

Expressive Writing/ Writing for Well-being

A developing body of research shows that expressive writing calms the mind and emotions and increases feelings of happiness and wellbeing. Research has shown increasing evidence of the emotional and physical benefits of all types of expressive writing, for example: creative writing, poetry, journaling, keeping a diary. There is little doubt that writing has positive consequences and results in long term improvement in mood and health and that it increases the immune response.

I have just completed a diploma in the subject and found the benefits for myself were profound and I would like to offer it to others. I facilitate a small group that started in my house (Gainey's Well) in January 2018. We meet the second Wednesday of the month from 2.30-4 followed by a cup of tea and biscuits.

I provide various prompts such as: words, poems, art, post-cards, metaphors, interesting objects. Exercises include individual tasks, pair work and group work.

Sharing of writing and participation in the exercises is completely voluntary although I do encourage some sharing. There is great benefit from sharing one's writing with others since, when heard and validated by others, expressive writing can be a powerful and affirming learning experience.

Examples of group writing

Group Poem, 10 January 2018

Journey

On this journey let us take:
Patience, a sense of adventure, enthusiasm,
a notebook and pens.
Let us take:
love peace and joy,
unopened packages of uncertainty and hope.
Let us take:
Our true selves
which we will find on the way.

On this journey we might meet:
Problems, set-backs, help from others
and a glorious sense of achievement.
We might meet:
Difficulties and discouragements,
our forgotten selves, neglected friends
and animals we once loved,
We might meet:
doubts and suffering
to be borne by us all,
Monsters and fairies,
old men and babies.

On this journey we hope to find:
Knowledge, wonder, fulfilment and peace,
love, peace, and joy multiplied.

We hope to find:
Insights hitherto not seen,
a different view of the landscape,
kindness and inspiration.

We hope to find:
Shared experiences, shared sense of the Other,
flowers and rainbows, treasures and wisdom.

Group poem, 11 July 2018

Summer

Summer reminds me of childhood holidays,
playing rounders in the long grass, rolling in the hay
splashing in the stream.

Summer smells of roses and wine,
full-grown lavender, strawberries and cream,
sea foam on the beach
the scent of rain on the earth after a drought.

Summer is the time for: disappearing to somewhere else,
seeing friends we haven't seen for years.
For guiltlessly doing nothing, revelling in sunshine
Summer is the time for travelling hopefully.

One of my tutors, Nigel Gibbons, wrote an acrostic which gives a flavour of the nature and guide lines for the group:

Writing Well

Write without self-criticism

Respond to our words from your feelings

Ignore grammar, spelling and getting it right.

Take the words gently in your hands and do not crush them with criticism.

Invoke the words to nourish and refresh you.

No need to share if you don't want to.

Go where the words lead but only as far as you want.

Wise words are not necessarily complicated, or difficult. They are often simple and straightforward.

Excellence is not required, there is always someone who writes better, but they do not write *your* words.

Listen with your ears and from your heart.

Let the words remain confidential to us, and do not scatter them thoughtlessly.

Our group came up with this acrostic for spring:

Spring Acrostic

Spring surprises.
Profusion of growth,
Recklessly fecund
Infinite possibilities
Noisily
Growing and greedily greening.

As you can see we make no claims to producing great literature but we are often surprised by what emerges.

A group participant wrote: "This is very helpful and good for the soul."

This is not a "how to write" class. No criticism is offered and no homework set! No experience is necessary, just a willingness to have fun and experiment with words. All you need is a favourite notebook and pen.

There are only 6 of us at present so we meet round my kitchen table. Since inevitably not everyone can come to each session we could benefit from having a few more people.

If interested please do get in touch. This is a new and growing field.

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