Name of Student

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Name of Class

Day Month Year

**How does therapeutic writing allow teenagers to grow mentally?**

**Introduction:**

Teenage is attender time for young individuals when they are going through different biological changes that produce various kinds of mood swings and behavioral changes in them. Also, this is the most critical time in terms of academics when external pressure is high on them. All these changes along with the academic pressure lead them to depression and anxiety. These issues become critical in young individuals when they are suffering from chronic mental illnesses, disability and any other kind of physical issues. These traumatic situations result in lower levels of self-esteem and confidence. All these situations can be improved through therapeutic writing. In this paper influence of therapeutic writing on teenagers is discussed in terms of its physical and mental effects. Getting out of depressive symptoms and negative thought patterns is really important for physical cognitive development. Does therapeutic writing has an effect on the emotional state of the adolescents, is the question that will be explored in this research paper.

**Discussion:**

Trauma and drama are the two words that describe the teen life for many teenagers. This is due to all the changes and transitions that they go through physically and mentally. According to various researches, depression levels in teenagers are on the rise(“New Report Shows Depression Rates Rising”). Causes of which include family issues, economic problems, parental influences, traumatic situations like physical or sexual harassments, bullying, and academic pressures. If teenagers have a lack of confidence to deal with their issues it can lead to worsening the situations. Also one of the most important factors that contributes to depression in teens in the transition, from the teenage to adulthood. According to the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, transitions are really problematic in teens and one in six teenagers consider suicide as the solution to their troubles in teenage ("Transitioning to Adulthood"). All these situations along with the transitional difficulties often result in depression and anxiety in the young individuals which often leads to suicide and self-abusive attitudes. These individuals feel alone, stressed and lost. All the mental trauma not only affects their memory and behavior but also is the leading cause of substance abuse in the teenagers turn to drugs and alcohol in young teenage to seek refuge from their problems. Problems like self-cutting are really among such children. These problems not only affects their personal health but also affects their physical health. Due to depression and other mental problems, often teenagers develop eating disorders that also affects them physically. Many of them turn obese which in turn results in high blood pressure, cholesterol and heart disease. These issues also cause chronic fatigue, unexplained pain, headache, migraine, and type 2 diabetes(“The Effects of Depression on the Body and Physical Health”).

All such broken teenagers often don't have anyone to talk to which keeps worsening the situation. Such teenagers often become a challenge for the teachers and parents. At such a critical stage role of the therapists is essential. But the therapeutic effects of the journaling can't be neglected. Teenagers can practice this therapeutic journaling all by themselves. And often therapists also suggest them to adopt this activity. Many studies are present that strongly suggests that therapeutic journaling turns out to be the most effective therapy in troubled teens. Therapeutic Journaling allows teens to manage their stress by writing the causes of their stress. Writing about anxiety and troubled personal experience allows them to deeply identify the main contributors in their bad situations. It gives them a safe place to vent their emotions. Venting out emotions give clarity to the mind and helps in increasing emotional intelligence. It is beneficial in improving communication issues (Federica et al.).

Writing the emotional allows the heart to become clear, which results in contentment and makes individuals happy. Thus provides a healthy environment to the brain and heart. This positivity helps teenagers to grow as a person. Writing about the wishes and dreams signals brain that these wishes are important thus helps to organize the brain around finding means to make the dreams come true. It also helps them to solve their problems without relying on others. It clarifies their perspective and rereading the written material allows them to look at their problem in a different dimension that allows new solutions to come in into being. It helps teens to develop a sense of empathy.

Even when teenagers go to therapists and talk about their emotions and thoughts, many fail to deliver the exact issues through their speech. Trust issues also come in the way of their sessions with the therapist as it is not easy for everyone to open up, freely to another human being. Thus therapeutic writing allows them to explore their problems and issues. Various studies suggest that therapeutic writing results in improved physical and emotional health among teenagers. But some studies show that writing has more effect on the minds of healthy patients than on the ones that are dealing with mental issues (Frisina, Borod, and Lepore). According to evidence-based research writing down, life experiences create a positive impact on the psyche. It also helps teenagers to digest their issues and get over the troubling incidents of their lives. Thus creates space for the positive impact to come in place. It improves the immune system, decreases the symptoms of various illnesses and improves memory and blood pressure. (Frisina, Borod, and Lepore)

It results in improving the overall personality and health of the teenagers by making them more aware of their habits and patterns and providing them the best support system that no other individual can. According to the article named "Study: Blog More Therapeutic for Teens than Diary research" that took place University of Hafia, teenagers who write blogs release the emotional stress better than the ones who write it in a diary as it creates a possibility for outside interactions (Siegel-Itzkovich)

Thus it can be suggested that therapeutic writing is beneficial in self-improvement among teenagers as emotional disclosure is a stressful event that is not possible for all the teenagers. Writing allows them to vent out their emotions and feelings and helps them get their focus back. It helps them take back control on life by sorting out their thoughts and emotions, thus proves to be beneficial for physical and psychological health. All these emotional disclosures allow them to become improved versions of themselves and help them get rid of their addictions. Following are the few effects of therapeutic writing.

**Growth as a product of experiences and learning**

Mental growth is a product of emotional growth, intellectual growth, and social developmental skills. For the mind to develop correctly during the teenage years, it is necessary that teenagers are in a sound emotional and mental state. Growth in teen years is associated with experiences and observations. These two help teens to grow and become ready for the adult world. With the growing depression among teenagers, mental growth is getting hindered by the unsorted emotions and traumatic experiences. Only healthy individuals can grow into stable and healthy adults. According to research writing is something that helps to improve memory and sort out the emotions(“Stages of Adolescence”).

**Therapeutic writing and Expressive writing**

Writing is a therapeutic experience. Therapeutic writing is also called writing therapy as it is all about receiving therapeutic benefits that aid clarity of thoughts and emotions in young individuals. It is the easiest accessible, versatile and low-cost therapy that can be adopted by anyone at any age. Expressive writing is done to express personal feelings and emotions, regarding any chosen topic or randomly. Therapeutic writing is a form of expressive writing, but its objective is inward emotions, and thoughts. It is also confused with the daily journaling, due to its flexible nature. But therapeutic writing can be done at any selected time. One way of adopting this therapy is to write freely and let all emotions transfer to the paper on their own. Another way of doing it is to think of a single traumatizing or disturbing event and write all of its associated dimensions on the paper. Like what happened, how happened, what could have been improved. All the feelings associated with the events should be written on the paper. Such form of writing helps a person to find the closure that enables him/her to free himself from all the negative emotions that are trying to hold the person back(*Writing Therapy*). According to research by research written emotional disclosure about the stressful traumatic event produce benefits emotionally and physically in the teenagers(Facchin et al.). It produces increased negative mood effects and decreased positive mood, immediately after writing the emotions, but in long run after few days, positive effects prevail over the person’s mood(Smyth et al.). In a study where groups were analyzed to measure the effects of writing, it was revealed that the group with shorter follow-up times, like less than a month, had better effects of the personality than the groups who participated in writing with longer follow-up periods(Facchin et al.). In a study the effects of therapeutic writing were observed in First-year students, who experienced the death of the friend. It was revealed that benefit-focused therapeutic writing turned about to be effective to students dealing with the loss.

Writing simply without expressing emotions, is less beneficial than writing that is based on pure emotions and problematic events. Similarly, if it’s done for yielding the benefits, according to psychiatrist’s guidelines, it turns out to be more beneficial.

**Benefits of Therapeutic writing**

According to a study, participants who wrote their most traumatic experiences for 15 minutes for consecutive four days, experienced health benefits (Baikie and Wilhelm). Research also proves that therapeutic writing can benefit the executive functioning of the brain. Executive functioning is really important in dealing with the memory of events and information storage, which is critical in teenagers(Barcaccia et al.).

Forgiveness is an important gesture that is a gift that is not for the others but our own selves. According to research forgiveness is a voluntary process due to which person forgive the offender and cultivates positive emotions in himself. Therapeutic writing provides a chance for individuals to get emotional closure thus makes the process of forgiveness easy(Barcaccia et al.) The study took place in Institute of Physical Activity, and Nutrition IPAN at Deakin University revealed that writing by hand requires the coordination between verbal and fine movements system of the body, and when we coordinate to write to encode information, it leads to richer memory. This university also encourages its students to ditch their laptops and instead write on paper by hand(Blatchford). This suggests that writing requires a person to collect his thoughts and emotions, one can't just randomly write anything on paper. This makes a person dig deeply to find his voice, which allows him to reconnect to his feelings at a deeper level. Thus it promotes clarity of the mind, get rid of toxic thoughts and allows a person to focus on better things in things, which leads to better observation and development.(Blatchford).

Self-regulation is a process that enhances a person’s ability to regulate his emotions. In a Study, it was hypothesized that expressive writing will help individuals to gain a sense of empowerment and control over their emotion. Especially in circumstances in which a person has experienced a traumatic event. It becomes difficult to manage emotions especially in teenage, when a person experiences personality conflicts and circumstantial conflicts, due to transitional phases. The similar study particularly studied the effects of writing for 24 minutes over four consecutive sessions about the transgression of the friend, to see if the positive effects can be yielded in such circumstances. But this study did not supported the hypothesis that writing is an effective coping strategy for children who experienced transgression by a friend. But it was found that simply writing expressively about the issue yielded an increase in the negative emotions but did not let the child get over the event. This can be due to the general perception of the writer, as he will be biased while writing about the event. It was concluded that writing will be beneficial only with sound executive function due to their ability to process and store information effectively but it won’t turn out to be effective for the individuals with less capable executive functioning. Also, self-regulation capabilities are not completely depended on the therapeutic writing. (Barcaccia et al.)

**Conclusion:**

Therapeutic writing is an effective tool in improving the adolescent’s mental capabilities and helping them grow emotionally. Its positive effects can’t be denied but therapeutic or expressive writing is not the only factor that will affect the growth and self-regulation capabilities in adults. Different researches propose that it is effective in helping individuals deal with the loss, but in certain circumstances, depending upon other factors, it is not effective in all types of circumstances. Thus it can be said that the effects of therapeutic writing rely heavily on the circumstances and the cognitive processes and abilities of the participants.

In measuring the effects more researches are required in this field that benefits specific. Further studies also need to control the moderating effects regarding the demographics, developmental stage and other range of factors that can potentially affect the adolescents. This therapy can be adapted by the individuals by themselves but turns out to be more effective when an expert professional is controlling the outcomes and expected benefits. This therapy should be adopted by the individuals as a hobby as many studies support that it has multiple benefits over the person’s mental growth, as it promotes the clarity in emotions. But the context of writing is important in yielding the benefits. Exactly like the destructive negative nature of the negative self-talk, writing if starts to takes the negative nature, can prove to be destructive rather than constructive. Thus it is important to have a clear agenda in mind if it is done as self-help. Agenda can be based on simple expressing of emotions, and it can be based on exploring the dimensions of the situations. But it is advised that if writing is adapted for therapeutic purposes, a specialist should be consulted. As psychiatrists and therapists know how to yield the positive outcomes out of therapeutic writing. Therapeutic writing is therapeutic because of its nature, thus it is important to perform it by keeping the purpose and constraints in check.

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