

## The Writing Cure

By Sharon Dempsey

“There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you.”

— Maya Angelou, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*”.

News flash – life’s hard. We all experience difficult times – relationship break ups, the loss of a loved one or periods of stress relating to work. Take your pick, there will be some catastrophic episode which leaves you reeling, unsure of how you will get through it. Throughout my own life I have experienced difficult times and during the dark days, I have been known to self-medicated with words, both in reading other people’s words and in writing my own.

There is evidence to prove that writing improves our resistance to physical illness, decreases the symptoms of anxiety and depression, and helps our overall sense of wellbeing. Shared writing and reading can improve well-being, create a sense of community and understanding.

In this strange new world we have found ourselves in, it is easy to worry and to feel overwhelmed. Many of our stresses, worries and preoccupations are imagined problems or at least problems over which we have little control.

We create the narrative of our problems, but we can also *recreate* and *reimagine* that same narrative in new ways. A problem shared is a problem halved – this applies to writing about it too. It becomes lighter in the telling of it. There is evidence to prove that writing improves our resistance to physical illness, decreases the symptoms of anxiety and depression, and helps our overall sense of wellbeing.

How does writing creatively help us?

By writing something down you are making it real.

You are allowing yourself to see it for what it is.

You are giving yourself the opportunity to reimagine it, to shape it into something else. In other words, it becomes reviewable. This is important. We can see it from another perspective.

Writing also allows for translation and transition: the problems that once held us back or affected our happiness can be seen as providing growth, enlightenment and strength.

Think of it this way: Worries + Writing = Insight

One of the most powerful ways of dealing with stress is to take some time to appreciate nature. Even if you live in a city with no green space to explore, you can find nature in the weeds that push up through cracks of the pavements, the sky above or the pigeons that roam looking for discarded food. Take some time to notice what is going on around you. Nature writing begins with observation and it combines the writer's experiences with the natural world. It is exploratory and reflective and helps us to not just learn about nature, but to learn about ourselves from nature.

Prompt:

Think about the natural landscape of your childhood. Was it urban or rural? Describe the physical world you grew up in.

Close your eyes and imagine yourself elsewhere: What sort of landscape do you see? What sort of creatures do you see? If you could be one creature or plant, what would it be?

Reading list:

Diary of a Young Naturalist by Dara McAnulty

H is for Hawk by Helen Macdonald

Landmarks by Robert MacFarlane

My Family and Other Animals by Gerald Durrell

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So next time life throws something horrendous your way, write through the pain.  
There's hope and light on the other side.

[https://www.amazon.co.uk/Extreme-Parenting-Child-Chronic-Illness/dp/1843106191/ref=la\\_B001JP4MYK\\_1\\_3?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1535712585&sr=1-3](https://www.amazon.co.uk/Extreme-Parenting-Child-Chronic-Illness/dp/1843106191/ref=la_B001JP4MYK_1_3?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1535712585&sr=1-3)

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[https://www.amazon.co.uk/Posy-Promises-heartwarming-story-about-ebook/dp/B07DKDGTLT/ref=la\\_B001JP4MYK\\_1\\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1535712585&sr=1-1](https://www.amazon.co.uk/Posy-Promises-heartwarming-story-about-ebook/dp/B07DKDGTLT/ref=la_B001JP4MYK_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1535712585&sr=1-1)