

Using therapeutic writing to manage issues both during and after cancer treatment, around physical and emotional distress tolerance, identity, and shifting priorities.

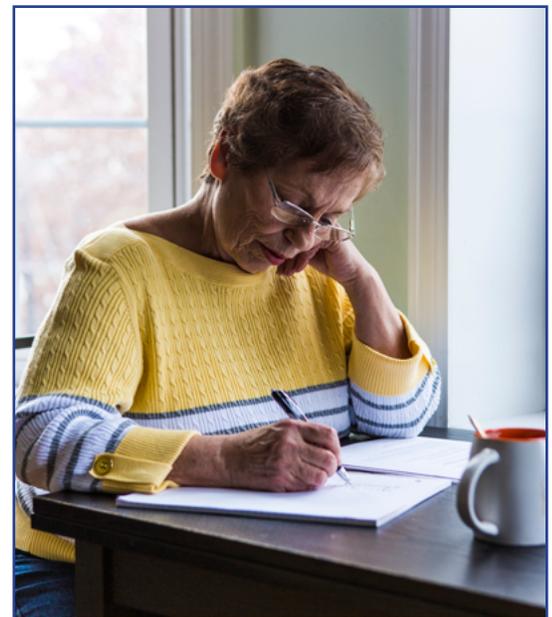
OVERVIEW

Therapeutic writing is a kind of structured journal writing. It is a self-care tool to encourage deeper and clearer reflection, processing, and discovery. Therapeutic writing can help you heal, grow, and thrive.

- Writing prompts are offered as frames—it's up to you to decide which content is most useful to examine through these frames.
- In therapeutic writing, the process is more important than the product: not the sentences that you craft on the page but the experience of writing.
- You can also refer to your journal entries later, as a resource, to read what you've written and track your progress.
- Therapeutic writing, like any form of journal writing, is a place where you can have a conversation with the person who knows you best: you.
- Some people find further healing and insight through sharing their reflections with others. But whether you share your work is up to you. Therapeutic writing is a deeply personal process, so for it to be profound and meaningful just to you is enough.

MANAGING STRESS THROUGH WRITING

Writing has been found in many studies to reduce feelings of depression, anxiety, and stress that can come when you're facing the challenge of cancer. This includes managing thought patterns and emotions prompted by uncertainty, and grappling with your identity both during treatment and afterward: "what ifs," fear, anger, sadness, helplessness, loss of your full sense of self. Learning to tolerate and decrease these feelings of distress can have physical, psychological, and emotional benefits — including improving sleep, reducing bodily expressions of stress headaches, stomach pain/digestive issues, rapid heart rate, neck and shoulder tension, etc.), managing the physical toll of treatment, resisting catastrophic thinking, developing more rational thought reframing, and deescalating emotional responses to more manageable levels.



If you are ready, grab a journal and a pen and start writing with the help of the prompts that we have provided. Take the first step on your healing journey today!

Good enough/self-forgiveness: When you are undergoing sometimes physically debilitating treatment for cancer, guilt feelings can arise if your current physical condition sometimes limits your ability to engage in relationships in certain ways or means that you depend on others more. Perhaps you can't be as involved in your children's activities as you used to and worry about their disappointment. Perhaps you struggle with asking for and accepting help, feeling undeserving. Identify three situations in your life where you feel this guilt arising, and for each, explore what feels "imperfect" due to cancer, investigating—without judgment—the very real reasons for this limitation or your need. Can you allow for the possibility that your engagement is enough and that your requests for help aren't a burden? Can you accept what you cannot change—cancer and its effect on your life—to let go and forgive yourself?



Curious about other topics? PAF's **Education Resource Library** houses our resources and provides straightforward information in a variety of formats to help you make informed decisions throughout your healthcare journey. Learn about health insurance, disability, medical bill management, and more by visiting our Education Resource Library today. Call us at 800-532-5274 (Monday through Friday, 8:30-5 Eastern) or visit www.patientadvocate.org for help!

Materials derived from Healing Works Foundation. All healthcare decisions should be made in consultation with a healthcare provider.