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Editorial

Shortly before the end of 2016, another issue of "Psychological Opinions" magazine is ready.

In this issue you can read an interesting article by **Dimitra Didangelou** about **therapeutic- expressive writing**. Beyond a creative way of expression, it helps to understand the past, gives meaning to the present. Also, it improves performance, sociability and self-confidence. If not convinced, read the twelve reasons of why it is worth facing the blank page.

Likewise, **Petros Theodorou** wonders and gives possible reasons for the **overestimation tendency in partnership**. Referring to internal demons and traumas, as we try to rest up through togetherness, the need of Other to cover all our realistic and implied needs, and to the de-evaluation of sex and sexuality, as secondary importance expressions.

Furthermore, in an in-depth article by **Constantinos Mantzikos** you can be informed about a topic that unfortunately is still topical and how it relates to depression. **Bullying**, usually expressed with school violence, is an intentional act to cause physical or mental pain and subjugation of the victim. In his article, beyond the symptoms to which bullying is associated, numerous ways to address them are also stated.

Finally, we present a book that covers a wide range of issues around sex, as indicated by the title of "**100 small truths about sex**", by **Evi Kyrana**, Fylatos Publishing. Only in Greek Version

Remember that you can subscribe to the magazine's page [here](#) or like our [facebook](#) page Psychological Opinions and see new articles and conferences.

Happy reading!

Era Moulaki

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12 reasons to start journal writing How writing can have positive impact in our lives

Article by

Dimitra Didangelou



*"We write to taste life twice,
in the moment and in retrospect."*

- Anais Nin

Ever since I can remember myself, I have enjoyed writing anything - from homework to poetry. Most of all, I enjoyed writing in my diary. I adored the whole procedure. Being alone, my hand running through/across the white pages. The moment I opened my diary, a new world was made available for me to shape according to my choosing. I used stickers, I scribbled seemingly irrelevant words and phrases in the margins... What I write about today is very different in comparison to what I wrote about when I was a child, but the ritual is still the same.

What about confiding? However small or big an event may seem to a third party, our own thoughts and feelings on what has happened matter. Whether it is about a scolding teacher or about feeling anxious because I may be fired, the catharsis procedure stays the same. I think, feel, write about it and let it go.

When I started writing my diary, there was no way for me to imagine that on the other side of the world, in the United States of America, scientists were doing some

research to verify the benefits of the writing project and evolve it into the science of therapeutic or expressive writing.

Expressive or therapeutic writing is the deliberate writing of experiences and personal events aiming to specific results. Pay special attention to the words "deliberate" and "specific results." It is not always enough to start writing to find relief (Adams, 1999). It is important to have a purpose and for that reason, specific techniques are implemented by experts in that field.

Expressive writing can be practiced by anyone at any stage of his/her life. It can be of use both during calm and relaxed times of our lives. It can help us to enjoy our lives' flow or help us cope during troubling times when we face difficulties or dilemmas. We can find peace working through our feelings (Progoff,1992).

Dr. James Pennebaker, professor at the University of Texas, has found after numerous studies that writing helps people organize their thoughts and find meaning in their traumatic experiences. Among the participants in his studies were HIV positive people, cancer patients and victims of sexual abuse and Vietnam veterans. He came to the conclusion that if they were able to find greater meaning in their difficulties, they would have a better chance to overcome them. Writing can help someone find meaning.

In what specific ways can we benefit from journal writing?

1. It helps us understand our past

Writing about my past helps me understand my present. Shining light on events and feelings from my childhood, I gain a more complete self-image and I can understand my present reactions. A Chinese proverb says: "The palest ink is better than the strongest memory."

2. It has a therapeutic effect

Among Dr. James Pennebaker's list of results we find: strengthening the immune system, lessening post-traumatic stress symptoms, improved feelings of depression, diminished anxious feelings, less/reduced obsessive thoughts and compulsions, reduced pain (Pennebaker, 2004).

3. It helps us organize and understand our lives

There are days that I feel time goes by very quickly and life slips through my fingers. When I write about whatever is going on, I feel as if I freeze time. When I make a list of the things I have to do within a week or a month I get the chance to bring some order to the everyday chaos.

4. It improves school and work performance

Research has shown that students get better grades when they have written an essay before the final exam. This may have something to do with writing releasing a part of the working memory which is responsible for working on complicated tasks (Klein & Boals, 2001, Cameron & Nicholls, 1998). The same is true for our job tasks.

5. It increases our sociability

Recent research has shown that people who wrote about their traumatic experiences, talked to other people more often, laughed more and used more words related to positive feelings. Expressive writing seemed to make them more relaxed in social situations/settings, better listeners and friends (Pennebaker & Graybeal, 2001).

6. It increases our chances to get a job

In one of his studies, Dr. Pennebaker asked middle aged unemployed men to write about their feelings, their anger and their thoughts. The control group was just writing about how they spent their time. Eight months later, 52% of the group who wrote about their feelings had found new jobs in comparison to a mere 20% of the control group (Pennebaker, 2004).

7. It raises our level of consciousness

When I gather memories, feelings, words, phrases, and images on a piece of paper I get a feeling of shaping my life. It helps me get a more complete view on/of who I am and what my purpose in life is.

8. It increases our productivity

Harvard Business School researcher Teresa Amabile, discovered that when people record even the smallest of their achievements, they feel more committed to their work, productive and aware of the purpose of their toil. They tend to work more consciously (Amabile, 2011).

9. It makes us better balanced and calm

Writer and poet Ralph Emerson often stressed the allure of depending our existence on factors such as luck, property, circumstance and other peoples' expectations of us. In order to get rid of such bondage he recommended strengthening our inner world. By strengthening our inner life we shall become less affected by what goes on outside. To quote Emerson: "Nothing can bring you peace but yourself." Writing is an excellent way to contact ourselves and our inner world, eventually finding balance.

10. It makes us wiser

Neuroscientist Antonio Damasio claims that our notion of wisdom is in fact our ability to understand where our feelings stem from and learn from them. Writing helps us examine our feelings, interpret them and reach closer to our innermost wisdom—another reason to take up writing.

11. It boosts our self confidence

After minimizing our resistance and reserve towards the paper, we may come across a pleasant surprise. We will soon find out a safe warm place to express our thoughts and feelings that may boost our self esteem and strengthen our self respect.

12. It boosts our creativity

I think no further explanation is needed. Do you have anything better in mind?

Learn more about expressive writing:

<http://empowerpsyche.org/>

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Why are we often over-charging the long-term committed relationship with too many expectations?

Article by

Petros Theodorou



Summary:

It seems that in our days the intimate long-term relationships acquire a special and perhaps exaggerated value, often resulting in a model of a "super-relationship" that if one fails to achieve feels failure and inadequacy. However, is this kind of relationship truly "the best"? Maybe this overvaluation connects with other psychological phenomena?

I am of the opinion that, nowadays, in our consumer and technocratic societies, although divorces are constantly on the rise, intimate long-term relationships have been imbued with meanings and importance that do not correspond to their essence, whether we call them marriage, cohabitation, "life partnership" or "serious relationship". The result is that these relationships often get "mutated", and disoriented from their deep coral nature, leading to disappointment and alienation instead of fulfilling contact processes.

I believe that this "over-charging" of such relationships happens due to several effects of our collective ways to live together and I would "group" such effects in three big "categories".

The first one includes various hard to accept characteristics of our existence, that become crucially important in our days of so many virtual paradises. Among such characteristics, I can briefly mention the following classical ones.

a) The terror of existential loneliness, which we can describe verbally but which we can never share, exactly because we are existentially alone: we are physically and psychologically unique beings with unique and completely individual experiences.

b) The futility born by the failure of the promises of collective prosperity as well as by the failure of suggestions for the "good" and for the "positive thinking" on our planet.

c) The increasing panic over our complete lack of control over physical reality (as I write this, my first cancer cells might be taking form, my first heart attack or stroke may be in preparation, or an earthquake that will destroy the building I live in might be coming).

d) The "knowledge" of our ceaseless journey towards old age and death. That is why, as time passes and we simply "survive" without bringing our lives closer to what we are and what we deeply and truly need, the idea of our unavoidable death in the future (the near or distant future - who knows...), takes deeper root in the our minds, freezing and paralysing us. The result is that we attempt to invent countless ways to "forget" our course to death with huge, glorious plans and neurotic projects; however, the more ambitious our projects get, the more hollow they become making it almost impossible to attribute meaning to our simple, little everyday life moments and so discover their secret beauty.

e) The responsibility of our choices in real life; despite our skills in the illusional space of online simulations and despite our holding our mobile phones as though they were guns ready to fire, we always have to choose in life; and this becomes a harder and harder issue (no matter how long the selfie-stick we buy is, it can never become a magic wand to change reality according to our tastes).

In the end, it would seem that no digital simulation of heaven can suffice to do away with all of these innate existential fears; simulated internet relationships can only cover them up temporarily. They keep on pulsate and so, while we float in online bliss, every now and then we freeze from the imperceptible breath of a constant invisible threat lurking right in our guts. Sometimes, we even come crashing down, as if an ancient and silently "re-activated" hidden wound due to a childhood fear of the unknown, is still bleeding ceaselessly. Then, it is only natural that the Other and his/her embrace can easily be transformed to seem like a warm and friendly cottage in the wild forest, like a safe enough port promising warmth and calmness after terrifying sea storms.

The second category of effects of our collective ways to live together that possibly "over-charge" intimate long-term relationships could be related to raw violence which generally permeates our lives and the air we breath in our modern flats; I think that violence is still dominant in our days, because it is still a characteristic of our species, a pole "balancing" another pole - the one that has to do with our capacity to follow noble spiritual quests.

Of course, nowadays, violence is not only explicit but can be well hidden in many ways. For example, it is hidden behind "customer service" desks and smiles (there are all around "big-brother" style signs: "our company is here for you!", "you can never lose each other because We take care of your communication!"). Other aspects of disguised violence are terrifying news updates, transformed by mass media in real horror box-office hits; moreover, there is the silent violence of loan payments, of taxes that are presented as a gentle caress but which cut like a knife, friendships and playful Facebook "likes" that only underline our loneliness etc. But none of these disguises can cover effectively the threatening breath of violence, passing through the seams of our so busy everyday lives and freezing our hearts. So, the Other again is enrobed with our often desperate expectations for safety and some traces of tenderness.

At the same time, a possible third category of effects "over-charging" intimate long-term relationships could be the spiritual and personal growth aspects projected on the long-term intimate relationship; I think that a more general tendency for spiritual quests is in part due to the role and influence of the commercialized former "New Age" movement. It seems to me that nowadays this influence has contributed greatly to an exaggerated focus on a somewhat superficial notion of spirituality and personal growth, naming them ultimate goals for this life and also the main goals of an intimate long-term relationship; in other words, the relationship becomes primarily a means for spirituality and personal growth instead of a way just to "be" in simple satisfying ways with the Other. Personally, I believe that such spiritual and personal growth over-demands from our long-term relationships, take away the earthy "blood and sand" aspects of our needs, resulting in our becoming somewhat "soft" and maybe "too gentle" in our encounters with the Other.

Thus, our existential features, the viciousness of our times and some kind of beliefs and values are already composing an effective trio of dynamics that contribute as a background to the overvaluation of the long-term intimate relationship.

On an overall background such as the one described till this point, the search for the Other and a deep and continuous relationship with them takes on incredible importance; however, it is likely that this "too much" importance, that this torturous necessity itself is what completely mutates the encounter with the Other into a "monster relationship".

In such a distorted framework to see our need for long-term relationships, what is it that we actually ask from the Other when we engage with them in a "serious" encounter? Joy? Pleasure? Safety? Tension and sexual excitement? Dreamy moments? For them to become the donor of everything we have needed and have never received, and which we will never receive in this life?

Often we seek all of this at once, as though the Other is a "relationship champion", able to satisfy all that we need. The perfect companion, exciting friend, unsurpassed lover that constantly shakes us up with the best sex of our life, our most powerful and eternal tender love, a source of exciting ideas and intensity, the understanding father

or mother of our children, the endless source of a unique combination of safety and freedom, our eternal partner with whom we care for our home, pay our bills, our taxes, shop at the super market, with whom we raise our children and we put up with our parents and our parents in law etc. And when one of these requirements is not met or when we are not satisfied with all this, we blame the Other (as if he/she were a champion-failure) or we feel guilty ourselves about our relationship not going well because of our not being "good enough".

Undoubtedly, the experience of love is exceptionally complicated. It is a multi-layered and very deep experience, very different to eros and desire; and long-term intimate relationships (with love as the central characteristic) are certainly the most profound form of connection two people can have. Such relationships are also a significant and absolutely necessary phase on our personal course, because they stir and motivate our existence in all its depth and layers; they push our being towards a search for new "states of equilibrium", as we learn to combine the terrifying awareness of our mortality's limitations with our innate ability to transcend them.

However, all of the above thoughts:

a) Do not axiomatically imbue the intimate long-term relationship with some "objectively" great importance, no matter if we see it or not as a chance for personal growth or spiritual development.

b) Do not make it some axiomatically necessary goal, degrading into primitive immaturity the passions, impulses, desires and other aspects of each of our little "secret" personal dramas regarding our needs for eros and for sex.

Perhaps it is a fact that eros creates only an illusion of touching the Other's core and that sex brings peace to our deepest existential terrors only for a short time. But both eros and sex cannot cease to be necessary experiences and deepest human needs, flourishing on different grounds than love (for example eros is based on the illusion of similarities with the Other and love on the struggle to accept differentiation). And of course there is no "objective" value system according to which these needs must be devalued because long-term intimate relationships are named in our days as an ideal way to advance in our spiritual pathway and in our personal growth - in other words no one can say that we must absolutely "reach" love and leave behind eros and sexuality.

If we see a love relationship as an idealised situation which is an end in itself, then, we start feeling that we need to "conserve" it anyway, because dealing with its difficulties is considered making some more steps in our personal growth or in our course for spirituality. Yet, I believe that we do not need to "squeeze blood from a stone" to feel that we are developing as human beings. As in every experience, if something in a long-term intimate relationship moves us ahead regarding our development, it is not any projected on the relationship "value" per se; what may move us ahead is only our direct experience itself while actively relating with the Other; it is only whether or not and to what degree we are able to become through direct experience more aware of our needs and our ways to deal with them. I think that loving is not seeing the Other and ourselves as beings dedicated to the "duty" of personal growth and spirituality

but as grounded and whole human beings attempting to mutually build a space comfortable for both during their encounter. Besides, our relationships are to “serve” us in our meetings and not to “be served” by us.

Summarizing, I believe that in our days there are many ways in which, both in life and in several related texts, this undoubtedly very important long-term intimate relationship is overvalued and somehow mutated. These ways, for me, include:

a) Naming it as “the” absolute means for personal growth and/or spiritual development (and consequently over-highlighting these aspects) while undervaluing its enormous difficulties and costs.

b) Arbitrarily considering this relationship a “life raft”, able to provide meaning to our life, like a conveniently shining beacon in the desert of present day life emptiness.

c) Seeing eros and sexual desire as expressions of “immaturity” and, therefore, of secondary importance for the spiritual person of today - in other words, they are arbitrarily knocked down to lower levels of the personal “growth scale”, in comparison to love.

d) In a lot of theoretical works (also in the psychotherapeutic field), sexuality and eros are often detached from the image of a concrete “Other” person; they are not seen as tremendous tendencies towards “this” or “that” very concrete person in flesh and bones fascinating us to madness; instead eros and sexuality are often delusionally turned into a vague, abstract and “harmless” opening of our vital energy to the vast impersonal universe; or, eros and sexuality are not talked honestly being placed in the cupboard as forbidden fruits, to be eaten in secret, in the dark.

e) We arbitrarily believe that in love, the role of the Other is to provide us with what life has not provided us with so far, thus we are entitled to demand of them “earth and water.” Thus, it is a logical consequence to stigmatize this hapless relationship as a “failure”, at the moment that the Other, charged to be a companion and life-vest in all (literally “all”) that we need, cannot anymore supply us with steady and satisfying doses of support, safety, eros, friendship, excitement, calmness, sex etc.

In conclusion, I think that sometimes, both in our day-to-day life and, in part, in the psychotherapy - psychology bibliography on relationships, there may be a one-sidedness as far as the importance of long-term intimate relationships is concerned. A one-sidedness that, as we saw above, may be related **(a)** to how we are experiencing today several of our deep existential needs, **(b)** to the disguised violence of our times, **(c)** to the beliefs and values that make up the background for our choices as to what exactly do we mean by saying “personal growth” and “spiritual development”.

As though when someone manages to love they no longer have the need to experience eros.

As though the enormous (for me) importance of the tragedy and paradox in every moment of the experience of eros is lessened and unimportant; I underline again that I always mean an experience of eros in which the “person in eros” does not orient to the abstract endless horizon ahead; instead, he or she turns to these or these or these

very specific eyes of this very concrete and very beautiful Other that are looking now, at this very moment, just through the eyes of the "person in eros", pulling him or her like a magnet into their bottomless abyss - an abyss capable of spreading, just through the looking, from the Other deeply into the "person in eros", capable of reaching in one instant the depths of his or her world, capable of stirring his or her own abyss.

As though when we love, we must strip our sexuality of its primal, pagan and dark roots that reach "elsewhere", to a different psychic area from our spirituality (even if one assumes that this "elsewhere" is of a lesser value than our spiritual landscapes, it still is an "elsewhere" with its own unique experiential colors and demands).

As though our sexuality is able to automatically mutate into a simple, soft cosmic vibration or into a caress made of tender pink clouds, instead of also being an unbearable gnawing down below, in our guts, that makes our knees tremble and causes our mouth to water, just like when we stand in front of an exceptional dish leaking our lips while dreaming the oncoming burst of tastes...

Bullying and Depression in Children

Article by

Constantinos N. Mantzikos



Introduction

In recent years bullying is a phenomenon that serious consequences in the school communities. The significance of this phenomenon in children is quite serious both physically and psychologically (Pernille, Holstein, Lynch, Diderichsen, Gabhain, Scheidt, & Currie, 2005; Sansone & Sansone, 2008). In addition it could have serious impact on school performance of affected students. Several studies (Bond, Carlin, Thomas, Rubin, & Paton, 2001; Gini, 2007; Pernille et al, 2005; Woods & White, 2005) have shown that this phenomenon is related to the existence of emotional problems. Other surveys (Olweus, 1997; Salmon, Jones, & Smith, 1998) suggest that bullying is associated with the existence of internalized and non-internalized disorders.

Papanis (2008) mentions an interesting definition of bullying when he states that it is the main manifestation by which school violence appears as an intentional act which aims at inflicting either physical or mental excruciating pain to induce subjugation of the victim.

Factors and their consequence of Bullying on the psychology of students

Aggression and bullying are due to many factors such as the violent behaviour of parents toward their children and each other (Efobi & Nwokolo, 2014; Nestoros, 1992). Another would be the angry disposition of teachers which is commonly

manifested either physically or verbally towards children (Nestoros, 1992), or peer group pressures (Vouisdakis, 1987; Markoulaki & Papastefanakis, 2008), whereas in large metropolitan centers juvenile delinquents gangs (Georgoulas, 2000), the Media and videogames (Nikolaou, 2004), and last but not least society in general (Courtecuisse, Fortin, Beze, Pain, & Selosse, 1998).

Children who fall victims to such incidents encountered several problems in their studies such as reluctance to school attendance and absences from classes (Reid, 1983). Moreover, many teenagers resort to suicide (Brunstein-Klomek, Marrocco, Kleinman, Schonfield, & Gould, 2007; Prewitt, 1988). On the other hand, many students because of intense coercion have high rates of depression and anxiety (Brunstein-Klomek et al, 2007; Fekkes, Pijpers & Vervloove-Vanhorick, 2004; Kaltiala-Heino, Rimpela, Rantanen, & Rimpela, 2000; Nordqvist, 2013), not to mention post-traumatic disorders (Nielsen, Tangen, Idsoe, Matthiesen, & Magerøy, 2015).

Research on Bullying and Consequential Depression on Students

Olweus (1991) in his survey found that boys who had been bullied had increased rates of depression in adolescence. Similar results have also been recorded of research conducted by Neary and Joseph (1994) who studied bullying in girls. Slee's investigation (2005) is in agreement with the above two studies. Survey results showed that there was a positive relationship with bullying depression in both boys and girls.

Bond et al (2001) in their study involving (N=3623) students concluded that there is a definite relationship of anxiety and depression symptoms following a bullying event for the victims. It seems that 25.1% of the sample who had undergone bullying showed signs of anxiety and depression compared to only 7.2% of those who had not. On the contrary, the greatest percentage of those sampled amounting to 53.7% who had suffered repeated bullying demonstrated both of these disturbances. Thus it was clearly shown that recurring bullying is directly associated with anxiety and depression. In a similar investigation conducted by Craig (1998) involving (N=546) students aged 11, those who had been abused demonstrated high levels of anxiety and depression against the abusers and the sample under investigation.

In a survey carried out by Natvig, Albrektsten and Qvarnstrom (2001) established that students who were victims of bullying by their classmates had expressed many high intensity psychosomatic symptoms as the main form of the symptoms of this depression. Similar findings resulted from the investigation of Fekkes and her colleagues (2004) who examined the degree of correlation between bullying, psychosomatic symptoms and depression in children 9-12 years. The results of this research showed that children who had experienced bullying exhibited psychosomatic symptoms such as headaches, anxiety, sleep problems and a desponded mood. Consequently they concluded that these students exhibited serious depression in comparison with other students. Sharp, Thompson and Arora (2000) conducted a study of (N=703) students and concluded that those who had experienced bullying complained of irritability, constant panic spells, repeated recollection of the instances and lack of concentration.

In another study on a sample consisting of (N=877) students aged 12-18 Rigby and Slee (1993) determined that there is a significant relationship of victimization with a low level of self-esteem. The findings firmly suggested that their low esteem was totally due to bullying rather than any possible antisocial behavioral patterns. Research by Egan and Perry (1998) sampling (N=189) students came up with exactly the same results that low levels of self-confidence may predetermine victimization and that bullying may lead to such levels of self-assurance.

Tackling School Bullying and Depression in Children

This phenomenon needs to be addressed collectively. Parents, teachers and students should contribute to tackling this situation. There are many ways of dealing with bullying. To begin with, child victims must have specialized psychological support from trained therapists to aid in managing depression and severe anxiety. An effective therapeutic intervention for these teens is Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy. The psychologist and child victim work on an emotional level, where discussions and exercises attempt to comprehend the child's understanding of the situation, their personal innate feelings as well as those of others. This would ultimately lead to the understanding in general of the connection between their thoughts, feelings and behaviors. In the process of cognitive restructuring, the child learns to think for himself (managing his reactions and feelings), to deal with stress and depression. Thus, with the cognitive development the person learns how to rectify any dysfunctional perceptions (Lohmann, 2013).

On the other hand, there must be continuous training-updating of teachers and parents concerning ways of coping with this phenomenon. Regarding those individuals who exercise Bullying, there is a need to emphasize early psychotherapeutic intervention of the said individuals including their families to alleviate these trends. Furthermore, students should be afforded the opportunity for positive expression of aggression, through various sports and more contact-living opportunities in a natural environment, which offers a particularly soothing effect on the nervous system.

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