Let It Flow:
Creative Expressions and Recovery
Ashland County RSVP Conference
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Description: The workshop will provide an overview as to the role creative writing can play in mental health and addictions recovery and support. Sample interventions will be presented, and participants will be given the opportunity to participate in an abbreviated creative writing workshop.

Learning objectives:
1. The participants will gain an awareness of how the use of creative writing can improve mental health
2. The participants will be introduced to various techniques of creative writing
3. The participants will experience a sample writing workshop and will complete a brief creative writing assignment

Writing and Improved Mental Health

Recovery: a positive social and personal journey and engagement

The goals of writing for recovery

- Providing a safe place for participants to explore the creative writing process
- Reducing participants’ anxieties about creative writing
- Offering a supportive environment to explore and discover individual writing voices
- Aiding participants in their work towards recovery and personal and social meaning

The uses of writing in the improvement of mental health
Reduction in depression, increase in productivity, reduction in doctors’ visits, etc.
- Introspection
- The role of story, of creating an alternative story Maxine Hong Kingston: “Story gives shape and form to chaos”
- Redemptive re-telling
- Creating new images: Dr. Fred Von Stieff reminds us that “the addicted brain is a museum of distorted pictures. Recovery brings forth a new framing of images . . . to hang on the mental walls that have been left so bare by addiction.”
- The value of self-expression, the development of voice

Narrative Therapy

Goal-Setting Theory – making maps of meaning. Reflecting on important moments in past, identifying personal motivations, creating plans for the future. Past authoring and future authoring. (Jordan Peterson, University of Toronto)

Practical example: [www.flylady.net](http://www.flylady.net)
Shine your sink before going to bed.
Get dressed – all the way to shoes.

Writing Options, Techniques and Interventions

Journaling
Progoff and Pennebaker - history
- reflection, self-observation
- daily happenings
- catharsis
- lists
- portraits
- guided imagery
- from an altered point of view
- unsent letter
- dialogue

Eight Suggestions for New Journal Writers (from www.journaltherapy.com)

- Protect your privacy. ...
- Start with an entrance meditation. ...
- Date every entry. ...
- Keep (and re-read) what you write. ...
- Write quickly. ...
Start writing; keep writing ...
Tell yourself the truth. ...
Write naturally.

Concept of directed journals – providing a starting place that goes beyond a blank page

Poetry

- Free verse
- Rhyming verse
- Haiku

The haiku is a Japanese verse in three lines. Line one has 5 syllables, line 2 has 7 syllables and line three has 5 syllables. Haiku is a mood poem and it doesn't use any metaphors or similes.

Short Story

Fiction

This I Believe

Six Word Memoirs
It was not right with you
Felled by dreams, saved by friends.
I should have bought a GPS
Moved every year, then came home
I came. I saw. I sat

Letters to the editor

Op Ed piece

Songs, hymns

Blog, social media

Lifeline

Life Script questionnaire (Thompson 2003)

Stepping Stones – recording landmark events, writing alternative stories
Sample Writing Workshop

Welcome and Introductions

‘A word is dead when it’s been said, some say. I say it just begins to live that day.’ Emily Dickinson

Affirmations

Reading and Response

Focus Topic

Writing Exercise: Dr. Seuss Prompts
Would you eat green eggs and ham on a boat with a goat? Why or why not?
Make a list of things you could do to cheer up the Grinch.

Homework Assignment

For Future Reading


Taylor, Sam, Helen Leigh-Phippard, Alex Grant. Writing for recovery: a practice development project for mental health service users, carers and survivors. 2014. International Practice Development Journal. 4(1) (5).