




The Role of Expressive Writing Interventions in Decreasing Trauma Symptoms and Increasing Meaning

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| E d i t o r | R e v i e w e r s |
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1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

In paragraph 4 of the Introduction, the study by Holliday et al. (2023) is cited as evidence for expressive writing's effectiveness among ICU staff, but the methodological limitations or scope of that study are not discussed. Please consider a more critical appraisal.

In the Introduction, the final paragraph begins with "Finally, the role of writing in constructing personal meaning..." This paragraph is overloaded with multiple concepts (e.g., existential uncertainty, narrative time, continuity of self). Consider splitting this into two paragraphs to improve clarity and thematic focus.

In the Methods and Materials, section "Study Design and Participants", the sentence "Participants were screened to ensure they had experienced at least one traumatic event..." requires more detail. What criteria or instrument was used to assess trauma history and severity?

In the Findings, the demographic data presented would benefit from more context. For instance, were there any differences in trauma type distribution across the intervention and control groups that could have confounded the results?

In Table 1, while means and standard deviations are provided, confidence intervals for mean changes are not. Including them would strengthen the interpretation of within-group effects.

In the Discussion, paragraph 3, where you state “participants reported not only a release of emotional tension but also a shift...”—there is no qualitative data presented to support this. Consider integrating brief qualitative excerpts or clarify that this is inferred from quantitative gains.

In the Discussion, paragraph 7, the phrase “particularly effective in contexts where psychological wounds are layered with complexity...” could benefit from clearer articulation. Please provide a specific cultural or clinical example to support this assertion.

Authors revised and uploaded the document.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

In the Introduction, paragraph 1, the sentence “Trauma, in its many forms, disrupts not only psychological equilibrium but also the process of meaning-making essential for recovery” could benefit from clearer operational definitions for both “psychological equilibrium” and “meaning-making” to ground the reader in precise theoretical terms.

In the Introduction, paragraph 3, the sentence “Expressive writing, therefore, transcends clinical boundaries...” is conceptually rich but lacks citation from non-clinical fields such as linguistics or education theory to substantiate the interdisciplinary claim.

In the Methods, under “Measures – Trauma Symptoms”, it is stated that the IES-R has “Cronbach’s alpha typically above 0.90”. Please specify the alpha value for the current sample in this study to support the internal reliability of the instrument.

In the Intervention section, under “Session 4: Writing from a New Perspective”, the technique of “psychological distance” is introduced. Please provide a theoretical citation (e.g., Kross et al., 2014) to support this mechanism and differentiate it from narrative perspective-taking.

In Session 6: Meaning-Making and Reframing, you mention “meaning-centered coping strategies.” Please elaborate on what these strategies entailed and cite the conceptual framework they derive from (e.g., Park & Folkman, 1997).

In the Data Analysis section, the text states that assumptions of normality were tested via the Shapiro-Wilk test. Please report the test statistics and p-values for at least one of the outcome variables to substantiate the claim.

In Table 2, “Error (within)” rows are listed but lack clarification of the error term derivation. Please provide a brief explanation in the main text of how this term contributes to the F-ratio calculation.

In Table 3, the Bonferroni results for “Meaning” show negative mean differences. This appears to be a typographical inversion, as mean values increased over time. Please ensure consistency between statistical direction and textual interpretation.

In the Discussion, the sentence “These results confirm that expressive writing... promotes sustained psychological integration...” is an overgeneralization. Please temper this with a recognition of the study’s small sample size and lack of blinding.

Authors revised and uploaded the document.

2. Revised

Editor’s decision after revisions: Accepted.

Editor in Chief’s decision: Accepted.