



Writing for Resilience

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Hello




Agenda

- Welcome, Opening
- Background and Evidence Base
- Guidelines
- First Prompt: Workplace Experience- Reflection/Discussion
- Second Prompt: Self-Compassion - Reflection/Discussion
- Continuing to use Writing for Resilience
- Conclusion



Objectives

A photograph of a Black woman with her hand on her chin, looking upwards in a thoughtful pose. Three green-outlined thought bubbles are superimposed on the image, each containing one of the objectives.

Discuss background,
evidence base for
expressive writing

Experience writing
strategies designed
to promote
compassion
satisfaction

Identify ideas for
continued use of
these writing
strategies

Focusing on Ourselves



- Self care is **not** self-indulgence. It is our responsibility.
- We can take an active role in promoting our own resilience and well-being.
- This can strengthen the impact of available workplace supports.



How do you define....

1. Burnout
2. Compassion Fatigue
3. Compassion Satisfaction
4. Resilience



Pennebaker Paradigm – Expressive Writing

- Expresses deepest feelings
- Makes sense of emotional upheaval
- Pays more attention to **thoughts** and **feelings** than to events, objects or people
- Tells a coherent story.
- Shifts perspective.



Pennebaker & Evans, 2014

Research

- Most benefit, but not everyone
- Initial increase in sadness, followed by increased sense of happiness, well-being.
- Improved immune system functioning
- Improvements in markers of chronic illness (asthma, rheumatoid arthritis, AIDS, IBS, cancer)
- Mood changes: long term-increased happiness, well-being and cognitive function. Decreased negativity, depression, rumination, general anxiety
- Increased resilience
- Improved school and work performance
- Enhanced social lives

Research on other writing approaches

- Increased resilience, optimism, self-esteem, positive mood, initiative, curiosity, strengthened relationships, improved health and longevity.
- Decreased neuroticism, depression, anxiety, loneliness, envy.



Lyubomirsky, 2007 &
Neff, 2006

“Our positive story shapes our neuro-pathways when we begin to write a new story for ourselves with a different perspective and in self-compassionate, affirming language.”

John Evans, [Hardwiring Happiness Through Writing](#)

Writing Style

- Open up and really express your feelings and thoughts.
- Describe negative and positive feelings and experiences.
- Avoid telling the same story in the same words over and over.
- Create a coherent, meaningful story about what happened and it's effect on you.
- Tell the story with a beginning, middle and end.
- Switch perspectives. For example shift from first to third person.
- Find your own voice - one that reflects who you are.
- Write by hand or type.

Safety Guidelines

- Choose something that isn't a current, immediate event.
- If writing about a serious trauma or difficulty, start out in a safe way.
- If the event seems like too much to write about now, write a sentence or 2 to bring it to a close. Choose something else.
- Keep your writing private.
- Take a break if private time is needed.
- Discussions here will focus on the experience, not the content.

Make a List

- Write a quick list of the most common stressful experiences you encountered at work in recent months.



Significant Emotional Experience

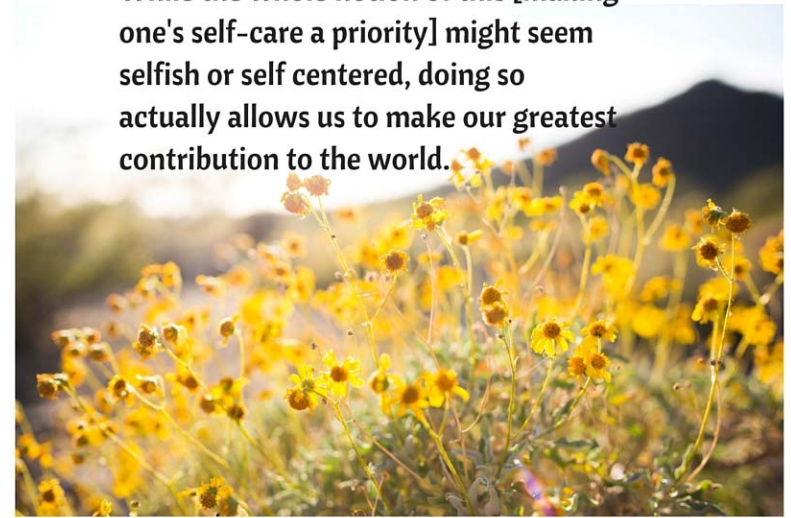
Choose thing that you find to be the most significant difficult emotional experience you have faced at work and resolved. Choose one that is at least 6 weeks in the past. Describe what happened, how you resolved it, and how you feel about it now. Express your deepest thoughts and feelings. Mid-way through, shift from first to third-person writing.

Promoting Resilience: Compassion Satisfaction

Choose one of these :

- What drew you to the work you now do?
- Write honestly about the value and positive impact of what you bring to the work.
- Write about a time you did your absolute best with a client/participant.
- Write about what you are most thankful for at work.
- Write about on something that happened at work that you find extremely funny.

While the whole notion of this [making one's self-care a priority] might seem selfish or self centered, doing so actually allows us to make our greatest contribution to the world.



Cheryl Richardson, The Art of Extreme Self-Care

Promoting Resilience – Self Compassion

Write a letter to a valued friend or co-worker, or from yourself to yourself. Write as if they had the same significant experience you just described. Express your compassion and empathy. Share any perspective, wisdom or advice you now have. Tell this person what you have learned from the experience that has been useful. Honestly and openly share your deepest thoughts and feelings.

Discussion

1. What did you notice from this writing experience?
2. How will you incorporate Writing for Resilience as an ongoing self-care strategy?



Post Writing Reflection

Rate the following items using a scale of 0-10. 0=not at all. 5 = somewhat. 10 =a great deal.

_____ A. To what degree did you express your deepest thoughts and feelings?

_____ B. To what degree do you currently feel sad or upset?

_____ C. To what degree do you currently feel happy?

_____ D. To what degree was this writing valuable and meaningful for you?

E. Briefly describe how your writing went so you can review and reflect on this later. You don't need to share the content here. Instead you can discuss what it was like for you to do this writing and reflect on your past and current feelings related to what you wrote about.

Tips for Continuing to Write for Resilience

- Consider writing regularly
- Select your prompts based upon what will be most useful
- You can develop prompts that are relevant to your work experiences.
- Consider using writing prompts after case conferences or reflective supervision sessions as ways for individuals to your own resilience.
- Create safety for writing as part of supervision or team meetings.

“...this work is most rewarding: to see people transformed immediately from sadness, desperation and depression to hope, joy and a renewed sense of purpose and meaning...”

Charles Figley, *Compassion Fatigue: Coping with Secondary Stress Disorder in Those Who Treat the Traumatized*

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