

CREATING THE JOURNALING WORKSHOP

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CREATING THE JOURNALING WORKSHOP

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Abstract

In order to deal with the issues one encounters in everyday life there needs to be an outlet in which to vent and record those issues which can be found through the process of journaling. This study focuses on grief and stress as encompassing most of these daily life issues and discusses the effects on both the body and mind while living under continued or unexplored grief and stress. As well, the concept of eustress is explored as a beneficial stress which journaling can also help to generate and advance. The study ends with an overview of journaling workshop in which the layperson can both facilitate and participate. The purpose of this thesis is to provide anyone the skills and knowledge to run their own workshop.

Introduction

Life is hard. Though the saying is trite, it is nevertheless as true as two and two equaling four. In the course of their lives, people have to deal with relationships—building and falling—; responsibilities to families, to school, to work, to time and to themselves; the death of loved ones; and stress upon stress upon stress. It is no wonder that people should have need of release, of outlet for the feelings and anxieties that these daily life issues create. But as time moves on, people place more and more value on society's expectations of their output and production to the sacrifice of mental health and security. Therefore, they become less available to, and find less availability from, others to communicate these feelings and anxieties.

In the absence of interpersonal communication as an outlet for these issues, one must look to intrapersonal communication—to the exploring of one's own issues with the self, using a concrete external object as a tool. This object is the journal; the concrete,

creative expression of one's inner world for the purposes of understanding, extrapolating, and moving beyond issues of daily life that need to be explored. The research will show that this creative exploration is beneficial to individuals outside the creative writing profession (laypeople), with the ultimate goal of creating a journaling workshop effective in providing these benefits to participants.

For the purpose of this paper, the issues expounded upon will be stress and grief associated with loss, as these two issues are, though certainly relatable, different enough from each other in a fundamental sense to be treated as such. Stress can and is caused by everything from the mundane to the major experiences of life, from the prospect of being fired at work to the question of what to feed the family for dinner tonight. At the same time, because of this, stress is ubiquitous and chronic, and therefore taken as a fact of life and almost too certain to be "dealt with" in any lasting way. The emotions arising from loss—the loss of a loved one from death, the loss of a marriage through divorce—are seen as more transitory emotions. Though this loss can certainly cause stress, it is still of a less lasting kind. This grief, though acute, is expected at some point to go away. It is for this reason, this expectation of a "life expectancy" to grief whereupon exhibition of those feelings becomes inappropriate, that a need for an intrapersonal way to deal with those emotions is evident.

However, numerous studies have shown how issues such as stress and loss affect the body and mind and the importance of finding an appropriate outlet to confront and deal with these issues in our lives. The question then becomes what form such an outlet might take and how best to utilize it. This paper intends to explore this question and to attempt to answer it based on sound research and analysis of previous research conducted

in the field. It is the belief of the researcher that journaling can be used by the lay-person as an especially effective tool in dealing with daily living issues such as stress and loss. In order to illustrate this, both stress and loss will have to be looked at more closely, and their effects on body and mind explained. However, for the purposes of understanding, an analysis of the field of journaling itself first needs to be undertaken.

What is Journaling?

Journaling is any free form of written expression, be it fiction, prose, poetry, narration, essay, etc., that occurs as the manifestation of thinking and state-of-mind by an individual. According to Bilinski (2002), “the journal is seen as a process of personal transformation...a tool in developing sustained critical thought and reflection, an interactive method in which knowledge is generated” (p. 37). In this view, journaling helps an individual to maintain critical thinking through the journaling process. For the case of this paper, the journal should be written for its own sake and not that of a larger whole (i.e., as part of a book or other professionally-written document). There are two applications of the journal: personal use and reflection and public (group) sharing. A public-use journal would be written as something able to be shared, though no less personal, for the purpose of catharsis, dialogue, expression, etc., while a private journal would be used for perusal, reflection, and interpretation only by its author.

A private journal that is not shared with anyone and is made for use by the writer only offers the writer space for reflection and interpretation with an understanding of his or her own psychology and broad interpretation skills that may be limited. However, it allows space for free expression and admission that might not be so readily offered if another person was expected to be reading it. Public journaling, on the other hand, which

would conceivably occur in a group of peers with a therapist/guide/workshop-giver, etc. allows for a wider range of interpretation into the personal writings of one person, whereas individual writers may be too close to their own situation to understand they what and when they did. While with private journaling this interpretation and understanding can more easily occur with time and distance from the topic of writing, public journaling with peer response or even just observation may allow writers to understand their own frame of mind more quickly and easily without taking time away from the emotions with which they initially wrote.

Why use Journaling?

As Luce-Kapler (2009) says in her essay, “As If Women Writing,” “Writing is a risky business; our thinking shaped on the page for others to ponder, consider, judge. So much of our experience, our imagination, reshaped, existing in a space of its own” (p. 282). This is a risk that should be embraced and utilized. What other form of expression is so conducive to providing a space for a cohesive, extensive, and understandable thought process to take place? Stream-of-consciousness is harder to verbalize than to write, especially if you’re not alone. Harder still is it to capture and remember in/for the future.

Written words can be deconstructed and reconstructed to glean meaning in a way that an artist’s painting or verbal communication (to some extent) cannot (Bolton, 1999). Bolton, in her article, “‘Every Poem Breaks a Silence That Had to Be Overcome’: The Therapeutic Power of Poetry Writing,” gives an extremely good case for using creative writing—and poetry writing by the lay person in particular—as therapy and for gaining understanding into one’s own psychoses. One of her points is that writing in this way

allows the writer, "...confidence and self-respect. Writing is physical, creating a concrete object...and the contemplation of the product can give pleasure and satisfaction" (p. 120). This is an extremely useful way to look at journaling: as the creation of something.

Through journaling, the writer has something tangible to show, to share, and to have for him or herself to re-work or re-integrate into his or her current state of mind either at the present or at a later time. Creativity is also useful in the journaling process because it allows journalists to express themselves using powerful language, imagery, metaphor, etc. This adds beauty and credence to their feelings, in turn propelling that creativity and the journaling process. As well, creativity allows the writer to take a step back, to look at his or her situation through a metaphoric or even fictionalized lens that could be useful in analyzing that situation without becoming absorbed in the personal nature of it.

The difference between writing and talking is the ability to look back on one's words, for the page to remember, and thus the writer to be able to let go until there comes an appropriate time to reflect (Bolton, 1999). The re-working that Bolton envisions happening for poetry, and which can occur at least to some extent through many writing methods, allows for language suitable to the feeling to be captured, honed, for imagery and words to be used to their fullest extent to create meaning and portray thought. This puts power into the text that is fully in the writer's control, and which is not as fully articulated in verbal communication.

As well, this writing allows journalists to take control of their own therapy, or at least have a hand in it. In Western medicine, as Bolton states, "patients have not been

expected to be involved as primary actors in their own diagnosis and treatment...; by writing, patients could take some control over their own treatment, in their own time and at their own pace” (p. 121, 124).

Previous Journaling Studies

Most prior studies involving the use of journaling for any outcome have been focused on journaling in schools, namely with (often younger) students. This research was conducted in an effort either to help children’s writing skills improve through non-structured/non-pressured creative writing. The interest was to study what children write about when allowed the time in class to free-write on a topic of their choice, or to allow expression and catharsis to come from creative journaling exercises. The latter research is what the interest is for this paper, though all implementers who studied the effects of creative journaling on their subjects (students) discussed at some point topic choice and the interest of it. From their own research, the authors of, “University Course-Based Practitioner Research: Four Studies on Journal Writing Contextualize the Process” found that journal writing could be used for, “recording experiences...writing without risk...increasing vocabulary...revealing, exploring, and organizing thinking... engaging the imagination...exploring the functional use of language...improving test scores...assessing ongoing growth...working out one’s feelings...and counseling” (Radencich, Eckhardt, Rasch, Uhr, & Oisanechi, 1998, p. 83-4).

Many of those who were interested in the topic choices made by their students chose to delineate those choices into categories. Those categories tended to encompass the same things that will be looked at here: the individual using writing to deal with grief and loss, both inter- and extra-familial stress, and stress in general. There was also often

a gender component addressed which, though not specifically the topic of this paper, is mentioned here because the research indicates a topic-preference bias that existed between males and females, and illustrates the differences in those things that are most important, and therefore most likely to be topics of stress, to the different genders. This difference will tend to cause males and females to be stressed about different things and experiences in general, though research in this area seems to be confined to the gender preferences of the young (elementary to secondary age). It is assumable, given the broad and universal topics assigned, that these gender preferences would be translatable across the age spectrum. For example, in Hunt's (1995) article, "Choice in the Writing Class: How Do Students Decide What to Write and How to Write it?", her studies in her classroom of high school students corresponded with Graves's study done with seven-year olds in 1975. Hunt writes:

Males wrote twice as many papers as females discussing philosophical questions such as the purpose of education, life after death, analysis of evil.... Males were more than twice as likely to write about action or violence...and they were also more likely to comment on world problems. Females wrote more than three times as many papers involving personal relationships as males did...and they were somewhat more likely to write about personal experiences...the genders wrote in more or less equal numbers about daily life occurrences...and the opposite sex. (p. 9)

While Graves (as cited in Hunt, 1995) says:

Boys wrote more about themes involving physical death, murder mysteries, war, fires, and the activities of men and boys beyond home and school. Girls' writing centered on themes about the family, the classroom, and holidays. Their characters were less aggressive and more limited geographically, and girls were more capable of writing objectively about themselves. (p. 7)

Though the subject will not be discussed further here, this gender difference might be interesting for the writer to keep in mind. Though the awareness might not

inform the writer's topics and interests, it would perhaps keep the individual aware of what interests him or her despite gender orientation.

Effects and Ethics of Writing for Therapy

Writing has the power to unearth, to express, to embolden. The writer, through journaling, is creating a photograph, a snapshot, or him- or herself in the space and state-of-mind they were in while undertaking that writing. The effects of this are powerful and compelling, since they leave the writer with not only a healthy outlet with which to expose in safety his or her emotional state, but also a permanent account of that state to delve into at a later date. This creation offers the writer a place to deposit these emotions; to capture them in a place outside of the body and mind, offering relief from stress and from crushing grief. This kind of writing should be utilized. It is not the purpose of it to always be poignant or powerful, but simply to offer a place to write about one's day, one's feelings, one's hopes and goals; it is an unloading dock, so to speak, for the build-up that naturally accrues throughout daily life.

As Bolton (1999) points out from her work on poetry in this same field, "poetry gives access to vital issues which can temporarily cause distress and occasionally psychological imbalance. These are usually short term and inevitable... [and are part of] a process of personal growth for the writer" (p. 130). It is logical that this same thing can be said for journaling in general, and for any type of writing in which that journaling might occur. However, the ethics of how to deal with any distress needs to be taken into account. According to the Biblio/Poetry Therapy Code of Ethics, "facilitators...take responsibility for the consequences of their acts and make every effort to ensure that their services are used appropriately in" (N.d., Principle 1- Responsibility section, para. 1).

Though the workshop stemming from this paper is not preeminently therapy-oriented, the effects stemming from utilization of journaling as stress-and-grief relief need to be taken into account, as they can affect the individual.

Also important to consider is the ethics of participant privacy. The facilitator will not, most likely in this case, be a therapist. Therefore there is no need and potential harm in requiring participants to share their journals with either each other or the facilitator. The journals in this workshop will be entirely for the benefit of the individual participant who writes it. Other workshop studies have found benefit from public journaling in their groups; however, it is neither the goal nor intention of this study to be designed in that way. It would cause too many privacy issues to occur, and would most likely not succeed for the majority of participants since, as stated earlier, this is not a regularly-meeting journaling group but a one-time gathering of peers who may or may not know or trust one another. With its focus on relieving the stress of daily life, participants may not want those stressors aired within the workshop setting—especially without the comfort-zone atmosphere of a regular group.

Challenges of Daily Living

Every day life is full of challenges, almost too many to mention. However, most fit into categories and subcategories of life-issues. Threats appear in many forms for human beings because humans have to live and thrive in such social, as well as ecologically-precarious and economically-motivated, environments. When one's life depends not only on the ability to find food and shelter, but also on the ability to keep up with the Jones's, the nine-to-five, and the mortgage payments, the threat of failure constantly looms. Then there are the more personal hardships like death, loss, divorce,

and separation that also weigh heavy on people's lives and sanity. For the purposes of this paper, two of the major life challenges will be analyzed: first, the seemingly all-encompassing stress, and second, the issues associated with grief stemming from loss.

Why Stress?

Stress is understood to be a ubiquitous characteristic congenital to life. There is no one thing that causes stress, no "type" of person affected by it. Instead, stress seems to be caused by nearly everything; from lifestyle, responsibilities, environment, physiological structure and psychological makeup—everything has the ability, it seems, to cause or be affected by mental and emotional stressors. Kemeny (2003) in her essay, "The Psychobiology of Stress," defines these stressors as, "circumstances that threaten a...goal, including the maintenance of one's physical integrity...or one's psychological well-being" (p.124). Stress is a biological imperative, as it is these stressors that initiate in the body fight-or-flight responses necessary to remove ourselves from negative or injurious situations. The physiological reaction that occurs in the body in response to stressors cause the "systems that are needed to deal with stress [to be] mobilized and [the systems] that are not needed are suppressed" (p. 124).

However, in society today, it is not a matter of course that every situation has an applicable fight-or-flight response. For instance, the stress that one feels in the workplace has no outlet in either of these responses; not if one wants to keep his or her job, which is often necessary to survival despite being detrimental to one's physical and mental health. The choice to remain employed, though, very often brings with it the consequence of remaining stressed, or at least of being subjected to the same stressors consistently. Not only can this constant state wreak havoc on one's mental state, but

“chronic or repeated activation of systems that deal with threat can have adverse long-term physiological and health effects” (Kemeny, 2003, p. 124).

It should also be remembered that there is a difference in type and kind of stressors on the body. These are distress and eustress. According to Le Fevre, Matheny, and Kolt (2003), “distress occurs when the demands placed on the body (...includes both the physiological and the psychological aspects) exceed its capacity to expend energy in maintaining homeostasis” (The Constructs of Eustress and Distress section, para. 2).

Eustress, then, is stress that does not cause this excess. Specifically, the body reacts to stress the way it does because of personal interpretation of that stressor as a positive or negative. Thus, whether the body interprets a stressor as eustress or distress and reacts accordingly is based on “positive perception of stressors [vs.]... negative perception of stressors” (Le Fevre, et al., 2003, para. 4). This implies that the individual has some cognitive control over the way he or she is affected by stress; to react to stress in a non-negative manner, one must be able to see the stressor as a positive or potentially positive influence.

To begin with then is the postulation that the mind and the body are connected in a fundamental sense, so that the ailments of the mind can be understood to affect the body and vice versa. This understanding is essential in demonstrating a prevalent need of stress-relief outlets and activities—not only to protect the mind, but to protect the body as well. Though Eastern thinkers criticize the West for needing to find a tangible connector between the mind and the body in order to consider such a connection real, the theories of these connectors will be outlined for the sake of understanding and visualization. For the purposes of this paper, in order to discuss the mind/body connection and how stress

affects it, the theories that connect the mind and the body scientifically need to be established. There are many such theories, but this paper will focus on the Neuro-Immuno-Cutaneous-Endocrine (NICE) network, the right front insula, and the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis and the sympathetic nervous system connection. The mind/body connection should be understood as a tangible, provable aspect of the human body and make-up, because with this understanding will come the accepted need of treating it as such.

The NICE Network

The largest organ in the body, the skin, envelopes us and connects our intrinsic systems to the outside world, responding to forces both inside and outside the body. The NICE Network is made of four organ systems, “intimately involved in the bridge between body and mind” (O’Sullivan, Lipper, & Lerner, 1998, p. 1431). These four organ systems, the nervous, the immune, the cutaneous and the endocrine (see Appendix A), communicate and react to each other through stimulus. In their essay “The Neuro-Immuno-Cutaneous-Endocrine Network: Relationship of Mind and Skin,” O’Sullivan et al. illustrate this connectivity by showing the effect of irritation to the skin caused when a person rubs or scratches it. This irritation is communicated to immunocompetent cells, which are able to produce normal immune recognition and responses to antigens in the body (Diener, Kraft, Lee, & Shiozawa, 1976), which then secrete anti-inflammatories such as cytokines. This reaction affects both the central nervous system (CNS) and the skin itself. In response, the CNS releases neurotransmitters which initiate the body’s motor functions to scratch or pick at the irritated spot (O’Sullivan et al., 1998). Through these actions/reactions, a mind/body connection is displayed. From the physical

reactions that cause picking at an irritated spot, there are also reactions occurring throughout the CNS based on negative sensory perception of the affected area that can impact the health of the rest of the body.

O'Sullivan et al write that "the immune system might constitute a sixth sense by converting stimuli from environmental factors (viruses, bacteria, trauma, etc) into biochemical information in the form of neurotransmitters, hormones, and cytokines" (1998, para. 4). Though these environmental factors the immune system modifies have to do with pain perception, the authors theorize that the immune system might also mediate sensory perception, which can cause mental and physical illnesses based on environmental stressors (O'Sullivan, et. al., 1998). These illnesses appear in behavioral neuroses like skin-picking and scratching.

The immuno, cutaneous and endocrine organ systems are all shown to respond to neuropeptides sent by the nervous system to communicate. However, the reactions of these systems are altered when the body is under stress (Kaplan & Manuck, 1999), very often seen in exacerbations of skin problems such as acne and eczema (O'Sullivan, et al., 1998). The altering of bodily systems under stress occurs because the nervous system and the immune system share the communication molecules calcitonin gene-related peptides (CGRP) that originate in both systems. Because CGRPs are found in such close proximity to both Langerhans cells in the skin and neurons, the skin communicates with the immune and nervous systems, and the nervous system communicates with the skin. This fact provides evidence for a mind-body connection in the skin (O'Sullivan, et al., 1998).

Through the nervous system, the brain perceives the health and appearance of the skin, the health and appearance of which, as well as that of the body, can be affected by what the brain perceives. When one is anxious or stressed, that person is more likely to sweat, break out, or become more prone to symptoms of eczema or psoriasis. Koo and Lebowhl (2001) call this reaction a “psychophysiologic disorder,” illustrated when “a skin disorder, such as eczema or psoriasis... is worsened by emotional stress” (para. 5). This psychophysiologic disorder needs to be taken into account because the effects of the stress are not just mental, but physical and can affect the entirety of the body. O’Sullivan et al propose that steps be taken by physicians to learn how to both control the stress of the patient as well as promote in the patient better self-esteem. If stressors can be controlled, confidence issues that can lead to outbreaks will not occur as often (1998). Koo and Lebowhl suggest patients admit to and confront the stressors that may be exacerbating their symptoms, as well as try “stress management classes, relaxation techniques, music or exercise” (2001, para. 8)

The Right Front Insula

The study of the right front insula in the brain provides another theory about where and how the mind is connected to the body. The right front insula deals with both emotion and self-perception. The more gray matter—neuronal cell bodies which transmit sensory and motor stimuli to the CNS (Moore, Bebchuk, Wilds, Chen, & Menji, 2000)—surrounding this area, the higher level of self-awareness and emotional sensitivity a person has, and the better able to understand his or her body the person will be (Blakeslee & Blakeslee, 2007).

The insula reacts to both emotion and strong sensations, such as pain and resulting fear. According to Craig, a Neuroanatomist at the Burrow Neurological Institute in Phoenix, Arizona, and as discussed by Blakeslee and Blakeslee (2007) in their article, “Where Mind and Body Meet,” the insula connects the mental states of the brain to the physical states of the body. By creating an “interoceptive map,” or an internally-oriented map of the body, the insula maintains communication with the inner organs, systems and needs (sexual, hunger) in the body in order to maintain homeostasis and contextualize sensations.

Also connected intimately with the insula are the orbitofrontal cortex, which plans behaviors around perceived punishments and rewards, the amygdala which connects experiences with the people and things best associated with them, and the cingulate cortex which monitors behavior and choices for possible mistakes and allows those mistakes to be corrected for. As well, the cingulate cortex allows significant emotional actions to be performed (see Appendix B). Thus, the emotions, behaviors, motivations and ideas of humans are all intricately connected to one another. Although it would seem that all these actions taking place in the brain would also mean those actions (emotions, ideas, etc.) *originate* in the brain, it is instead the theory of many researchers that emotions originate in the body (Blakeslee & Blakeslee, 2007).

According to the Blakesless and Blakeslee (2007), who are in agreement with the theories of psychologists William James and Carl George Lang, the emotion of fear does not come from the mental analysis and reaction to external situations, but from internal, physical reactions that inform the brain. For instance, a man about to fall off a cliff does not feel fear about the fall and his impending death *per se*, but the “gut” reactions—the

stomach clenching, the sweat and chills, the racing heart—are what create the feeling of fear in the man. Conversely, a person who cannot feel physically, a paralysis victim, for example, will often have trouble feeling emotion as strongly as he or she once did.

Things seem duller and less affecting, which adds credence to the idea that emotion originates in the body. Thus the higher capability a person has for understanding his or her own physiological needs and reactions, the better able to control and properly respond to these reactions that person will be.

Though emotions, ideas and motivations were held by Descartes to be completely mental occurrences, only attributing to the body the ability to bring to the physical world those ideas and motivations through action, it appears instead that they cannot be wholly attributed to either the mental or physical aspects in the body. Instead, the body supplies the basis for emotion, the mind translates that basis into ideas and feelings and constructs actions for the body to carry out. The two cannot be separated if the person is to be able to think and feel completely.

The Hypothalamic-Pituitary-Adrenal (HPA) Axis and the Sympathetic Nervous System

The HPA axis works to keep internal homeostasis despite environmental factors and creates needs in the mind to satisfy bodily wants (Pecoraro, 2006). Working together with the sympathetic nervous system, the body's threat-response system (Kemeny, 2003), the HPA connects the brain with the body (see Appendix C). The hypothalamus is connected to corticotrophin-releasing hormone (CRH), arginine vasopressin (AVP), thyrotropin-releasing hormone (TRH), and gonadotropin-releasing hormone (GnRH)-secreting neurons (Chrousos & Gold, 2001). These neurons react to stressors, alerting

the hypothalamus to stress in the body, which lets the hypothalamus know to release cortisol, as well the neurons to release their own secretions meant to control for homeostasis (Chrousos & Gold, 2001). The cortisol increases blood pressure and blood sugar, and reduces immune responses (Sachar, et al., 1973), and the fact that the HPA is connected with the nervous system means that it can affect the entire periphery of the body. In their article, “A Healthy Body in a Healthy Mind—and Vice Versa—the Damaging Power of ‘Uncontrollable’ Stress,” Chrousos and Gold study the effects of cortisol release on chronically stressed people such as depression patients. Their conclusion, based on the connection between mind and body found in the HPA axis, and how that connection is affected by stress and emotion, is that “treatment of emotional disorders will also be therapy for devastating organic diseases” (2001, para. 9).

The number of theories that connect the body to the mind indicate that there are multiple areas in the body that connect and interconnect with, as well as respond to, and act upon the mind. Even within the three theories pertaining to the NICE Network, the Right Front Insula, and the HPA/Sympthetic Nervous System Axis, multiple connections can be made. In each there exists interaction between systems, always including the neurological, and all are potentially affected by the mind’s perceptions. The effect of these systems being constantly employed by stressors can be seen in the diminished responses of the immune system. For instance, the cortisol released by the hypothalamus “suppresses a variety of immune functions... [as well as promoting others,] for example, those closely related with inflammation” (Kemeny, 2003, p. 126). Inflammation, a bodily-function necessary to control and destroy harmful bodily pathogens, can be

harmful when chronic. It is at “the root of a host of diseases...such as rheumatoid arthritis and may play a role in...cardiovascular disease” (p. 126).

Evidently, some tangible connection between the mind and the body can be traced and interwoven through bodily systems. Perceptions can cause outbreaks of skin diseases, a chill along the spine can cause fear, and a mental disease can lead to a physical one. The importance of understanding, and admitting to, these connections can drastically change the way both physical and mental problems are treated. Instead of acting upon the one with no regard for the other, health providers can pursue treatment with the understanding that an effect upon the mind and vice-versa can occur. Both the body and the mind need to be treated as part of a whole instead of wholes in themselves.

An Economic Study of Stress

As another way of translating stress into something applicable to and concerned about by society as a whole, Sophie Bèjean and Hèlène Sultan-Taïb (2004) evaluated work-related stress and its monetary effects. In their article, “Modeling the Economic Burden of Diseases Imputable to Stress as Work,” the authors focused on the public healthcare system in France, which entails that employers themselves provide for the specific branch of the system which cares for “work injuries and occupational illnesses” (p. 16). Though America lacks a public healthcare system at this point, it is still often the duty of the employer to provide worker-compensation in the event of work-related injury and disease.

Bèjean and Sultan-Taïb (2004) focused their study on three illnesses: cardiovascular disease (CVD), depression, and musculoskeletal disease (MDS) and back pain, which all have been shown to stem from work-related stress. By analyzing the

number of working-age French citizens suffering from the three diseases, Bèjean and Sultan-Taïb calculated the number of cases attributable to occupational stress for the year 2000, and thus the cost of these diseases to France in the cases of both patients who received medical care and those who died. Their results, confined to those individuals of working-age, stand as “€1,324 million for CVD... €3,658 for depression... and €14.1 million for MSD and back pain” (p. 20-21). These figures stand for states of morbidity, while the authors propose the monetary equivalent of mortality stemming from these diseases to be well-over one billion Euros.

Though the authors allow for error, and advise methods for future research that differs from their own (p. 23), the conclusions drawn are still the same and comparable to American society: our lifestyles cause stress, stress causes disease, which in turn cost vast amounts of money. In fact, Atkinson (2000) is cited by Le Fevre, Matheny and Kolt (2003) as saying, “over 60 per cent of all workplace absences are due to stress, and although it is difficult to measure the total cost of occupational stress, estimates in the USA range from 200 to 300 billion dollars per year” (para. 2). It is a justified cause both by humanist and economic standards, therefore, to find ways of decreasing stress in the daily lives of individuals.

As shown, the physiological, psychological, and economic effects of stress are not only interrelated but understood as well by the scientific community. The need for a way to combat stress that does not inflict more stress (i.e., monetarily or temporally) is apparent. But what also needs to be taken into account is what role other issues play on a person’s life and health. While stress is seen as a constant part of life, grief and loss are understood to be more transient, impermanent. However, these issues still need to be

dealt with, still need to find outlet, or they will affect the body in much the same way as chronic stress.

What is Grief?

Grief is termed as a “type of separation reaction in which the bereaved individual mourns the loss of a loved one or abstraction” (Maier, 2003, p. 238). Grief does not just stem from death, but, as indicated in this definition, from the loss of any person, relationship, or idea, as well as the symbols represented by those things in a person’s life. In the book *On Grief and Grieving* by Elizabeth Kübler-Ross and David Kessler (2005), the types, stages, and nature of grief are explained, and are not confined only to the mourners of an individual. Rather, it is understood that one can grieve any type of loss. These stages are “denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance...[and] are part of the framework that makes up our learning to live with the one we lost” (p. 7). Ross and Kessler also explain that these are not to be understood as points on a “linear timeline” (p. 7); that everyone goes through and expresses their grief differently. However, this is not universally understood and can create problems for the griever as well as those close to him or her.

The extreme personal and unique nature of grief is gone into at some length by the authors, and is beneficial to the terms of this study, in that it is not always socially-allowable or advantageous to share grief. This personal nature is important to understand because the grieving individual often feels in opposition to society as well as friends and family members who can’t understand his or her position and feelings based only upon their own. This means that communication with others is often shunned or deemed useless throughout the stages of grief one goes through. In her essay, “The Social

Regulation of Grief,” Martha R. Fowlkes (1990) assesses the implications of grief as a mode of societal acceptance or exclusion. The expression of one’s grief becomes dependent on society’s approval of that grief, and who one is grieving, and for how long, becomes subject to that approval. Fowlkes’s concern in the essay is that there are types of loss that society undervalues or devalues based on preconceived notions of relationship importance, intimacy, and legitimacy. This valuation confers the highest amount of legitimacy and understanding to mourners of relatives or heterosexual partners, especially in the case of marriage, and the least amount to mourners of colleagues, friends, support systems (i.e, therapists, counselors, doctors, etc.), homosexuals, extramarital love partners, and criminals.

Mourners of these people have may feel a social obligation to exhibit less or even no grief in public. Conversely, an individual may feel stigmatized by society if they feel *less* than what is deemed an appropriate level of grief (Fowlkes, 1990). For example, the son of an emotionally-absent man may feel little-to-no socially-recognized feelings of grief and loss when that man dies, and would either have to bear with this stigma or fake the emotions that are not authentic to his own mourning process. So how do these people cope with their loss? Where do they place their painful, confusing, legitimate feelings, and how do they mentally and physically process the stages of denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance that Kübler-Ross and Kessler outline as the common stages of the grieving process if they are not allowed or benefited in properly exhibiting those feelings in society?

Sarah Ferguson, who, after the death of her therapist, understood the “‘social responsibility’ to minimize her public expression of grief” (1990, p. 641) found solace in writing her pain, in order to manage it:

You did die....Nearly four months ago, and I still cannot believe it. Most people do not want to talk about death and mourning. I want to talk of it all the time because you are the person who I have loved the most, and you have died. I know all about the outer world of social responsibility, so can one can accuse me of continuing to grieve for you. You did not want to leave your wife and your daughter and your brother and some of your colleagues and friends. You did not wish to leave me, either, and I do not know how to live without you. You knew it would be so. (As cited in Fowlkes, 1990, p. 641)

Through this quote, the stages of death are apparent as she moves through them. In particular, the stages of denial, anger at society for not letting her speak out about what she is feeling, and acceptance of her therapist’s feelings towards her and, ultimately, acceptance of the fact that she is dead. Ferguson also mentions the need to talk about it “all the time.” This is a common need of the griever: to talk, to share his or her “story” (Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2005, p. 62), or relationship with death and mourning. But so often there comes a point, either when the socially-allowed time for grieving has lapsed (or was never there at all), or the speaker feels no relief in that sharing, that the need to share is still felt.

This story-telling is “primal to the grieving process” (Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2005, p. 63) because at this point for the mourner there is still something relevant in the death that is not understood. Kübler-Ross and Kessler describe this as kin to detective work, to uncovering the truth not only about death but about the loved one’s death—about unanswered questions that their death left one with, such as, “Was she happy in life?” “Did he love me?” “Did he ever cheat on me?” “Did he want me to take him off

life support?” Talking about these questions helps to relieve and unearth one’s confusion, even if the answers aren’t obvious right away (p. 64).

Verbal communication with others who knew the deceased or who have faced the same situation is tantamount for one’s health, but when that communication is not available or helpful, the questions and the need to speak still need to be addressed. In order to “heal the wound left by the loss of that part of herself embodied in her daughter, [Isabelle] Allende...undertook the therapeutic activity of writing about her bereavements” (Maier, 2003, p. 241). This writing led eventually to her novel *Paula*, but more importantly, Allende writes:

The writing process served as [my] means of coping with personal tragedy and loss....to go through mourning and survive. Word by word, and tear after tear, I retraced every step of that horrible year. And by doing so, I retraced every step of my life. And I was able to put everything together in these pages.... And while it was painful, it was also joyful because I was...walking. I was not stuck, paralyzed in the pain. I was walking through the pain. (As cited in Maier, 2003, p. 241-42)

Loss, and the following grief, is an inevitable part of life, the meaning of which can never be fully understood. However, the pain of it need not be so permanent, so crushing, or so regimented as one might feel it needs to be at first. There are outlets, just as there are outlets for stress, and as has been seen, often it takes—by necessity or desire—written form. As such, it is not only appropriate but beneficial and arguably necessary to design a workshop showing participants to use writing in order to meet this need for outlet. Therefore, the last section of this paper will outline and illustrate this proposed workshop: the journaling workshop.

The Journaling Workshop Setup: Analyzing a Past Approach

Though most previous journaling workshops have focused on the public journaling and peer-review process, it is still beneficial to look at these approaches in order to become better informed about those used in this study. Bolton (1999), for example, who runs a space for health professionals and other types of people who are not therapy patients, finds it helpful to designate the space as *not* therapy. This is because many people shun the idea of therapy, of needing therapy, and would therefore be hesitant to enter a group that posits therapy as the reason for existence. Instead, people get together to write and share about their lives as peers.

For the purposes of this paper, therapy will not be a stated focus either, though there could be therapeutic benefits. Instead, the focus will be on developing one's thoughts and ideas—whether for academic purposes, for keeping accurate record of these thoughts as they occur, or as a means of creating eustress, the “construct of good stress” (Le Fevre et al, 2003, para. 4). However, following this goal, it might be beneficial when conducting a writing workshop to group the workshops informally, but with an emphasis on peer-relatability. For example, workshops for students, workshops for teachers, workshops for “community members,” for a broader and more generalized setting, or workshops for women. This will create a group-oriented workshop, allowing for easier goal-definition and explanation.

Bolton's (1998) workshop for professionals, besides emphasizing itself as a writing group, not a therapy session, focuses on getting people to write about a subject. She starts with having people write about “the different hats they wear in their lives, the different people they are in different settings and groupings: mother, health visitor, lover,

daughter...and the people they might have been” (1999, p. 127). She recommends writing without thinking, letting the hand flow in order to get out the participants’ ideas. This could be especially beneficial for two reasons: one, for people already wary of a therapy-setting, asking for too much meditation about their feelings and ideas might only serve to reinforce that feeling. Two, by keeping the hand moving, not pausing for over-reflection, the amount of self-critique that the writers are wont to impose upon themselves is reduced, as well as inhibitions the writer may feel about the prospect of sharing their writing later, and thus writing to the group instead of for themselves. By using a continuous flow method, the group writing becomes more beneficial, more personal, and more authentic.

After the writing exercise is complete, Bolton (1998) then gives time for the writers to re-read what they have written, reflect on it personally, and decide through this what to read to the group. In this way, after the stream-of-consciousness part is done, the writer is allowed to reflect a bit on what they have written, therefore being able to decide for themselves what is most important and most beneficial to share. Through this practice, the individual may discover for him or herself what issues are most important to him- or herself at that moment, thereby aiding in the insight-potential of the process.

As the writer reads to the group, Bolton (1998) makes sure that it is the writing itself, and not the writer, that is focused on and discussed. “This creates a safe space for the writer, who knows they will not be questioned or discussed beyond the limits of the writing they have chosen to share” (p. 127). This serves to further comfort the writers as to the goals and definition of the group, and to embolden them in the future to write more

openly and freely were that group to reconvene. As one member of her women's group wrote after she had shared her poem about her feelings stemming from childlessness:

I'd passed up an opportunity on the first day of that weekend, not wanting to bother to package issues for easy sympathy, and not wanting either to set up an investment of time and energy that wasn't on anyone's official agenda for the weekend. By the next morning, no one had much of a choice! (p. 128)

This was because, though her first day of writing might not have dealt with childlessness, the group had opened her up to her own need to talk about it, giving her outlet, space, and desire to share those feelings. The action/reaction effect is one that stems not from sharing, but the anticipation of outlet. Once the writer has experienced the outlet the journal provides, and begun to think of it as a safe space for release of thought and tension, those thoughts and tensions will more easily be accessed in the future. The "silence that had to be overcome" (Perkins, as quoted by Bolton, 1999, p. 128) occurs as a fundamental aspect of daily stress and overwhelming grief; by providing that outlet, the pressure is eased.

Therefore, the aim of this work is to produce a workshop that will provide this outlet, though not in the same form as Bolton's group took. The workshop approach to be used for this study will focus on private journaling. To establish a journaling group that would allow for an honest and open give-and-take of observation and reflection would necessitate more time (probably regular meetings) and more knowledge of conducting such a group than potential facilitators may possess. The structure is detailed here only to offer more choice and elicit further thought for the reader.

Because the writings that occur in the workshop will be entirely private to the writer, this will facilitate in creating an atmosphere conducive to openness without the

inevitable withholding or “writing to the crowd” that would necessarily occur in a public journaling situation. The purpose of this workshop is simply to outline the advantages of keeping a journal in order to reduce stress and relieve pain. The best way to ensure the participant leaves the workshop with that knowledge is to not burden him or her with what might appear to be scrutiny or a violation of privacy.

The Workshop

Based on the previous research detailed in this paper, one can see a need for this kind of workshop. What follows will answer the questions arising from this need, such as: how does one teach journaling? How long will the workshop be? What form will it take? Who will receive it? The resources used to answer these questions were Davis’s (1974) *Planning, Conducting, & Evaluating Workshops* and Lawson’s (2006) *The Trainer’s Handbook, Second Edition*, as well as the researcher’s own interests and conclusions drawn from local environment.

First, the role of the participant should be established, since the participant is integral to the workshop. Who will the participant be? In this case the focus of the workshop will be the layperson; one who is not already a writer by trade. For professional writers, writing is already utilized as a tool for self-expression and release of inner feelings. The layperson, then, can be anyone outside of the professional writing level who is challenged by the struggles of daily living. However, to narrow the scope for the purposes of this study, and because group dynamics are often better served when there is a common element or interest in the group, one demographic will be chosen.

Therefore, the workshop will be designed with dormitory-living (usually freshman- and sophomore-level, ages 18-22) college students in mind. In order to answer

the question of how to teach this or any demographic journaling, the researcher will discuss the five assumptions of the adult learner as set out by Malcom Knowles and cited by Lawson. Assumption one is that “adult learners want to take responsibility for their own lives, including the planning, implementing, and evaluating of their learning activities” (Lawson, 2006, p. 28). If this assumption is correct, then it is the responsibility of the workshop director to provide for that need. The correct approach, then, is one that allows the participant to be given the tools he needs for learning, and then be in charge of interacting with them. The facilitator still needs to be active in providing the participant with the understanding necessary to do this, but training becomes collaborative. The journaling workshop, then, will aim to give participants the information necessary to understand how and why journals can be used. The implementation of that knowledge will always be in the hands of the participant themselves, so the best course of action taken by the facilitator will be to leave participants with knowledge and the will to use that knowledge.

The second assumption of the adult learner is that each participant arrives at the workshop with a knowledge-base informed by past experiences (Lawson, 2006). Thus, the facilitator needs to build on this knowledge, using that knowledge-base in the building process. Everyone has some idea of what journaling is, and of how it is done. The facilitator’s job then is to inform the participant of the workshop the advantages as well as the misconceptions that lie in the field based on what the participant already thinks and feels about it. For instance, it is perhaps not commonly understood but commonly *felt* that in order to write in a journal one must have something important, integral, beautiful, or in some way profound to write about. Journalists, then, in order to

become journalists, need to find a way of “killing their angel, or sacking their schoolteachers” (Bolton, 1999, p. 120). One role of this workshop will be to enforce the understanding that, whatever form it takes, and however grammatically correct it may be, the writing is important not because of what it says *per se*, but because no matter what it says, it is the personal outcome of the writer’s day. The product of his experience. And in that, it is meaningful.

Stemming from this third assumption comes the fourth: that readiness to learn something comes from an understood need to know it—that learning should be “problem-centered rather than subject-centered” (Lawson, 2006, p. 29). Just as the facilitator must suit the participant’s already-held knowledge of the subject, he must also bring background information to that knowledge that connects it to a real-world problem or issue that affects the participant’s life. In this case, the nature of the daily life of the participant implies stress no matter what demographic said participant is part of. It also implies loss, pain, and any other of the universal daily struggles concurrent with life. Combining this knowledge with the information that journaling can help to ease that stress, to create a safe space in which to interact with those struggles, offers the participant a relevant skill-set for dealing with his or her “immediate needs” (p. 29).

Finally, the fifth assumption of the adult learner is that adults want to learn because of internal factors such as the need for “better quality of life, greater self-confidence, or the opportunity to self-actualize” (Lawson, 2006, p. 29). Thus, the effects of journaling as being a “very creative process... [which] can increase self-confidence and self-respect... [stemming from] the creation of a concrete object” (Bolton, 1999, p. 120) need to be addressed and emphasized. The ability to find catharsis and meaning

through the production that occurs from putting pen to paper is one that supplies alleviation and fulfillment of the learner's needs. Through the addressing of these learner-assumptions, the journaling workshop can satisfy its participants' needs and be successful in providing knowledge.

Workshop Structure

The basic questions that need to be answered in order to develop a design structure for the workshop are the “who, what, where, when, why, how, and how long” diagnostics. This is to ensure that the workshop functions in all aspects to achieve the best results most efficiently and to make sure that the workshop facilitator is well-organized both in preparing for and going into the workshop itself. Thus, those questions will be answered here:

Who: Dormitory-living college students

What: Participants will learn how to manage daily life struggles through journaling

Where: College Inn Dormitory student lounge

When: A weekday evening when most would be available to attend

Why: To help the students to better cope with their college careers and life-issues.

How: Through a discussion of what journaling is, why it is used, and how it is used, followed by a practical exercise.

Length: One hour

Promotion for the workshop will appear two weeks before workshop date in the form of flyers throughout the College Inn dormitory.

The purpose of this one-hour workshop (see Appendix D for design) is to provide participants with an accurate knowledge of what journaling can accomplish in their lives. The workshop will begin with a short welcome and introduction to the participants by the facilitator and with passing out an overview of workshop purpose and objectives to participants (see Appendix E). This will be followed by a synopsis of the research discussed here, including what stress is with a distinction between distress and eustress emphasized, as well as a definition of grief and loss and the physiological effects thereof. The form of this information will be given as a brief lecturette and will be fairly basic in amount and level. The purpose is to provide enough knowledge that the practice journals will be undertaken by the participants with an adequate understanding of the benefits of the exercise and of their continued uses in the future. As well, since different people work best under different mediums, the different forms journaling takes—by hand as well as by computer, singularly or in groups, private or public (blogs, web journals), will be discussed.

Following the lecturette, the facilitator will pass out small journals to the participants and there will be one journaling exercise. The first will be structured in order to give the participant some guidance so that he or she does not feel groundless or not properly introduced to the concept. This structured journal will be simple and basic in form, such as a “what if?” question (see Appendix F), which would allow for creativity and brainstorming and would also introduce the participant to free-form writing that was not going to be judged or graded.

In an educational setting such as a college, students are taught that writing is either right or wrong. Therefore, though most students are asked to assert their opinions

in the course of many of their assigned essays, the tendency to feel like there is a right or wrong answer, and that potential incorrect areas in other parts of the essay (i.e., grammar, punctuation, and spelling) will underscore whatever they write about anyway, can cause distress and lowered confidence. After this experience, and because of negative reactions by pre-or-post college teachers to the student's writing and ideas in the past, the writing process itself may be looked at with hostility.

One of the purposes of the journal, then, is to replace the distress one feels towards the writing process with *eustress*. To replace the second-guessing and doubt one takes into his or her writing with intuition and creativity—the feeling of freedom and ease. Practice with this may inform future academic writing with these qualities, as well as impart participants with a new-found avenue for exploring inner thoughts, ideas, and emotions through a medium that they may have resisted before.

After the first writing exercise there will be a short discussion of initial reactions of the participants. They will not be asked to share what they wrote, but only how the writing made them feel and what it brought out for them. Following this will be a second exercise. This will be less structured, and will not be prompted with a question. Instead, the facilitator will choose a picture based on a neutral scene (i.e., a nature scene—see Appendix F) about which the participant will write. The purpose of choosing this neutral picture limits the chance of the participant entering into the activity with pre-formed biases or opinions they might have about a scene with people in it, and they will be less likely to try to construct a story around the picture that, though creative, would not necessarily push them to create through less visually-representative means. A picture of a carnival scene, for example, is already suited to a story. It needs only character

definitions and dialogue added for the people depicted. A picture of a meadow, however, is less specific and does not as naturally lend itself to narrative. Thus the participant can react to the picture, writing what it makes them think about and feel without prompting him or her with specific and less challenging narrative structure.

After a second short discussion of the effects of the exercise, the facilitator will summarize the workshop, remind the participants of stated objectives, the basics of the information provided, and future application of journaling on their own time.

Participants may keep the provided journals. Following this summary, evaluation forms will be given to the participants. These will be simple forms to fill out on their way out, asking the participants if the workshop met stated objectives, if they were given enough information and adequate time to finish the exercises, and if they have any suggestions for the improvement of the workshop in the future (see Appendix E).

Future Research

This workshop is meant to teach the lay person to utilize journaling as a means of stress relief, eustress creation, and expression. However, a more formalized and research-oriented approach to discover the full applications of the journaling process could be implemented in education. Under the whole-mind educational approach, which asserts that education which seeks to educate the whole mind and appeals to the multiple ways in which knowledge is gained, is essential in knowledge attainment and retention. The purpose of this incorporation is to find whether students learn better, retain that knowledge better, and use it with more confidence and skill if the different parts of their brains are incorporated at once during the learning of it.

There has been much research done in this field, and some done in the field of using journaling to specifically improve learning of English class writing and reading skills and creative writing. However, journaling may have merit in other fields as well, and it would be useful to study the nature and scope of that merit. For instance, would keeping a journal that incorporates only words to describe math problems help improve the ability to learn math for a student who does not grasp numerically-based problems? Would keeping a natural history or practical-approach journal that is to be used in everyday life to describe one's world help in learning science? In appealing to the multiple interests and intelligences of a person, this research could be used to help students learn in a way that would benefit their entire educational careers and thus their lives.

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Appendix A

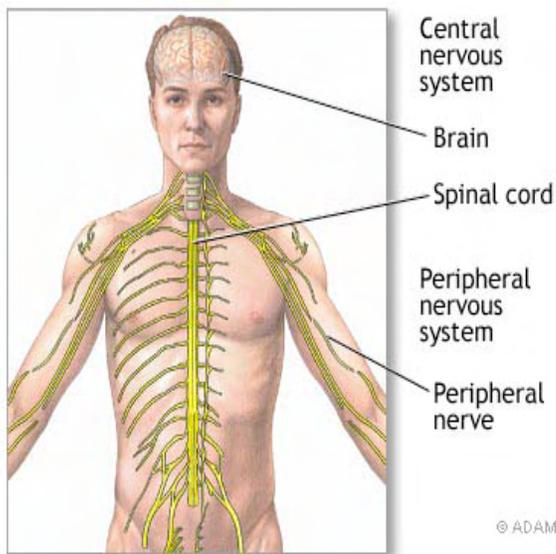


Figure 1. Nervous System (“Nervous system,” 2006).

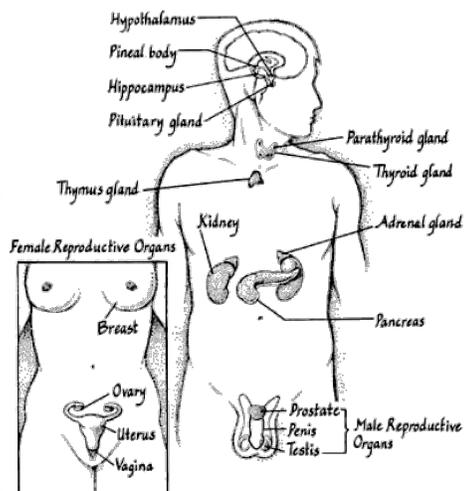


Figure 4. The Endocrine System (Born, 1996).

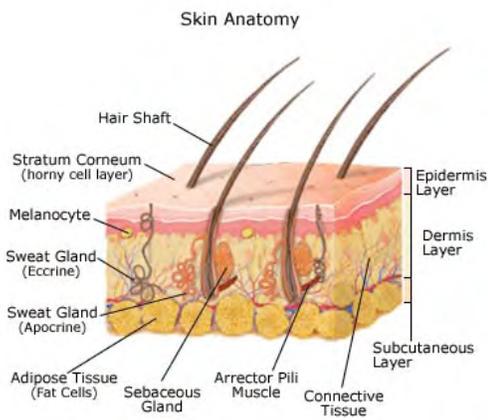


Figure 3. The Cutaneous System—the skin (“The Cutaneous System,” n.d.).

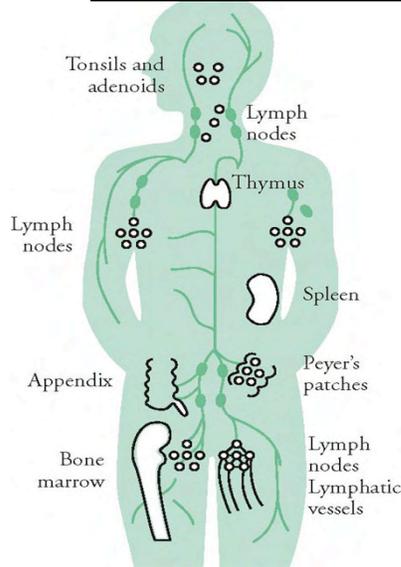


Figure 2. Immune System (“The Immune System,” 2010).

The Four Organ Systems of the NICE Network

Appendix B

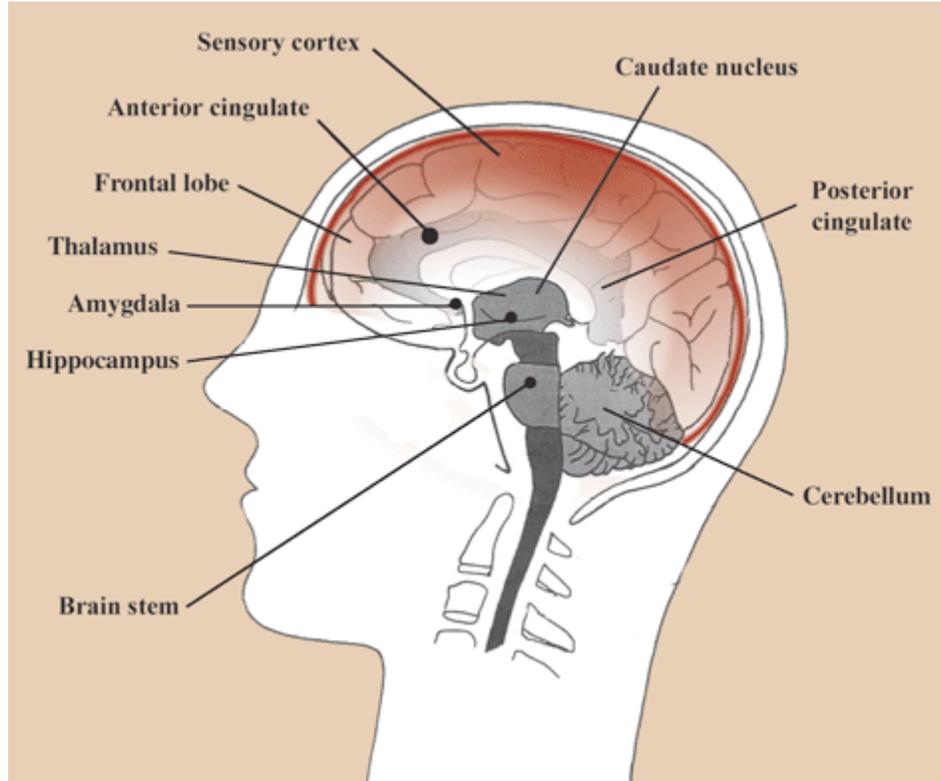


Figure 5. Brain map of Insula, Cingulate Cortex (called here the anterior cingulate) and Amygdala, where the insula is the white area in the center above the amygdala (“The Brain Map,” n.d.).

Appendix C

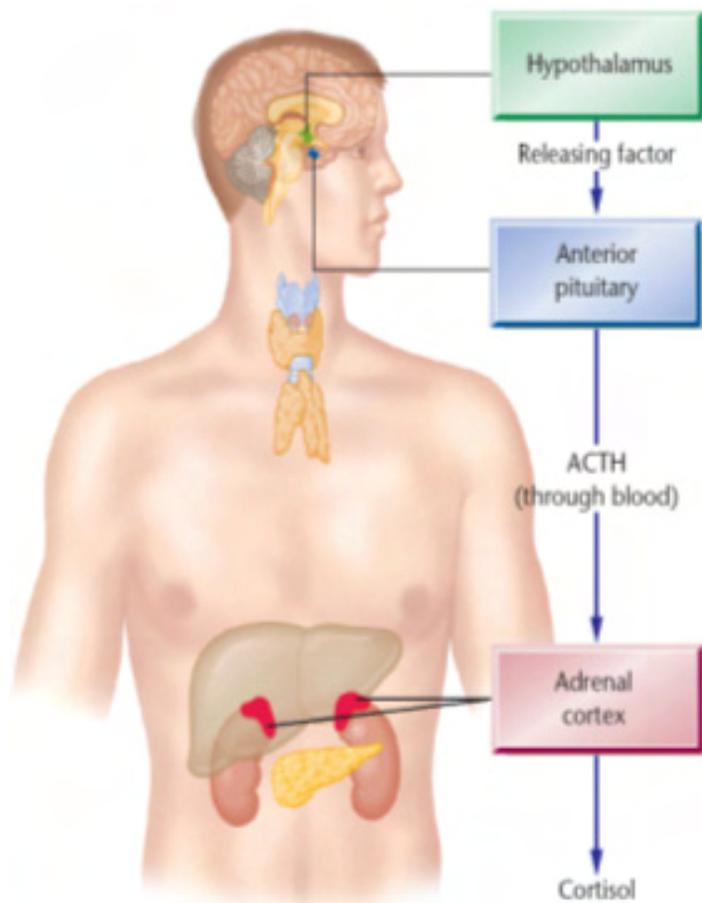


Figure 6. The Hypothalamic-Pituitary-Adrenal Axis (“The HPA Axis,” n.d.).

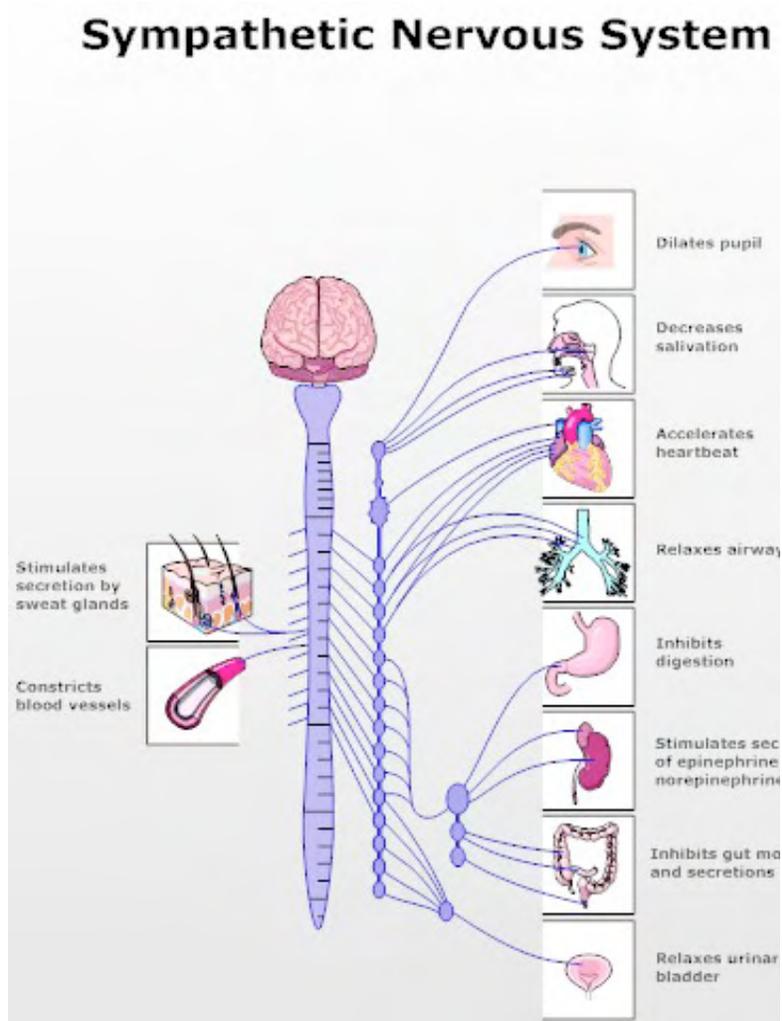


Figure 7. The Sympathetic Nervous System. (“The Sympathetic Nervous System,” 2007).

Appendix D

Workshop Design

Introduction/Passing out Objectives Sheet.....	5 minutes
Lecturette/Questions.....	10-15 minutes
Pass out journals/Journaling Exercise Number One.....	10 minutes
Discussion.....	5 minutes
Journaling Exercise Number Two.....	10 minutes
Summary/Discussion.....	10 minutes
Evaluation.....	5 minutes
Total time.....	55-60 minutes

Materials :

- Objectives sheet (One per person)
- Journals (One per person)
- Evaluation Sheet (One per person)

Appendix E

Objectives/ Information Sheet

Objectives:

- Gain knowledge about the fundamentals and benefits of journaling based on information given on :
 - Stress ; Eustress/Distress
 - Grieving and Loss
 - Effects of both on mind and body
- Experience journaling process through journaling exercises
 - Discuss exercises
 - Discuss workshop as a whole

Evaluation : (On back of Objectives sheet)

- Did you learn the fundamentals and benefits of journaling?
- Did you understand the concepts given of stress including the distinction between eustress and distress?
- Did you understand grief and loss and its effects, as well as those of stress, on the body and mind?
- Were the journaling exercises beneficial to you?
 - Did you understand the potential benefit of journaling?
 - Was enough time given to complete the exercises?
 - Were the prompts given appropriate to you? Were they enjoyable?

Did they aid in your overall understanding of the objectives given?

- Was the overall format and order of the workshop appropriate for understanding?
- Was the overall time allowed for the workshop suitable to you? If not, what areas were given too much/not enough time?
- Do you have any other comments/suggestions?

Appendix F

Possible Journal Prompts

Exercise One

Facilitator chooses one topic or question to have participants answer. Example questions :

- What would you do if you were on a boat in the middle of a lake and it sprung a leak?
- What if you had to choose between love and money?
- Would you rather know every language fluently or know how to play any instrument?

Exercise Two :

