



Expressive Writing

Between stimulus and response, there is a space.

In that space lies our freedom

and our power to choose our response.

In our response lies our growth and our happiness.”

~ Viktor Frankl

“You are not your thoughts”

Philosophers have said for centuries, “You are not your thoughts.” However, that doesn’t make thoughts any less real. The corresponding hormonal response from your body reinforces this perception. Since every thought is linked to a corresponding internal bodily sensation, you have to have to be careful. With repetition, your brain will perceive your ideas and concepts as your reality. It is critical to comprehend the influence you have on your quality of life based on what you choose to upload into your brain.

Chronic pain is linked with anxiety and frustration and your thoughts and life can become progressively dark. My term for the situation is living in “The Abyss.”

In the era of advanced neuroscience research, pain, anxiety, and anger are all viewed as a progression neurological circuits and physiological responses. These imbedded patterns cannot be controlled, changed, or removed. You can **only** detach or separate from them and then form “detours” or new, more functional circuits. In order to begin this process, you need some distance between your thoughts and automatic reactions.

Writing begins your path to healing

Expressive writing creates this needed space. You will develop an awareness of your thoughts, positive or negative, and you can separate from them. Its effectiveness has been demonstrated in many research studies.

(1)

- Associating thoughts with physical sensations forms new neurological connections.
- Writing down thoughts creates a **space** between you and your thoughts on the paper.
 - This also effective.
- Your brain associates that **space** with vision and feel.
- This creates a physical separation from your thoughts.

Your real journey to healing will begin **only** when you engage in a regular writing routine.



1. Write your thoughts and instantly destroy them.

- Write down specific thoughts. They do not have to make any sense or be legible.
 - They can be positive or negative, rational or irrational, or anything.
- Destroy them.
 - You can write with complete freedom.
 - It is important to NOT analyze these thoughts. Your attention will still be on them and they will be reinforced.
- Do this once or twice a day for 15-30 minutes per session.
- It is **counter-productive** to “journal” or keep these writings.
- Write in this free-flow format for a couple of weeks.
- Then engage in the “Feeling Good” format below.

There is usually a shift in anxiety and frustration within a short time. Writing in the format described in *Feeling Good* provides more focus and structure, in addition to the free expressive writing. For some people, the anxiety may significantly worsen and you should limit or stop the writing until you feel you can handle it. If you feel like you cannot, then contact your doctor. If you are in therapy, it is important to coordinate these efforts with your therapist. Occasionally, he or she may not want you to do the writing.

2. *Feeling Good*

- Read the first third of David Burn’s book, *Feeling Good*.
- Write in his “three-column” format.
- This format stimulates reprogramming of your nervous system: 1) awareness 2) separation 3) establishing new circuits.
- This book is most effective with engaging in the suggested writing.

Continue to IMMEDIATELY destroy your writing