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The Pennebaker Method

Choose a challenging feeling, event, symptom or life situation you are currently experiencing or find yourself brooding about. Spend around 15 minutes writing about it in a 'stream of consciousness' way.

- Write about the objective experience (ie what happened) and more importantly, your feelings about it. Really let go and write about your deepest emotions. *What* do you feel about it and *why* do you feel that way.
- Write continuously; don't worry about grammar, sentence structure or spelling. If you run out of things to say or reach a mental block, just repeat what you have already written.
- Some people like to write every day, others find that it's better to write when they feel like it every few days or even more than once a day. Write when ever you want to, or whenever you feel you need to.
- You are writing for yourself. You may want to lock it away, destroy it after you write or keep your writing in a special place. The important thing is to do it for *you* ; planning to show your writing to someone can affect your mind set while writing.
- Don't judge what you have written as good or bad – it is what it is.
- Don't be inhibited by judgements around politeness or manners. Some people find that swearing or cursing on paper can be helpful as a totally legitimate way to let go of anger. Remember "better out than in!".
- Some people feel sad or upset immediately after writing, because it brings up issues they have often used a lot of energy to suppress. These negative feelings usually dissipate in a few hours, in fact most people report feelings of relief, happiness and contentment after writing.
- Try to avoid getting into problem solving until the end of your writing. Often people do find they naturally reach a new perspective or gain insight, but its best to wait till you have finished the cathartic part of the process (usually 10-20 minutes of writing).

From: Opening Up: The Healing Power of Expressing Emotions. By James W. Pennebaker, PhD. Pub The Guilford Press 1990.