

Healing through Writing

A Journaling Guide to Emotional and Spiritual Growth

OPENING UP

The Power of Beliefs

Healing through Writing addresses mental as well as emotional obstacles to writing. One must first change the way one thinks about emotions so that one can allow a greater range of expression. Writing, therefore, can be approached with an open mind. This begins with understanding and believing that emotion itself is not negative. It is the avoidance of emotional expression that is negative. For, suppression of emotion in turn limits one's range of freedom in relating to others, one's ability to maintain a healthy internal balance of thought, and one's understanding of self.

For instance, a basketball player who is pumped about a big game is filled with emotion. Yet, how he channels his emotion will dictate the success he has in being self-directed. The same is true about life. If someone makes you angry, your telling that person that you are angry is not necessarily unhealthy. It is how and why you tell that person you're angry that makes a big difference.

Many emotions we feel and experience are more than appropriate considering the situation or given context. Often, what we may fear in acknowledging the fullness and depth of our emotions is that we will be overwhelmed by our emotions and become irrational. We become fearful of not being in control of our behavior or thoughts or of making decisions that we may later regret. Though we may fear the potential harm of fully identifying with the intensity of our emotions, we may fail to fully grasp the potential harm to our mental and physical well-being caused by the continual suppression of our emotions. Statements such as, "I shouldn't feel the way I feel" typify a belief system in which an individual questions the power and beauty of emotional expression. Often, unresolved feelings of guilt and shame fuel this type of belief system. As a result, a part of our emotional selves shuts down.

In addition, a commitment to the growth process requires practice to improve one's ability to express his or her thoughts and emotions through writing and in one's daily interactions with others. Moreover, it entails having an understanding that writing for the purpose of self-expression and self-awareness means writing without being judgmental. There is no need for judgment, because feelings are neither right nor wrong. To be critical is to be concerned with other people's ability to relate to what one is saying and how one chooses to say it. In writing, all that matters is the ability to express one's self in the form that is most adequate or comfortable. That you have said it in a form that is most relative and comfortable for you is what is most significant. In other words, the only thing worth judging is how free one is allowing oneself to be to express what one honestly feels in the moment.

To write with such openness, one must view the pen and paper as one's ally and as a vehicle for self-expression. One must believe that one's relationship between one's emotions and one's journal is necessary and significant. It is because one's skill as a writer is not as significant as one's openness and one's honesty. If one is open, honest, and committed to writing on a daily or consistent basis, in time one will develop the ability to accurately express one's emotions. Additionally, if one has not cleared one's mind of the negative thoughts associated with being aware of and expressing one's emotions, one will not experience the freedom necessary to facilitate one's own Inner Healing and Growth Process. If one has an intense desire to experience greater freedom of emotional expression, evaluating one's belief system is essential for beginning the process of removing emotional barriers. If examining one's

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belief system is not effective in removing emotional barriers, then it is likely that one is not yet at a place in which one is ready or able to fully digest the intensity and depth of one's underlying emotions. It may take more time to heal one's wounds, but practicing writing about even less intense personal experiences or consistently receiving the external support of a mentor, individual, or group therapist who can convey understanding will eventually pay off. However, before challenging you to closely examine your beliefs, let us briefly discuss beliefs and their significance in our efforts to achieve personal and spiritual goals.

Each of us may have varying definitions of beliefs, but here they are to be understood as, "What one has come to think of as Truth and what one perceives as Reality." The irony is that while we may indeed be very passionate about or protective of our system of beliefs, they don't always represent an objective Truth. Of equal significance is possessing beliefs that contradict and do not support our personal goals. If I say, for instance that I believe that, "My growth is limited" and that "I can't change who I am," my negative thoughts would subsequently be competing with any personal motivation that I may have to change or grow. The same would be true of someone who says that he or she wants to be a millionaire but thinks that money is evil. Thus, one cannot put his heart and soul into one's goal because of one's contradictory beliefs. Consequently, one will not be able to achieve one's goal on one's own efforts, at least not without feeling guilty or unworthy, even if the goal is finally attained.

Jane Roberts, in her book *The Nature of Personal Reality*, addresses the power of our conscious and unconscious beliefs in materializing our personal reality. She contends that the power of our beliefs extends far beyond the parameters of gender and culture. We are like artists who paint a picture of our own personal reality by the beliefs we hold. As Roberts explains, in the long run our beliefs will play themselves out and create an outer material existence of our internal conscious and unconscious patterns of thought and emotion. In light of the above, *Healing Through Writing*, attempts to encourage individuals to become more aware of their beliefs as well as of the positive and negative impact that they may have on their lives. Even more, this book urges one to commit oneself to a process of strengthening beliefs that produce positive outcomes and eliminating those that produce negative outcomes.

Beliefs are extremely powerful because they shape our view of reality and dictate the direction of our actions and reactions. Unfortunately, many of us do not realize exactly what we believe. In many instances, we are unwilling to reevaluate our beliefs even in light of additional information that may prove conflicting or contradictory to our personal goals. This may be true because we ultimately know that when our beliefs change, we must change.

PLEASE STOP

Take a moment to reflect on what you believe in your personal life and then complete the exercise on the following page.

PERSONAL BELIEFS

About Myself

About Others

About Life

What beliefs do I have that produce positive outcomes in my life?

What beliefs do I have that produce negative outcomes in my life?

I am sure that if you honestly completed the exercise, you were surprised to discover some of your beliefs. In evaluating them, I hope that you seriously considered the impact that

some may have on your freedom and openness to emotional expression as part of your Inner Healing and Growth Process.

If you experienced difficulty completing the exercise or relating your personal beliefs to obstacles in your personal life, review example in Appendix I.