree, firmly rooted and standing tall in the face of challenges.
- If you seek courage and fearlessness, you might imagine yourself as a soaring ea-

gle, gliding through the vast open sky without hesitation.

- If you long for compassion and kindness, you could see yourself as a gentle river, nourishing and supporting all those who cross your path.

Allow your imagination to run free, exploring different metaphors that resonate with your vision of the person you want to become. Write them down, embracing the possibilities and potential they hold.

2. Embracing metaphors to envision your Future Self

Choose one metaphor that resonates deeply with you and reflects the qualities and characteristics you wish to embody. Write a detailed description of this metaphorical version of yourself. Use simple language to paint a picture of your future self, capturing the essence of who you want to be.

Describe how this metaphorical version of yourself interacts with the world around you:

- How do you navigate challenges and setbacks?
- How do you approach relationships and connections with others?
- How do you bring your desired qualities into your daily life?

Allow your emotions to guide your writing, expressing the positive transformations you envision for yourself. Embrace the growth and personal development that accompanies this metaphorical journey.

3. Integrating your metaphorical vision into your life

Reflect on the actions, habits, and mindset that align with the metaphorical version of yourself. How can you incorporate these qualities into your daily life?

Create a list of small, achievable steps that will bring you closer to embodying your metaphorical vision. For example:

- If you see yourself as a compassionate river, make a commitment to perform one act of kindness each day.
- If you envision yourself as a resilient oak tree, practice self-care and develop strategies to cope with challenges.

Remember, change takes time, and transformation is a journey. Be patient with yourself as you navigate this process of growth and self-discovery.

4. Manifesting your metaphorical vision

Visualize yourself living as your metaphorical version. Use what we have already learned, write a short story, a poem, a song or a letter to yourself, depicting your life as the person you aspire to become. Use evocative language and imagery to bring your vision to life.

Celebrate your progress and achievements along the way. Embrace each small step forward, knowing that each action aligns you more closely with the person you want to be.

Metaphors have the power to transform our experiences, allowing us to dream of the person we wish to become. By embracing metaphors, we can envision our future selves with clarity and purpose. Remember that your dreams are within reach, and with determination and resilience, you can manifest the qualities and characteristics you desire. Embrace the journey of growth and transformation, and trust in the power of metaphors to guide you towards the person you aspire to be. Take care of yourself and know that you are not alone. Your story matters.



6. Tool 2: Repurposing words to repurpose experiences

The purpose of this exercise is creating a new neural path in the brain, by taking a word and looking for another meaning of what it already has. A meaning significant to us. This will help create a habit of thinking critically about what an experience really means to me. Thus, we can create a new meaning to the difficult things that have happened to us, and, with time, we will be able to do it with more and more ease.

Creating new neural paths in healing from trauma is crucial for our well-being and recovery. It helps our brains process and make sense of difficult experiences, paving the way for healing and growth, helping us to:

Break free from negative patterns

Trauma can create negative thought patterns and behaviors that keep us stuck in pain and distress. By creating new neural paths, we can break free from these patterns and find healthier ways of coping and responding to triggers.

Rewire the brain

Trauma affects the brain's structure and functioning. Creating new neural paths allows us to rewire our brains by forming different connections and pathways. This rewiring helps us process and integrate the trauma, reducing its impact on our daily lives.

Develop resilience

Building new neural paths strengthens our resilience. It enables us to adapt to challenges, bounce back from adversity, and maintain emotional well-being. By forming positive connections in our brains, we cultivate the ability to navigate difficult experiences with greater strength and resilience.

Regain control

Trauma can make us feel powerless and out of control. Creating new neural paths empowers us to regain control over our lives. It allows us to develop a greater understanding of ourselves, our emotions, and our triggers, giving us the tools to respond in healthier and more empowered ways.

Encourage healing and growth

Creating new neural paths is a vital part of the healing process. It supports the brain's natural capacity for growth and adaptation. By forming new connections, we create space for healing, personal transformation, and the possibility of a brighter future.

Writing exercise: repurposing words to transform trauma

We want to teach you a very powerful, yet easy to learn and put to practice, tool to help you heal your difficult experiences. It employs your natural creativity and enhances your brain's ability to learn, combining those two traits to boost your well-being.

By giving new meanings to the words we associate with our trauma, we can reclaim our narratives, redefine our experiences, and foster healing. Through creative expression, we will transform the language of pain into a source of empowerment and growth.

Instructions:

1. Select trauma-associated words:

Choose a few words or phrases that are closely related to your traumatic experiences. These could be specific events, emotions, or triggers that hold negative connotations. It is important that you choose those words or phrases yourself; Only this way, they will hold meaning to you. It's OK to get inspired by songs, poetry, Instagram or Facebook posts or even supermarket ads - this is your process, and you decide what matters.

2. Explore alternative meanings:

Begin by brainstorming alternative meanings or interpretations for each selected word. Consider positive or neutral associations that resonate with your personal journey. Think about how these words can be reframed to reflect your healing and growth.

3. Write repurposed definitions:

Write down the repurposed definitions for each word. Be creative and use vivid language to capture the transformation. Imagine how these words can take on new life and become symbols of resilience, hope, and self-empowerment.

4. Create poetic expressions:

Use the repurposed words and their definitions as inspiration to write poems or short

prose pieces. Let your imagination flow freely as you explore the emotions, insights, and experiences connected to these words. Use simple language and heartfelt expressions to convey your journey.

Feeling a bit lost? Have a look at the following examples:

Word: Failure

Negative connotation: Failure - a heavy burden of disappointment and defeat, a mark of inadequacy.

Positive association: Growth, resilience, learning from setbacks.

Redefinition: Failure - a stepping stone on the path of growth, an opportunity to learn, adapt, and persevere.

Example usage:

When I encounter failure, it no longer defines my worth or diminishes my spirit. Instead, it becomes a catalyst for growth. Each stumble or setback becomes an invitation to learn and develop my resilience. Failure now signifies my courage to embrace challenges and my determination to rise stronger than before.

Poetic expression:

*In the depths of failure, I find my wings,
Unfurling, fluttering, ready to take flight.
No longer a weight that holds me down,
It becomes my compass, guiding me towards
light.*

Word: Vulnerable

Negative connotation: Vulnerable - a state of weakness, helplessness, and exposure to harm.

Positive association: Authenticity, connection, strength through openness.

Redefinition: Vulnerable - a brave act of embracing authenticity, a gateway to deep connections and personal growth.

Example usage:

Rather than fearing vulnerability, I choose to honor it as a profound act of courage. By allowing myself to be vulnerable, I open the doors to genuine connections and meaningful relationships. It is through vulnerability that I find my strength, as it empowers me to be true to myself and invite others into my world.

Poetic expression:

*In vulnerability's embrace, I find rebirth,
Unravelling layers of a fragmented self.
My tender chrysalis of growth,
Guiding me towards connections, heart-to-heart.*

Word: Pain

Negative connotation: Pain - anguish, suffering, a reminder of past wounds and trauma.

Positive association: Resilience, transformation, a catalyst for inner strength.

Redefinition: Pain - a testament to my resilience, a catalyst for growth and transformation.

Example usage:

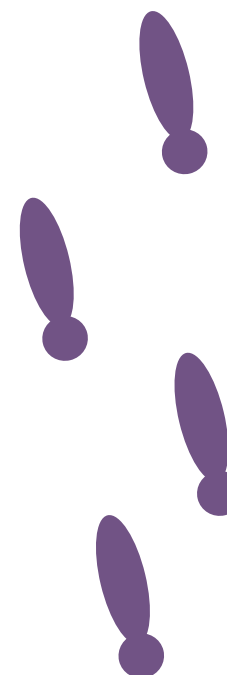
Though pain has marked my journey, it does not define me. Instead, it stands as a testament to my strength and ability to overcome. Each experience of pain becomes an opportunity for growth, for rising above and discovering the depths of my resilience. Through pain, I find the seeds of transformation that blossom into the person I am becoming.

Poetic expression:

*In the valleys of pain, I uncover treasures,
Hidden beneath the scars of yesteryears.
Each ache, a testament to my resilience,*

For in healing, I find strength that perseveres.

By repurposing words associated with our trauma, we can reclaim our narratives and transform our experiences. Through creative writing, we give new meaning and power to these words, finding empowerment, healing, and growth. This exercise allows us to explore alternative perspectives, fostering a sense of self-discovery and resilience. As we repurpose these words, we rewrite our stories, transforming them into testaments of strength and hope.



Reaching for forgotten possibilities

5

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1. How memories are formed

At times, we may experience moments when memories seem to slip away, becoming difficult to recall. Forgetting memories is a natural part of our brain's functioning, but it can also be influenced by various factors, including trauma. If that's the case, returning to those memories often implies reliving them again. This can be painful, as our brain does not know that this particular experience is behind us already and, bathed in certain emotions, lives the past experience as if it would be happening in the present moment. The good thing is there are techniques to regulate those emotions (see the Essential Tools chapter of this book).

How memories are formed:

To understand the reasons behind forgetting memories, first we need to understand how memory and remembering things work. When we experience something, our brain processes the information and encodes it into memory. This process involves different parts of the brain working together, such as the hippocampus, which plays a vital role in memory formation. If you wish to deepen the subject, here's a short video on how memories are made: [click](#).

There are different types of memory that our brain utilizes:

- **Sensory memory:** This is the initial stage where our senses capture information briefly.
- **Short-term memory:** Also known as working memory, this holds information temporarily for immediate use.
- **Long-term memory:** This is where information is stored for an extended period, allowing us to retrieve it later.

1. Forgetting as a normal process:

Forgetting is a natural process that occurs for various reasons. Our brain filters and discards information that it deems less relevant or unnecessary. This selective forgetting helps us focus on what's important and prevents our memory from becoming overwhelmed with every detail of our lives.

2 Factors affecting memory retrieval:

The retrieval of memories can be influenced by several factors:

- **Interference:** When new information overlaps or competes with existing memories, it can make retrieval more challenging.
- **Encoding failure:** If information was not adequately encoded during the initial processing stage, it may be difficult to retrieve later.
- **Time and decay:** Memories that are not

accessed or reinforced over time can fade and become more challenging to recall.

3. Trauma and memory:

Traumatic experiences can impact how our brain stores and retrieves memories. When faced with intense stress or trauma, our brain's focus shifts to survival, affecting memory consolidation. The fragmented nature of traumatic memories can lead to gaps, distortions, or even complete amnesia surrounding the traumatic event.

4. Repression and dissociation:

In response to overwhelming trauma, individuals may employ defense mechanisms such as repression and dissociation. Repression involves pushing distressing memories into the unconscious mind, making them difficult to access voluntarily. Dissociation, on the other hand, creates a detachment from the traumatic event, often resulting in a fragmented memory experience.

5-Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD):

PTSD is a condition that can occur after experiencing or witnessing a traumatic event. One of its characteristic symptoms is intrusive memories, where fragments of the traumatic event intrude into everyday life. However, some individuals may also experience memory gaps or a sense of detachment from the traumatic event.

6. Emotional memory:

Emotions play a significant role in memory formation and retrieval. Traumatic experiences are often accompanied by intense emotions, which can enhance or impair memory. Strong emotions can make memories more vivid and enduring, while extreme stress can hinder memory encoding and consolidation.

7. Memory recovery:

The recovery of forgotten memories, particularly traumatic ones, can be a complex process. Memories may resurface gradually, triggered by various cues or through therapeutic techniques guided by trained professionals. It is important to approach memory recovery with caution and seek support from qualified individuals experienced in trauma therapy.

Forgetting memories is a natural process influenced by various factors, including trauma ([click](#) to watch a short video on this subject). Our brain selectively stores and retrieves information, allowing us to focus on what is relevant. Traumatic experiences can impact memory formation and retrieval, leading to gaps or distortions. Defense mechanisms like repression and dissociation may further affect memory recall. Understanding the connection between trauma and memory

can help us approach memory recovery with care and seek appropriate professional guidance when needed. Remember that everyone's memory experiences are unique, and it is essential to prioritize well-being throughout the healing journey.



¿Cómo se forman los recuerdos y cómo los perdemos? - Catharine Young

2. Remembering forgotten memories

The process of recalling these lost memories can be complex and may vary from person to person. In this explanation, we will explore the factors involved in remembering forgotten memories and accessing repressed ones using simple language.

1. Creating a safe and supportive environment:

To remember forgotten memories, it is crucial to create a safe and supportive environment. This can be achieved by seeking help from a trained professional, such as a therapist or counselor. They can provide guidance and create a space where you feel comfortable and secure.

2. Trust and patience:

Remembering forgotten memories requires trust and patience. It is essential to trust yourself and the process. Be patient with yourself, as memories may resurface gradually, rather than all at once. Understand that the timing and pace of remembering are unique to each individual.

3. Emotional readiness:

Bringing back repressed memories can be an emotional process. It is important to be emotionally prepared and have coping mechanisms in place to navigate any distressing emotions that may arise.

A supportive network of friends, family, or professionals can be invaluable during this time. You can also take advantage of self-regulating exercises described at the beginning of this book.

4. Integration of fragmented memories:

Sometimes, forgotten memories may resurface in fragments or bits and pieces. It is essential to approach these fragments with openness and curiosity. Keeping a journal or engaging in expressive writing can help integrate these fragmented memories and make sense of them over time.

5. Respect individual limitations:

Not everyone may be able to access repressed memories, and that is okay. Each person's journey is unique, and memories may resurface when the mind feels ready to process them. It is important to respect your own limitations and not force the retrieval of memories if it feels overwhelming or distressing.

6. Self-care and well-being:

Throughout the process of remembering forgotten memories, prioritize self-care and well-being. Engage in activities that bring you joy, practice relaxation techniques, and maintain a healthy support system. Taking

breaks when needed and seeking professional help can contribute to a balanced approach.

7. Professional guidance:

Although this book is intended as a self-help guide, please always remember that working with a qualified therapist or counselor who specializes in trauma can greatly assist in accessing lost memories. They can use specific therapeutic techniques such as cognitive therapy, hypnosis, or EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing) to help facilitate the retrieval of repressed memories.

Remembering forgotten memories and accessing repressed ones can be a complex and individual process. It requires creating a safe environment, trust, patience, emotional readiness, and professional guidance. It is important to respect individual limitations and prioritize self-care throughout the journey. Remember that not everyone may be able to access repressed memories, and that's alright. Your well-being and personal growth should always remain the top priority.

3. Consciousness

Our consciousness refers to our awareness of our thoughts, emotions, and surroundings, and it plays a crucial role in shaping our actions and behaviors. Here's a short, animated video deepening this subject a little bit: [click](#)



El Origen de la Consciencia - Cómo las cosas inconscientes se

When we are not aware of certain thoughts, emotions, or behaviors, it can be challenging to work on them or change them. For example, if someone has unconscious biases, they may not even be aware that these biases exist and, therefore, cannot work on changing them. Similarly, if someone is not aware of their negative self-talk, they may struggle to change it and develop a more positive mindset.

However, it's important to note that our consciousness is not a fixed entity. We can expand our awareness and become more conscious of our thoughts, emotions, and behaviors through practices such as mindfulness, meditation, therapy, and self-reflection. By becoming more conscious of our

inner experiences, we can identify areas of growth and work on changing patterns that may be holding us back.

What happens with our memory and ability to recall past experiences when trauma comes into the picture?

Trauma can affect our memory in several ways, and the impact can vary depending on the individual's experience and the nature of the trauma. What can happen is:

Fragmentation of memory

Memories can become fragmented, with some aspects of the experience being vividly recalled while others are forgotten or repressed. This fragmentation can make it challenging to form a coherent narrative of the traumatic experience and can lead to confusion and distress.

Flashbacks

They are vivid and intense sensory experiences that can feel like reliving the traumatic event. These flashbacks can be triggered by various stimuli, including sights, sounds, smells, or other sensory experiences that were present during the traumatic event.

Dissociation

In some cases, trauma can cause us to dis-

sociate or detach from our experience, leading to a sense of being disconnected from our surroundings or even our own body. This dissociation can lead to gaps in memory or difficulty recalling specific details of the traumatic event.

Memory distortions

Those lead us to remember events differently from how they occurred. This can include exaggerating certain aspects of the experience, downplaying others, or even remembering events that did not happen.

Trauma can have a profound impact on our memory, and the effects can be long-lasting. It is important to seek support from a mental health professional if you are experiencing symptoms related to trauma, such as flashbacks, dissociation, or memory difficulties. Therapy can help you process and integrate your experiences and develop coping strategies to manage the impact of trauma on your life.

4. Bringing memories back

Remembering what we have forgotten can be a challenging process, especially if the memories have been repressed or forgotten due to trauma or other significant life events. But we can help to support the remembering process:

Use guided imagery

It involves visualizing a particular memory or experience in detail. This technique can help bring forgotten memories to the surface and provide a way to process them in a safe and controlled manner.

Keep a journal

Daily writing down your thoughts, feelings, and experiences can help bring forgotten memories to the surface. Keeping a journal can also provide a way to track your progress over time and identify patterns or triggers related to your forgotten memories.

Practice mindfulness

Being present and aware of your thoughts, feelings, and surroundings can help you tune into your inner experiences and identify any memories or emotions that may have been repressed or forgotten.

Seek out supportive relationships

Sharing your experiences with supportive and understanding individuals can help bring forgotten memories to the surface. Be-

ing able to talk about your experiences and emotions can provide a sense of validation and help you process your memories in a safe and supportive environment.

And last, but certainly not least:

Seek support from a mental health professional

A therapist or counselor can help guide you through the process of remembering and processing forgotten memories. They can provide a safe and supportive environment to explore your experiences and work through any emotions or challenges that may arise.

The above - mentioned tools can help bring the forgotten memories back, but what can we do once they are back with us again? An interesting way of working with them is to give another meaning to a traumatizing memory. It can be a helpful way to reframe the experience and find a sense of healing and growth. Here are some strategies that can help:

1. Reframe the narrative

Look for ways to reframe the traumatic memory in a more positive light. For example, you may be able to find lessons or insights that you have gained from the experience

or identify strengths and resilience that you have developed as a result of the trauma.

Example: Being bullied at school - a traumatizing memory for many of us. You could reframe the initial negative memory into one that can open the space for your constructive growth. The experience of being bullied can make you more empathetic and understanding towards others who may be going through similar situations. It can help you recognize the importance of kindness and treating others with respect.

- Also, you showed resilience by continuing to face each day with courage. This strength will serve you well in future challenges, as you know you have the inner power to overcome difficulties.
- Overcoming bullying requires an immense amount of strength and self-belief. By enduring and persevering, you have proven to yourself that you are stronger than you may have initially thought. This experience has helped shape your character and build a stronger sense of self.
- Going through bullying can ignite a passion within you to stand up against injustice and support others who may be experiencing similar mistreatment. You can use your voice and experiences to make a positive difference in the lives of others

2. Practice self-compassion

Be kind and compassionate to yourself as you work through the memory. Recognize that the trauma was not your fault, and that you are doing the best you can to heal and move forward.

Engage in activities that bring meaning

We mean activities such as volunteering, creative pursuits, or spending time with loved ones. These activities can help you find a sense of purpose and fulfillment that can help balance out the trauma.

Connect with others who have experienced similar trauma

experiencia.

Trauma often makes us feel isolated, and like we are the only individual that suffers from this particular difficult experience. The reality is quite surprising though - The projected world population on 1st of January 2023, was 7,942,645,086 people, surely some of them have experienced at least something similar (especially given that we are all humans craving the same things). Connecting with others who have experienced similar trauma can provide a sense of validation and support. Support groups, online forums, and community organizations can be helpful resources for finding others who share your experience.

Giving another meaning to a traumatizing memory can take time and effort, but it is possible to find healing and growth through the process. By reframing the memory and engaging in activities that bring meaning to your life, you can find a sense of purpose and fulfillment despite the trauma.



5. Tool 1: Calling Inner Child!

What, or who, is an Inner Child?

The concept of the inner child refers to the emotional and psychological aspects of our childhood experiences that continue to influence our thoughts, behaviors, and emotions in adulthood. It represents the child-like part of ourselves that carries our early memories, beliefs, and emotional wounds. The inner child can be thought of as an inner representation of our younger selves, with their unique needs, vulnerabilities, and desires. Take a look at this short animated video for more information: [click](#)



5 Signs You Have a Wounded Inner Child (How to Heal)

The famous inner child concept gained popularity in the field of psychology, particularly in the realm of inner child therapy and inner child healing. This concept suggests that unresolved childhood experiences, such as trauma, neglect, or emotional wounds, can have a lasting impact on our adult lives. These unresolved experiences can shape our self-perception, relationships, and overall well-being.

The idea of the inner child is often associated with healing and personal growth. By recognizing and acknowledging the presence of the inner child within us, we can begin to address and heal the emotional wounds from our past. This process involves nurturing, validating, and providing the support and love that may have been lacking during our early years.

Working with the inner child often involves various therapeutic techniques, such as visualization, guided imagery, journaling, and inner child dialogues. These techniques aim to establish a compassionate and nurturing relationship with our inner child, allowing us to gain insight into our unresolved emotions, unmet needs, and limiting beliefs. Through this process, we can offer healing, reassurance, and emotional integration to our inner child, ultimately fostering self-compassion, self-awareness, and personal transformation.

The inner child represents the vulnerable, innocent, and wounded aspects of our past selves that continue to influence our present experiences. By engaging with our inner child and providing the care and attention it needs, we can embark on a journey of healing, self-discovery, and personal transformation. We can work on nurturing it in several ways:

Emotional healing

Your inner child holds the memories, emotions, and wounds from your past experiences. By acknowledging and addressing these unresolved emotions and wounds, you can begin the process of emotional healing. This healing can help alleviate distress, reduce emotional triggers, and promote a greater sense of inner peace and well-being.

Self-awareness and self-discovery

Developing a relationship with your inner child fosters self-awareness by shedding light on the beliefs, patterns, and behaviors that stem from your early experiences. This self-awareness allows you to understand yourself more deeply, uncover hidden motivations, and gain insight into why you may respond to certain situations or triggers in specific ways.

Building self-compassion

Your inner child represents the vulnerable and innocent part of you that may have experienced pain, neglect, or trauma. Nurturing a compassionate relationship with your inner child involves offering love, acceptance, and understanding to that wounded part of yourself. This self-compassion can transform self-criticism, shame, and self-judgment into self-acceptance, self-love, and forgiveness.

Healing relationship patterns

Unresolved childhood wounds can impact your relationships and interactions with others. By developing a healthy relationship with your inner child, you can address any negative relationship patterns or dynamics that may have originated from your early experiences. This healing work can improve your ability to form healthy connections, set boundaries, and communicate effectively in your relationships.

Empowerment and personal growth

Connecting with your inner child allows you to reclaim your personal power and take responsibility for your own healing and growth. By nurturing and listening to your inner child's needs and desires, you can make choices and decisions that align with your authentic self. This process empowers you to break free from limiting beliefs, self-sabotaging patterns, and societal expectations, ultimately leading to personal growth and transformation.

Cultivating joy and playfulness

Your inner child embodies the spirit of joy, playfulness, and creativity. By reconnecting with this aspect of yourself, you can tap into your innate sense of wonder, curiosity, and imagination. This can bring a greater sense of joy, spontaneity, and lightheartedness into your life.

Resilience and coping skills

Developing a nurturing relationship with your inner child equips you with coping skills and emotional resilience. By addressing past wounds and meeting the needs of your inner child, you learn a healthier way to navigate challenges, regulate emotions, and manage stress in your daily life.

So, how to get in touch with your inner child? We propose several ways to do that:

1. Free-form writing: Set aside time for free-form writing, where you let your thoughts flow without any judgment or limitations. Write from the perspective of your inner child, allowing them to express their fears, dreams, and desires. Let their voice guide the words on the page, and respond with words of love, understanding, and reassurance.

Example:

Dear Adult Me,
I'm scared. Scared of being judged, of not being good enough. Sometimes it feels like I'm invisible, like no one really sees me or cares about me. I fear being left behind, forgotten, and abandoned. It's hard to trust others because I'm afraid they will hurt me like before.

But you know what? Deep down, I have dreams and hopes too. I dream of being loved unconditionally, of feeling safe and protected. I want to

be free to express myself without fear of rejection. I yearn for connection, to have true friends who understand and accept me for who I am. I wish for moments of joy and laughter, where my heart feels light and carefree.

I want to believe in myself, to feel confident and capable. I desire to pursue my passions and discover my unique talents. It would be amazing to have the freedom to explore the world around me, to learn and grow without restrictions. I long for moments of pure happiness, where I can simply be myself and feel loved and accepted.

Adult Me, please don't forget about me. I need your love, understanding, and reassurance. Remind me that I am worthy of love, that I matter. Help me overcome my fears and doubts. Hold my hand and guide me through life's challenges. Show me that it's okay to make mistakes and that failure doesn't define me.

I want to feel safe, nurtured, and cherished. Please protect me from harm and help me heal the wounds from the past. Let's create new memories filled with love, laughter, and growth. Together, we can make my dreams come true and build a beautiful future.

Thank you for listening and for being there for me. I trust you, and I believe that we can make our journey together a beautiful one.

With love,
Your Inner Child

2. Storytelling:

Write a short story or a fairy tale that reflects the experiences of your inner child. Create characters and a narrative that mirrors the challenges and emotions your inner child may have faced. Use the story to provide a sense of resolution, growth, and empowerment for the characters, offering hope and healing to your inner child.

Example:

Once upon a time, in a magical land, there lived a young girl named Lily. Lily had a bright spirit and a heart full of dreams, but she often felt invisible and unheard.

In the enchanted forest where Lily roamed, there was a wise and gentle owl named Oliver. Oliver could see into the depths of people's souls and sensed the pain that lingered within Lily's heart.

One day, as Lily wandered through the forest, her eyes filled with tears, she stumbled upon a hidden door. Curiosity ignited within her, and she opened the door, revealing a secret world filled with vibrant colors and talking animals.

In this magical realm, Lily encountered a timid bunny named Bella, who had also felt invisible and struggled with self-doubt. Together, they embarked on a journey to find the Key of Self-Acceptance, which would

unlock the door to their inner strength and confidence.

Their journey led them through a maze of challenges and self-discovery. Along the way, they faced a daunting river of self-doubt, a dark forest of fears, and a towering mountain of insecurities. Through each trial, they learned to confront their fears and doubts, realizing that they were stronger and more resilient than they had ever imagined.

As Lily and Bella grew braver, they encountered a wise old turtle named Timothy. Timothy shared his wisdom and encouraged them to embrace their uniqueness. He reminded them that their worth was not defined by the opinions of others, but by the love and acceptance they had for themselves.

With Timothy's guidance, Lily and Bella finally reached the Key of Self-Acceptance, shining brightly within a golden chest. They unlocked their inner power, transforming their doubts into strength and their insecurities into self-love.

Returning to the enchanted forest, Lily and Bella discovered that their newfound confidence had a ripple effect. The animals of the forest began to see their own worth reflected in the girls' radiant spirits.

Lily and Bella shared their story with others, spreading the message of self-acceptance

and empowerment. The once invisible and unheard found their voices and discovered the beauty and strength that resided within them.

In the end, Lily and Bella realized that their journey was not just about their own healing, but about inspiring others to embrace their inner magic. The enchantment of the forest grew brighter, and every creature within it knew that they were seen, heard, and valued.

And so, Lily and Bella lived happily ever after, continuing to empower themselves and others with the gift of self-acceptance and love. Their fairy tale became a guiding light for all who dared to embark on a journey of healing and self-discovery.

3. Dialogue with your Inner Child:

Write a dialogue between your present self and your inner child. Begin by addressing your inner child, asking how they're feeling and what they need. Write down their responses, allowing their voice to be heard. Respond as your present self, offering words of compassion, understanding, and support. Continue the dialogue back and forth, letting it unfold naturally.

Example:

Present Self: Hello, my dear inner child. I want you to know that I'm here for you, ready to listen and support you. How are you feeling today? What do you need right now?

Inner Child: (Softly) I feel scared and lonely. I still carry the pain from the past. I need to feel safe and loved, to know that I'm not alone.

Present Self: Oh, my sweet child, I understand how those feelings can be overwhelming. I want you to know that you are safe now, surrounded by love and care. You don't have to face those fears alone any more. I'm here with you, holding your hand through it all.

Inner Child: Really? You won't leave me?

Present Self: Never. I promise you that I will always be here, supporting you every step of the way. You deserve love, acceptance, and understanding. You are worthy of all the beautiful things in life.

Inner Child: Thank you for saying that. But sometimes, I still feel like I'm not good enough. Like I'm to blame for everything that happened.

Present Self: Oh, my dear child, those feelings are not your burden to bear. You were never to blame for what happened. You were innocent and deserving of love and protection. The hurt you experienced was not your fault. Please believe me when I say that you are more than enough

just as you are.

Inner Child: It's hard to let go of those thoughts, but I want to believe you. Can you help me?

Present Self: Of course, I'm here to guide you through this process. Together, we can challenge those negative thoughts and replace them with kinder, more empowering beliefs. Let's celebrate your strengths and achievements. You are resilient, courageous, and full of potential. I believe in you with all my heart.

Inner Child: Thank you for believing in me. It means the world to me. Can we create new happy memories together?

Present Self: Absolutely! We can fill our lives with joy, laughter, and beautiful moments. Let's engage in activities that make us feel alive and connected. We'll dance, sing, explore, and surround ourselves with loving and supportive people. We'll nurture our passions and dreams, letting them guide us towards a fulfilling life.

Inner Child: I'm excited to start this new journey with you. Thank you for being there and for loving me unconditionally.

Present Self: The pleasure is all mine, my precious inner child. Remember, I'm here every step of the way, holding your hand, and together, we'll heal, grow, and create a life filled with love and happiness. You are never alone.

4. Letter Exchange:

Write a letter from your adult self to your inner child, expressing love, acceptance, and understanding. Share insights and wisdom you have gained over the years. Then, switch roles and write a letter from your inner child to your adult self, expressing their fears, desires, and hopes. Respond to their letter with empathy, validation, and encouragement.

Example:

Letter from adult self to inner child:

Dear Sweet Inner Child,
I am writing this letter to you with so much love and warmth in my heart. I want you to know how cherished and precious you are to me. Through the years, I've learned so much, and I want to share some of that wisdom with you.

First and foremost, I want you to understand that you are loved unconditionally. You are deserving of love, care, and kindness, simply because you exist. You don't need to earn it or prove your worthiness. You are already enough, just as you are.

I know that there were times when you felt scared and alone, when the world seemed overwhelming and unfair. But please remember that you are not defined by the challenges you faced or the hurt you endured. Your strength and resilience have carried

you through so much, and they continue to guide you on this beautiful journey called life.

You have the power to shape your own destiny. Your dreams and desires are valid and important. Don't be afraid to pursue them with passion and determination. Trust in your intuition and let your heart guide you. You are capable of achieving greatness, and your unique gifts and talents are meant to shine brightly in the world.

I want to tell you that it's okay to make mistakes. Mistakes are opportunities for growth and learning. Embrace them, and don't let them define you. You are not defined by your past, but by the choices you make in the present. Each day is a chance for a fresh start and a new beginning.

You are never alone, my dear. Reach out for support when you need it. Surround yourself with loving and nurturing relationships that uplift and inspire you. Remember, vulnerability is a strength, and asking for help is a sign of courage, not weakness.

Now, my inner child, it's time for you to share your thoughts with me. I want to hear your fears, desires, and hopes. Speak freely, and know that I'm here to listen with an open heart.

*With all my love and support,
Your Adult Self*

Letter from inner child to adult self:

Dear Adult Self,

I'm feeling scared and unsure of myself. I still carry the pain of past experiences, and sometimes I worry that I'm not good enough. I want to believe in myself, but doubts keep creeping in. I desire to feel safe, loved, and accepted. I hope for a future filled with joy and happiness, where I can truly be myself.

I long for moments of playfulness and laughter, where I can explore the world with curiosity and wonder. I want to express my thoughts and feelings freely without the fear of judgment. Please help me find the courage to overcome my fears and to believe in my own worthiness.

Your empathy and understanding mean so much to me. Thank you for listening and for being there. I trust you to guide me through this journey of healing and self-discovery.

*With love and hope,
Your Inner Child*

Response from adult self to inner child:

My dearest Inner Child,

Thank you for sharing your heartfelt thoughts with me. I want you to know that your fears and worries are valid, and I understand how they may still linger within you. But please remember that you are not alone in this. I am here, ready to hold your hand and walk this path of healing and growth together.

You are deserving of love, safety, and acceptance. It's okay to feel unsure sometimes, but remember that you are so much stronger than you realize. I see your unique strengths and the spark of resilience that shines within you. Believe in yourself, my inner child, for you are capable of achieving remarkable things.

I want to assure you that your voice matters. Your thoughts, feelings, and desires are important,

and they deserve to be heard and validated. Embrace your authenticity, and let your true self shine brightly in the world. You are worthy of love and acceptance just as you are, without needing to change or hide any part of yourself.

As we journey together, I will guide you gently towards a future filled with joy, happiness, and self-discovery. We will nurture your playful spirit, allowing it to dance freely. Your dreams and passions will be cherished and pursued with enthusiasm and

determination.

Remember, my inner child, that healing takes time. Be patient and kind to yourself along the way. Celebrate every small step of progress, for they are significant markers of your growth. I am here to provide the love, understanding, and support you need.

*With unwavering love and encouragement,
Your Adult Self*

5. Guided visualization writing:

Close your eyes, take a few deep breaths, and imagine yourself in a peaceful and safe place. Visualize your inner child joining you in this space. Engage in a conversation with them, asking how they feel and what they need. Open your eyes and write down the dialogue that took place, capturing the messages, emotions, and insights that emerged during the visualization.

Example:

In a peaceful and safe meadow, I close my eyes and envision my inner child standing beside me. I feel a sense of calm and warmth as we connect in this serene space. Taking a deep breath, I gently address my inner child.

Present Self: Hello, my dear inner child. I'm so glad we are here together. How are you feeling today? What do you need right now?

Inner Child: I feel a mix of emotions. There's some lingering sadness and fear, but also a glimmer of curiosity and hope. Right now, I need reassurance and a sense of safety.

Present Self: I understand, my sweet child. You are safe here with me. I want you to know that I am here to protect and support you. You don't need to carry those burdens alone any more. Take my hand, and let's navigate this journey together.

Inner Child: Can I trust you? Will you always be there for me?

Present Self: Absolutely, my precious child. I promise you that I will always be by your side, holding you with love and compassion. You can trust me to listen, understand, and guide you through any challenges that come our way. You are never alone.

Inner Child: Thank you for saying that. It means so much to me. Sometimes, I feel like I don't belong or that I'm not good enough.

Present Self: Oh, my dear child, those thoughts are not true. You are inherently worthy and deserving of love and acceptance. Your uniqueness is what makes you special. Embrace your authenticity and know that you are enough just as you are. The world needs your light.

Inner Child: I want to be seen and heard. I want to express myself without fear of judgment.

Present Self: Your voice matters, my little one. It's time to reclaim your voice and let it soar. Speak your truth, share your thoughts and feelings, and trust that the right people will listen and understand. Your vulnerability is a strength, and through it, you will find genuine connections and support.

Inner Child: Can we have fun and play like we used to? Can we explore and embrace joy?

Present Self: Absolutely! Let's invite joy back into our lives. We'll dance, laugh, and engage in activities that make our hearts sing. Remember the simple pleasures that bring you happiness. Embrace playfulness and curiosity. Let's cherish and nurture the childlike wonder within us.

As we open our eyes, I feel a profound sense of love and connection with my inner child. The dialogue we shared in this visualization has reminded me of the importance of self-compassion, trust, and embracing joy. I carry these messages and insights with me, knowing that my inner child is always there, waiting to be nurtured and loved.



6. Tool 2: Emotional Freedom Technique on paper

The Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT), also known as “tapping,” is a therapeutic approach that combines elements of traditional Chinese medicine, cognitive psychology, and exposure therapy. It involves tapping on specific acupressure points on the body while focusing on emotional or psychological distress. EFT has gained recognition for its potential to alleviate stress, reduce anxiety, and promote emotional well-being. In this chapter, we explore the adaptation of EFT as a writing exercise, highlighting the benefits of combining its principles with expressive writing and providing insights into its transformative potential.

Understanding the Original EFT:

It was developed in the 1990s by Gary Craig, who drew inspiration from the meridian system in traditional Chinese medicine and the principles of acupuncture. According to EFT theory, emotional and psychological distress are caused by disruptions in the body’s energy system. By stimulating specific acupressure points through gentle tapping, the energy flow is restored, resulting in emotional relief and a sense of balance.

The process of EFT, in its classic form, involves the following steps:

1. **Identifying the issue:** Begin by identifying the specific emotional or psychological issue you would like to address. This could include stress, anxiety, fear, trauma, limiting beliefs, negative emotions, among others.
2. **Setting up the tapping sequence:** EFT uses a specific sequence of acupressure points to tap on, including the eyebrow, side of the eye, under the eye, under the nose, chin, collarbone, under the arm, and top of the head. These points are gently tapped using two or more fingers while repeating a specific affirmation or statement related to the issue. This short animated video shows the placement of the tapping points: [click](#).
3. **Tapping and focusing:** As you tap on each point, focus on the issue at hand and tune into the associated emotions or beliefs. This process combines physical stimulation with cognitive and emotional engagement.
4. **Assessing and repeating:** After a round of tapping, assess the intensity of the emotional distress on a scale of 0 to 10, with 10 representing the highest level of distress. If the intensity has decreased but is not fully resolved, repeat the tapping sequence while adjusting the affir-

mation or statement to address any remaining aspects of the issue.

Why is it beneficial to adapt EFT as a writing exercise:

The adaptation of EFT as a writing exercise offers a unique and powerful approach to emotional healing and self-discovery. By combining EFT principles with expressive writing, we can access deeper layers of our emotions, thoughts, and experiences. Among the benefits of the written form of EFT are:

1. **Emotional release and processing:** Writing about emotional experiences can facilitate the release and processing of emotions. By integrating EFT principles into the writing exercise, we can tap into our emotional landscape and gain deeper insights into their feelings, beliefs, and reactions.
2. **Increased self-awareness:** EFT, combined with writing, promotes self-awareness by providing a space to explore and understand one’s emotional triggers, patterns, and underlying beliefs. Through the process of writing, individuals can uncover subconscious thoughts and emotions, leading to greater self-understanding and personal growth.
3. **Cognitive restructuring:** Writing offers

an opportunity to challenge and reframe negative beliefs and thought patterns. By incorporating EFT techniques, we can tap on specific acupressure points while writing to reinforce positive affirmations, cultivate self-compassion, and create new empowering narratives.

4. Integration of mind and body: Written EFT facilitates the integration of the mind and body by combining cognitive and emotional processing with physical tapping. This integration can enhance self-regulation skills, reduce stress responses, and promote a greater sense of balance and well-being.

5. Empowerment and self-healing: Engaging in the written form of EFT empowers us to take an active role in our healing and personal growth. By tapping into our own inner resources, we can develop self-soothing techniques, build resilience, and facilitate our own self-healing process.

6. Enhanced clarity and problem-solving: Writing allows for reflection and introspection, which can lead to enhanced clarity and problem-solving abilities. By combining EFT with writing, we can gain fresh perspectives, uncover solutions, and develop action plans for addressing challenges of working through emotional issues.

So, how is the written form of EFT actually performed?

1. Intention setting: Begin by setting an intention for the writing exercise. Determine the emotional or psychological issue you would like to address or explore.

2. Preparation: Find a quiet and comfortable space where you can engage in uninterrupted writing. Have a notebook or journal and a pen ready.

3. Tapping sequence: Go through the EFT tapping sequence, using the specific acupressure points mentioned earlier. As you tap, focus on the issue at hand and repeat a chosen affirmation or statement related to the issue.

4. Writing: Once you have completed the tapping sequence, start writing about the identified issue. Let your thoughts and emotions flow freely onto the paper. Be open and honest with yourself, allowing your innermost thoughts and feelings to surface.

5. Integration: As you write, periodically pause and tap on the acupressure points to reinforce positive affirmations or address any emotional intensity that arises. This helps to integrate the EFT principles into the writing process.

6. Reflection and action: After completing the writing exercise, take a moment to reflect on what you have written. Notice any shifts in emotions, insights gained, or new perspectives that have emerged. Consider any action steps or self-care practices you may want to implement based on your reflections.



Tips and tricks for the EFT Writing Exercise:

- 1. Safe space is important:** Ensure that you are in a comfortable and private environment where you can fully express yourself without judgment or interruption.
- 2. Practice self-compassion:** Be gentle and compassionate with yourself throughout the process. Remember that healing takes time, and it's okay to feel vulnerable during the writing exercise.
- 3. Set realistic expectations:** Each individual's healing journey is unique, and results may vary. Set realistic expectations and embrace the process rather than focusing solely on the outcome.
- 4. Consistency is key:** Engage in the EFT writing exercise regularly to experience the cumulative benefits. Consider setting a regular schedule for the practice to make it a consistent part of your self-care routine.



By combining the principles of EFT with expressive writing, we can reach our emotions, challenge limiting beliefs, and foster self-compassion. This integration of tapping and writing offers a holistic approach to addressing emotional distress, promoting self-awareness, and empowering individuals on their healing journey. Incorporating the EFT writing exercise into a regular self-care practice can yield transformative results, supporting emotional well-being, and personal transformation.

Abundance call

6

1. Abundance call
2. Where do limiting beliefs come from?
3. How to identify limiting beliefs
4. Tool 1: Beliefs vs dreams
5. Tool 2: Grati... what?

1. Abundance call

Have you ever wondered what are the greatest obstacles to abundance in every part of your life?

Sometimes, surprisingly, they are not at all external. They, however, vary from person to person, that's why it's important to reflect on yourself and pin them down. After we become more conscious of ourselves, we have more space for challenging and, ultimately, changing our beliefs that no longer serve us. Those obstacles, as you might have already guessed it, are our limiting beliefs. Some of them can take the following forms:

Those obstacles, as you might have already guessed it, are our limiting beliefs. Some of them can take the following forms:

- There are not enough resources for me in the world. Somebody has to go hungry so someone else could be fed (scarcity mindset): the belief that there is a limited amount of resources, opportunities, and success available, leading to a fear of lack. This mindset can hinder one's ability to attract abundance and can create a self-fulfilling prophecy of scarcity.
- It will not work anyway, so why even bother trying (fear of failure): Fear of failure can prevent us from taking risks, pursuing opportunities, or stepping out of our comfort zones. This fear can limit growth in various aspects of life.
- I'm not worthy of this. I need to take another training/ course/ learn more/ and maybe then... (lack of self-worth): Feeling unworthy or undeserving of can seriously hurt our relation with the world, not to mention create a barrier to growth and abundance. Low self-esteem and self-doubt can sabotage our efforts to reach our dreams.
- Why is it happening to me? (resistance to change): Growth often requires embracing change, whether it's trying new

things, developing new skills, or shifting mindset and behaviors. Resistance to change can keep us stuck in familiar but limited circumstances, hindering our ability to live our lives to the fullest.

- What will people say...? (external influences): External factors such as societal norms, family expectations, and cultural conditioning can impact one's beliefs and actions related to growth. Pressure to conform or fear of judgment can restrict individuals from pursuing their own vision.

Overcoming these obstacles requires self-awareness, mindset shifts, and intentional action. It may involve cultivating self-worth, embracing change, practising gratitude, surrounding oneself with positive influences and, above all, challenging and reframing limiting beliefs. But wait... what exactly are those?

A limiting belief is a thought or state of mind that you think is the absolute truth and stops you from doing certain things. These beliefs don't always have to be about yourself, either. They could be about how the world works, ideas, and how you interact with people.

Whether it's fears or just our ideas about how the world works, baked-in ideas shape how we behave and how we interpret what happens. These limiting beliefs can hold us back from trying or undermine our efforts and relationships. Often they start from a young age but also become more set over time. You become a person who holds yourself back. But why? How does a person grow from a fearless kid into someone afraid of failure, avoiding challenges and learning opportunities, or constantly doubting yourself?

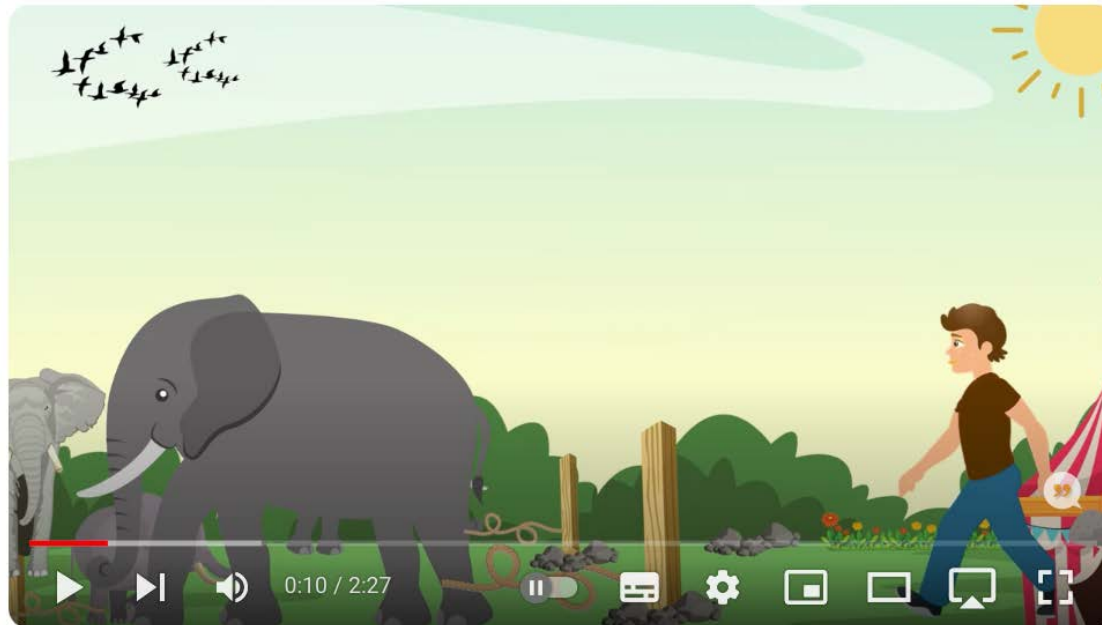
Limiting beliefs can form as part of anyone's natural development from childhood through young adulthood and beyond. It's time

to learn about your self-limiting beliefs and how you can overcome them.

Limiting beliefs can change your life, but not always for the better. They create self-awareness that stops you from chasing after your dreams, forming healthy relationships with people, and creating change in any area of your life. Having primarily negative beliefs puts boundaries and limitations on things in our lives and keeps us within our comfort zones. They can sometimes act as a defence mechanism to protect ourselves from pain. Your subconscious could remember past ne-

gative experiences and try to prevent you from hurting yourself again.

These subconscious boundaries could lead to negative emotions like imposter syndrome, anxiety, and procrastination. Here's a short-animated story about how limiting beliefs can impede our growth [click](#)



The Elephant Rope | A Story About Limiting Beliefs (Motivational Story)

2. Where do limiting beliefs come from?

Our limiting beliefs come from plenty of different places. To overcome them, we first need to learn their origin. Here are a few categories that can be helpful to pin down the source of your belief:

Family values and beliefs

Your parents and other family members taught you a set of beliefs and values, starting before you were even conscious of it. We start developing our core beliefs when we're young based first on what we learn from our family, whether they transmit these beliefs purposefully or not.

A grandparent may dwell on the differences between "rich people" and everyone else. A father might emphasize godliness and responsibility in a way that makes childhood transgressions loom large. A mother might push her children to work hard to succeed in a white collar profession as the key to a better life.

More times than not, these beliefs were their own that they passed on to you. They could be about particular career paths, taste in music, or hobbies. Eventually, you solidify your own set of limiting beliefs, based in part on what your family has taught you.

Life experiences

Any experience that you have in life gives you a feeling to remember. These conclusions that you draw from experiences dictate what you choose to do in the future. Maybe you rode a bike and hated it. Next time you have the opportunity to hop on a bicycle, you might refuse because you remember hating your previous experience.

Education

Whoever you're learning from, may they be teachers, family, or friends, impact what you believe to be true. When someone's job is to share information and beliefs, you absorb them. If the person who's teaching you is someone you admire and have a lot of respect for, you're more inclined to believe everything they say.

Examples of limiting beliefs

Limiting beliefs are present in all areas of our lives. Here are five examples of some of the most common limiting beliefs about ourselves, the world, and life in general:

- “I'm too slow to play basketball. I've missed my chance to get into sports, so why bother trying now?”
- “My personality type doesn't match a lot of other people's, so I'm never going to find

- someone to be in a relationship with.”
- “If I don't get good grades, nobody will love me”
- “I'm too quiet and slow to be successful in class. I should give up now.”
- “I don't have time to start a new hobby because I'm so busy.”
- “You have to be really arrogant to go into sales.”
- “The only way to get promoted is to give up having a life.”
- “You can't trust anybody.”
- “If you win, I lose.”
- “I'm not really a numbers' person.”
- “I'm not good at public speaking” “I'm not the type of leader”
- “It seems like a good idea, but I'll probably mess it up. I usually do.”
- “I've never been a runner (biker, skier, swimmer).”
- “Taking risks doesn't work out for me.”

Sounds familiar?

3. How to identify limiting beliefs

We all develop habits that become automatic, and we don't question them. But when you're trying to overcome limiting beliefs, you need to take a step back and think about your daily life. How do you practice self-talk? What's your reaction when you make mistakes?

Here are three ways that can help you identify your limiting beliefs:

1. Reflect on your behavior.

Evaluating your behavior can help show you what causes your limiting beliefs. Think back to when someone hurt your feelings and you needed to speak up for yourself.

What was your reaction? Did you speak up, or did you walk away from the situation without letting the person know how you felt? Situations like this can show you that you might have a limiting belief that you should avoid conflict at all costs, but that negatively impacts your relationships.

2. Write down your beliefs.

Try writing down your general and detailed beliefs — the personal ones, the vague ones, and the ones that you feel very strongly about. You can categorize them by sections like family, relationships, and health.

Without thinking too hard about which beliefs you write down, it gives you the chan-

ce to look them over once you're done. This way, you can identify which ones are your own limiting beliefs.

3. Make a list of things that challenge you.

There could be things that routinely challenge you in life that you avoid that could be your limiting beliefs, so ask yourself, "What limiting beliefs are you holding on to?"

Write down your challenges and look for any patterns; this will offer you a chance to think of self-improvement strategies for specific areas of your life.

Have you never landed your dream job and simply chalked it up to having poor luck? That could be a sign that you have a limiting belief that your bad luck is the thing that gets in the way of your success.

Sometimes we know we have problems to overcome, but it can be hard to pinpoint them.

How to overcome limiting beliefs

It's challenging to identify them, but it can be even harder to know how to deal with limited beliefs. Feeling like you can't reach your goals might stop you from living a truly fulfilling life. But it isn't impossible to swap out a limiting belief for an empowering belief. To reframe your mindset, you need to have strategies that work for you.



4. Tool 1: Beliefs vs dreams

Our beliefs have a profound influence on our dreams and aspirations. They shape our perceptions, attitudes, and actions, ultimately determining the extent to which we pursue and achieve our deepest desires. If we hold negative beliefs about our abilities, worth, or potential, we may limit ourselves and dream small. Conversely, positive and empowering beliefs foster a sense of self-confidence and encourage us to dream big and aim high.

Our beliefs about what is possible or impossible shape the scope of our dreams. If we believe that certain goals or achievements are beyond our reach, we may limit the extent of our aspirations. However, when we embrace a belief in possibilities and open ourselves to new ideas, our dreams expand, and we become more willing to take risks and explore uncharted territories.

Negative beliefs can create self-imposed limitations. Beliefs such as “I’m not good enough” or “I’ll never succeed” create mental barriers that hold us back. Transforming these beliefs into empowering ones allows us to break free from limitations and pursue our dreams with resilience and determination.

Our beliefs play a crucial role in motivating and sustaining our efforts towards our goals. Positive beliefs provide a sense of purpose, fuel our motivation, and give us the strength

to persevere during challenging times. They remind us of our innate potential and the sense of being powerful enough to overcome obstacles on our journey.

Our beliefs shape our perception of the world and the opportunities available to us. If we hold limiting beliefs, we may fail to recognize or act upon opportunities that align with our dreams. On the other hand, empowering beliefs help us cultivate an abundance mindset, enabling us to spot and seize opportunities that support our aspirations.

Beliefs can become self-fulfilling prophecies. If we deeply believe in our ability to achieve our dreams, we align our thoughts, actions, and energy towards making them a reality. If, on the other hand, we hold beliefs that undermine our dreams, we may unknowingly create circumstances that confirm those beliefs, leading to unfulfilled aspirations.

Wouldn’t it be wonderful if we had something to say whether to have a certain belief or not? Well, we do! All it takes is to identify and transform our current beliefs. The objective of this exercise is to transform negative beliefs a young person might have. For the sake of the exercise, we have chosen a very common (among many adults as well) belief: “I’m not smart enough.” This belief can stem from various sources such as academic stru-

ggles, comparison with peers, or receiving negative feedback. It creates a self-perception of inadequacy and limits the young person’s confidence in their intellectual abilities. This negative belief may discourage them from pursuing academic challenges, taking on leadership roles, or exploring new areas of learning. Over time, it can hinder their potential and limit their aspirations and dreams. Transforming this belief into an empowering one, such as “I am capable of learning and growing,” can open doors to new possibilities and encourage the young person to pursue their academic interests and embrace their unique intelligence. By reframing our mindset, we can create a foundation for pursuing our aspirations with kindness

Exercise Instructions:

1. Find a quiet and comfortable space where you can reflect and write. Allow yourself to be fully present in the moment.
2. Take a few deep breaths to center yourself and cultivate a sense of calm. Feel the tension leaving your body with each exhale.
3. Grab a pen and a journal or a piece of paper.
4. Begin by identifying any negative beliefs you hold about intelligence. These beliefs may include self-doubt, limiting thoughts, or misconceptions. Be gentle with yourself as you explore these beliefs, acknowledging that this is a safe and non-judgmental space.

We have identified the following:

"I'm not naturally smart or talented in any area."

"No matter how hard I try, I'll never be as intelligent as others."

"Intelligence is fixed, and I'm stuck with what I have."

"I'm always going to struggle academically; it's just the way I am."

"Others are inherently smarter than me, and I can never catch up."

"Intelligence is solely determined by IQ or test scores, and I fall short."

"I've made mistakes in the past, so I must not be intelligent."

"I can't handle complex subjects or challen-

ging intellectual tasks."

"Intelligence is determined by genetics, and I didn't get the 'smart' genes."

"I've been labeled as 'dumb' before, so it must be true."

5. Write down these negative beliefs, one by one, using kind and simple language. Allow your thoughts to flow freely, without censoring or filtering them.

6. Reflect on each negative belief and consider its impact on your ability to pursue your dreams. Take a moment to acknowledge any emotions that arise. Be compassionate with yourself as you navigate these feelings.

7. Now, it's time to transform these negative beliefs into empowering ones. For each negative belief, rewrite it in a positive, supportive, and uplifting manner. Embrace the power of kind and simple language that resonates with your heart, encouraging self-compassion, growth, and personal empowerment.

It might go something like this:

"I have unique talents and strengths that contribute to my intelligence."

"With dedication and effort, I can continually expand my intelligence and knowledge."

"Intelligence is not fixed; it can be developed and nurtured throughout life."

"I am capable of overcoming academic

challenges and achieving success."

"I possess my own unique form of intelligence that is valuable and meaningful."

"Intelligence encompasses various skills and abilities beyond just IQ or test scores."

"Mistakes are opportunities for growth, and they do not define my intelligence."

"I have the capacity to comprehend complex subjects and excel in intellectual tasks."

"Intelligence is influenced by various factors, and I can cultivate it through effort and learning."

"I refuse to let past labels define my true intelligence; I am capable of great things."

8. Ensure that the new beliefs align with your goals and dreams. Emphasize the strengths, resources, and resilience within you. Remember that these beliefs are a reflection of your inner truth and the limitless potential that resides within.

9. After rewriting each belief, take a moment to reread them and feel the positive energy they bring. Visualize how these empowering beliefs can shape your mindset, actions, and overall well-being.

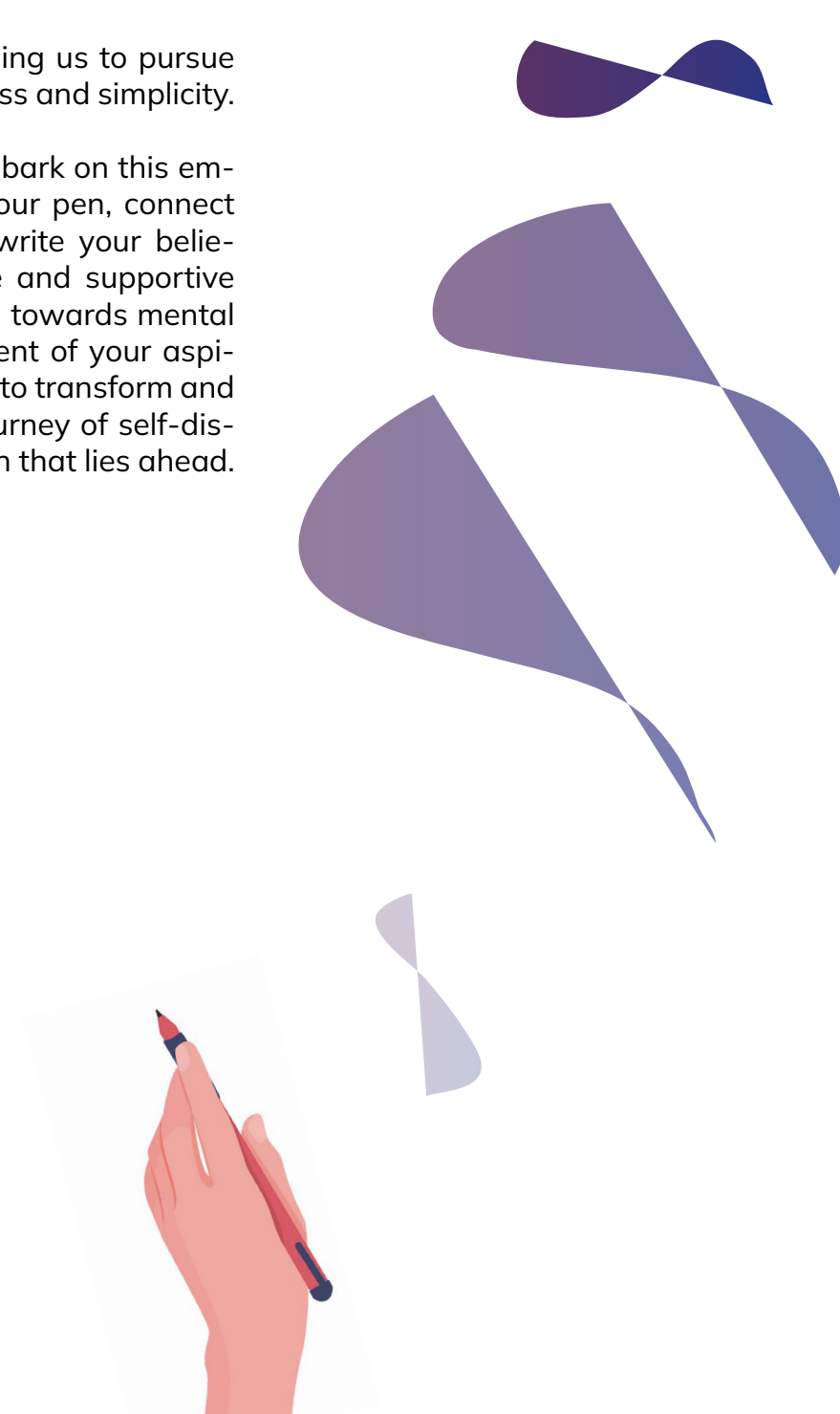
10. Choose one empowering belief that resonates deeply with you. Write it on a separate piece of paper or create a digital image that you can keep as a reminder. This belief will serve as an anchor, guiding you on your journey towards achieving your dreams.

11. Keep this empowering belief close to you. Place it where you can see it daily, such as a vision board, your desk, or as a screensaver on your electronic devices. Let it serve as a constant reminder of your inner strength and the possibilities that lie ahead.
12. Reflect on your transformed belief regularly. Take time to internalize its message, connecting with the profound impact it can have on your life. Use it as a guiding light to inspire and motivate you on your journey towards achieving your dreams.
13. Remember, self-care and kindness towards yourself are essential in pursuing your dreams. Embrace the process of personal growth and celebrate your progress along the way. Allow yourself the grace to learn, adapt, and evolve as you navigate your unique path.
14. As you continue on your journey, be open to revisiting and revising your beliefs. Our perspectives can evolve, and new insights can emerge. Embrace the power of self-reflection and adjust your beliefs accordingly, nurturing your mental health and supporting your dreams.

tures our well-being, enabling us to pursue our aspirations with kindness and simplicity.

Now, take a moment to embark on this empowering exercise. Grab your pen, connect with your dreams, and rewrite your beliefs to embrace the positive and supportive mindset that will guide you towards mental well-being and the fulfillment of your aspirations. Trust in your ability to transform and thrive, and embrace the journey of self-discovery and personal growth that lies ahead.

This exercise focuses on reshaping any un-supportive beliefs we might have to create a positive and supportive foundation for the future. By acknowledging and transforming negative beliefs, we can cultivate self-compassion, resilience, and a mindset that nur-



5. Tool 2: Grati... what?

You might have heard about this one before. This tool is recommended by many therapists around the world: here's a short, animated video about the power of gratitude: [click](#), and another one, focused more on the scientific approach: [click](#). We intend to give it a new, fresh outlook.

The objective of this exercise is to introduce the concept of a gratitude journal and its benefits. By practicing gratitude through journaling, we can nurture a positive mindset, enhance our well-being, and develop a greater appreciation for the simple joys in life. This exercise aims to inspire children and adults alike to embrace gratitude as a powerful tool for happiness.

Exercise instructions:

1. Find a spot, any spot. The ideal one would be a place where you can relax and reflect, but if this is not available to you at the moment, you can write while waiting for a bus, on a train or waiting in line at the supermarket. Anything goes, just make sure you have a notebook or a blank journal and a pen or pencil.
2. Take a deep breath and imagine a warm, glowing light surrounding you, filling you with a sense of calm and happiness. But if you are not in the place to do this right now, you can skip this part. After all, it's your writing journey.
3. Open your journal and dedicate the first page to gratitude. Write the title, "My Gratitude Journal," in big, colorful letters. Decorate the page with drawings or stickers, make it yours.
4. On the second page, write today's date. This will be the beginning of your gratitude journey.
5. Now, think about something or someone you are grateful for. It could be a person, a pet, a special place, a favorite toy, or even a delicious meal. Write about it in your journal, explaining why you feel grateful for it. For example, "Today, I am grateful for my best friend, Sarah. She always makes me laugh and supports me when I'm feeling down. She's like a ray of sunshine in my life."
6. Take a moment to close your eyes and imagine that person, thing, or experience. Picture yourself feeling grateful and happy about it. Let that warm, grateful feeling fill your heart.
7. Repeat this exercise every day. Write about different things or people you are grateful for, focusing on the positive aspects and the joy they bring to your life. Be as specific as possible, describing why each one is meaningful to you.
8. If you're having trouble thinking of something, try to recall a small moment of joy or kindness you experienced during the day. It could be as simple as the smell of fresh flowers, a smile from a stranger, or a funny joke you heard.
9. You can also add drawings, doodles, or pictures to your gratitude journal to make it even more colorful and expressive.
10. Whenever you're feeling sad, upset, or just need a boost of happiness, take out your gratitude journal and read a few entries. Allow the memories of gratitude to uplift your spirits and remind you of the many blessings in your life.

11. Remember, there are no right or wrong things to be grateful for. It's all about acknowledging the positive and finding joy in the little things.
12. Over time, you'll see how your gratitude journal becomes a beautiful collection of happiness and appreciation. It will serve as a constant reminder of the goodness in your life, even during challenging times.
13. Embrace this journey of gratitude, and let it shape your perspective and nurture your happiness.

Being grateful works miracles, because it shifts our focus from what we lack to what we have. When we practice gratitude, we actively acknowledge and appreciate the positive aspects of our lives, big and small.

It helps us see the world through a positive lens. By intentionally focusing on what we are grateful for, we train our minds to notice the good things around us. This positive perspective improves our overall outlook on life and allows us to approach challenges with resilience and optimism.

When we express gratitude, our brains release feel-good chemicals such as dopamine and serotonin. These neurotransmitters are associated with happiness and well-being. By regularly practicing gratitude, we can cultivate a greater sense of happiness and

contentment in our lives.

Gratitude encourages us to be present in the moment. It brings our attention to the here and now, helping us appreciate the simple joys and experiences that often go unnoticed. By being mindful of the present moment, we can deepen our enjoyment of life and find gratitude in the little things.

Expressing gratitude strengthens our connections with others. When we show appreciation for someone's kindness or support, it fosters a sense of warmth, trust, and reciprocity in our relationships. Gratitude acts as a powerful bonding agent, enhancing our social connections and promoting a sense of belonging.

It has a calming effect on our minds and bodies. By focusing on the positive aspects of our lives, we shift our attention away from worry and stress. This can help reduce anxiety and promote a greater sense of inner peace and well-being.

Practicing gratitude fosters empathy and compassion towards others. When we appreciate the goodness in our own lives, we become more attuned to the experiences and needs of others. This can inspire acts of kindness, generosity, and a desire to make a positive difference in the world.

We encourage personal growth and self-reflection by being grateful. It invites us to learn from our experiences, appreciate our strengths, and embrace opportunities for growth. By focusing on what we are grateful for, we can develop a deeper sense of fulfillment and purpose in our lives.

Regaining sense of belonging through compassion

7

1. Self-compassion
2. Trauma and self-compassion
3. Tool 1: Tough Questions: from writing to becoming
4. Tool 2: Write yourself a better story

1. Self-compassion

Self-compassion is a way of relating to ourselves with kindness, understanding, and acceptance, especially during times of difficulty, failure, or suffering. It involves treating ourselves with the same warmth and care we would offer to a good friend or loved one who is going through a challenging situation.

Self-compassion has three main components: kindness, common humanity and mindfulness (more on that below). It doesn't rely on external achievements or validation, but rather on treating ourselves with kindness and understanding regardless of our perceived successes or failures.

Practicing self-compassion involves developing a nurturing and supportive inner dialogue, treating ourselves with care, and extending understanding and forgiveness to ourselves when faced with challenges or mistakes. It can be cultivated through mindfulness exercises, self-reflective practices, and self-care activities that prioritize our emotional well-being.



2. Trauma and self-compassion

Trauma can have a significant impact on our ability to practice self-compassion. Self-compassion involves treating ourselves with kindness, empathy, and understanding, especially during difficult or challenging times. However, trauma can cause us to feel disconnected from ourselves, leading to self-criticism, shame, and self-blame. This can make it difficult to practice self-compassion, as we may feel unworthy or undeserving of compassion.

On the other hand, practicing self-compassion can be an effective way to cope with the effects of trauma. When we are able to treat ourselves with kindness and understanding, we can reduce feelings of shame, self-blame, and isolation, and cultivate a sense of safety and security within ourselves. This can be especially important for individuals who have experienced trauma, as trauma can cause feelings of disconnection and alienation from oneself and others.

Research has shown that practicing self-compassion can lead to a range of positive outcomes for those who have experienced trauma, including increased resilience, improved emotional regulation, decreased symptoms of anxiety and depression and a more positive and accepting relationship with ourselves.

Overall, while trauma can make it challenging to practice self-compassion, developing a compassionate and understanding relationship with ourselves can be an important part of coping with the effects of trauma and promoting healing and recovery.

When we experience trauma, we may develop negative beliefs about ourselves, such as feeling unworthy, unlovable, or powerless. These beliefs can contribute to feelings of shame, self-criticism, and self-blame, which can further exacerbate the effects of trauma. However, by practicing self-compassion, we can learn to treat ourselves with kindness, empathy, and understanding, even in the face of difficult emotions or experiences. This involves cultivating three key components of self-compassion we mentioned before:

Self-kindness

Treating ourselves with warmth, understanding, and patience, rather than harsh self-criticism or judgment.

Common humanity

Recognizing that we are not alone in our suffering, and that others also experience pain and difficulty in their lives.

Mindfulness

Observing and accepting our thoughts and

emotions without judgment, and cultivating a non-reactive, non-judgmental attitude toward our experiences.

By practicing self-compassion, we can develop a more positive and accepting relationship with ourselves, which can help us to cope with the effects of trauma and promote healing and recovery. Research has shown that practicing self-compassion can lead to a range of positive outcomes for individuals who have experienced trauma, including increased resilience, improved emotional regulation, and decreased symptoms of anxiety and depression.

Self-compassion can be very helpful when it comes to healing from trauma. The more vulnerable you are willing to be (and to be able to open the Pandora's box with your past, often difficult experience, requires a very high grade of both courage and kindness towards oneself).

We want to give you several quick tips on how to cultivate this approach within you and towards others:

1. Talk to yourself in a kind and compassionate way, using words of comfort and support.
2. Engage in activities that bring you joy

and comfort, such as spending time in nature or with loved ones.

3. Focus on your strengths and positive qualities, rather than dwelling on your perceived weaknesses or failures.
4. Cultivate mindfulness through practices such as meditation, deep breathing, or body scans.

Recent research has found that being kind to ourselves, understanding that we are not alone in our struggles, and being aware of our thoughts and emotions can help us grow after going through tough experiences. It's important to cope with our emotions and problems in a healthy way.

Investigaciones recientes han descubierto que ser amables con nosotros mismos, comprender que no estamos solos en nuestras luchas y ser conscientes de nuestros pensamientos y emociones puede ayudarnos a crecer después de pasar por experiencias duras. Es importante afrontar nuestras emociones y problemas de forma saludable.



3. Tool 1: Tough Questions: from writing to becoming

This exercise is designed to lower the volume of the voice we are all used to hearing: our Inner Critic, to be able to hear another voice, that is always there for us, but is much more beneficial and subtle than the critic is. We are also taught to rather listen to the critic than to the other voice. But who is speaking to us, really? The Inner Critic is a widely known concept, but the other one? We like to call it the “gentle”, or “Compassionate Parent” voice.

The inner critic and compassionate parent are two different concepts related to our internal dialogue and our approach to nurturing and supporting others.

Inner Critic:

The Inner Critic refers to the critical voice within ourselves that tends to be harsh, judgmental, and self-critical. It is the internalized voice of external influences such as societal standards, past experiences, and expectations. The Inner Critic can be relentless in pointing out our flaws, mistakes, and perceived inadequacies. It often leads to feelings of self-doubt, low self-esteem, and anxiety. The Inner Critic can hinder personal growth and well-being by creating negative self-talk and reinforcing limiting beliefs. See this short animated video to learn more about this concept: [Click](#)



The Critical Inner Voice - Whiteboard Animation

Compassionate Parent:

The Compassionate Parent, on the other hand, is an approach to nurturing and supporting yourself and others with kindness, understanding, and empathy. It involves providing love, care, and guidance while recognizing and validating emotions, needs, and individuality. Compassionate Parent focus on building strong connections, promoting healthy development, and fostering a positive sense of self. It encourages communication, active listening, setting boundaries, and teaching skills to navigate challenges. The Compassionate Parent is really ourselves. To learn more about this concept, see this short animated video: [clic](#)



How to distinguish between the two of them? Pay attention to the following elements of self-talk:

1. **Focus:** The Inner Critic primarily focuses on self-judgment and negative self-talk, while The Compassionate Parent emphasizes providing love and support.
2. **Target:** The Inner Critic primarily affects our own self-perception and emotional well-being, while The Compassionate Parent aims to promote growth and well-being.
3. **Tone:** The Inner Critic uses a critical and negative tone, often reinforcing self-doubt and fear. In contrast, The Compassionate Parent utilizes a kind, understanding, and empathetic tone.
4. **Purpose:** The Inner Critic tends to undermine self-confidence and hinder personal growth, whereas The Compassionate Parent seeks to nurture and empower children, helping them develop resilience, self-esteem, and positive relationships.

It's important to recognize and quiet the Inner Critic within ourselves through self-compassion, cultivating a more supportive and nurturing inner voice. By practising compassionate parenting towards ourselves, we can provide a positive and nurturing environment for our inner children, helping them develop a healthy sense of self and fostering their overall well-being.

We can choose to give more voice to our The Compassionate Parent through the Tough Questions creative writing exercise. It will help us with cultivating compassionate responses towards ourselves and others. It is important to note that this change, like any other change, will not happen overnight, so don't get discouraged; The important thing is to plant the seed. If you are consistent and water it every day, over time you will grow a beautiful new compassionate nervous system response that will change your life for the better.

Here's how you perform this exercise:

1. Find a quiet and comfortable space where you can focus without distractions.
2. Have a pen and paper or your preferred writing tools ready.
3. Imagine a scenario or situation in which you often struggle to respond with compassion or kindness. It could be a conflict, a challenging relationship, or a personal struggle.
4. Write down three tough questions related to that situation. These questions should challenge your usual responses and encourage compassionate thinking.
5. Reflect on each question and aim to answer them with the highest possible compassion grade. Consider how a compassionate and understanding person would respond.
6. Write your responses in a free-flowing manner, without judgment or self-censorship. Allow your answers to come from a place of genuine empathy and kindness.
7. After answering each question, take a moment to reflect on how your compassionate response differs from your usual reaction. Notice any shifts in perspective or emotional well-being.
8. Repeat this exercise periodically, exploring different scenarios and tough questions, to further develop your compassionate responses.

Example:**Scenario: A conflict with a classmate****Tough Questions:**

1. Why do I tend to react defensively and engage in arguments instead of seeking understanding?
2. How can I shift from being judgmental to actively listening and showing empathy?
3. What can I do to find common ground and work towards resolution instead of escalating the conflict?

Examples of Compassionate Responses:

1. Instead of reacting defensively, I can remind myself that my classmate may be experiencing their own challenges or insecurities. By understanding their perspective and addressing their concerns with empathy, we can foster a more collaborative and supportive environment.
2. Rather than being judgmental, I can remind myself that everyone makes mistakes and has their own unique struggles. I can actively listen to my classmate, validating their feelings and acknowledging their perspective without immediate criticism. This will create a safe space for open communication and understanding.
3. To find common ground and resolve conflicts, I can approach the situation with a mindset of cooperation rather than competition. I can propose solutions that consider both our needs and find compromi-

ses that benefit both parties. By focusing on shared goals and fostering a sense of teamwork, we can build strong, working relationships.

Remember to embrace self-compassion throughout this exercise. Recognize that changing habitual responses takes time and

practice. Celebrate your progress, no matter how small, and continue to nurture your capacity for compassion in various aspects of life.



4. Tool 2: Write yourself a better story

Our minds are incredibly powerful and play a significant role in shaping our perception of the world. One fascinating aspect of our minds is confirmation bias, which refers to our tendency to seek out and interpret information that aligns with our existing beliefs and expectations. This bias influences how we perceive and interpret the world around us, creating a unique and subjective experience for each individual.

While we all inhabit the same physical reality, our subjective experiences differ because of the narratives we construct within our minds. These narratives are formed by our beliefs, past experiences, cultural influences, and societal conditioning. They serve as the lens through which we perceive and make sense of the world.

Telling ourselves a better story involves recognizing the narratives that no longer serve us and consciously choosing to reframe them in a more positive and empowering light. By doing so, we can actively shift our perspective, attitudes, and beliefs, ultimately transforming our world vision.

When we tell ourselves a better story, we begin to challenge our existing beliefs and open ourselves up to new possibilities. We intentionally seek out evidence and expe-

riences that align with our new narrative. By actively searching for alternative viewpoints and interpretations, we broaden our understanding and start to see the world in a different light.

Changing our narrative offers numerous benefits. It enhances our sense of self-worth and self-confidence as we embrace a more positive view of ourselves and our capabilities. It fuels motivation and resilience, as we shift from a mindset of limitation to one of growth and possibility. Moreover, it positively impacts our emotional well-being by reducing self-criticism and negative self-talk, leading to increased happiness and fulfillment.

By consciously changing our narrative, we become active participants in shaping our reality. We move away from being passive recipients of our experiences and instead become creators of our own stories. This transformation empowers us to make positive changes, pursue our goals, and live a more meaningful and fulfilling life.

It's important to note that changing our narrative is not about denying or suppressing negative emotions or difficult experiences. It's about acknowledging them while actively reframing our perspective to focus on

growth, learning, and resilience. It's about consciously choosing a narrative that supports our well-being and empowers us to create the life we desire.

“Write yourself a better story” is a compound exercise and can be overwhelming, as it is quite difficult to reframe a past experience, the meaning of which we have been repeating to ourselves again and again for years. That's why it is recommended to start with a past experience that is not so significant for us, or, better yet, with a present experience that is just a little bit unpleasant, enough to cause us a bit of discomfort. Keep in mind that the fastest way to change the course of our future lives is to start changing and molding our present.

Here's how to perform the exercise:

Prepare by dividing a piece of paper in 3 columns. The first one will be the space for writing down the original feelings that arose when you first had the challenging experience, the second one will be for freely rearranging your thoughts about the experience, and the third one is to give the old experience a final, new form - a starting point for growth.

1. Choose an experience that you would like to work on; As we said before, it doesn't have to be an extremely difficult one. We are looking for a mild challenge here: It could be a personal setback, a failure, or a disappointment.
2. Reflect on the initial narrative: Take a few moments to reflect on the initial thoughts, beliefs, and emotions associated with the chosen experience. Consider how it has affected your perspective and self-perception. How did you feel when you were experiencing it? After recalling your feelings, write them in the first column of the piece of paper that you previously prepared.
3. Identify the lessons and growth opportunities: Explore the potential lessons and growth opportunities that can emerge from this experience. Consider how it might contribute to personal development, resilience, and character building. Loosely write your thoughts about it in the second column. Don't worry about the outcome, this is a work in process.
4. Reframe the narrative: Begin writing a new story by reframing the difficult experience. Start by acknowledging the initial challenges and emotions, but then shift the focus to the positive aspects and potential benefits that can arise from it. Start putting it into words and then transfer them on your piece of paper (3rd column).
5. Embrace personal growth and resilience: Highlight the ways in which this experience can foster personal growth, resilience, and inner strength. Focus on the lessons learned, skills gained, and the new perspectives that can be developed as a result.
6. Cultivate self-compassion: Throughout the exercise, infuse self-compassion into the new narrative. Try to be kind, understanding, and forgiving toward yourself as you navigate through challenges.
7. Visualize a positive outcome: Envision a positive outcome or future scenario that reflects the growth and transformation resulting from this experience. Imagine yourself embracing your newfound strength, confidence, and wisdom.
8. Emphasize personal empowerment: Encourage yourself to take ownership of their story and embrace their ability to shape their own narrative. Emphasize your power to redefine your experiences and use them as stepping stones toward a brighter future.

You can repeat the exercise as many times as you wish, working on a different experience or on the same experience. Repeating work on one of the challenging memories of yours can often get you to a place you would never have imagined when you first started the exercise. If you choose to work on the same experience again, we recommend allowing yourself plenty of time for reflection between the attempts. This will ensure the integration of any emotions that we originally chose to reject.



Autonomous being

8

1. Autonomous being
2. Tool 1: Autonomous speech
3. Tool 2: Independent writing practice
4. Write everyday

1. Autonomous being

When it comes to our lives, each of us sees the world in a unique way. Our beliefs shape our reality, and our minds search for confirmation of those beliefs. But what if we could change the narrative and tell ourselves a better story?

Having a healthy sense of autonomy means having a good relationship with ourselves. It involves understanding our real feelings and needs, having a clear sense of who we are and what we want, and taking responsibility for our lives. It's about being true to ourselves and not relying on others to define us.

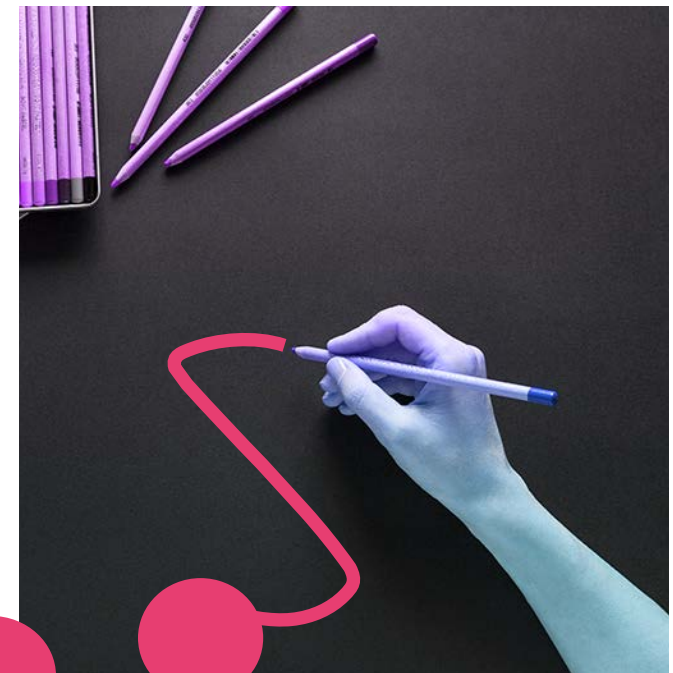
On the other hand, what may seem as healthy autonomy, might really be pseudo-autonomy: it seems healthy on the surface, but it's actually a mask for avoiding vulnerability. It involves keeping emotional distance, appearing fiercely independent, and manipulating or controlling others to meet our needs. In pseudo-autonomy, we suppress our true needs and emotions, always putting on a cheerful facade.

Healthy symbiosis is about maintaining balanced relationships with others. It means creating win-win situations through flexibility and cooperation. It involves valuing others for who they are and expressing our wants and needs without threatening the relationship. In healthy symbiosis, we respect

each other's autonomy and have the option to end the relationship with mutual respect if needed.

During infancy, healthy symbiosis sets the foundation for healthy autonomy as we grow and develop our individual identities in adolescence. But if our early experiences involve trauma, our chances of developing healthy autonomy can be hindered.

By working through our trauma, we can strengthen our true identity and become more autonomous. This allows us to connect with others without losing sight of ourselves. In other words, once we establish healthy autonomy, healthy symbiosis becomes possible.



There are four key steps in the journey towards healthy autonomy:

1. Recognize the ways in which you've coped with past challenges and understand how they still affect you today, even in non-threatening situations.
2. Build a stronger connection with your true self, feeling supported and empowered from within.
3. Begin acknowledging and understanding your early experiences, perhaps with the help of representatives or supportive individuals, until you're ready to experience and process them yourself.
4. Once you're ready and your healthy self is strong, confront and express the difficult emotions and physical experiences associated with your past trauma. Within a safe framework, allow yourself to safely express and process these feelings.

Healing from trauma is a step-by-step process, respecting your readiness, trust, and feelings of safety.

Personal autonomy is vital for your well-being. It allows you to make independent decisions aligned with your values, beliefs, and preferences. It empowers you to pursue your goals and desires without undue influence from others. Autonomy promotes self-determination, empowerment, and fulfillment.

However, trauma can significantly impact

personal autonomy. It can make you feel a loss of control, doubt yourself, withdraw from others, be hyper-vigilant, and develop negative self-beliefs. But with support and healing, you can regain your autonomy and develop self-trust and confidence.

2. Tool 1: Autonomous speech

According to the Oxford Dictionary of Psychology, autonomous speech is “an invented language understood only by its inventor(s), such as the secret languages sometimes used by twins, especially in their second year of life. It is also called idioglossia or cryptophasia”. Since we are playing with word meanings and rewriting our difficult experiences, we are going to use idioglossia’s principles as means to develop a higher grade of autonomy as writers using their creativity to deal with their trauma.

Here, we will create our own language to talk about our difficult experiences. It can be as complicated, or as simple, as you would like it to be. Even if it’s just a single word, it’s a start! Creating your own language through idioglossia can be a powerful way to talk about trauma and express your experiences in a deeply personal and cathartic manner. Here’s a step-by-step guide on how to embark on this transformative journey:

1. Reflect on your experiences:

Take some time to reflect on the experiences you want to address. Consider the emotions, sensations, and memories associated with those events. This self-reflection will help you lay the foundation for your idioglossia language.

They do not need to be the most difficult experiences you’ve ever had; In fact, it is sometimes helpful to start with something smaller that has less impact on our well-being. This way we can slowly learn the mechanics of the exercise and build muscle memory sufficient to deal with more difficult topics.

For this example, let’s consider the experience of a car accident.

1. Identify emotionally charged words or sounds:
2. Think about the specific emotions and feelings that arise when you recall those traumatic experiences. Identify words or sounds that resonate with those emotions. They can be existing words from different languages or completely new sounds that you create.
3. In this case, words like “fear,” “crash,” and “pain” might resonate.
4. Create symbolic representations:
5. Explore the use of symbolic representations to convey the complex aspects of your trauma. These symbols can be visual, tactile, or even abstract. Consider using shapes, colors, patterns, or gestures that hold personal significance for you. Write everything down as you go, those might be useful later - after some time, when you integrate this experience, you might look back at this particular

dictionary as a way to connect with your subconsciousness.

6. For instance, you might use a jagged lightning bolt to represent the crash, a broken heart shape to symbolize the emotional pain, or an eye shedding tears to signify fear.
7. Develop grammar and structure: Construct a simple grammar and structure for your idioglossia language. Decide how words or symbols will be combined to form sentences or phrases. You can establish rules for sentence structure, verb conjugation, or other linguistic elements, or you can allow for more fluid and intuitive expression.
8. You may leave this step out if it seems too complicated or overwhelming - we are trying to establish a sense of stronger connection with ourselves, not to destroy it. If a certain structure appears, great! If not, do not get discouraged, you are a beautiful work in progress. For example, you might use the symbol for fear followed by the sound “bo” to represent the phrase “I was scared.”
9. Establish meaning: Assign meaning to your idioglossia words, sounds, and symbols based on their connection to your traumatic experiences. You might create a lexicon or reference guide to keep track of the meanings associated with each element of your language.

ge. The meanings can be specific to you, allowing for a deeply personal and therapeutic mode of communication. For instance, the symbol for the car accident might represent the event itself, while the sound “ba” might symbolize physical pain.

10. Practice and refine: Start using your idioglossia language in your writing or self-expression exercises. Experiment with how different combinations of words or symbols evoke certain emotions or convey specific aspects of your trauma. Continually refine and adapt your language as you delve deeper into your healing journey.
11. Seek support and share: Consider sharing your idioglossia language with a trusted therapist, counselor, or supportive friend who can provide guidance and understanding. Sharing your language and discussing its meaning can offer additional insight and emotional support.

Remember, idioglossia is a personal and intimate form of expression. It’s entirely up to you how you choose to use and share your language. Allow yourself the freedom to explore, experiment, and adapt your idioglossia as you navigate the process of healing from trauma.

Dealing with traumatic experiences through idioglossia can offer several significant benefits for individuals on their healing journey.

Here are some of the advantages:

Self-expression and empowerment

Idioglossia provides a unique and personalized language for expressing emotions, thoughts, and experiences related to trauma. It offers a safe and confidential outlet for us to communicate our innermost feelings, allowing us to reclaim our voice and regain a sense of control over our narrative.

Enhanced emotional processing

Idioglossia encourages us to explore and confront our emotions associated with trauma in a structured and intentional way. By translating these emotions into a personal language, we can gain a deeper understanding of our feelings, facilitating emotional processing and healing.

Symbolic representation and distancing

The use of symbols and abstract representations in idioglossia allows us to create a degree of separation between ourselves and the traumatic experience. By transforming complex emotions and memories into symbols, we can gain perspective, foster emotional detachment, and begin to make sense of our trauma from a new vantage point.

Increased self-awareness

Engaging with idioglossia requires introspection and self-reflection. As we develop our language, we become more attuned to our thoughts, feelings, and needs. This hei-

ghtened self-awareness enables us to identify triggers, establish boundaries, and develop effective coping strategies.

Catharsis and emotional release

Through idioglossia, we can release pent-up emotions and find catharsis. The act of expressing oneself in a personal language allows for a deep emotional release, providing relief and a sense of liberation from the weight of trauma.

Alternative communication pathways

Idioglossia creates a bridge between the often indescribable aspects of trauma and the outside world. It offers an alternative means of communication when conventional language feels inadequate or overwhelming. This can foster better understanding and empathy from others, who may struggle to grasp the full extent of the individual’s experience.

Creative exploration and transformation:

The process of creating and engaging with idioglossia is inherently creative. It encourages us to tap into our imagination, think symbolically, and explore our experiences from different angles. This creative exploration can lead to transformative insights, personal growth, and the emergence of new perspectives on the healing journey.

3. Tool 2: Independent writing practice

Engaging in independent writing practice can be incredibly important and uplifting when you're on a journey of healing from trauma. Writing becomes your own peaceful oasis, where you can retreat and connect with your inner self. It's a place where you can let your thoughts flow freely and express your feelings without judgment. Embrace the power of your words as they become a source of comfort and solace.

Through writing, you discover the incredible strength of your own voice. You have the power to tell your story, share your experiences, and shape your narrative. Let your pen dance across the pages, knowing that your words have the ability to heal not only yourself, but also others who may read them someday.

When you write, you release the weight of your trauma, allowing it to transform into something lighter. It's like a fresh breeze sweeping away the shadows, creating space for healing and renewal. With every word, you take a step forward on your journey towards resilience and wholeness.

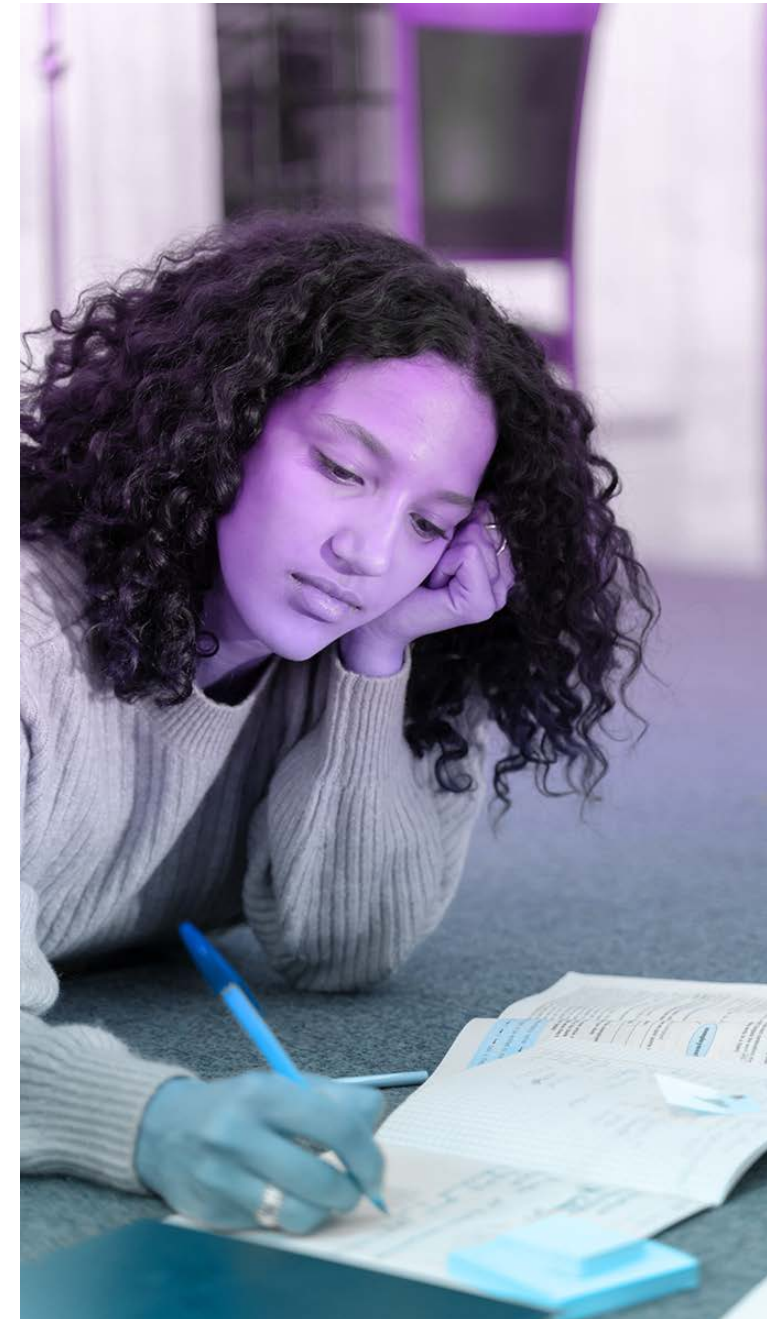
In the realm of independent writing, there are no right or wrong answers. It's about embracing your truth, even if it's raw, messy, or uncertain. Your words hold immense power

to acknowledge your pain, but also to illuminate the strength and resilience that reside within you.

Writing opens the door to new perspectives and insights. As you weave your thoughts and experiences onto the page, you may discover hidden meanings, untapped resilience, and moments of profound clarity. Embrace the beauty of these discoveries and let them guide you towards healing and growth.

Each time you engage in independent writing practice, celebrate the progress you've made. Every word, every sentence, and every page is a testament to your courage and determination. Acknowledge the steps you've taken, no matter how small, and let them fuel your optimism and belief in your ability to heal.

The act of writing itself is a form of self-care and self-compassion. Embrace this beautiful practice as you embark on your healing journey, and trust that your words have the power to transform your pain into resilience, strength, and ultimately, a brighter future.



4. Write everyday

We strongly encourage you to set aside some time every day that you dedicate to your writing practice. Our brain and body have a natural inclination towards repetitiveness, and it can actually be quite beneficial for us.

Repeating certain tasks or actions helps our brain become more efficient. When we perform familiar actions, our brain can automate the process, conserving mental energy for other tasks that require more focus and attention.

Repetitive practice is essential for skill development. Whether it's playing an instrument, learning a new sport, or writing for trauma healing, repeated practice strengthens the neural pathways associated with that skill. Over time, this repetition enhances muscle memory, coordination, and overall performance.

Repetition plays a crucial role in memory formation. This is great news for everyone who writes to give their difficult experiences another meaning. When we encounter information or experiences repeatedly, it strengthens the connections between neurons, making it easier for our brain to retrieve that information later on. Repetition can help so-

lidity learning and aid in long-term memory retention.

Engaging in repetitive activities can have a calming effect on our nervous system. Repetition can be soothing and provide a sense of predictability and stability, which can be especially helpful in managing stress and anxiety.

Our brain craves routines and habits, as they provide a sense of structure and familiarity. Rituals and habits can serve as anchors in our lives, bringing comfort and stability. They can provide a sense of order and control, reducing stress and promoting a positive mindset.



Celebrating change

9



As creative writers dealing with difficult experiences, we all want to experience change, whether big or small. But how we approach and celebrate change can make a significant impact on our well-being and happiness. Celebrating change is important because it allows us to embrace the power of transformation and find joy in the process.

Psychologist BJ Fogg, the founder of Stanford University's Behavior Design Lab, has studied behavior change extensively (here is a short Ted Talk video explaining his model). He believes that when three elements come together—motivation, ability, and a prompt—a new behavior can occur. To make lasting changes in our lives, Fogg suggests breaking them down into specific, easy behaviors called “Tiny Habits” and finding ways to trigger and reward them.

In his work with thousands of people, he discovered that celebrating small successes is crucial for making fledgling habits stick. Celebration has a powerful effect on our behavior and mindset. It creates positive feelings that wire new habits into our brains and make us feel great in the process.

Fogg shares the story of Linda, a stay-at-home mom who often felt overwhelmed and criticized herself for what she didn't accomplish. Like many of us, she focused on her shortcomings and rarely recognized her successes. His research shows that we tend to dwell on our failures rather than celebrating

achievements. He teaches us using celebration as a tool for transformation. Celebration is a technique for behavior change and a shift in our psychological outlook. When we celebrate, we create positive feelings that reinforce new habits in our brains.

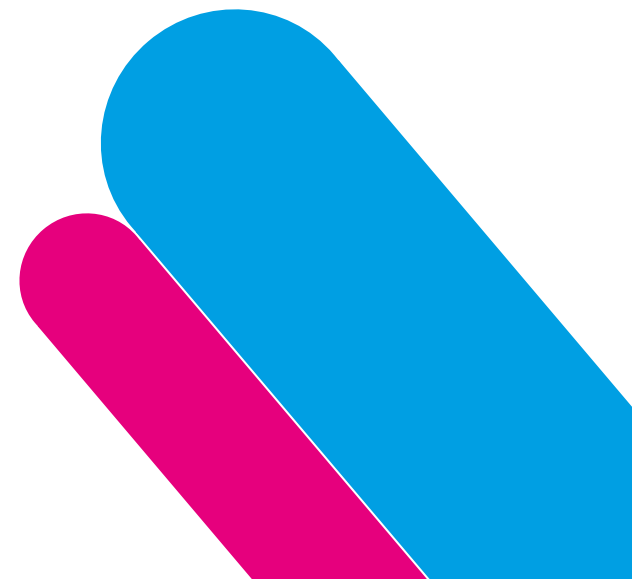
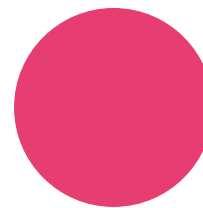
Fogg's personal experience with celebration began when he was going through a difficult time filled with stress and anxiety. He found that flossing a single tooth and celebrating it as a small victory made him feel better. This sparked his curiosity, and he realized that the act of celebrating itself had a significant impact on his emotions and motivation.

Emotions play a vital role in habit formation. Repetition alone isn't enough; it's the positive feelings associated with an action that truly create lasting habits. Celebration is the key to using emotions effectively and creating a positive mindset that supports habit development.

Celebration is like fertilizer for our transformation. Each individual celebration streng-

thens the roots of a specific habit, while the accumulation of celebrations over time nourishes the entire habit garden. By cultivating feelings of success and confidence, we create an inviting environment for new habits to flourish.

Using Fogg's framework, we recommend celebrating at three different times: when you remember to do your bit of daily writing, right after you've completed it, and immediately after you feel that you are able to respond to your triggers, not just react to them in the old manner. The celebration can be as simple as saying “yes!” or picturing fireworks in your mind. Personalize it! The goal is to create a feeling of success that wires in the habit and motivates you to continue.



If you're unsure about what celebration works best for you, Fogg suggests imagining yourself in different scenarios and observing your natural reactions. These clues can help you discover your personal ways of celebrating.

Sometimes, celebrating can feel challenging or unnatural for some people. Fogg introduces the "Celebration Blitz" as a technique to experience the power of celebration. Set a timer for three minutes, tidy up the messiest area of your home or office, and celebrate this small success along the way. Notice the shift in your mood and perspective as you create a positive environment through celebration.



Celebrating change is essential because it allows us to embrace transformation, cultivate a positive mindset, and reinforce new habits. By celebrating our achievements, no matter how small, we create a sense of joy, motivation, and resilience. So, let's celebrate every step of our transformative writing journey and discover the power of celebration in our lives. *vidas.*

Writing tools

10



We have already covered the superiority of handwriting when it comes to dealing with difficult emotions. Nonetheless, we understand that nowadays digital writing tools are forming our day to day, they are getting more and more powerful and are here to stay, so we decided to include them here. Their enormous advantage is their availability, since most of us carry a mobile phone in our pocket. And we have to admit, as much as we love handwriting, it is better to write digitally than not at all (because you keep forgetting your notebook at home, for example). Below we list some of the most useful digital writing tools, editors and thesauruses for you to use whenever you feel like it:

1. **Grammarly:** Grammarly is a widely used writing tool that helps check grammar, spelling, punctuation, and style errors. It provides real-time suggestions and explanations to improve your writing. Use it if correct grammar is important to you, but remember, it is not absolutely necessary for trauma healing. Actually, some exercises we presented earlier encourage you to break up the traditional grammar rules. In the end, what really is important is you, your emotions and their transformation.
2. **Hemingway Editor:** Hemingway Editor helps you improve the clarity and readability of your writing. It highlights complex sentences, excessive use of adverbs, passive voice, and offers suggestions for simplifying your text.
3. **Google Docs:** Google Docs is a free online word processing tool that allows you to write, edit, and collaborate on documents in real-time. It offers features like automatic saving, sharing, and commenting, making it easy to work on writing projects with others.
4. **Evernote:** Evernote is a note-taking and organization tool that lets you capture ideas, make notes, and save articles or web pages for later reference. It syncs across devices, making it convenient for writers on the go.
5. **Scrivener:** Scrivener is a powerful writing software for longer writing projects like novels or research papers. It offers features for organizing research, outlining, and structuring your writing, helping you stay focused and organized.
6. **Cliche Finder:** Cliche Finder helps you identify and avoid overused phrases and clichés in your writing. It highlights them so you can find alternative and more creative expressions.
7. **Canva:** Canva is a graphic design tool that can be useful for creating visually appealing documents, such as book covers, promotional materials, or social media posts to accompany your writing.
8. **Reedsy Book Editor:** Reedsy Book Editor is an online writing and formatting tool specifically designed for authors. It helps you create e-book files with features like chapter organization, styling options, and export to various formats.
9. **Storyboard That:** Storyboard That is an online tool for creating visual storyboards and comics. It can be helpful for planning and visually organizing your story ideas before diving into the actual writing process.

Thesauruses:

A thesaurus is an invaluable tool for writers as it provides synonyms, antonyms, and related words that can enhance the variety and richness of their writing. Here are some popular thesaurus options specifically geared towards writers:

1. **Merriam-Webster Thesaurus:** Merriam-Webster offers an online thesaurus with extensive word lists, synonyms, and antonyms. It also provides example sentences to help writers understand the context and usage of different words.
2. **Thesaurus.com:** Thesaurus.com is a comprehensive online resource that offers a vast collection of synonyms, antonyms, and related words. It also provides definitions, example sentences, and audio pronunciations for words.
3. **Power Thesaurus:** Power Thesaurus is a crowdsourced online thesaurus that offers a wide range of synonyms contributed by its community of users. It provides alternative word suggestions and allows users to vote on the relevancy and quality of different synonyms.

that displays word connections and relationships in a dynamic and engaging way. It helps writers explore related concepts and find the perfect word for their writing.

5. Collins Thesaurus: Collins Thesaurus is a trusted resource for writers, offering a comprehensive range of synonyms and antonyms. It provides example sentences, usage notes, and word origins to help writers understand the nuances of different words.

6. Macmillan Thesaurus: Macmillan Thesaurus is another popular online resource that offers a vast selection of synonyms, antonyms, and related words. It provides usage examples, alternative phrases, and additional information to aid writers in their word choice.

7. Oxford Thesaurus: Oxford Thesaurus is known for its quality and reliability. It offers a wide range of synonyms and antonyms, along with definitions, example sentences, and usage notes to help writers find the most suitable words for their writing.



Hemingway
Editor



grammarly



Post scriptum

11



The final version of this book was conceived after completing a training course about dealing with difficult emotions and experiences and thus starting creating and experimenting a real, tangible change in our lives. The tools we shared above are a result of the common work of our youth workers and young people going through a difficult period in their lives. We would like to share their comments about the training and those tools, to encourage you to become a creative writer and employ them in your daily practice; It can prompt you to create changes in your way of experiencing things, however difficult they might be. And, as Dr Wayne Dyer once said, when you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change.

So, what do some young people trained in creative writing tools for trauma say about them?

- *“This course gave me a safe space to express myself and process my difficult experiences through writing.”*
- *“I never thought I could find healing through words. Here, I found guidance I needed to navigate my emotions.”*
- *“I discovered a new level of self-awareness and introspection through the creative writing exercises.”*
- *“I found my voice again through the power of storytelling.”*
- *“Writing allowed me to confront my trauma in a way that felt safe and empowering.”*

- *“I am amazed by the resilience and strength I discovered within myself through this course.”*
- *“The writing exercises provided a cathartic release, allowing me to let go of the weight I was carrying.”*
- *“I now have a newfound sense of hope and optimism for the future.”*
- *“I learned that I am not alone in my struggles, and writing brought a sense of connection and community.”*
- *“This course helped me rediscover my creativity and passion for writing.”*
- *“I am proud of the progress I made in my writing skills and personal growth during this course.”*
- *“Writing became my sanctuary, a place where I could explore and make sense of my emotions.”*
- *“I am grateful for the tools and techniques I learned that will continue to support my healing journey.”*
- *“This course empowered me to share my story and inspire others who may be going through similar experiences.”*
- *“Writing gave me a sense of control over my narrative, allowing me to rewrite my own story.”*
- *“I realized that my experiences are not my identity, and I can choose how to define myself through my writing.”*
- *“This course taught me the importance of self-care and self-expression as part of my healing process.”*
- *“I overcame my fear of vulnerability and*

learned to embrace the strength in sharing my truth.”

- *“The feedback and encouragement I received from the instructor and peers boosted my confidence in my writing abilities.”*
- *“Writing became a form of self-discovery, allowing me to uncover layers of myself I hadn’t explored before.”*
- *“I now have a collection of stories that reflect my journey and serve as a reminder of my resilience.”*
- *“The writing prompts sparked my imagination and helped me tap into emotions I didn’t know how to express.”*
- *“I feel lighter and more at peace after releasing my thoughts and feelings onto the page.”*
- *“Through writing, I found new perspectives and alternative ways of viewing my difficult experiences.”*
- *“I am forever grateful for the transformative power of creative writing and the impact it had on my life.”*



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