Expressive and creative writing in the therapeutic context: From the different concepts to the development of writing therapy programs

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Abstract

One of the main aims of this scoping selective review is to clarify the differences between expressive and creative writing in the mental health context, not only at a conceptual level but also regarding its therapeutic effects. The other one is to identify the more efficient ways to develop therapeutic creative writing programs for a clinical population. Considering these specific aims, we employed a selective review on the writing therapeutic literature. We found that, although expressive writing is clearly defined and its benefits on mental health empirically well established, creative writing lacks a consistent conceptualization in clinical settings. Similarly, we reported several studies focusing in the therapeutic benefits of poetry, but other writings genres receive much less attention and are even more insufficiently defined. Since some studies support the idea that giving a significant content to a text is more beneficial, and considering that writing creatively offers new perspectives and meanings to the information, we propose that the development of creative writing programs should be tried. Aiming to develop such programs in the future, we give some suggestions based on already studied expressive writing methods.

Keywords: expressive writing; creative writing; self-expression; therapeutic writing; poetry therapy

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