

EXPRESSIVE WRITING FOR WELLBEING TOOLKIT

INTRODUCTION TO EXPRESSIVE WRITING

What is expressive writing? Expressive writing involves writing down current thoughts, feelings, physical sensations, insights, gratitudes, and more. It is writing without regard for typical writing conventions, such as sentence flow or organization. This type of writing involves being in touch with the present moment, focusing on yourself.

Why use expressive writing? Research has shown that expressive writing helps to manage anxieties, reduce stress, and cope with depression or life events. This technique is helpful as it allows you to externalize your thoughts and stressors, not carrying them around. This allows individuals to separate themselves from their problems. Often times, this helps to view the environment different or solve problems.

WAYS TO USE EXPRESSIVE WRITING

There are many different ways to use expressive writing. Below are some popular methods to try out and determine which is most beneficial to you.

- **Journaling** involves writing down your current thoughts and feelings at that moment or about an event. Journaling can be free-writing about stressors or concerns or following a prompt. Here are some prompts to try:
 - Prompt for self-discovery: If someone described me, what would they say?
 - Prompt for anxiety or depression: What happened before I felt a shift in my mood?
 - Prompt for managing emotions: What is causing these feelings?
 - Prompt for personal growth: What do you most want to accomplish in life?
- **Writing a gratitude list** involves listing things that you are grateful for and why. This can be done daily, discussing events of the day, or when you are feeling negative emotions, listing people, places, things, and events.
- **Writing a letter to yourself** about challenges you've overcome and successes you've had. This letter can be revisited during tough times and you are feeling low.
- **Writing a song or a poem** about your current thoughts, feelings, insights, stressors, and more allows for externalization as well as creativity.

PRACTICING WITH EXPRESSIVE WRITING

Free-writing: Write about your current thoughts and feelings, noting any stressors you may be facing and letting your concerns out.

Prompt: What values do you consider most important in life (honesty, justice, altruism, loyalty, etc.)? How do your actions align with those values?

REFERENCES

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