



CREATIVE WRITING RESOURCE FOR PEOPLE AFFECTED BY GRIEF

Writing can be an effective way to process thoughts and feelings following a bereavement, or other grief. Recognising what you are experiencing and orientating to 'where you are' can be helpful in seeking appropriate support and reaching out to others.

Before writing, it can be a good idea to check in whether you are experiencing the following, which may need further professional support, alongside writing:

- Re-experiencing trauma, e.g. flashbacks, bad dreams, severe distress in relation to the trauma
- Hyperarousal, e.g. an exaggerated startle response, insomnia, poor concentration, aggression
- Avoidance, e.g. avoiding people, places, activities and situations related to the trauma
- Negative change in mood, e.g. persistent negative thoughts, beliefs and emotions

Guidelines for writing:

- Write what is meaningful to you
- Don't write for more than 20 minutes at a time
- Consider who you might implicate in your writing and anonymise
- Ask yourself: Are you able to write this piece now?
- Sharing with other people can be an excellent way of taking next steps to healing
- After writing, do something pleasant for yourself, such as making a drink, having a bath

Claire Williamson is the former Director of Studies for Metanoia Institute's MSc in Creative Writing for Therapeutic Purposes. Her poetry explores many themes, including coping with bereavement; her latest collection is *Visiting the Minotaur* (Seren, 2018). Claire is a doctoral candidate at Cardiff University, exploring 'Writing the 21st Century Grief Novel, drawing on Arthur Frank's responses to 'narrative wreckage' - chaos, restitution and quest. With artist, Eleanor Glover, Claire facilitated the *Shadow into Light* series of workshops at Bedminster Family Practice.

Books by Claire Williamson

Visiting the Minotaur available from Seren Books www.serenbooks.com

The Soulwater Pool, Ride On and Split Ends available directly via

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The Japanese poetic form 'haiku' has been proven to have a calming effect and an ability to connect us more deeply with our creativity, engender a sense of happiness and reduce physical symptoms.

Here is an example of a haiku:

moss for memory
velcro hooks grip to damp earth
hold not too tightly

Write about a place that you experience as calm, it could be a memory, or an imagined place.

You can count syllables, if you enjoy that kind of thing: 5 syllables in the first line, 7 syllables in the second line, 5 syllables in the third line.

Or you can just write three short lines. You can try to connect your ideas and feelings with the natural world.

Changing perspective has been proven to support the integration of life experiences.

Try writing beginning with these stems and fill in with your own words in between.

I...

You...

They...

I...

You...

They...

A pantoum poem originates in Malaysia; it is a poem 'by numbers', like painting by numbers, where lines repeat. Because of the repetition, it can hold memories, or it can reframe an experience by the changing order of lines. Below is an example.

A suggestion of starter is to begin with the word, 'Because...'

1 Because you left socks everywhere
2 car, bathroom, even the flowerbed
3 I cursed that I would miss these things
4 beacons of your presence

2 car, bathroom, even the flowerbed
5 at the bottom of a shopping bag
4 beacons of your presence
6 sloughing their way into my days

5 at the bottom of a shopping bag
7 that no longer includes your favourites
6 sloughing their way into my days
8 everything slipping away

7 that no longer includes your favourites
3 I cursed that I would miss these things
8 everything slipping away
1 because you left socks everywhere

An acrostic poem uses the letters of a word as the first letters for words and phrases on the same topic. Feel free to play with the rules such as writing how words sound, or budging the first letter along, e.g. using the letters of WRITE

Words have been my friends for years
wRiting me, often before I know myself
If I'm alone, words always find me
Taming them, I write them down
hErding them into place.

Try your own acrostic using a key word that has meaning for you in your process.