

# Find Joy Through Reflective Journaling

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# Find Joy through Reflective Journaling

Martha Peaslee Levine, MD  
Associate Professor of  
Pediatrics, Psychiatry and  
Humanities

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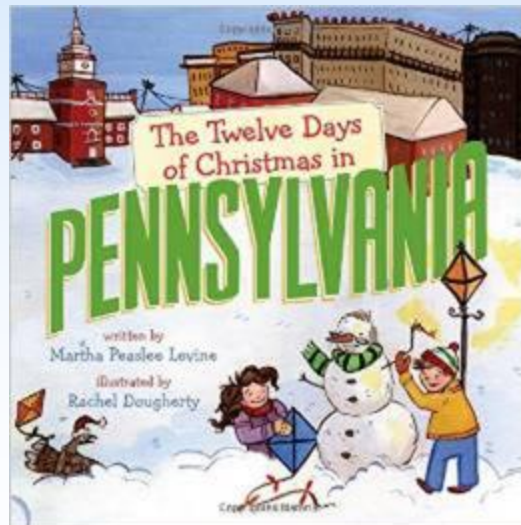
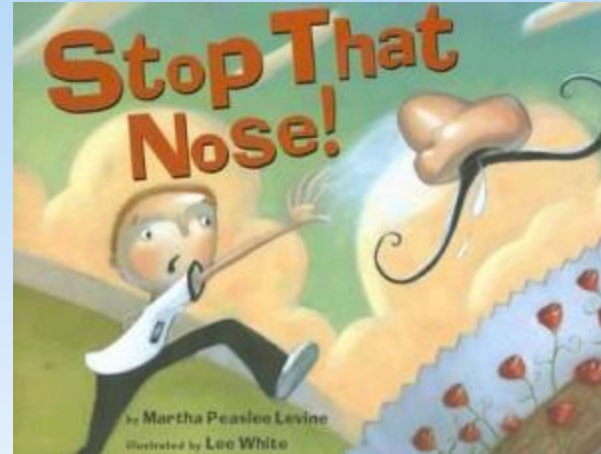
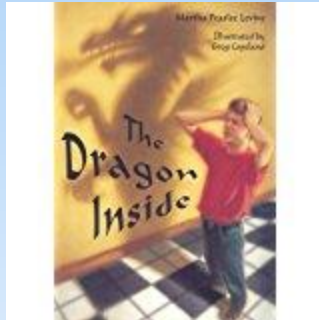
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- Nothing to disclose
  - Except for a love of writing

# Writing

- What does writing mean to you?
- Does the word evoke certain memories?
- Feelings? Thoughts? Beliefs?

# Writing Life



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# Journal = Journey

- Journal—journey, a way of finding your voice



# Expressive Writing

- Explore her/his deepest thoughts and feelings about the experiences or topics that are important to them
- Some explore how topic related to issues in their lives
  - Childhood
  - Relationships
  - Who they are
  - Who they have been or will be

**James W. Pennebaker, PhD**  
**Began investigations into effects of writing  
based on personal experience**

- In his book, **Opening Up**, Pennebaker describes a period of depression. “After about a month of emotional isolation, I started writing about my deepest thoughts and feelings. I remember being drawn to the typewriter each afternoon for about a week, where I would spend anywhere from 10 minutes to an hour pounding on the keys...Each day after writing, I felt fatigued and yet freer. By the end of the week, I noticed my depression lifting. For the first time in years—perhaps ever—I had a sense of meaning and direction.”



# Writing--

- Is a form of confession.
- Allows people to determine how much disclosure they are capable of dealing with
- Allows translating events into language which allows understanding and assimilation
- Helps identify areas of conflict in life
- Clarifies complicated issues
- Helps express emotion rather than suppressing

# Inhibition

- Requires psychological energy
- This energy use leaves fewer resources to respond to current stressors or developmental hurdles
- Inhibited experiences resurface as ruminations, dreams, and thought disturbances
- Limits ability to integrate event

# Writing from the Heart Workshop

- Joy Cowley, suggests that when you sink into yourself and write your childhood memories, the strongest emotion is fear. Quiet happy moments languish underneath. Pain is what comes up first.
- One participant found that in each of her memories, her shyness figured prominently. She was able to examine the influence this had on her life and the ongoing hold it had over her

# WRITING EXERCISE



# Chapter Titles From: “When You Reach Me” by Rebecca Stead

1. Things You Hide
2. Things You Wish For
3. Things That Sneak Up on You
4. Things You Keep Secret
5. Things You Don't Forget
6. Things You Push Away
7. Things You Hold On To
8. Things You Pretend
9. Things That Make No Sense
10. Things You Realize
11. Things You Protect
12. Things That Heal

- The easiest thing in the world to be is you. The most difficult thing to be is what other people want you to be. Don't let them put you in that position.

**Leo Buscaglia**

# WRITING EXERCISE



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# Late Summer

by Carrie Fountain

Out for a walk tonight,  
the dog is throwing all her weight  
against the leash, lunging toward  
the fat tomcat

licking his black ankles  
with a delicious, solemn attention  
at the top of the neighbor's steps.

Because this is what the dog  
was made to do.  
Because for some lucky animals

the space between the body  
and what it wants  
is all there is.

"Late Summer" by Carrie Fountain from *Burn Lake*. © Penguin, 2010. Reprinted with permission

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# Narratives

- Dominant Stories of our lives
- Need Deconstruct—unpack what have become problem-saturated or unhelpful stories
- Need re-author preferred stories
- Look at different versions, variations or interpretations of stories

# WRITING EXERCISE



For sale: Baby shoes. Never worn. —*Ernest Hemingway*

Longed for him. Got him. Shit. —*Margaret Atwood*

Well, I thought it was funny. —*Stephen Colbert*

Revenge is living well, without you. —*Joyce Carol Oates*

# Henriette Anne Klauser

## Put Your Heart On Paper

- Discussed a severe biking accident in which she was injured after careening down a hill. “Already at thirteen I was beginning to realize a principle that has guided my life. Writing transforms. Writing takes what is distasteful and makes it palatable, takes what is painful and helps you to heal. Writing that story was a Band-Aid for my soul, because it shifted by perspective.”

# Pennebaker's Trauma Study

- Pennebaker found using computer analyses that people who were benefiting from writing were constructing stories.
- Needed to write about emotions of trauma and trauma itself without restrictions.
- If wrote only emotions without describing trauma or described trauma without emotions, health benefit not observed

# Natural Disasters

- Smyth, et.al. looked at 53 individuals displaced by a hurricane and flooding
- Control vs. emotional writing, also community group of non-displaced
- In control writing group at 3 month mark, disaster-related intrusions were associated with higher levels of negative affect and more physical symptoms than emotional writing group

# Writing and Occupational Survival

- Looked at group of men laid off from their jobs. ½ write about deepest feelings about getting laid off. ½ wrote about how they used their time. A third group didn't write at all.
- Within 3 mo., 27% writing about feelings landed jobs compared with less than 5% superficial writing and no-writing grps.
- Later 53% writing grp vs 18% others had jobs
- The men in the different grps went on same number job interviews.

# Why?

- Suggestion that writing about emotions helped the men come to terms with their extreme hostility towards former employer. Without this experience, they tended to vent anger in interview situations. Having dealt with anger in writing, in interview situations seemed more promising job candidates



# Meditative Aspect of Writing

- Own Experience “A time where connections and thoughts surface that I don’t expect and teach me something new either through my own experiences or those of my characters.”
- Evident in Groups
- Paola Corso, a poet, describes “...writing poetry is an act of prayer: a sequence of words, a rhythm of sounds that when read to one’s self or spoken out loud has the power to release the spirit from within.”

# Writing Guidelines

- Topic?

Issues taking emotional energy to contain.

- What?

What happened and what you feel.

- Why?

Why do you feel that way.

- How?

Write continuously to turn off inner critic.

# Writing Guidelines Cont.

- When?

Relates to individual, times of anxiety or strong emotions. Morning energy can lower Inhibitions. Some suggestion spacing writing may increase benefits (1/wk for month vs. 4/wk for 1 week)

- Where?

Pennebaker's studies suggest unique settings can help. Place won't be interrupted.

# Writing Guidelines cont.

- What should happen to the writing?  
Keep for yourself, use in therapy,  
destroy—any work.  
Don't write with mind towards showing  
others. Can inhibit what you write.

# Journaling Techniques

- Five-minute sprint
  - Need a prompt? I remember... I believe...What do I want?
- Lists
  - 3 pleasant moments/achievements/experiences
- Clustering
- Captured moments
- Lists of 100 (Adams 1990)

write fast, repeat as much as needed,  
number the items, don't censor

When done group items, with perhaps  
surprising results

# More Techniques

- Unsent letters
  - People in life, younger or older selves
- Dialogues
  - With people, events, body, inner wisdom
  - Eating disorder, recovery, resistance/blocks
- Feedback mechanism
  - Writer comments on what has been expressed
  - When I read this I notice...I am surprised that....I realize...I am aware that...I feel....

# Are there other times writing is not helpful?

- Pennebaker raises these questions—
  1. Are you using writing as a substitute for action?
  2. Is your writing an intellectual rather than a self-reflective exercise?
  3. Are you using writing as a forum for uncensored complaining?
  4. Is your writing an exercise in self-reflection or in self-absorption?

# The Trail Is Not a Trail

by [Gary Snyder](#)

I drove down the Freeway  
And turned off at an exit  
And went along a highway  
Til it came to a sideroad  
Drove up the sideroad  
Til it turned to a dirt road  
Full of bumps, and stopped.  
Walked up a trail  
But the trail got rough  
And it faded away—  
Out in the open,  
Everywhere to go.

"The Trail Is Not a Trail" by Gary Snyder, from *Left Out in the Rain*. © North Point Press, 1986. Reprinted with permission.  
([buy now](#))



**New things are scary.  
Approach with caution. But**



# Reminders

1. Mindfulness Lunch & Learn  
(February 5<sup>th</sup> @ 12:00PM – PSH St. Joseph) **available via ZOOM**
2. Go to <http://bit.ly/JournalingLunchandLearnEval> to submit your evaluation of today's lunch and learn.