

Impact of Expressive Writing on Creativity

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Abstract : Negative emotions are rather seen as creativity inhibitor. On the other hand, it is worth noting that negative emotions may be good for our functioning. Negative emotions enhance cognitive resources and improve evaluative processes. Moreover maintaining a negative emotional state allow for cognitive reinterpretation of the emotional stimuli, what is good for our creativity, especially cognitive flexibility. Writing a diary or writing about difficult emotional experiences in general can be the way to not only improve psychical health, but also - enhance creative behaviors. Thanks to translating difficult emotions to the verbal level and giving them 'a name' or 'a label', we can get easier access to both emotional content of an experience and to the semantic content, without the need of speaking out loud. Expressive writing improves academic results and the efficiency of working memory. The classical method of writing about emotions consists in a long-term process of describing negative experiences. Present research demonstrate the efficiency of this process over a shorter period of time - one writing session, on school children sample. Participants performed writing task. Writing task had two different topics: emotions connected with their negative emotions (expressive writing) and content not connected with negative emotional state (writing about one's typical day). Creativity was measured by Guilford's Alternative Uses Task. Results have shown that writing about negative emotions results in the higher level of divergent thinking in all three parameters: fluency, flexibility and originality. After the writing task mood of expressive writing participants remained negative more than the mood of the controls. Taking an expressive action after a difficult emotional experience can support functioning, which can be observed in enhancement of divergent thinking. Writing about emotions connected with negative experience makes one more creative, than writing about something unrelated with difficult emotional moments. Research has shown that young people should not demonize negative emotions. Sometimes, properly applied, negative emotions can be the basis of creation. Preparation was supported by a The Young Scientist University grant titled 'Dynamics of emotions in the creative process' from The Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education.

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