

# WRITE YOUR WORRIES AWAY

*Creativity applied to anxiety (Activity 3/12)*

## DESCRIPTION

This is a technique called expressive writing. You write about your deepest feelings without concern for grammar or spelling; you only focus on your thoughts and feelings. There is a popular theory that expressive writing “offloads” worrisome thoughts, thereby freeing up mental resources to complete other tasks. Scientific grounding of this activity is that this form of writing reduces the size of the negative brain wave signal. Based on this study, expressive writing about your worries will help you become less distracted, thereby making your brain less reactive and more focused. It is this unfocused activity — free-flowing writing that documents whatever comes to mind without concern for technical errors — that will help your brain become more focused, thereby allowing you to complete tasks more successfully. In fact, many other forms of unfocus can help you focus more easily too.

## OBJECTIVES

- Help the seniors distract from the worrisome thoughts
- Free up some energy and mental resource in them to focus on other things or tasks
- Express the worries on paper

## RESOURCES AND MATERIALS

- Paper
- Pens, pencils

## IMPLEMENTATION – INSTRUCTION

1. The moderator gives the seniors some sheets of paper and pens and asks them just to write what comes to mind. They don't need to follow any rules, there are no pre-determined topics. This writing is just theirs, nobody will read it, nobody will judge them, so they can write whatever, in the language they prefer, in the wording they like. They don't have limits.
2. The participants will have 15-20 minutes to write.
3. After that, they won't share what they have written, but they will share what they felt when writing.
4. We expect them to feel easiness and relaxation, as writing out worrying things is like getting rid of a physical burden. We expect a shift from thoughts that cause anxiety to more positive attitudes and emotional stability.

## POSSIBLE MODIFICATIONS

A possible modification would be to shift from free-flow writing and set some guidelines, for example, to write down ways to eliminate or diminish the effect of what causes anxiety to the person.

Note: although this could be an effective way to rationalize anxiety, it is not 'expressive writing' anymore, because of some guidelines being set.

## EXPECTED RESULTS

- The person will feel more relaxed as a result of expressive writing.
- The person will get rid of anxious thoughts for a while.
- The person will be able to shift from worries to the completion of other tasks.