**Training Curriculum**

**Using Expressive Writing and Telling in the GBV program regarding Violence against Women and Girls**

**Co-developed by Social Workers and Principals of Akkar Network for Development NGO, Lebanon**

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**Expressive Life Writing and Telling**

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(Free translation).



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**About the Expressive Life Writing Project**

Years of research have demonstrated the power of words and storytelling in supporting and empowering those who have suffered violent and/or traumatic past life experiences. Likewise, the expression of traumatic experience through art has long been a tool in the treatment of traumatic stress. This project was designed to test the evidence for using Expressive Life Writing as a tool of support and empowerment for women victims of sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations. The curriculum for training social workers and human rights defenders has been developed via research by AND Akkar Network for Development NGO, Akkar Lebanon, along with the UK-based researchers.

**Expressive life writing** is a humanities-based intervention often employed with survivors of trauma, in post-conflict situations or during periods of cultural reconstruction. Expressive Life Writing has been found to improve physical and psychological health. It can also provide the basis for some participants to move towards the making of literary works. With regard to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Expressive Life Writing has been shown to have a number of benefits including improved coping and posttraumatic growth (or the ability to find meaning in, and have positive life changes following, a traumatic event), as well as reduced PTSD symptoms, tension, and anger. In relation to CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy), expressive life writing can lead to the ability to make metaphorical meaning, thus breaking the cycle of internally repeated experience by creating an artefact in writing which provides a sense of separation and control.

The Expressive Life Writing project is designed to discover as much as possible about the relationship between expressive forms of life writing and life storytelling and the recovery from symptoms associated with traumatic experience.

In particular, its aim is to test whether the process of evidence gathering from victims of sexual violence in conflict might move beyond ‘do no harm’ and provide the space for a supportive form of interaction based on the principles of eliciting Expressive Life Writing.

To do this, we have created a program of training and materials that will enable local human rights defenders and others to develop and run bespoke Expressive Life Writing workshops in post-conflict settings or in other reconstructive environments.

The writing exercises used in this project are designed to encourage participants to reflect on their life experiences in narrative and non-narrative ways.

Research with victims of traumatic experience in non-conflict settings and with combat veterans has demonstrated that the process of writing down these reflections empowers survivors to ‘detach’ from negative experiences by turning them into tangible, shareable stories, thus increasing their sense of wellbeing.

The current project emerges from running Expressive Life Writing workshops with women who have been victims of sexual violence in conflict in Kirkuk. The researchers are available to train human rights defenders to run workshops that draw on, and adapt, the Expressive Life Writing exercises. The training will include a full introduction to the central evidence-based research used in the development of those exercises’ workshop methodologies.

Much of this material is condensed in this Training Handbook for ease of reference. The researchers, Jensen and Campbell, prepared the materials alongside the AND Directors, who oversaw their translation into Arabic for consultation, feedback and adaptation. This version is a free translation from the Arabic as it retains the local expert influence of social workers on the ground. Jensen and Campbell work with NGOs, charities and other stakeholders to provide a ‘train the trainers’ program using this material, supported by monitoring, observation and advice.

The online version of the project provides a space for anyone interested in running these kinds of workshops in their own region to register with the project and receive appropriate training.

The final aim of the project is to critically assess the findings to increase our understanding of the relationship between expressive forms of life writing and traumatic experience, and use that new knowledge to inform protocols for evidence gathering from victims of sexual violence in conflict, so that this process may move beyond ‘do not harm’ to support the recovery of survivors.

## OUR PROJECT

**Expressive Life Writing Project**

The aim of this project is test the use of Expressive Life Writing workshop methodologies with victims of sexual violence in conflict to consider alternative curriculums to evidence gathering that might move beyond ‘do no harm’ and support the process of healing.

* **Expressive Life Writing exercises will be used in workshops settings and in one-to-one interviews with survivors of sexual violence in conflict and volunteers who approach human rights defenders for legal advice and support.**
* **The researchers will train trainers who are human rights defenders in the use of these exercises.**
* **The use of these exercises will be monitored by the researchers. Questionnaires distributed to the participants throughout the exercise period and afterward will provide information on their effectiveness in supporting recovery and wellbeing.**
* **The researchers will feed this information back into the project, updating and enhancing the materials for future participants.**
* **The researchers will advise the human rights defenders on updating their interview protocols in line with the results of this research.**

This project is designed to discover as much as possible about the relationship between expressive forms of life writing and life storytelling and traumatic experience.

The researchers have consulted with a wide range of interested parties from many walks of life: human rights defenders, narrative theorists, creative life writers and writing therapy practitioners, psychologists and other people who are involved in working with victims of sexual violence in and post-conflict.

As part of the research aimed at increasing knowledge of the complex relationship between life storytelling, expression and writing, we aim to use the knowledge gained in these initial workshops to adapt and further develop an online virtual learning environment ‘toolkit.’

This ‘toolkit’ will function as an online training course for interested rights advocates who register with the project, and contain original research-based and ‘road-tested’ teaching materials for organising and running Expressive Life Writing workshops for survivors of sexual violence in and post conflict.

**As for Akkar Network for Development, this curriculum targets women who have experienced various types of violence and trauma because it helps them to express themselves. Via that expression, the social worker builds trust, establishes relationship and can therefore more readily identify the acute and less acute needs of a participant. In this way Expressive Writing and Telling is both a tool to improve well-being and also a diagnostic tool as it elicits further pertinent detail regarding fears, concerns and possible danger situations. It is a new way to help participants talk about their traumas and develop a future plan to overcome these traumas and live comfortably with the support of a social worker**.

**INTRODUCTION**

## EXPRESSIVE LIFE WRITING: THE EXERCISES AND GUIDELINES

### What is ‘Expressive Life Writing’?

Expressive Life Writing is creative or imaginative writing, usually arising directly from life experience, which allows for thoughts and feelings to be expressed as part of the writing. It is a particular type of humanities-based intervention often used for survivors of traum, in which they write out their thoughts and feelings about a stressful or traumatic experience in various ways, sometimes coming at subject matter at a tangent and at other times dealing directly with the past. Expressive Life Writing can entail reading the works of other writers (sometimes called bibliotherapy) as part of any workshop. The dissemination of polished work emerging from expressive life writing workshops may sometimes be judged as usefully supportive to read in other early-stage writing projects.

Expressive Life Writing has been found to improve physical and psychological health. In regard to PTSD in particular, Expressive Life Writing has been shown to have a number of benefits including improved coping and posttraumatic growth (or the ability to find meaning in, and have positive life changes following, a traumatic event), as well as reduced PTSD symptoms, tension, and anger.

It has been adopted as a form of writing therapy and was developed primarily by James Pennebaker in the late 1980s. His studies showed that allowing thoughts and feelings about a topic to enter into the writing about a topic was therapeutic for the group who undertook this work, as evidenced in comparison with the control group who wrote as objectively and neutrally as possible about selected topics.

### About the Exercises

Much of the background thinking for the exercises adapted for this handbook comes from Pennebaker and other leaders in the field of writing therapy, also known as bibliotherapy, such as Kathleen Adams and Nicholas Mazza.

Participants begin with shorter exercises to establish a positive relationship to the practice of expression through words before moving towards exercises that more expressly elicit thoughts and feelings.

The final exercises allow for a raised awareness of the self. They move to using words to generate insights lodged in stories that can create a separation between the participant and the events—what we described earlier as ‘detaching’—and allow for moving on from traumatic experience.

The aim of these exercises is therefore to synthesize knowledge outlined in the first half of the book and that of experience of delivering creative writing workshops in therapeutic and non-therapeutic environments to produce an integrative collection of expressive exercises that can be used or adapted for use along the guidelines provided.

**This project expands these ideas into two sets of exercises as follows:**

**Expressive Life Writing Exercises**: These can be used in one-to-one situations or in group workshops. These assume that the participant(s) are able to write down their responses themselves.

**Expressive Telling Exercises**: These are aimed at one-to-one situations in which the participant is unable to write down the responses for whatever reason, whether because of literacy issues or otherwise. These exercises assume that the participant tells their responses to the facilitator who listens carefully and writes down the participant’s responses before reading back the responses and double-checking their accuracy. It may sometimes be useful to share the ‘told’ stories of others, in beginning to elicit stories in a new situation or environment. . Ideas about how this might work in practice are noted below.

**Full instructions for using both kinds of exercises are outlined to follow.**

### Notes for ALL facilitators (FOR USE IN BOTH WRITING AND TELLING EXERCISES)

An introduction appears with each exercise. You can read this out or you can select which parts are most relevant to your participant(s). It is important that all participants know there is no wrong way to approach these writing and/or telling opportunities. All responses are good responses in this context.

In a group setting, for example, even if someone does something quite different from the rest of the group, this can be acknowledged as showing how diverse storytelling from experience can be.

Some exercises ask for lists of words to begin with. This is to encourage and enable even the reluctant writers or speakers and those who think it cannot be done.

The exercises then move towards asking for sentences as within every sentence is the narrative impulse to tell a story. It is this kind of storytelling from life experience that may be an important resulting skill.

**Characteristics of the participants:**

* The curriculum is implemented as a psychosocial support group.
* Age ranges between 18-25 years / 25-35 years / 35 years and older (these characteristics also apply to those who will implement the expressive narrative).
* The same group should include either single or married women.
* The number of participants within the group is between 8 and 10 participants.
* The participants do not know each other in order to ensure the confidentiality and safety of participant. It makes it easier for them to express and participate in activities in a more free and comfortable manner.
* Participants should know how to read and write because all activities are based on expressing and writing especially those who will be involved in the expressive life writing group.

**Methodology Implementation Mechanism:**

* The curriculum includes eleven sessions distributed over six weeks, where two sessions are executed per week.
* The duration of the session ranges from one hour to one hour and a half, depending on the number of exercises that will be carried out in each session.
* Participants are entitled to withdraw when they wish.
* No woman has the right to join the group after the first session because that session revolves around building trust between the participants and ensuring their comfort and safety.

**Place of implementation:**

* Implemented in secure centers/ suitable and comfortable rooms/ acceptable by the participants.
* The center should have a secure locker for the curriculum participants in order to protect their personal files and documents, which may contain stories from their real lives.
* The facilitator should give each woman a special file with her name written on it to keep all the papers and a copy of the handbook.

**Guide for facilitators:**

* Preparation in advance to ensure that the activities are carried out well.
* Create an atmosphere for participation and stimulate the participant to express and write.
* Pay attention to the language and dialect in order to ensure the participants’ understanding of the instructions and ideas.
* Provide examples when explaining complex ideas in order to facilitate the implementation of activities and to encourage expressing among the participants.
* Use clear and simple expressions.
* Allocate time to suit activities and allow participants to express themselves.
* Give instructions in a fragmented manner and follow the steps sequentially.
* Remind them that the participation is voluntary to ensure the participants' comfort.
* Remind them that there is no wrong and right answer when expressing themselves.

**Individual implementation:**

Some activities are implemented individually during the case management service, as needed to facilitate the service and to help the survivor to overcome the crisis and to help her better express herself as well as enabling her to set goals and steps of action planning.

**Intentional listening**

The facilitator will operate by applying the basic aims of ‘intentional listening’.

In a group workshop situation or in a one-to-one interview where life experiences are being shared through words, the following may be expressed or embodied: ideas, beliefs, information, feelings, and meanings.

Intentional listening is characterized by the listener (in this case the facilitator) staying apart from and not commenting on any of these ideas, beliefs, information, feelings and meanings except to check on their accuracy or to show empathy.

Intentional listening is also marked by a willingness of the facilitator to focus on what is occurring at any one time within writing workshop or the face to face interview, and not to be otherwise distracted by questions of timing or other concerns.

*Examples of intentional listening include:*

I am focused on you while you talk.

I am committed to you within this workshop/interview and I will give you time.

I put aside my view and my experience and I fully ‘hear’ yours.

*Examples of non- listening include:*

I think about other things while you are speaking.

I want to shift the discussion and hurry you along.

I interrupt you to share my view and my experience.

The facilitator’s method is to record what the writer participant is saying and to relay that back to the participant in an enabling manner. This initial step is unlike those taken in a pedagogic or craft-based workshop where the aim might be to comment on or improve expression. However, experience of ongoing workshops tells us that at quite an early stage, writers may express the wish to improve their expression and begin to ask questions about style. In post-conflict environments, this often arises when a workshop has established its own dynamic over time and when the resulting ‘stories’ are to be presented in a form available to other readers. At first though, facilitators can concentrate on the initial steps of intentional listening in order to facilitate early-stage writing or telling.

**For Expressive Life Writing Workshops Only:**

Some exercises have a specific ‘sharing’ suggestion on how the group might workshop the writing but the sharing of writing in general is dealt with below. Many exercises also have specific notes for the facilitator on what to highlight and what to look out for.

A list of counter-indicators and risk factors is provided here, along with suggestions on situations that can arise, and on how to deal with these.

**Sharing the writing**

Each exercise is designed to generate writing that could then be shared with the group. Because the starter exercises ask for word clusters and phrase gathering, the facilitator can use these at the start of the workshop to establish ways in which each participant can feel comfortable about speaking in the group.

Sharing the writing in this way is a key function of Expressive Life Writing in workshop since the expression itself is supported by the sharing. The sharing of work is also inspirational and enables the more reluctant writers who can often see the possibilities more clearly when exposed to the work of their peers.

The facilitator may find that some participants are more reluctant than others to share what they have written. There are a number of approaches that can be taken:

* The facilitator can offer to read the writing aloud for the participant.
* The facilitator can ask if the person would like another workshop member to read the work.
* The facilitator can support the wish of the participant not to read out the work but they can suggest that, as the participant may become more comfortable over time, the two of them can revisit this question and see how the participant feels, perhaps after the next exercise.

Each exercise is designed to be attempted within the workshop situation. From time to time, a suggestion is made that an exercise could be attempted or completed outside the workshop environment. The latter is to be undertaken only if the facilitator feels that no harm, psychological or otherwise, could come to the participant as a result of working on writing outside the workshop. If writing is undertaken outside the workshop, the facilitator should refer to this at the beginning of a subsequent workshop, and allow for the sharing of the work undertaken at home.

Intentional listening also includes an observing vigilance on the part of the facilitator. This will entail observing whether most or all of the group are writing during a particular exercise. It will entail gauging when to move to asking for work to be shared after writing. A good time to do this is when writing seems to have slowed down and/or when more than half the participants have stopped writing. The facilitator will practice vigilance in observing indicators of feelings of vulnerability or anger, as dealt with in the next section.

**Important Final Notes for ALL facilitators (FOR USE IN BOTH WRITING AND TELLING EXERCISES)**

**Challenges and Risk Factors**

The facilitator will have ensured that all participants are made aware of the consent form and that they have given their consent.

In addition, the facilitator may want to begin each session with a reminder to all present that if, at any time, they wish to stop writing or they would like to express an opinion or feeling about the writing or telling exercise itself, that they may of course do so, and that there are no repercussions of any kind to non-participation or to stopping participation.

It is part of the intentional listening and vigilance of the facilitator to observe if a particular exercise is having any emotional ‘affect’ on the participant and to intervene to discuss this using some or all of the methods below.

**Risks**

The following, and other similar risks, are possible outcomes of this work:

* A participant may be moved to tears.
* In a group setting, a participant may comment on the writing of another in a way that appears to judge their beliefs, their feelings, their intent, or their ability to make meaning.
* In writing or telling work that brings back memories of the traumatic event, a participant may experience feelings of anger or bitterness, and may express these feelings as directed against one of their peers, or against the facilitator.

In all cases, the facilitator has to decide whether they personally feel enabled by the process to deal with the situation or whether they need to call a halt to the workshop. If they do decide to stop the workshop or one-to-one interview at that point, they can either give a comfort break and reconvene, or they can ask participant(s) to attend at another time. If the former approach is taken, the facilitator may be able to address the issue or concern on a one-to-one basis with the person concerned. Quite often, it occurs that after a break and a one-to-one chat, the workshop or one-to-one interview can be reconvened.

**Counter-Indicators**

The facilitator should stop the workshop or one-to-one interview immediately if any of the following are the case:

* There is any danger to the participant(s) or to the facilitator.
* There is an expression of emotion by a participant of such strength and effect that it would be unfeasible to continue with the workshop or one-to-one interview.
* In a group setting, it becomes clear that there is an inequality among the participants that means that they cannot view each other as peers in the way that the workshop requires to operate. (This could be an inequality due to cultural factors, or it could be one generated by circumstances. For example, one of the participants not having had enough to eat that day.)

**Support**

The wellbeing of the facilitator is essential to the project and the facilitator can call on the project founders at any time for support, advice and discussion. If the facilitator needs to halt the process at any time due to any of the above pertaining to themselves, this is the right and proper thing to do and will be supported by the project founders.

**Session 1: Get Acquainted and Trust Building**

**Time: 90 minutes**

**1. Get acquainted (25 minutes)**

* Introducing the social worker and the services of Akkar Network for Development through the use of long definition of women (Appendix 1)
* Definition of the program: The facilitator should read page 5 before starting the session and explaining the curriculum.

**What is this curriculum?**

This curriculum is known as the expressive life writing for women who have experienced crises at one point in their lives. It includes a series of writing-based exercises, in which each participant is privy to her thoughts, feelings and experiences. Expressive life writing is designed to encourage participants to think and reflect on their life experiences in different ways, especially returning to the past, memories, self, things, places and people and turn them into possible stories for comfort.

**The goal of the curriculum:**

* Become comfortable and adept at starter writing tasks, and gain enjoyment from these.
* Move to activities which can elicit parts or sections of life stories that contain recognition of feelings and may entail, via the writing, an expression of internal states.
* Work closely with the self through writing to increase the awareness towards participation in the wider environment in which certain events occurred in one’s life.

**Sessions:**

The curriculum includes eleven sessions, with two sessions per week and each session ranging from one hour to one hour and a half.

**Handbook for the participants’ work:**

Each participant will have her own handbook that will be used at the end of each session. It will include information about the curriculum and its goals, as well as a space for reflection and expression. The participant will express in her own way (drawing, writing ...), and in all privacy and confidentiality, what she thinks at the end of each session, along with a daily evaluation of the session and exercises. This handbook, which the participants receive at the end of the curriculum, remains in the center in a private and secure locker.

**2- Activity suggesting the expectations from this program (10 minutes)**

Give each participant a picture and ask them to write, their name, and how they feel now (from the inside), later each participant hangs the picture on the wall.

* Express expectations from this participation within the adequate space present in the handbook
* [[1]](#footnote-1)Allow participants to express their expectations as voluntary participants.

**3-Activity for getting acquainted and building a support network**

Instructions

Material: wool yarn

The facilitator invites participants to stand in a circle and begins by giving instructions:

* Each participant should introduce herself (name, age and favorite hobby ....), by holding the tip of the wool yarn and later passes it to another participant so she would also introduce herself and so on to form the network.
* Facilitator explains that the process of getting acquainted allows everyone to express themselves and form a new network that will grow during the stages of the program.
* The facilitator thanks the participants.

**4- Group Agreement (10 minutes)**

Instructions

Materials: Pens, Flipchart

* The facilitator explains to the participants the importance of an agreement to ensure effective sessions and create a positive and encouraging atmosphere within the group.
* The facilitator writes the participants’ ideas on the flipchart and praises their approval.
* In case the participants do not mention these points, the facilitator should mention them: (Listening and not interrupting / The importance of maintaining confidentiality / The importance of committing to the sessions and their time / Participating in discussion regularly / The need to emphasize that the participation of ideas is voluntary during the session / Express one’s opinion freely / All participants have the right to participate / Importance of attendance / A new participant cannot be included from the second session)
* -The facilitator invites all participants to sign the agreement as a confirmation to the following points.

Note

The facilitator can use any means to stimulate the group when she notices its distraction

**5- Present the sessions’ topics (10 minutes)**

Material: flipchart and a pen

The facilitator explains that the curriculum contains eleven sessions. The sessions contain different exercises that focus on the life stories of each participant.

1 – Get acquainted and building trust

2 - Word clustering/ Phrase gathering

3 - Elements; Things in Season and in Time

4. Window on the World

5 - Writing a letter

6. Beginning a map of your self

7. Writing about family

8. Other important people in my life

9. Window into the self

10. Looking at future self

11. Consider your stories as possible for you and others

The facilitator gathers the participants’ consents and ask them if they have any questions

**6- Consent to participate (10 minutes)**

\* The facilitator distributes the consent form and invites each participant to read the form individually.

\* After the participants finish reading, the facilitator explains the consent form’s articles to everyone.

\* Facilitator invites the participants to read them again and welcomes further inquiry.

\* The participants and the facilitator sign the consent form. This form is hanged on the wall in the participants’ line of sight during the implementation period of the curriculum.

**7 - Summary of the first session - Evaluation (10 minutes)**

Required Materials: Handbook

* The facilitator invites the participants to open the handbook on the paragraph relating to the evaluation of the first session.
* The facilitator reminds each participant that they have their own handbook, in which they can freely express themselves with ease, while expecting the utmost privacy and confidentiality. The facilitator thanks the participants and invites them to put the handbook in the locker.
* The facilitator tells the participants that she is eager to see them in the next session and reminds them of the importance of commitment and the date of the next session.

**Expressive Life Writing Exercises**

**The expressive life writing exercises starter: Word clustering/ Phrase gathering**

The purpose of these starter exercises is to help participants start writing. The exercises are designed to show that everyone can write and that there is no wrong way to write.

These exercises encourage thinking and the connection that occurs when a word allows you to remember another word. This is a way to reach the ideas that form our own conversation. The resulting lists will be surprising to some because of their ever-increasing diversity. Participants should be informed that diversity is good and that all the answers are welcomed, there is no wrong way to do the exercises.

The starter exercises also initiate a relationship between the facilitator and the participants. The participants will typically feel more relaxed after allowing everyone to write something down and share something in common.

The facilitator should ensure that each participant in the group shares at least once after the first exercises. A conversation about what they wrote or felt when trying to write these exercises can take place.

The facilitator uses "intentional listening": by encouraging and repeating something they have said, rephrasing or summarizing answers, while continuing to focus on the participants and their words rather than other things such as time or finishing other exercises.

Depending on the group, exercises may require more or less than the estimated time featured below. The facilitator can decide to do more starter exercises if she feels that the group needs more time to feel comfortable, but at least two exercises from the beginning exercises should be completed.

The primary phase focuses on enabling participants to participate and to feel that the place is safe while being able to trust the facilitator.

After doing the listing exercises and word clustering, participants can learn how to identify and describe emotions and experiences. This increases the sense of self-awareness through writing and the detached feeling from past events takes place.

1. **Unit 1: Exercises towards Expressive Life Writing**

**The goal of the unit:**

* Become comfortable and adept at starter writing tasks, and gain enjoyment from these.
* Move to activities which can elicit parts or sections of life stories that contain recognition of feelings and may entail, via the writing, an expression of internal states.

*(This Unit contains 4 titles)*

**Session 2: Word Clustering/ / Phrase Gathering (30/40 mins)**

* This activity can be applied on an individual or a group.
* [[2]](#footnote-2)Applied to all age groups.
* Ensure that all the required materials are available to execute the session.
* Give instructions in a clear and fragmented manner, it is also preferred to repeat them again to ensure that all participants understand what is required of them.
* During the course of the session the facilitator should ask the following: “Are there any questions? Does anyone want to inquire about anything?”
* Allowing the participants to express their feelings and share their life stories without naming names.
* Healing sentences can be used if the women are talking about sensitive topics.

**(15 mins for each line)**

* The facilitator asks participants to write the words (in the lists below) across a page. Then s/he asks participants to consider the word as if it’s a jumping off point to generate other words and phrases. Whatever comes to mind is absolutely fine.

Instructions

* Under each word, participants write the words or phrases that come to mind. If this seems as if it’s potentially a challenge, the facilitator can give the example below, reading out the word and the result. The facilitator may draw attention to the fact that everyone’s list will be different, that some will travel away from the initial word into phrases and even mini-stories, and that all reactions are welcome.
* The facilitator attributes 7 minutes for participants to write words and phrases and then attributes another 5 minutes for them to share what has been written.

Example

**Bowl: glass, painted, ceramic, broken, cracked, destroyed, tiny, bedside, gold, jewellery, pestle and mortar, making olive paste, passing the bowl, sharing, dipping in, sorting the big from the small…**

The suggested words for this exercise are:

Crops Storm Spirit Chair

Guide for the Facilitator

The facilitator asks the group to do the first line of words, followed by sharing the results with the rest of the group. The facilitator should ask how the participants found that task—was is easy? Difficult?

**The facilitator may then ask the participants:**

* What did you write? What were the most interesting words you came up with?
* Did any story ideas from your own life experience come to mind?

If so, participants can be asked to jot down these ideas to remember them for later.

* After this, the facilitator moves to the second line of words, gauging how long to give for this depending on reaction to the first. The facilitator should ensure that any participant who has not shared or spoken in response to the first line of words is encouraged to do so the second time.

**End of Session: (15 minutes)**

Now the group has started writing, it was a good start, and we will move on to the remaining exercises in the upcoming sessions and see what happens. Now we will move on to the handbook that I told you about during the previous session.

Who can remember what the handbook is for? What does it include? Some or all participants can recall the answer.

Now each of you will fill in the session’s evaluation form. I remind you of the opportunity to reflect and express yourself in the handbook, allowing you to express what you want after the course of this session.

[[3]](#footnote-3)

**Session 3: Working with Elements; Things in Season and in Time (60-90 mins)**

* This activity can be applied on an individual or a group.
* Applied to all age groups.
* Ensure that all the required materials are available to execute the session.
* Do not combine the first part with the second part, it is preferred to explain each part alone and give instructions clearly and sequentially.
* During the course of the session the facilitator should ask the following: “Are there any questions? Does anyone want to inquire about anything?”
* You can skip the second part of the first exercise and move on to the second exercise.

**Excercice1: Working with elements (20-30 mins)**

This exercise asks us to consider some of the basic elements of life—water, fire, earth and air—as part of what we encounter in our daily lives. It emphasises that remembering those encounters can sometimes trigger an opportunity for writing.

**Part1: The facilitator says the following to the participants:**

In this exercise, you are asked to feel a connection with the physical world. Sometimes, we feel that connection has been broken. But the act of writing can begin to make us feel connected again.

**The sun is our sun. The moon is our moon. The rivers that run free are ours as are the stars of the night sky.**

* Let’s imagine…
* If the sun was to speak to you, what might it say?
* If you were to address the moon, the same moon that has seen you through all of your nights and all of your days, what would you say?
* If a river or lake or a sea that you know were to speak to you, what story might it tell?[[4]](#footnote-4)
* Taking one of these: the sun, the moon or a body of water, write the first things that come to mind. You will write either what this body of water would say to you, or what you might say to it. Take a few minutes and write quite quickly, as all thoughts are good thoughts and there’s no wrong way to do this.

**The Facilitator gauges the time to be given for this task, but approximately 4 minutes is often when pens slow down and it’s time to interject to ask for sharing and discussion.**

The Facilitator then decides whether to move to Part 2 of this exercise. If the response has been enthusiastic and there’s a momentum to continue, Part 2 moves towards a more story-based approach. If the response has been mixed, with some reluctance, the facilitator may want to move to the later exercises:

**Things have a season and a time** or to **Look out of the window**.

**Part 2.**

Guide for the Facilitator

In this part, there is a large number of instructions that is why it is important to read them slowly so that the participants can comprehend them and understand the purpose of this part and so they would be able to write.

**The facilitator says the following to the participants:**

The air we breathe is free. Even if less than clean at times, it keeps us alive. We have an intimate connection with the air. It enters us and it leaves us. The air knows our whole story if you think about it.

Likewise, we have all been walking the same earth since we learned to walk. Some of us have worked with the earth in growing plants or cultivating crops. Some of us have used earthenware pots for cooking or for decorating. The earth is ours, and it could be said to know our whole story.

Instructions

* Choosing either air or earth,
* Think of one time that this became important to you.

This might be when you visited a region in which the air felt different or it might be a time when you were happy to get back out into the air. It might be when you worked with the soil in some way or it could be when you cleaned off the earth from vegetables before cooking them for a special occasion. Think about how the air or the earth was important to it; write down what you remember about this time or this incident.

You might like to begin sentences with:

* I remember…
* At that time we used to…
* This was important because…

**A note to the facilitator:** the sharing of this may show up possible ‘stories,’ which is the term you can give to the telling of any happening or incident from life. You can encourage the group to think of themselves as tellers of stories by recognising the inherent possibility for ‘story’ in the notes they have written. Thus, if there are notes that imply a slightly larger tale, you can suggest that this tale would be interesting to use and could be used in some of the next exercises.

**Exercise 2: Things have a season and a time (20-30 mins)**

**Part 1. The facilitator says the following to the participants:**

Now we will pick a time of year, it can be any time or any month or any day of the year, there may be a celebration, event or something we normally do with a group of people at that time of the year.

* Close your eyes
* Choose a time of the year. It can be any time of the year.
* There might be a festival, an event or something you do in a group that usually happens at this time of the year.
* Think about one of these that you have experienced.
* Then think about yourself in the place that this occurred. This will be a particular place at a particular time.
* Then fill in the sentences below, adding to them the detail of what you are doing in this remembered time and what doing that thing feels like.

Note

**A note to the facilitator:** if you feel that a prompt is necessary, you can give examples that focus on what participants remember doing with their hands.

Example

This might be preparing certain foods, putting on particular clothing, cleaning up after particular events, etc.

As the participants to complete the following statements about the time and place they have chosen.

It is the time of ………………………………………………………………

I am (add activity, what are you doing?)…………………………………………………………..

The place I am is (short description of sights, sounds, smells)…..…………………..

To be in this place, doing this, feels (describe some feelings)……….

**Part 2. The facilitator says the following to the participants:**

You have now thought about a scene from your past. You have recalled how it felt to be there. You might have remembered the sights, sounds, smells and you might have ‘seen’ in your mind’s eye what objects were around you at that time.

Instructions

Pick one of these objects. It can be something you were using or it might be something on a shelf. It could be an item that stays outside or it might be something small and hidden away inside.

The fact that you have remembered this object is enough to make it interesting as almost any object we recall in this way has a story about it waiting to be told.

You are now going to tell that story. It can have three parts:

Note

* What is the object? Describe it to someone who has never seen it.
* How did it come to be in the scene you remembered?
* Why do you think that it is important to you?

**Note to the facilitator:** you may find you want to give the group a prompt. If you think it is necessary, you can pick something from your own past that you might write about if you were joining in. This can act as an example. This kind of shared experience can increase trust between the facilitator and the group.

**End of Session: (15 mins)**

Now each of you will fill in the session’s evaluation form. I remind you of the opportunity to reflect and express yourself in the handbook, allowing you to express what you want after the course of this session.

**Session 4: Window on your world (60 mins)**

Guide for the Facilitator

* This activity can be applied on an individual or a group.
* Applied to all age groups.
* Ensure that all the required materials are available to execute the session.
* Do not combine the first part with the second part, it is preferred to explain each part alone and give instructions clearly and sequentially.
* If you notice that the participants are continuing to write expand the time and let them now.
* During the course of the session the facilitator should ask the following: “Are there any questions? Does anyone want to inquire about anything?”

**Part 1: (25 mins)**

**The facilitator says the following to the participants:**

In this exercise, you are asked to imagine what you see when you look out of a window of your present day life and what you ‘see’ when you imaginatively look out of a window from a time in your past.

Thinking about where you now live, think about going to the window. If you close your eyes, you can ‘see’ out of this window, and see all that appears there in your mind’s eye. It may be urban or rural, it may be busy or quiet, it may be full of people or it may be land or water and a horizon.

Instructions

-Take a moment to write down what you see, trying to say what colours things are, what shapes you see and what noises you hear. Pretend you are describing this to a person who cannot see. -What details can you add to help this person to imagine this view?

**The facilitator can allow approximately 3 to 4 minutes for this initial phase of writing.**

**Part 2. The facilitator says the following to the participants: (20 mins)**

Thinking about a window from your past, pick one window that you remember well. It might be in a building in which you spent some time or it might be somewhere you visited briefly. You might have been quite young at the time or it might be at a particular time in your life.

Think of your past self at this window now.

Instructions

* Begin to write down what you see out of this window in the same way as you did in part 1. -How is the view different? What are the things you notice here that you did not observe in part 1?
* Then, think about the person you were at this window in your past.
* Write down what that past self is thinking as she stands at this window.
* Are there things that this past version of you would like to say to the present person that you are?
* Write these down just as she might say them.

**Note to the facilitator:** this is the first time that feelings about the past might be generated in the writing. You will want to remain aware that this can feel difficult for some participants. Even if some participants have not written down what their past self might say, they may have thought about what this means. In discussion, you can say that some writers find that this exercise generates thoughts and feelings that can be emotional. During the discussion, you will want to allow participants to air how they are feeling as they share this writing.

Note

**End of Session: (15 mins)**

Now each of you will fill in the session’s evaluation form. I remind you of the opportunity to reflect and express yourself in the handbook, allowing you to express what you want after the course of this session.

**Session 5: Writing the unwritten letter (30-60 mins)**

Guide for the Facilitator

* This activity can be applied on an individual or a group.
* Applied to all age groups.
* Ensure that all the required materials are available to execute the session.
* Give them the freedom to keep or destroy the letter.
* Give them the freedom to read or decline reading the letter.
* During the sharing phase it is preferred that the participants have finished writing the letter or waiting for the others to finish what they want to write.

Writing directly to a person from our past can be a powerful way of claiming or reclaiming a feeling of control over that past. Putting down thoughts towards an imagined ‘letter’ to a person can give feelings of empowerment to the writer.

This kind of writing can trigger feelings of vulnerability so the facilitator will remain vigilant in terms of checking in as to how all participants are coping (see notes for the facilitator).

**The facilitator says the following to the participants:**

Firstly, think of three people from your past. These may be people who have since died. They might be people you used to live or work with in the past. Or the person might be one whom you encountered only briefly but who left an impression on you and your life.

Look back over the three people you chose. Pick one of these.

You are going to imagine writing a letter to this person.

The reason for ‘writing a letter’ is that it allows you to address this person directly. You can say anything you want to say. Some people like to say something that they wish they had said. Others want to write something to change what the person thinks about them.

Instructions

* Beginning ‘Dear…’, write directly to this person from your past.
* Tell them why they came into your mind/ why you remember them.
* Tell them why you are writing.
* Tell them something you wish they could know.
* Give some remembered details of your interactions.

Note

* If you want to do so, tell them something you wanted to say at the time.

**Note to the facilitator**: give about 6 minutes for the writing of these ‘letters’. Be aware of how much writing is being done and shorten the time if necessary. In the sharing and discussion, apply the vigilance described in the guidelines for facilitators. In this discussion, be aware of possible story ideas emerging from the discussions of particular experiences and incidents. Mention these, reflecting on the fact that they could be stories within a life story. This positive reinforcement of the possibilities for story making enables participants to think about writing up further stories and prepares them for Units 2 and 3.

**End of Session: (15 mins)**

Now each of you will fill in the session’s evaluation form. I remind you of the opportunity to reflect and express yourself in the handbook, allowing you to express what you want after the course of this session.

#### **Unit 2 – Bridging the past to the present**

These exercises are designed to enable participants with several ways of writing that create ‘bridges’ of feeling and emotion between the experiences of the past and the realities of the present.

They are designed to follow on from the final two exercises in Unit 1.

##### **Session 6:** **Beginning a Map of Your-self**

Guide for the Facilitator

* This activity can be applied on an individual or a group.
* Applied to all age groups.
* Ensure that all the required materials are available to execute the session.
* This exercise cannot be performed if the last two exercises of the first unit were not already preformed.
* Commitment to the organization of the parts, and explaining the instructions in a detailed, accurate, clear and divided manner.

**The facilitator says:**

This is a two-part exercise. The first part is for thinking and imagining and the ‎second part is for writing. Unlike some of the other two-part exercises, both parts ‎here should be attempted as they do not stand independently. ‎

**Part 1: (35 mins)**

The facilitator asks participants to close their eyes. Then the facilitator says that she ‎is going to go around the room and ask each participant to describe a different ‎detail of the room in which they are all seated.‎

The facilitator may need to prompt the first descriptions. One person might ‎describe the ceiling or the windows. Another might describe how the tables and ‎chairs are set out. Yet another might describe the colors on the floor and walls.‎

As the descriptions continue, the facilitator can playfully ask for more details. For ‎instance, she might ask about whether there is any picture or poster on the walls. ‎She might ask about some smaller aspect of furniture, doors, cupboards or ‎decoration, all while participants remain with eyes closed.‎

The subsequent discussion will lead to the realization that every detail of a room is ‎not remembered in the same way, nor is it described in the same way.‎

Participants are invited to open their eyes. ‎

Facilitator explains that one of the advantages of Expressive Life Writing is that it ‎can produce a personalized description of a place, and can also act as a way ‎into describing the inner life of the person in that place.‎

The facilitator invites participants to now proceed to part two.‎

**Part two: (40 mins)**

The facilitator asks participants to close their eyes again. Now she tells them that ‎she’d like them to think back in time and to remember their first kitchen, or at least ‎the first place in childhood where they remember food being prepared and ‎eaten.‎

The facilitator might like to say: we are choosing the kitchen because this is often ‎forms the center of the lives of a household. It is the place where people come ‎together, and it is often where the most important conversations of our lives occur.‎

Now the facilitator asks the participants to imagine this kitchen and to look around ‎it so that they can begin to remember everything that they ‘see’. ‎

**Leading questions from the facilitator might include: ‎**

* What kind of windows and furniture are in this kitchen?‎
* What colors do you see when you look around? ‎
* What special items do you find come into your mind as you remember the details ‎of this kitchen? For some, these may be particular cups or plates, for others, the ‎sink where they first washed dishes, the drawer where useful items are kept or the ‎plants on the windowsill. ‎

The facilitator asks participants to open their eyes. Now that they have thought ‎themselves back to a particular kitchen, they are going to write about one ‎memory set in that place.‎

This could be the time when something was learned, when something changed for ‎the writer, or when an interaction with others left the writer with a memory that ‎stays with them to this day. ‎

Participants are given 15 minutes to write up this memory. ‎

Note

The facilitator says that they might like to begin the memory with a description of ‎where it is taking place.‎

The facilitator should remain vigilant during this writing exercise as working with ‎specific memories can bring back unresolved feelings. As with all of the exercises, ‎participants can end at any time. The facilitator can move around the room as ‎necessary encouraging and monitoring as required.‎

Because this exercise is specific, it often generates what amounts to a short story. ‎Often participants will want to share that story and there can be wide-ranging ‎discussion of life experience emerging from that story. ‎

The facilitator can ask participants to consider how writing the story has made ‎them feel and in finishing off this session, the facilitator can decide that this would ‎be a good point in which to have any monitoring forms filled out.‎

‎ ‎

**End of Session: (15 mins)**

Now each of you will fill in the session’s evaluation form. I remind you of the opportunity to reflect and express yourself in the handbook, allowing you to express what you want after the course of this session.

1. **Unit 3: Identity and Feelings/Moving toward Life Narratives**

By writing about personal feelings, participants begin to identify their feelings more coherently and gain a sense of control (Mazza, 1999).

The goal of Units 1 and 2 is for participants to do two things respectively:

* Become comfortable and adept at starter writing tasks, and gain enjoyment from these.
* Move to activities which can elicit parts or sections of life stories that contain recognition of feelings and may entail, via the writing, an expression of internal states.

The goal of Unit 3 is to work more closely with ‘the self’ in the writing. The aim of doing so is to increase the participant’s awareness of the wider environment in which particular incidents have occurred. This process begins to match the need (described in the HANDBOOK) to create meaning and to construct a narrative that can be viewed with detachment but has been created as something owned and cared for by the writer.

The exercises here have several different areas of focus including:

* Myself and others
* Other characters
* The self of now
* The past self
* The self of the future.

Christine Cohen Park says ‘an exploration of who the self is at the moment of writing is key’ and these exercises reflect that emphasis.

Due to this emphasis, there are reflective exercises that allow for participants to reflect on the process of their writing during this unit. These are marked **R** below and the facilitator can decide whether to include them at the point they appear, or whether to choose one to do at the end of a session or at the end of a set of workshops.

**Looking outwards to others who are important to your life story**

**Session7:** **Writing about Family (90 mins)**

Guide for the Facilitator

* This activity can be applied on an individual or a group.
* Applied to all age groups.
* Ensure that all the required materials are available to execute the session.
* Part 2 cannot be carried out without completing part 1.
* This exercise can be carried out (part 1 and 2) during the assessment of the case management service that helps the survivor identify people supporting her within the family, or wants to express her feelings towards that person or she may be unable to face that person directly so she writes about it.

**Part 1. The facilitator says the following to the participants: (35 mins)**

Instructions

Using mother, father, sister, brother, cousin, or words you use for other family members or for your intimate partners in life, put one of these in the centre of a page and draw a circle around that word.

Now, like the spokes of a wheel, draw lines emerging from that central word. Where these stop, write down your thoughts from these prompts:

* Something you did that I liked
* Something you did that I did not like
* What you said at a particular time
* What I said to you at a particular time and how you reacted
* What I hoped you would have done
* What I feel about you as I write this down

Note

**Note to the facilitator:** Take note of whether there is writing going on in the group. Allow time for that to happen (approximately 5 minutes).

Ask the group how they are doing with this exercise. Have they filled in the spokes of the wheel? Are they ready for the next stage? Would anyone like to share one of the notes they wrote down?

**Part 2. The facilitator says the following to the participants: (15 mins)**

It could be that expressing something about our family could make up one part of a life story. We can make a short story out of one or two of these notes. Taking one of the incidents or events that you recall involved both you and a family member, write a short paragraph using the following as suggestions.

This event might be from a time of happiness and joy or it might be from a time when things were not going too well. Either is of course welcomed.

* Write how you would describe what happened to a friend who does not know your family. (Think about where, when, why, how, and who)
* Then write how you felt about this at the time. (Think about your actual feelings on the day or the days afterwards and describe these)
* Then write how you feel about this incident now. (Think about how you feel, having written about the incident. Have your feelings changed since?)

Now we will move on to the reflective exercise

##### ***(R) A safe place (20 mins) (Appendix 6)***

**(Facilitator may choose to interject one or both reflective exercises here)**

The following sentence starters are designed to help participants reflect upon their present and past feelings. This reflection particularly allows for accessing feelings of wellbeing. The aim is that the connection will begin to be made between writing and those feelings of wellbeing.

**The facilitator asks the participants to complete the following sentences:**

* I feel most relaxed when…
* My body does not feel tense when…
* When I feel calm I am able to…
* When I write I feel…
* The place I feel safest in my life at present is…
* The place I felt safest in my life in the past is…
* The place where I can feel most like my best self is…

**End of Session: (15 mins)**

Now each of you will fill in the session’s evaluation form. I remind you of the opportunity to reflect and express yourself in the handbook, allowing you to express what you want after the course of this session.

###### **Session 8:** **Other Important People in My Life (60 mins)**

Guide for the Facilitator

* This activity can be applied on an individual or a group.
* Applied to all age groups.
* Ensure that all the required materials are available to execute the session.
* This exercise can be carried out during the assessment of the case management service that helps the survivor identify people supporting her within the family, or wants to express her feelings towards that person or she may be unable to face that person directly so she writes about it.

Note

**Note to the facilitator:** If the above exercise has generated writing and discussion, you can use this model for an exercise using ‘other people’ who appear in participants’ lives.

Instructions

**The felicitator says: (25 mins):**

* Introduce the idea of writing about other people, apart from family.
* Tell participants to write down the name of another person that they have encountered, and beneath that name, a title or label for that person.

**Facilitator may want to say:** for example—teacher, co-worker, boss, neighbour, doctor, police officer, security guard, etc. This can be anyone who has had an impact on you. A teacher may have conveyed some belief in your ability. A neighbour may have helped out in a time of need.

* Facilitator then asks participants to write down the name or label and under this, to write several words or phrases that come to mind. This is a word cluster, using the same method as the initial starter exercises **(Appendix 5).**

Taking words and ideas from their word cluster, participants write a short paragraph about an interaction with this person.

* + Something that person did (i.e. the chosen person) that I did not like.
  + Something he did that I liked
  + What he said at a particular time
  + What I said to him at a particular time and how he responded
  + What I hoped he had done
  + What I feel about this person as you speak about them now.

As this is the first writing task which builds in a sense of a beginning, middle and end, you may want to draw attention to the fact that the work that is emerging from the group is starting to feel like stories that have the shape of narratives with a beginning, middle and end. You can add that life stories can often seem made up from several smaller stories so that participants can begin to think of these mini-stories as potentially part of their larger story.

**Note for the facilitator: the session’s time is extended if the reflective exercise is carried out.**

##### ***(R) Making writing about your life more comfortable to do (20 mins) (Appendix 7)***

**Note to the facilitator:** Some participants may find it a challenge to write about their lives. Sometimes it can be useful to use this exercise if that is the case. Though it seems to be writing about writing, it can help the group to express their fears and anxieties about the process and it may liberate some participants to write more freely and expressively.

**The facilitator asks the participants to write down the answers to the following sentences**

* When I am asked to write about myself, the first thing that comes to mind is…
* What feels uncomfortable about writing is…
* What gives me hope or inspires me about writing life stories is...

**Note to the facilitator:** you can discuss the resulting sentences with the group, showing that shared fears or feelings of discomfort are to be expected but that there can be rewarding elements that come out of the participation in the process even if not all participants will want to share all their writing.

**End of Session: (15 mins)**

Now each of you will fill in the session’s evaluation form. I remind you of the opportunity to reflect and express yourself in the handbook, allowing you to express what you want after the course of this session.

**Session 9: Window into the Self (60-90 mins)**

Guide for the Facilitator

* This activity can be applied on an individual or a group.
* Applied to all age groups.
* Ensure that all the required materials are available to execute the session.
* Commit to the sequence of the parts.

This exercise is partly adapted from Adams, 1998, p.16, and it mirrors the ‘window on your world’ exercise from Unit 1, here changing the focus from outward to inward)

Note

It is designed to focus directly on the self.

**Part 1: The facilitator asks the participants to complete the following: (30mins) (Appendix 8)**

Instructions

* Three words that describe me are…
* Three words that others might use to describe me are…
* My greatest strength is when I….
* I am grateful for…
* The type of friend that I am is…
* The person I feel closest to (this can be someone alive or dead) is…

**Part 2: An exploration of identity and meaning: (30 mins)**

The goal of this part is the gained wisdom that the participator has learned in her life and wants to share with others for the sake of their future.

Instructions

* Explain that the second part of the exercise asks that participants write two or three sentences in response to each prompt.
* After these sentences are written (approximately 4 minutes) the facilitator asks that these responses are shared by those who are ready to do so.
* After a discussion of those responses, the facilitator may ask that the sentences be added to and written up into a short story from life.

Such a story would begin with the things that have been most important to a person.

Then there might be a look to the future.

Then there might be something that amounts to a piece of learned wisdom that the writer wants to convey to others.

**Prompts: (Appendix 9)**

* What are the two things in my life that have most influenced me and made me the person I am today?
* What have I got to learn for the future?
* Have I got something to teach others for their futures?
* After initial sentences are written in response to the prompts, the facilitator uses the discussion to point out possible stories that could be written up, giving time for this to be done (or at least begun) within workshop if possible (approximately. 12 minutes).

**End of Session: (15 mins)**

Now each of you will fill in the session’s evaluation form. I remind you of the opportunity to reflect and express yourself in the handbook, allowing you to express what you want after the course of this session.

**Session 10: Looking at Future Selves (60 mins)**

Guide for the Facilitator

* This activity can be applied on an individual or a group.
* Applied to all age groups.
* Ensure that all the required materials are available to execute the session.

Toward the end of a workshop cycle, it can be important to build in a future focus. The ‘letter’ part of this exercise mirrors the ‘letter exercise’ in unit 1 but here the focus is more about the self in the future.

Instructions

**Part 1. The facilitator asks the participants to complete the following:**

If I could be… then I would…

If I were… then I could…

**Part 2. The exercise then moves on to looking at relationships with the self and with others in the future.**

**The facilitator asks the participants to complete the following: (Appendix 10)**

I feel most comfortable with another person when…

Being open and honest with another person makes me feel…

I feel most vulnerable when…

For me, to connect fully with someone means…

Others can be close to me if they…

Others can earn my trust by…

**Part 3. The facilitator says the following to the participants:**

* Write a letter to a future ‘other’ in your life. This may be someone who is already in your life as a relative, friend or partner or it may be someone whom you will never meet again. You are writing to the future self of this person.

Begin ‘Dear…’ And consider what you what will you tell this future person in this letter.

You may want to include: **(Appendix 11)**

* What I wish for you is…
* What I wish for myself is…
* What I hope for us both is that…

Make this exercise and this message possible so that the participant can write for her future self while mentioning: supportive people, strengths, wishes for her future self, future and supportive plans and steps.

**Session 11: Consider Your Stories as Possible for You and Perhaps Others (90 mins)**

In previous exercises, the self-assessment of the stories written by each participant develops and how elements of the story can support or inspire others. The next exercise crowns and reinforces that curriculum. The exercise should only be attempted if the previous exercises resulted in some materials and a debate and if the group is prepared to consider its stories as possible for other women and supportive to encourage them to write

**The facilitator says to the participants the following:**

The facilitator can be clearer with the women by saying: to conclude the sessions and writings in an effective and possible manner think of as many stories that frequently come to mind. Perhaps you have previously expressed them and want to revise them or perhaps it’s a new story that has not come to mind before. Express in the way that makes you comfortable without mentioning names. Think how your story can be supporting and possible for other women.

Or a song, a memory or a story describing your participation and the curriculum within this group.

The final goal is: to support other women and encourage them to write through possible stories: **Evaluation and conclusion of the curriculum (30 minutes)**

The facilitator invites the participants to freely express, in writing or drawing, their experience during their participation in this curriculum without mentioning names or anything that exposes the identity of the participators.

The facilitator reminds the participants about the agreement to use and publish the stories anonymously without including information that pertains to the name or identity of the participator.

**Avatar (15 minutes)**

Return to the avatar and take a look at the feelings and expectations and the change that occurred during this participation. The facilitator explains to the participants that they can add what they want.

**Evaluation: (5 is the highest mark and 1 is the lowest mark)**

The facilitator invites the participants to evaluate the curriculum individually and privately, and assure that this evaluation will positively help during the implementation with other groups. The facilitator distributes the evaluation paper:

1. Do you feel that this participation allowed you to self-improve and build a support network?

❶\_\_\_\_\_❷\_\_\_\_\_❸\_\_\_\_\_❹\_\_\_\_\_❺

1. Were you satisfied with the facilitator’s performance?

❶\_\_\_\_\_❷\_\_\_\_\_❸\_\_\_\_\_❹\_\_\_\_\_❺

1. Were you satisfied with the confidentiality during the participation sessions?

❶\_\_\_\_\_❷\_\_\_\_\_❸\_\_\_\_\_❹\_\_\_\_\_❺

1. Was the place comfortable for sharing?

❶\_\_\_\_\_❷\_\_\_\_\_❸\_\_\_\_\_❹\_\_\_\_\_❺

1. Were the tools used in the sessions good and enough?

❶\_\_\_\_\_❷\_\_\_\_\_❸\_\_\_\_\_❹\_\_\_\_\_❺

1. How influential was this participation on your life?

❶\_\_\_\_\_❷\_\_\_\_\_❸\_\_\_\_\_❹\_\_\_\_\_❺

1. Do you recommend others to participate in this curriculum? Yes or no and why?

Yes:……………………………………………………………………………………

No:………………………………………………………………………………………

1. Other suggestions?

**Thanks for participating and celebrating (35 minutes)**

- The facilitator thanks the participants for their interaction during the sessions and exercises

- Emphasizes confidentiality

- Reminds the participants of the case management service

- Distributes the number for the Hot Line

- The celebration includes desserts and distributing a notebook with a padlock and a pen to encourage them to write and return to writing whenever they please

### **EXPRESSIVE TELLING EXERCISES**

**Expressive Telling: Getting Started**

The following exercises are adapted from ‘Expressive Life Writing’ to ‘Expressive telling’. The telling is recorded by a third party writer who is the facilitator.

This adaptation is for use orally in situations in which there are literacy issues or other challenges to the writing of exercises, or where writing is otherwise counter-indicated. The person who is trained in the overall application of the Expressive Life Writing Project should, if possible, be the person recording the oral exercises (the facilitator).

The adaptation takes into account the requirements for a flexible curriculum that can be adjusted to suit the situation on the ground and the time available in one session.

This adaptation is particularly concerned with allowing the participants to both gain the possible benefits of beginning to tell, and therefore reclaim, their life stories while also eliciting the knowledge and information that could possibly go forward into a juridical setting.

This document was prepared after a consultation with Asmaa al Ameen, General Director-Project Manager INMAA, and the Expressive Life Writing Project team are very grateful for the insights gained into how the project could operate in the field.

**Guide for the facilitator:**

Undertaking any of these, even the shortest, is predicated on the following conditions:

* That the facilitator has been exposed to the Expressive Life Writing Project training.
* That a base level of trust has been established between the facilitator and the participant.

**Shorter version: Duration 15 to 30 minutes**

To be used only if there is a likelihood that this participant may not be able to be accessed in the future. The longer version of the exercise is preferable wherever possible.

The facilitator follows the training protocols, offering an information sheet for participants and requesting the completion of the required consent form prior to the start of the first exercises, reminding the participant that they need not participate in any of the exercises if they do not wish to do so .

A monitoring form is to be completed after each interview session.

When recording what the participant is saying, the facilitator applies intentional listening, supporting the telling with encouragement but not adding their own commentary.

There are two parts.

**Part one:**

**The Facilitator begins the session by saying:**

Tell me about one incident or memorable occasion from your childhood. This might be a happy or sad occasion. It might be when something changed for you. Some people tell of when they went off to be married. Others recall a moment of joy within a family. I am going to ask you to remember your incident and then to tell me about it.

Who was there at the time?

What happened first and what happened next?

How did the incident or that day end?

How did you feel that night?

How did you feel the next day and a few days later?

Was there another happening connected to this one that recalling this may have helped you remember?

(**Note to Facilitator:** If there is a second incident that the participant wants to describe the facilitator uses the above questions for a second time.)

**Part two:**

**The Facilitator continues the session by saying:** I am now going to ask you to tell me two things from your adulthood, one of which you were glad happened and one which you wish did not occur.

I will ask you the same questions about both of these happenings.

(**Note to Facilitator:** You will use the questions in the first part and apply these in sequence to the two different events chosen by the participant from their adult life.)

**The Facilitator then says:**

How do you feel now as you tell the story you were happy about?

How do you feel as you tell of the happening you would wish did not occur?

Have you told about this upsetting incident before? What was the reaction to you telling of this incident?

I would like to read back to you what I have written about this last incident. This may help you to remember some other details. Please feel free to add these details including who was there and how they behaved.

The facilitator then reads back the text to the participant stopping frequently to ask if there is anything the participant would like to add.

When the facilitator feels that the participant has told all that they might usefully tell in this session, they can say:

Thank you very much for sharing the stories you have shared today. Just before we finish, may I ask you whether this incident is related to others that you would like to tell me about? Perhaps other happenings occurred that you would prefer did not occur and perhaps they are still having an effect on your life? We would like to ask if you might tell us about any related incidents.

(**Note to facilitator:** Use your best judgement about whether or not to elicit the stories of other incidents during this session, using the above template. You may decide to either continue, or to arrange a future session.)

**Longer versions of oral exercises in ‘telling’- Designed to be applied over a number of sessions of one half hour each.**

**Minimum two sessions (of which one is that described above).**

**Preferred number: Five sessions**

Throughout, the facilitator uses ‘intentional listening’: encouraging, repeating back, paraphrasing and summarising responses to participants, keeping the focus on them and what they are saying and not on other things like timing or getting more exercises underway.

The exercises may take more or less time than amounts approximated.

First, the facilitator uses the exercise in the short version above. Having recorded as mentioned, the facilitator moves on to the exercises below.

1. **Composing a ‘letter’ to a person involved in an incident that you would prefer had never happened**

The goal of the message is to restore a sense of control over the past and to think about what you will say to that person.

**The Facilitator says:**

Speaking directly to a person from our past can be a powerful way of claiming or reclaiming a feeling of control over that past. Thinking what you would want to say in such a ‘letter’ to a person can bring you feelings of empowerment. You can experience feelings of being more in control of the situation. Note that these are not actual letters that will ever be sent but that you are doing this is a way of *expressing* your feelings and thoughts within your story of what happened.

(**Note to Facilitator:** This kind of storytelling can trigger feelings of vulnerability so the facilitator will remain vigilant in terms of checking in as to how all participants are coping—see notes for the facilitators).

**The facilitator says the following:**

Beginning ‘Dear…’, speak directly to this person. I will record what you say and you will have a chance to hear this read back to you. If you are expressing the same feelings to more than one person, that is fine also.

First, tell me who you are addressing. I will write down their names and their relationship to you, if any.

(The facilitator then gives the following prompts one at a time, recording what the participant says after each.)

Tell this person or these people why they came into your mind/why you remember them.

Tell them why you are composing this letter.

Tell them something you wish they could know.

Give some remembered details of your interactions. You can give the details of the kind of place it happened, you can say what was going on around or within the same building, you might find that you will remember colours, textures, sights and sounds.

(The facilitator adds that even though the person or these people were present and were part of the incident, they may need to be told of it from the point of view of the participant.)

Tell them something you wanted to say at the time.

Tell them something you would like to say to them right now.

**Note to the facilitator:** give as much time as you can to the recording of these imaginary ‘letters’.

This exercise will normally be done in a one-to-one situation. Afterwards, it may be useful for a number of participants to meet as a group to share their letters and discuss them with one another with a facilitator present. If working in a group, and if you have time, allow for sharing and discussion, applying the vigilance described in the guidelines for facilitators. You will find that the discussion can help individuals add more details to their original. If you are able to do so, add these details as they are revealed during the discussion. At the end of the discussion you can take a moment to ask the group whether any of them have anything they would now wish to add to their piece.

The exercises here have several different areas of focus including:

* Myself and others
* Other characters
* The self of now
* The past self
* The self of the future.

Christine Cohen Park says ‘an exploration of who the self is at the moment… is key’ and these exercises reflect that emphasis.[[5]](#footnote-5) Exploration of who the self is at the moment can be achieved orally or through writing.

Due to this emphasis on self-exploration, there are reflective exercises that allow for participants to reflect on the process of being asked about their lives. These are marked **R** below and the facilitator can decide whether to include them at the point they appear, or whether to choose one to do at the end of a session or at the end of a set of workshops.

As with the exercises above, the following exercises will normally be facilitated in a one-to-one situation. If possible and the facilitator feels it would be practical and useful, the participants may meet afterward to discuss the stories elicited during their one-to-one sessions.

1. **Looking outwards to others who are important to your life story**

**Telling stories about family**

**Part 1. The facilitator says the following to the participant:**

Using mother, father, sister, brother, cousin, husband or words you use for other family members or for your intimate partners in life, choose one of these who is uppermost in your mind at the moment for reasons good or bad.

I am going to ask you to reply to each of these prompts and I will record what you say after each one. Feel free to give some detail about what you remember during each:

* Something this person did that you liked.
* Something they did that you did not like.
* What you said at a particular time.
* What this person said to you at a particular time and how you reacted.
* What you hoped you would have done.
* What you feel about this person as you speak about them now.

The facilitator says:

Ask the individual how they are feeling about this exercise. Are they ready for the next stage? Is there anything else they would like to share that they have remembered?

**Part 2. The facilitator says the following to the participant:**

It could be that expressing something about our family could make up one part of a life story. We can make a short life story out these notes. Taking one of the incidents or events that you recall involved both you and a family member, let’s look more closely at it for a moment.

This event might be from a time of happiness and joy or it might be from a time when things were not going too well. (The facilitator may want to suggest the incident to choose if it is clear that the participant does not readily know which one to choose.)

* How you would describe what happened to a friend who does not know your family. (Think about where, when, why, how, and who) I will write down your simple description of what happened.
* How did you feel about this at the time? (Think about your actual feelings on the day or the days afterwards and describe these)
* How do you feel about this incident now? (Think about how you feel, having written about the incident. Have your feelings changed since?)

**The facilitator facilitates the recall of the participant by remaining a good listener and by recording while encouraging.**

1. **Other important people in my life**

Introduce the idea of telling about other people, apart from family.

**Facilitator may want to say:** for example—teacher, co-worker, boss, neighbour, doctor, police officer, security guard etc. This can be anyone who has had an impact on you. A teacher may have conveyed some belief in your ability. A neighbour may have helped out in a time of need.

Think of a time when this person was encountered by you.

* Something this person did that you liked.
* Something they did that you did not like.
* What you said at a particular time.
* What this person said to you at a particular time and how you reacted.
* What you hoped you would have done.
* What you feel about this person as you speak about them now.

(The Facilitator then uses the prompts above to elicit a set of different story responses.)

**Reflective exercise**

**A- A safe place**

**(Facilitator may choose to interject one or both reflective exercises here)**

The following sentence starters are designed to help participants reflect upon their present and past feelings. This reflection particularly allows for accessing feelings of wellbeing. The aim is that the connection will begin to be made between Expressive Telling and those feelings of wellbeing.

**The facilitator asks the participant to complete the following sentences and he/she records the answers:**

* I feel most relaxed when…
* My body does not feel tense when…
* When I feel calm I am able to…
* The place I feel safest in my life at present is…
* The place I felt safest in my life in the past is…
* The place I do not always feel safe is…

1. **B-Making thinking about your life more comfortable to do**

**Note to the facilitator:** Some participants may find it a challenge to talk about their lives. Sometimes it can be useful to use the following exercise afterwards if that is the case.

**The facilitator asks the participant to tell their answers to the following sentences:**

* When I am asked to talk about myself or to tell of things that have happened, the first thing that comes to mind is…
* What feels uncomfortable about this is…
* What gives me hope or inspires me about this is...

**Note to the facilitator:** you can discuss the resulting sentences with the participant, showing that shared fears or feelings of discomfort are to be expected but that there can be rewarding elements that come out of the participation in the process.

Note that any of the above exercises can be returned to fruitfully since it’s possible that each time they will generate a new set of experiences recalled by the participant. In this way the facilitator or acquires of documented stories at the same time as the participant being allowed to have some of the benefits of expressive storytelling.

1. **A rounding-off exercise**

The facilitator may feel that a rounding-off exercise would be a good thing to end either a session or a sequence of sessions. This is a way of attempting to ensure that no harm is done during the exercise sequence and also helping the participant to leave the safe place where the interview occurs feeling more able and less vulnerable.

**Window into the self**

This exercise is designed to focus directly on the self.[[6]](#footnote-6)

**The facilitator asks the participant to tell him/her their answers to the following:**

* Three words that I use to describe me are…
* Three words that others might use to describe me are…
* My greatest strength is when I…
* I am grateful for…
* The type of friend that I am is…
* The person I feel closest to (this can be someone alive or dead) is…
* I am proud when I think of this thing or this person in my life (facilitator may want to prompt here: this can be a time that you helped someone, or it could be that you are proud of a child, a sibling, a parent or other relation)

**Note**: The facilitator allows several minutes for discussion, questions and clarifications.

The final aim of this exercise is to recognise the agency of the participant in attempting this set of Expressive Telling exercises.

If they have agreed to have their stories written up and disseminated anonymously or otherwise the aim of that dissemination is to further empower participants by providing them with the opportunity of passing on a sense of that agency to others.

**Appendices:**

**Appendix 1: Introducing the Role of the Social Worker and the Services of Akkar Network for Development**

**Appendix 2: Consent Form**

**Appendix 3: The Handbook**

**Appendix 4: Breathing Techniques**

**Appendix 5: The Sun Exercise (writing about the family)**

**Appendix 6: Reflective Exercise: A Safe Place**

**Appendix 7: Reflective Exercise: Comfortable when writing**

**Appendix 8: Window into the Self (1)**

**Appendix 9: Window into the Self (2)**

**Appendix 10: Examining the Relationship of the Self with Others in the Future**

**Appendix 11: Write a Message**

**Appendix 1: Introducing of the Role of the Social Worker and the Services of the Akkar Network for Development.**

Long definition - for women

1. Defining oneself - what organization we represent - what is the reason for our visit.

- I (your name) and my colleague (her name) from Akkar Network for Development came to introduce our project and (mention another reason for the visit if possible).

If you welcome us (or if you don’t mind welcoming us) or if it’s possible to welcome your female neighbours in the building or nearby houses. If there is no inconvenience, we need 10 times of your time and if possible welcome Neighbours into your home to tell them about our services.

1. Definition of the case management service

- I will tell you in detail about the services provided by the organization in which I work.

- Services provided to all women regardless of their nationality (Lebanese, Jordanian, Syrian ...) because women in general have common challenges regardless of their nationality.

- If the group is made up of Syrian women say: But we pay special attention and target Syrian women because they went through difficult situations and several challenges. There are women who fled across the border on foot with their husband and parents, or alone with their children. They sometimes go through stressful situations that cause them pain, only because they are women. Even when being integrated into the new society they might have been exploited because they are considered strangers.

- Many things might happen to women (just because they are women) that might upset them and which they cannot talk to anyone, even to the closest people to them, about due to the fear of misunderstanding them. The nature of our society prevents women from speaking or expressing the things that happen to them from fear of being blamed or creating problems or even taking measures that might be unfair to them.

- And because we humans when we remain quiet about upsetting situation that happened to us, we might feel the pressure, and exhaust ourselves, and relay this oppression onto our children, mothers, brothers or husbands.

- So we have experienced and skilled specialists, trained to offer women support in a place where a person’s privacy is respected.

- This person is the social worker (mention the name of social worker).

- The social worker listens to any difficulties or pressures in order to offer support and help women express what they are worried about. She does not give advice or solutions, but helps make decisions that are appropriate for the women, without making judgments.

- Distribute the organization information card.

- Women can contact the social worker on the Hot Line number even after work hours if necessary. Women can miss call the following number: ...................................................... The social worker will call them back.

1. Safe places

We have a center for women and girls only, which men never have access to, located in Halba, Harrar and Hissa (mention the full address of the center near the women).This center offers activities such as (mention activities) and the services that we have mentioned above.

- If you wish for a particular activity, we might offer it, so you can suggest new activities. As we have said before, this program is for you, we are on your side, and we will offer you support.

- We have a bus that offers the women a ride back and forth from the camps or houses to the center.

- As for mothers, they can bring their children to the center, there are volunteers to take care of them.

- Since we noticed that the women have loved our services we chose to offer these services to women in near and somewhat distant areas from our centers. We have safe places where we implement the same center activities. We chose places that are near the women so that they can reach us in the following places (mention the places).

1. Introducing other activities

- We offer several activities that improve communication skills and enhance self-confidence and safety, as well as adapting and integrating into the society by making friendships. These activities include (mention activities).

- In addition, we provide awareness sessions on several topics (mention the topics).

- We offer a special program for teenagers between the ages of 11 and 18 years: drama sessions and the "my safety, my well-being" session curriculum.

- Teenagers learn life skills such as controlling anger and self-confidence, how and who they can trust, and many other topics. Life skills are learned through activities, games and acting during several sessions that take place once or twice a week. These services are provided after getting the mothers’ consent.

- We offer a special platform for women "Arab women speak"

- The curriculum consists of 10 sessions dealing with several topics: social roles, self-esteem and self-confidence, decision making, negotiation skills and support networks.

1. End of the introduction

- We know that these areas do not have a lot of places such as public parks and markets for entertainments. It is in safe places where women gather, get to know each other and learn a skill they like.

- Before the end of the introduction I want to ask you about the housing situation here. What do women do during the day? How do girls spend their time? Are women or girls at risk?

- Do you have any questions? We will be here for the next ten minutes. If you want to talk to us about anything, do not hesitate to contact us.

**Appendix 2: Consent Form**

Consent Form

Welcome to the expressive life writing project

Please fill out this form and write your name.

Name:

Date:

I confirm that I am here at my free will and that no one has forced me or coerced me to come and participate and I can withdraw at any time.

I confirm that I am aware of the project’s goal and have become familiar with the content of the program.

I understand that all the information, writings and stories I write will be private.

I allow the use of my written stories in pamphlets presented during an event held by the organization (for example, 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence) as an encouragement to all women and girls to participate with complete privacy, without mentioning names or personal information.

I allow a partial or complete publication of the stories I have written privately (without mentioning information identifying the name or person) for the purpose of scientific research.

I have received information regarding the services of Akkar Network for Development and the case management service, in particular, provided by the social worker at the center and how to communicate with her. I have also received a sheet containing information regarding the services provided by the organizations in the region.

I know I can cancel my consent to participate in these exercises at any time.

I know I can cancel my consent to post my answers to the exercises at any time

Signature:

Date:

Place of the workshop or personal session.

**Appendix 3: The Handbook**

**Introduction, getting acquainted and defining the curriculum’s goals.**

**What do I expect from the sessions?**

Contents

1. Introduction: Get Acquainted and Trust Building

Unit 1: Exercises toward Expressive Life Writing

1. Word Clustering/ Phrase Gathering
2. Elements; Things in Season and in Time
3. Window on the World
4. Writing the Unwritten Letter

Unit 2: Bridging the Past to the Present

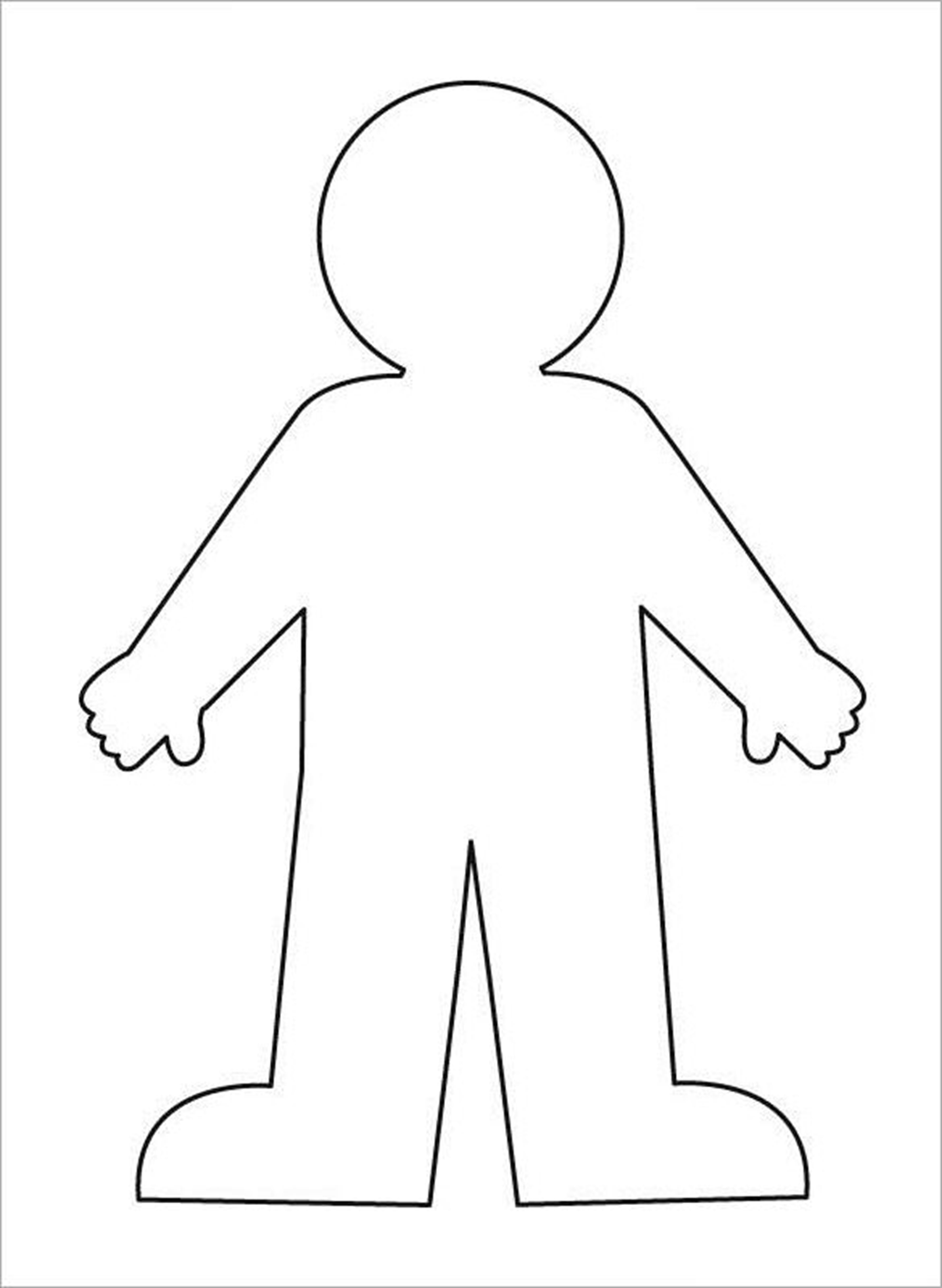
1. Beginning a Map of Yourself

Unit 3 – Identity and Feelings / Moving toward Life Narratives

1. Writing about Family
2. Other Important People in My Life
3. Window into the Self
4. Looking at Future Selves
5. Consider Your Stories as Possible for You and Others

**The Curriculum’s Goals**

* Become comfortable and adept at starter writing tasks, and gain enjoyment from these.
* Move to activities which can elicit parts or sections of life stories that contain recognition of feelings and may entail, via the writing, an expression of internal states.
* Work closely with the self through writing to increase the awareness towards participation in the wider environment in which certain events occurred in one’s life.



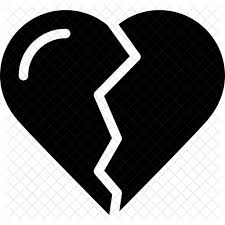
**Session 1: Get Acquainted and Trust Building**

**Expectations:**

**Monitoring Form**

This questionnaire is used after any expressive life writing exercise and it contains questions that help in identifying ‎emotions:

**How was today's session?**



1. I expressed my deepest thoughts and emotions: **Yes No**
2. I feel uncomfortable now**: Yes No**
3. I am experiencing positive emotions now**: Yes No**
4. My writings today were valuable and meaningful to me: **Yes No**

**Please answer the following questions:**

1. What did you like and did not like about the exercise you did today?
2. Briefly explain any other ideas you have / suggestions regarding the course of the today’s exercise?

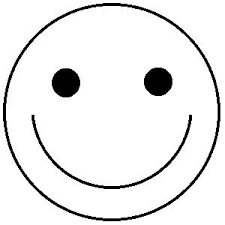
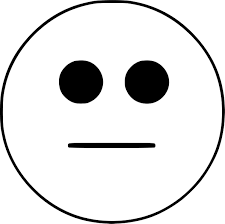
**Session 2: Word Clustering/ Phrase Gathering**

**Space for reflection and expression:**

**Monitoring Form**

This questionnaire is used after any expressive life writing exercise and it contains questions that help in identifying ‎emotions:

**How was today's session?**

****

1. I expressed my deepest thoughts and emotions**: Yes No**
2. I feel uncomfortable now**: Yes No**
3. I am experiencing positive emotions now: **Yes No**
4. My writings today were valuable and meaningful to me**: Yes No**

**Please answer the following questions:**

1. What did you like and did not like about the exercise you did today?
2. Briefly explain any other ideas you have / suggestions regarding the course of the today’s exercise?

**Session 3: Elements; Things in Season and in Time**

**Space for reflection and expression:**

**Monitoring Form**

This questionnaire is used after any expressive life writing exercise and it contains questions that help in identifying ‎emotions:

**How was today's session?**

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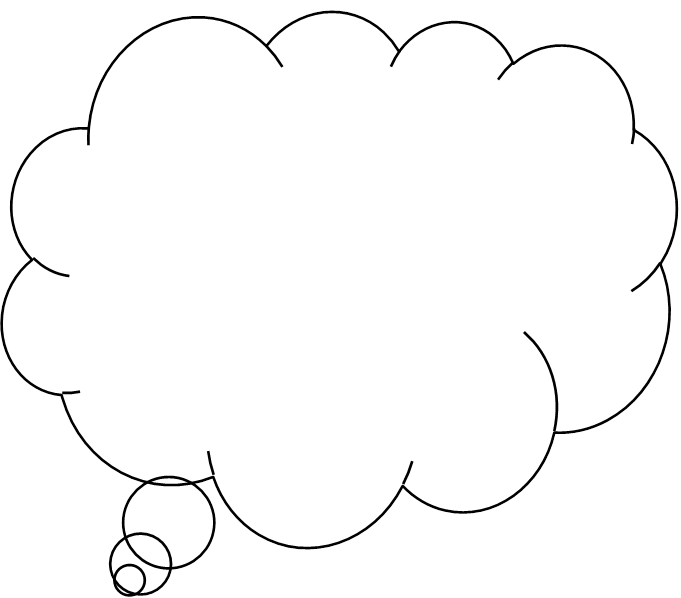
1. I expressed my deepest thoughts and emotions**: Yes No**
2. I feel uncomfortable now**: Yes No**
3. I am experiencing positive emotions now: **Yes No**
4. My writings today were valuable and meaningful to me**: Yes No**

**Please answer the following questions:**

1. What did you like and did not like about the exercise you did today?
2. Briefly explain any other ideas you have / suggestions regarding the course of the today’s exercise?

**Session 4: Window on the World**

**Space for reflection and expression:**



**Monitoring Form**

This questionnaire is used after any expressive life writing exercise and it contains questions that help in identifying emotions:

**How was today's session?**

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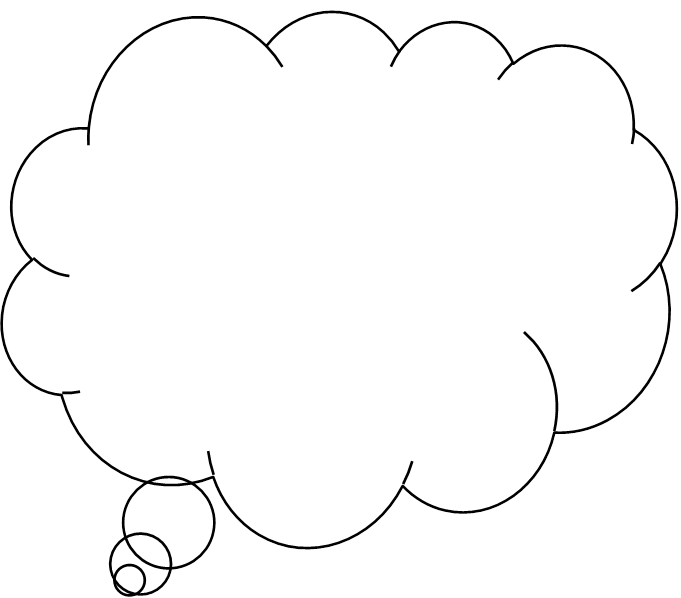
1. I expressed my deepest thoughts and emotions**: Yes No**
2. I feel uncomfortable now**: Yes No**
3. I am experiencing positive emotions now: **Yes No**
4. My writings today were valuable and meaningful to me**: Yes No**

**Please answer the following questions:**

1. What did you like and did not like about the exercise you did today?
2. Briefly explain any other ideas you have / suggestions regarding the course of the today’s exercise?

**Session 5: Writing the unwritten letter**

**Space for reflection and expression:**



**Monitoring Form**

This questionnaire is used after any expressive life writing exercise and it contains questions that help in identifying ‎emotions:

**How was today's session?**

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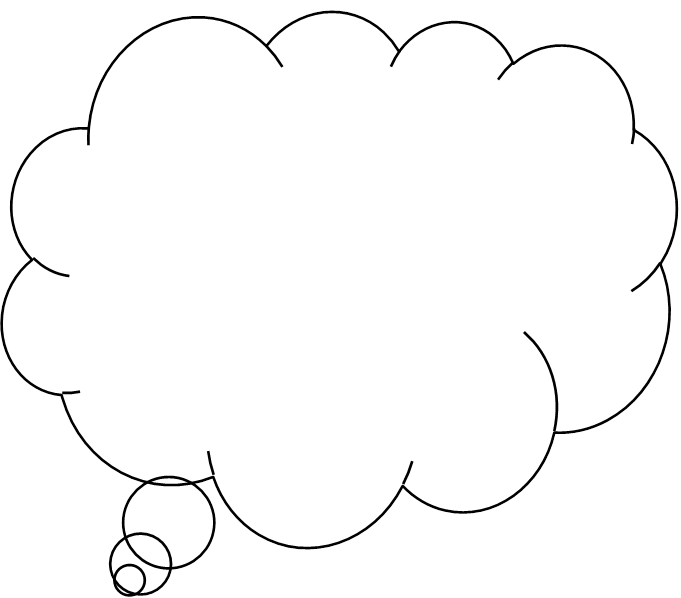
1. I expressed my deepest thoughts and emotions**: Yes No**
2. I feel uncomfortable now**: Yes No**
3. I am experiencing positive emotions now: **Yes No**
4. My writings today were valuable and meaningful to me**: Yes No**

**Please answer the following questions:**

1. What did you like and did not like about the exercise you did today?
2. Briefly explain any other ideas you have / suggestions regarding the course of the today’s exercise?

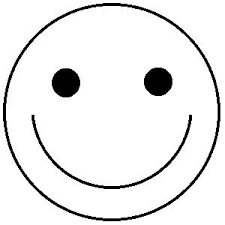
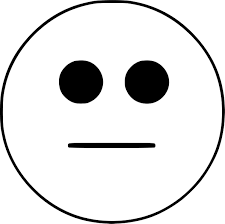
**Session 6: Bridging the past to the present**

**Space for reflection and expression:**



**Monitoring Form**

This questionnaire is used after any expressive life writing exercise and it contains questions that help in identifying emotions:

**How was today's session?**

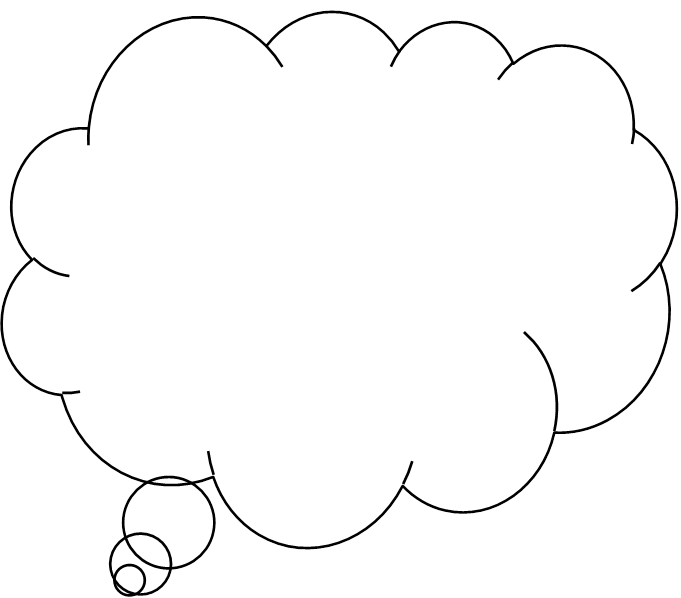
1. I expressed my deepest thoughts and emotions**: Yes No**
2. I feel uncomfortable now**: Yes No**
3. I am experiencing positive emotions now: **Yes No**
4. My writings today were valuable and meaningful to me**: Yes No**

**Please answer the following questions:**

1. What did you like and did not like about the exercise you did today?
2. Briefly explain any other ideas you have / suggestions regarding the course of the today’s exercise?

**Session 7: Writing about family**

**Space for reflection and expression :**



**Monitoring Form**

This questionnaire is used after any expressive life writing exercise and it contains questions that help in identifying emotions:

**How was today's session?**

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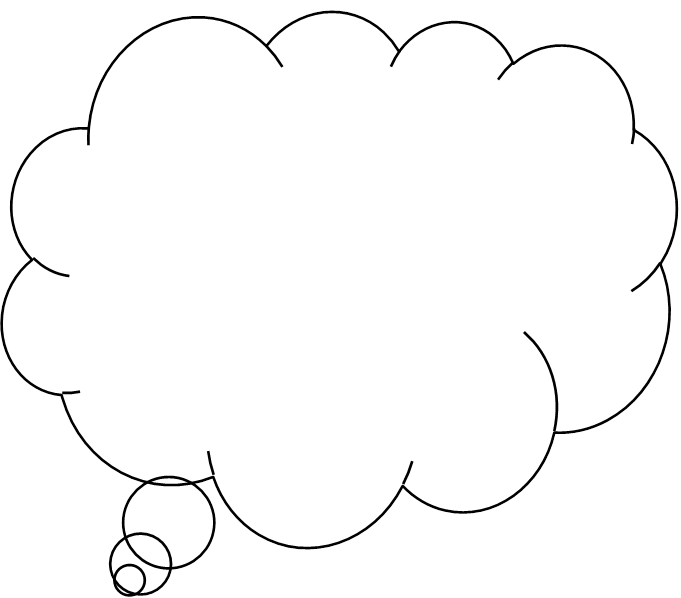
1. I expressed my deepest thoughts and emotions**: Yes No**
2. I feel uncomfortable now**: Yes No**
3. I am experiencing positive emotions now: **Yes No**
4. My writings today were valuable and meaningful to me**: Yes No**

**Please answer the following questions:**

1. What did you like and did not like about the exercise you did today?
2. Briefly explain any other ideas you have / suggestions regarding the course of the today’s exercise?

**Session 8: Other important people in my life**

**Space for reflection and expression:**



**Monitoring Form**

This questionnaire is used after any expressive life writing exercise and it contains questions that help in identifying ‎emotions:

**How was today's session?**

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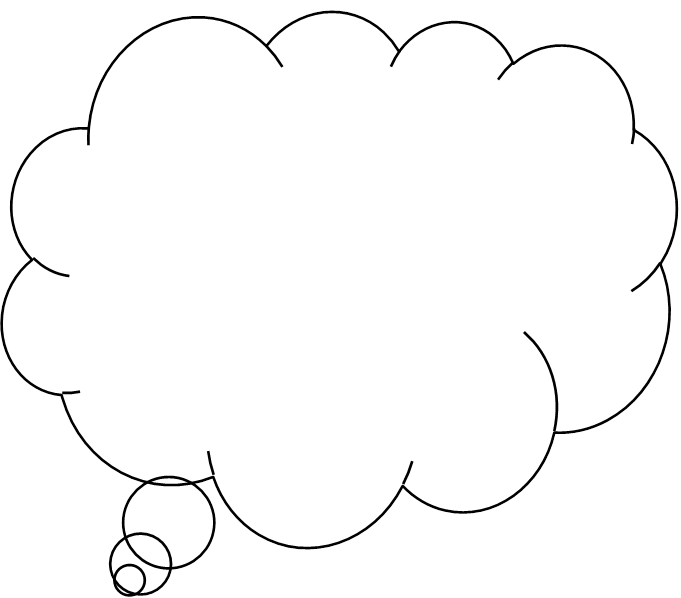
1. I expressed my deepest thoughts and emotions**: Yes No**
2. I feel uncomfortable now**: Yes No**
3. I am experiencing positive emotions now: **Yes No**
4. My writings today were valuable and meaningful to me**: Yes No**

**Please answer the following questions:**

1. What did you like and did not like about the exercise you did today?
2. Briefly explain any other ideas you have / suggestions regarding the course of the today’s exercise?

**Session 9: Window into the Self**

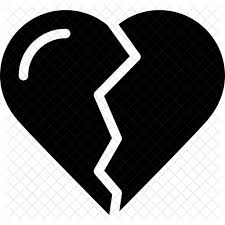
**Space for reflection and expression:**



**Monitoring Form**

This questionnaire is used after any expressive life writing exercise and it contains questions that help in identifying ‎emotions:

**How was today's session?**



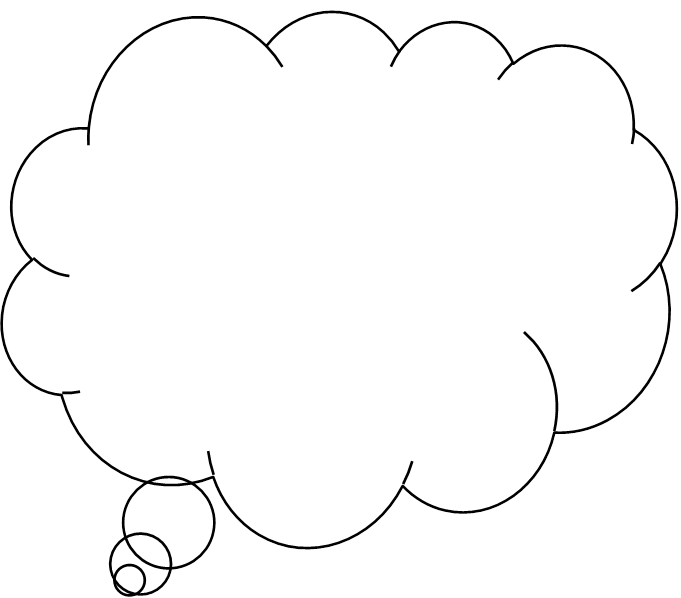
1. I expressed my deepest thoughts and emotions: **Yes No**
2. I feel uncomfortable now**: Yes No**
3. I am experiencing positive emotions now**: Yes No**
4. My writings today were valuable and meaningful to me: **Yes No**

**Please answer the following questions:**

1. What did you like and did not like about the exercise you did today?
2. Briefly explain any other ideas you have / suggestions regarding the course of the today’s exercise?

**Session 10: Looking at Future Selves**

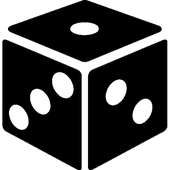
**Space for reflection and expression:**



**Monitoring Form**

This questionnaire is used after any expressive life writing exercise and it contains questions that help in identifying ‎emotions:

**How was today's session?**



1. I expressed my deepest thoughts and emotions: **Yes No**
2. I feel uncomfortable now**: Yes No**
3. I am experiencing positive emotions now**: Yes No**
4. My writings today were valuable and meaningful to me: **Yes No**

**Please answer the following questions:**

1. What did you like and did not like about the exercise you did today?
2. Briefly explain any other ideas you have / suggestions regarding the course of the today’s exercise?

**Appendix 4: Breathing Techniques[[7]](#footnote-7)**

- Explain the goal.

- Show the women how to do it first by explaining it step by step before doing it yourself.

- Ask the women if they want to do this exercise.

- Explain to them all the steps and participate in the exercises.

- Ask the women if they wish to do the exercise themselves.

- Ask them: How do you feel?

- Repeat the exercise and make sure they understand the idea.

- Ask them if they want to try the exercise at home.

- When they return to participate in the second session, ask them if they did the exercises. Can they do the exercises in your presence?

-Review the implemented methods with them.

**Appendix 5: The Sun Exercise**

* Something that person did (i.e. the chosen person) that I did not like.
* Something he did that I liked.
* What he said at a particular time.
* What I said to him at a particular time and how he responded.
* What I hoped he had done.
* What I feel about this person as you speak about them now.

**Appendix 6:** **Reflective Exercise: A Safe Place**

* I feel very comfortable when ..............................................................................................

...................................................................................................................................................

• I do not feel tense when ............................................................... .........................................

...................................................................................................................................................

• When I feel relaxed I can ............................................. .........................................................

...................................................................................................................................................

• When I write I feel ....................................................... ..........................................................

..................................................................................................................................................

• The place I currently feel most safe in is ..............................................................................

...................................................................................................................................................

• The place I felt most safe in during the past is .......................................................................

...................................................................................................................................................

• The place where I feel my best self is .....................................................................................

....................................................................................................................................................

**Appendix 7:** **Reflective Exercise: Comfortable when Writing about Your Life**

• When asked to write about myself, the first thing that comes to my mind is…………… ............................ ................................................................................................................

• What makes me uncomfortable when writing is ................................................................

...............................................................................................................................................

• What inspires me or encourages me to write life stories is. ..............................................

.................................. ...........................................................................................................

**Appendix 8: Window into the Self**

**Answer the following questions:**

• Three words that describe me ................................................................................................

• Three words others use to describe me ..................................................................................

• My greatest strength is……………………………………………………………………….

• I am grateful for ......................................................................................................................

• As a friend I am ………………...............................................................................................

• I feel that the closest person to me is (can be alive or dead)...................................................

**Appendix 9:** **Window into the Self**

**Answer the following questions:**

• What are the two most important things in my life that have influenced me and made me the person I am today?..................................................................................................................... ………………………………………………………………………………………………….

• What should I learn for the future? ……..................................................................................

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

• Do I have anything to teach others that can benefit their future? ...........................................

………………………………………………………………………………………………….

**Appendix 10: Examining the Relationship of the Self with Others in the Future**

I feel more comfortable with someone else when ……………………………………………...

…………………………………………………………………………………………………..

Openness and honesty with someone else makes me feel ……………………………………..

………………………………………………………………………………………………….

I feel a great deal of danger when………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………….

For me, full harmony with someone means…………………………………………………….

………………………………………………………………………………………………….

Others can be close to me if they ………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………….

Others earn my trust if ...............................................................................................................

………………………………………………………………………………………………….

**Appendix 11: Write a Message**

I wish that you…………..……………………………………………………I wish that I………………………………………… I wish that you and I………………………………

REFERENCES

This is a training document and used alongside the Handbook. The full version of the *Expressive Life -Writing Handbook* is available from the researchers. This contains a full set of references. In the first instance, contact the UK-based researchers, Dr. Meg Jensen and Dr. Siobhan Campbell. Email [S.Campbell@open.ac.uk](mailto:S.Campbell@open.ac.uk) or M.Jensen@kingston.ac.uk

1. Note: To avoid saying that participation is not mandatory, we prefer to explain it this way: "You are free to participate or not participate but we would appreciate your participation to listen to your stories or whatever you would like to share. Your participation is valued and appreciated by everyone. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Age ranges between 18-25 years, 25-35 years, 35 years and above [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. 1. You are sincere in what you say

   2. You are not guilty and not to blame

   3. I appreciate you sharing with us

   4. I am very sorry for what happened to you

   5. We are here to provide support

   6. I value what you say and what you are going through [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The Facilitator asks the participants to write about eat element. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Christine Cohen Park, cited in Hunt, p.177. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. This exercise is partly informed by Adams, 1998, p.16. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Used if the dynamics of the group changed to help the group focus and feel comfortable [↑](#footnote-ref-7)