

The Healing Power of Writing

Writing for Carers

Karen Holford

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My story as a writer

- Started when I was six
- Encouraged by others
- Experimented with words and rhymes and how the words sounded
- Poetry can often lead to richer and more beautiful prose
- Writing books – learning about structure
- The power of bullet points - preparing for efficient writing
- Start small and write articles first
- Read them aloud to check for smooth sounds
- Or use the computer tools to read back to you

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- Time – you have so many other things to do and so little time to focus.
- You are trying to meet your own needs as well as other people's needs.
- It is easy to lose the motivation for bigger projects because they don't get finished and that is disheartening.
- We may have unrealistic expectations and unhelpful messages from our past and our teachers that can be a barrier to enjoying the flow of writing.

Challenges of writing as a carer

Or as someone with additional needs

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Writing can help us...






- To clear our muddled thoughts
- To focus on different aspects of our life that we might not have thought about before
- To look at our life, experiences, and things around us from different perspectives
- To explore healing and uplifting ideas
- To tell our story as a journey with God
- To share our story with others

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Just one word...to begin with

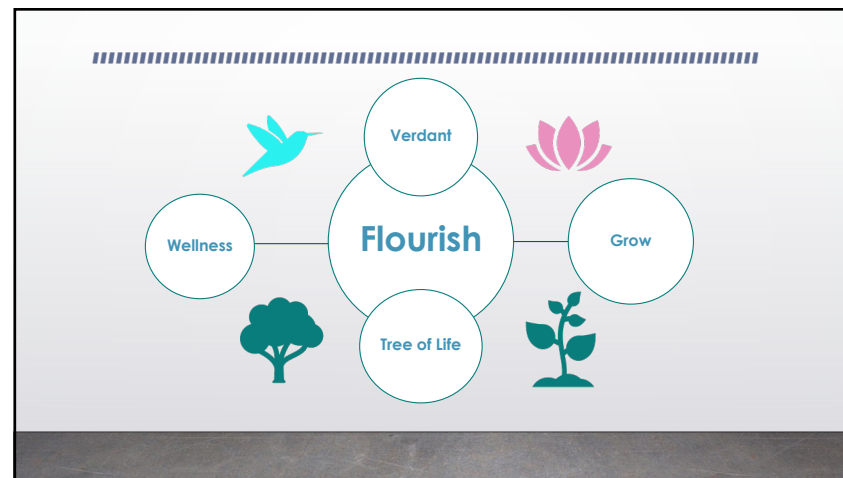
-  Choose a word for yourself that you would like to make your theme for the year, or for a month, or just a week – you can change it whenever you like!
-  Flourish, survive, growth, peace, kindness, compassion, hope, release, etc.
-  Don't think too hard.
-  Write it big in the middle of your sheet of paper.
-  Look at it and reflect on it...

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Develop the word...

- Around your word write or draw other words and things.
- What feelings does the word evoke in you?
- What pictures does it bring to your mind?
- What memories do you have of this word?
- How might this word help you when you face a challenge?
- Scatter similar or related words around the page.

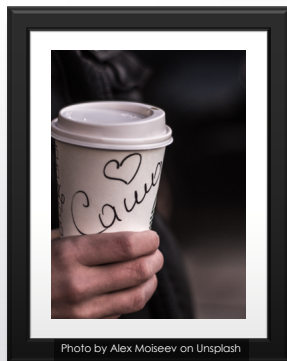
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Using your own name

- K – kind
 - A – appreciative
 - R – reflective, relational
 - E – enabling, enthusiastic
 - N – nurturing
- Use words to describe what you like about yourself, or create a mission statement based on the letters.



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Gratitude list

- Writing a gratitude list is a good way to document each day.
- When we experience gratitude we can't experience anxiety – opposites.
- 30 things I'm thankful for today.
- Or just write 3 things a day in a simple diary – photograph them too.
- Or go through the alphabet and write one thing for each letter.
- Or buy an address book and add items of gratitude to the lettered pages.



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Gratitude list

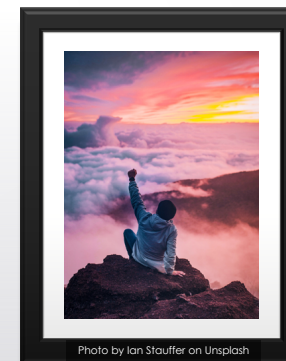
- Write down for yourself, or in the chat, three things that you are grateful for.
- What can you see, hear, smell, touch and taste right now?
- Listen to "10,000 reasons" by Matt Redman to inspire you.
- Be more creative – I am thankful for this because...
- Or turn each gratitude into a verse of a psalm.



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What Went Well? WWW

- Another quick journaling concept is the 'What Went Well?' task.
- Use a small diary, or even index cards, to note down what went well today before you go to bed.
- Add one thing you learned, one thing that surprised you, and where you saw God today.
- This is a simple structure to help you remember what did go well – which is usually most of your day, and go to sleep feeling more positive. Do this with others in your home, too.
- It is good for your wellbeing to focus on what went well (Phil 4:8) rather than to catalogue your catastrophes.



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What Went Well? WWW

Take your paper and write down three things that went well today:

- 1
- 2
- 3

One thing you learned:

- 4

One thing that surprised you:

- 5

Where I saw God today...



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100 things that bring me joy

- '100 things' is a really good project to work on when you are feeling down.
- Take a pack of 100 index cards or a notebook with 100 pages. Write down each joy on a different card or page. What you like to see, hear, taste, smell, touch, activities that bring you joy, favourite books, films, songs, Bible stories, Bible verses, clothes, places, memories, people...
- Pick one card a day and try to experience that joy in some way. Write a few sentences about your joy experience on the back of the card, with the date. Add illustrations, stickers and doodles to the card too.

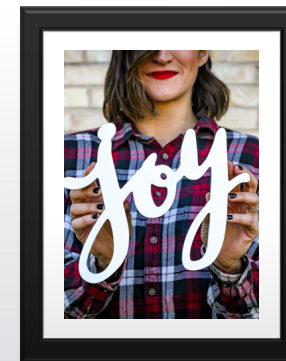


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100 things that bring me joy

- Write down 3 things that have brought you joy in the past week.
- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- For added creativity, write a very short story about your joy experience. Try limiting yourself to 50 words. Add a photo too if you like.



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Haiku

- Haikus follow a 5-7-5 syllabic structure.
- The entire poem only has three lines, with 17 syllables in total.
- The first line is 5 syllables. The second line is 7 syllables. The third is 5 syllables.
- They are short and simple and you can be creative quite quickly.

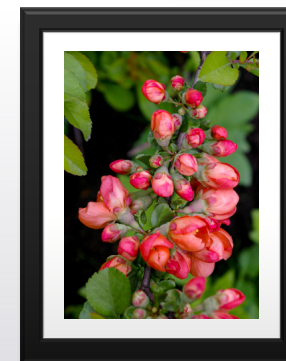


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Haiku

The blossom opens
Its fragrant heart to the sun
Delicate and pure

The birds gather moss
Gently building sheltered nests
To cradle new life




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Telling our stories



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My life in bullet points – or a mind map – or a time-line

Autobiographies can feel overwhelming.

Capture the key points in bullet points or a mind map.

Or create a time-line with sticky notes.

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To Be Told - Dan Allender - telling the story of your life with God

- Tell your faith/life story by looking for all the places where God was at work in your life.
- How He guided, helped and supported you all through the years.
- He has always been with you.
- How would God tell the story of His loving relationship with you?
- How has He grown you closer into His likeness over the years?




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Creative writing using the Bible

- Retell Bible stories from the perspective of minor characters. Such as the story of Jesus birth from the perspective of the innkeeper's wife, or Mary's mother, or the story of someone healed by Jesus, etc,
- Rewrite Psalm 23 from the perspective of a carer, parent, truck driver, or any other profession.
- Write the story of Ruth by writing her journal.
- Imagine the routine of a day on Noah's ark.
- Rewrite a parable from a modern perspective.




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My Best Self – Character stories

- Jennifer Fox Eades, a Christian educator who focuses on character development, says that who we are is what we are capable of at our best – not necessarily how we function under heavy pressure.
- Write your story from the perspective of a loving friend, who knows who you are at your best, and describe your strengths.
- Visit www.letitripole.org to learn about character strengths and www.viacharacter.org to take a character test. Write a story about a time when you used one of your key character strengths.




Photo by Heather Ford on Unsplash

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Love letter from/to God

- Go to www.fathersloveletter.com and download the Father's Love Letter in your language.
- This is a letter from God to you, taken from lots of Bible verses.
- Read it and let it soak into your heart.
- Write your letter back to Him.
- Create your own love letter from God, personalised for your needs, or for other people's needs.




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Letter/postcard from your future self

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Letter from future self

- Imagine that you can be "beamed up" into the future.
- What wisdom and guidance would you share, from the position of the future, to encourage you today?
- Write yourself a letter of encouragement and comfort from your future self.




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The Bin and the Gold Box
Sift your thoughts.

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The Bin and the Gold Box

- Sift your thoughts – taking them "captive" (2 Cor. 10:5)
- If they are discouraging and unhelpful, or tell you that you are not enough, or not good enough, write out the unhelpful thought on scrap paper.
- If they are Phil 4:8 thoughts – pure, lovely, good, encouraging, etc. write them on neat paper squares and put them in a gold box, or encouragement jar.
- Put all the rubbish thoughts in a bin - they are not from God.
- Keep the gold and precious thoughts and reflect on them. When you need encouragement dip into the box or jar.




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Sitting in God's lap

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 Sitting in God's lap

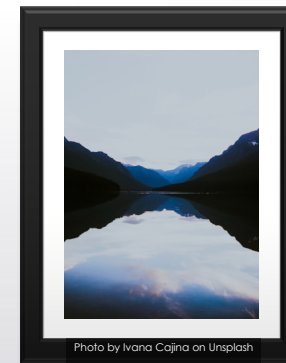
- Imagine you are sitting in God's lap and He is giving you a big hug.
- He smiles at you, holds you close, and tells you what He knows your tired heart most needs to hear.
- Write down your conversation with your most loving Father God.



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 Reflecting on the workshop

- Which writing activity would you most like to start doing in your life?
- What difference would it make to your life if you spent a few minutes writing now and then?
- What would you most like to write about?
- What ideas do you have for your next writing project, however small?



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 Blessing

- And never let ugly or hateful words come from your mouth, but instead let your words become beautiful gifts that encourage others; do this by speaking words of grace to help them.
- Ephesians 4:29 The Passion Translation
- So may the words of my mouth, my meditation-thoughts, and every movement of my heart be always pure and pleasing, acceptable before your eyes, Yahweh, my only Redeemer, my Protector.
- Psalm 19:14 The Passion Translation



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