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The Power of Poetry For Healing by Leslie Tuchman, MFT

Reading poems about survival, addictions, transitions, hope, abandonment, loss and ultimately strength, can quickly get to the core of how people are experiencing their personal issues.

When poetry is used for healing in group therapy it offers opportunities for insight, connection, creativity and catharsis as well as fun. Poetry for Healing is designed specifically for the non-writer. There is no writing instruction or critique. Instead the focus is on a powerful therapeutic process.

From the seeds of creation to awareness and insight

“A moment’s insight is sometimes worth a life’s experience” –Oliver Wendell Holmes

Prewritten poems are used as source material for writing activities and discussion. Inspired by the source poem entitled *Listen* by W.S. Merwin, group member A.E.F. states “The words of this poem hit that still tender place inside when I was invisible to family and to myself.”

“By listening to other participant’s stories, thoughts and perceptions, I realize that our life issues and problems are similar. We are not alone, but connected. By sharing we all grow, states group member, M.K.

From a safe circle of words to new bonds of understanding.

Once people get involved in the group, amazing things emerge; taking risks, forming bonds and opening up doors that would be too scary to open anywhere else. Group member M.K. states “I give a piece of myself to everyone present. We all want to be heard, acknowledged, recognized and validated. We do that for each other.”

From catharsis to calm.

“Writing in our therapy group is providing a way for me to access those deep-down hidden feelings that have tripped me up and kept me bound for so very long. The process is cathartic for me and I find my creativity growing”- A.E.F., group member.

Though people may discuss troubling issues and feelings, this process is not depressing. There is always time to work with each individual in the therapeutic process until there is a feeling of resolution. Clients leave the 2 hour sessions feeling cleansed, calm, empowered and grateful to have shared and been heard and understood.

“When the door opens and it’s back to reality”, MK continues, “I try to take the experience with me and not think so much, but feel and open myself up to the richness that I had in the experience.”

If you are drawn to the idea of using poetry as a therapeutic tool, a group setting might just be the perfect way to begin. Remember that it’s not the product that matters; what matters is the process of discovery, growth and healing.