

The Process of Writing about Experiences involving Negative Emotions

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Several experimental studies have indicated that writing about traumatic life events helped reduced health problems. Writing could bring about physical and mental benefits due to two factors: emotional expression and cognitive re-organization. Writing tasks to encourage cognitive re-organization and emotional expression have been used in previous experimental studies. However, there have so far been no studies that have examined the individual mental process. Therefore, this study focused on the process of an individual's writing about experience with negative emotions.

Four students participated in this research, and there were three sessions. In each session, the participants wrote about their experiences with negative emotions for 10 minutes. Consequently, when they were writing, some participants experienced positive emotions and other participants experienced negative emotions. It was considered that emotional expression and cognitive re-organization were associated with the writing experience. Further, it was concluded that only emotional expression along with re-experiencing negative emotion led to a negative experience, but cognitive changes lead to a positive experience. However, it cannot be necessarily said that emotional expression has no positive effect. It is speculated that the suitable methods of writing depend on the individuals. In addition, the relationship between the researcher and participants gradually changed throughout the sessions. Relationships may deepen through writing, and participants could become engaged in writing with confidence by deepening the relationship. This result indicated that the role of the therapist as an observer is important when writing is clinically used. It is required to continue to explore writing methods that are suitable for individuals, taking into account the relationship between the researcher and the participants.