Creative Writing Group for Adolescents With Depression

A graduate project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree of Master of Science in Counseling,
Marriage and Family Therapy

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ABSTRACT

CREATIVE WRITING GROUP FOR DEPRESSED ADOLESCENTS

By

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Master of Science in Counseling,

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Depression is a problem that plagues teenagers across America. In order to combat against the isolation and low-self worth associated with depression, teens need to be armed with a group of like-minded peers and an accomplishment to boast about. This project creates a Group and Workbook that will help therapists utilize the benefits of creative writing, specifically for this population.
CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH, 2013) estimated that nearly 2.6 million adolescents suffered from at least one episode of major depression (NIMH, 2013). Information found from TeenHelp.com (2015) shows that teenagers who suffer from depression are at higher risks for several problems, such as fewer education opportunities and more physical illnesses. Early interventions are necessary to minimize the effects of depression. However, many parents have difficulty finding affordable solutions to the problem (Cortazal, 2010). Requiring few materials and yet posing many benefits, writing offers a unique but affordable intervention (Smitherman & Thompson, 2002). Christ Baty (2014), creator of Nanowrimo, summed up the appeal of writing by stating, “Everyone has dozens of novels in them. And getting one of those stories written is even more fun and life-changing than I had originally realized” (p. 12).

Statement of Need

Cortazal (2010) has indicated how deep seeded the problem of teenage depression is in America. Depression not only has several short-term effects, such as lower grades, but also has long-term effects if untreated, which can include drug use and impaired physical functioning. Many parents do not have the education or means to treat adolescents with depression. There is a great need for a widespread intervention that can be given at low cost to parents and school (Cortazal, 2010). It is hypothesized that the benefits from the creative writing project will be one low-cost intervention that will successfully help some adolescents overcome such depression.
Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this project is to create a group with a corresponding workbook in order to utilize creative writing as a form of art therapy for adolescents. Through focusing on developing organizational, creative and writing skills, adolescents will be able to overcome the symptoms of depression by applying writing as a coping skill.

Statement of Significance

This project can be used by other clinicians and schools as a low cost intervention for adolescents facing depression. Adolescents who use the intervention will build better coping skills and have a chance to interact with others in a supportive environment.

Terminology

Adolescent – An individual between the ages of 13 and 18. For the purpose of this project the terms teenager and adolescent will be interchangeable.

Inner editor – The voice in a person’s head that tells people that ‘they can’t achieve what they want.’ It drives people towards perfection, but often prevents people from achieving anything at all.

Muse – A person’s creative aid that inspires one to create and express oneself through artistic means.

Writer - Person who writes, whether for a career or as a hobby. The type of writing varies.

Limitations of Project

The limited amount of research done on creative writing as opposed to other forms of writing has determined the inclusion of several forms. The group is limited in that several forms of writing will be explored, but in-depth usage of all in a short amount
of time will be impossible. Another limitation is the time constrictions that may prove to be challenging in addressing every individuals possible problems.

**Organization of the Remainder of the Project**

In order to better understand this issue, it is necessary to review previous studies and research regarding writing groups in the treatment of adolescents suffering from depression, which will be covered in the following chapter. The review will cover different forms of writing and the benefits of releasing emotions in a healthy way. Chapter three will reveal the development of this project and illustrate how to implement the workshop. Chapter four will include a summary of the project along with recommendations for the implementation and recommendations for the future. This chapter will end with a conclusion. The last section will be the appendage that illustrates the outline for the group and the workbook to be used.
CHAPTER 2

Review of Literature

This chapter will illustrate how the many components that make-up creative writing can be used as a treatment for adolescents with depression. The literature review will begin adolescent depression, followed by support for the use of group therapy in the treatment of teenagers followed by art therapy. Next the effects of goal setting for adolescents will be examined. This will be followed by an analysis of several types of writing as therapy including: Creative writing, poetry therapy, song writing therapy, personal narrative or journal writing, and expressive writing. The chapter links to an evaluation of the physical and mental health benefits of writing. An argument for writing as a form of Mindfulness concludes the chapter.

Adolescent Depression

Cairns, Yap, Pilkington and Jorm (2014) contend that adolescence is a difficult time for many and is a peak time for the first onset of a depression episode (Cairns, Yap, Pilkington, & Jorm, 2014). According to Cortazal (2010) depression has severe negative consequences both the short and long term. In adolescents, the short-term consequences often reflect through symptoms such as dropping grades (Cortazal, 2010). However, long-term effects include much more severe symptoms such as drug use and attempting suicide (Stice, Rohde, Seeley, & Gau, 2008). These symptoms put stress on the adolescent’s entire family structure. Parents of adolescents with depression in a longitudinal study by Jaycox et al. (2015) reported high levels of familial stress and parental burden. Understanding some of the symptoms in the context of adolescents is
important when it comes to preventing the undesirable long-term consequences (Jaycox et al. 2015).

A symptom that has long-term consequences is a lack of self-care, which can manifest in many forms. In their meta-analysis of longitudinal studies Cairns, Yap, Pilkington and Jorm (2014) discovered that interventions that target life skill and self-care areas such as sleep patterns, dieting and use of coping skills, help provide a successful in long-term prognosis. According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (5th ed.; DMS 5, American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2013), one of the most dominant symptoms of depression is the feeling of loneliness, which is often caused by isolation. Fatigue and negative self-images make it hard for people with depression to interact with others (APA, 2013). Many teenagers surveyed in Cortazal’s (2010), study stated they would prefer an active treatment that included both individual therapy and medication. This active treatment would force the parents to become involved as well have them take part in creating and transporting their teenagers to appointments (Cortazal, 2010). Yalom (2005) postulated that another way to help adolescents combat feelings of isolation is to have them join a group.

**Group Therapy**

Group therapy brings people together. Teenagers are able to protect themselves from outside threats and building a sense of hope. Looking to peers for support is developmentally appropriate and should be utilized (O’Brien, 2003). According to Yalom (2005), groups give adolescents a chance to share their story and normalize certain behaviors and feelings amongst themselves. Many teenagers do not trust adults, and can be more authentic when talking to their peers. Teenagers can learn a great deal from one
another, especially when they are not open to outsiders from youth culture. This form of therapy can reach multiple individuals at once while simultaneously creating social bonds that can lower feelings of isolation (Yalom, 2005).

The most studied therapeutic model for group therapy targeting teenage depression is cognitive-behavioral therapy. Straub et al. (2014) examined the effects of Cognitive-behavioral group therapy in the treatment of depression in teenagers in Germany. Fifteen outpatients between the ages of 13 and 18 were split into three groups and met for six week group as a part of this pilot study. The clinicians used the Children’s Depression Rating Scale Revised and the Beck Depression Inventory Revision in order to assess the baseline and compare it to the final results. The interventions used were based in a cognitive-behavioral model of therapy and included, psycho-education, cognitive restructuring, behavioral activation, and emotion regulation. The researchers saw a reduction in depression symptoms such as suicidal ideation at the end of the study (Straub et al. 2014).

O’Brien (2003) utilizes a much different approach to group therapy in the treatment of teenagers. In his groups for inpatient adolescents, O’Brien noticed a theme of ‘Ambivalence,’ or the existence of opposite feelings at the same time in the individual. These opposing feelings can have the teenager demanding independence and nurturing simultaneously. How a therapist responds to the ambivalence in the room can change the course of therapy. Interventions utilized include the instillation of hope, building on strengths, and reflecting on losses. He holds that groups should be focused on action, or making a positive change such as increasing the use of coping skills (O’Brien, 2003).
Action focused groups tend to focus on completing a task, such as creative writing, and develop coping skills for future use.

Although group therapy is an evidence-based practice there are some challenges to keep in mind when working with teenagers. Anything that resembles therapy often causes adolescents to withdraw or put their guard up. Because of these obstacles Haen and Weil (2010) make a case for the use of art group work with teenagers. Creative art therapies provide a safe way for adolescents to express emotions. Symbols can be used to represent many different emotions and bring to light thoughts that normally would dwell in the subconscious. Haen and Weil use a few different examples to exemplify their point. One such example is of a group of teenagers that at first did not want to be in therapy. Sensing the tension and anger in the room, the therapist created an intervention. The therapist put a telephone in the middle of the room and asked the teenagers to pretend to call an adult the teenager was having with. One teenager jumped into the middle of the circle ready to scream profanities in a pretend phone conversation with a former teacher that gave the teen a poor grade. This sent the precedent for the rest of the group to have. Taking a step back, the therapist then changed the conversation to one with an adult that the teenagers admired. By the end of the session the group had bonded and became open to the therapeutic process (Haen & Weil, 2010).

Art Therapy

According to Green and Drewes (2013), a rich history and a depth of research shows how effective art therapy can be when treating children and adolescence. Several therapeutic models utilize art, including Psychoanalytic and CBT. The type of art therapy used can differ great depending on the theoretical orientation, presenting problem,
diagnosis, stage of development, among other factors. Once a therapist has chosen an appropriate intervention, time must be spent preparing the materials. During the intervention, the therapist observes the client and how he or she interacts with the materials and responds while performing the intervention. Once complete, the therapist asks open-ended questions designed to clarify and understand what was created. Often times the discussion after illuminates thoughts and feelings more than the activity itself (Green & Drewes, 2013).

Art therapy groups in particular are effective when working with children and adolescents. Finn (2015) conducted a case study to examine how art could be used in a group setting for 11-13 year olds dealing with grief and loss. Over the course of 9 sessions several different forms of art were utilized to spark conversations between the participants and facilitator. Through the evaluation conducted at the end, it was derived that the children gained a better understanding of different emotions, realization that one can learn from life’s difficulties, knowledge of the stages of grief, and positive coping skills. Having others to talk to was cited as an important factor for the children (Finn, 2015).

A blend of both writing and art group for children was conducted in Bosnia. Darvin (2009) encompasses a variety of techniques in the group, arguing that the bookmaking fostered communication skills and resilience in the pre-adolescent girls. The girls in the study were from Serbia and Bosnia at a summer camp. During the time of the study, the children had witnessed acts of war. Schools attempted to remain open when possible, but were unable to provide a safe and structured environment due to the circumstances. The uncertain environment made it hard for the girls to learn. The
children were instructed to make a book, using both their own words and illustrations. Prompts were given to help guide the children. Through the stories, the children gained literacy skills and bridged the gap between the Serbian and Bosnian girls. This accomplishment also instilled a sense of pride within the girls (Darvin, 2009).

**Goal Setting**

When combined, setting and completing goals create several benefits for adolescents. As one of the most challenging and rewarding literary goals a person can set for themselves, creative writing fits perfectly in this category. Morisano, Hirsh, Peterson, Pihl, and Shore (2010) revealed one such benefit through a study conducted with school age children. The findings support the idea that setting goals along with elaborating and reflecting on each one, improves academic performance. Participants in the study were asked to take part in an intensive online intervention. In the experimental group the participants took time to write out goals and reflect during the course of the intervention. The experimental group was found to have an increase in GPA scores following the intervention (2010).

Page-Voth and Graham (1999) indicate that setting and completing writing goals improves writing skills in students with learning disabilities. Participants split into three groups: goal setting, goal setting plus and control. Three papers were written through the course of the study: before, during, and after. The participants in the goal setting and goal setting plus group significantly improved over the course, compared to the control group, illustrating that clearly defined literary goals can improve writing performance and self-confidence in adolescents (1999).

**Creative Writing**
Creative writing is the foundation of this process, and has been successfully used as a therapeutic intervention by clinicians. According to Flynn and Stirzinger (2001) writing is a gateway into the minds of others. Montgomery and Kahn (2003) posit that even when a person does not explicitly write an autobiography, the past experiences and cultural influences still play a role. Through writing, individuals can work through traumatic experiences by transforming them into literary devices, such as metaphors (Bishop, 1993). Smitherman and Thompson (2002) assert that creative writing is a coping skill that can be taught and implemented with just a pen and paper, making writing both cost and time effective.

Flynn and Stirzinger (2001) acknowledged story writing as an important intervention in the case study of a regressed adolescent boy. Using the narratives as a keyhole into the boy’s world, the therapists were able to better understand him and build rapport. This increased rapport lead to the boy being able to reveal his inner struggles. Even though these stories did not always seem to correlate with his life, his past did always influence his writing (2001). This idea that individuals always write stories that can correspond with their own lives overlaps with Montgomery and Kahn’s (2003) case study of five students with learning disabilities. Even when explicitly told to make-up any story, the students would draw upon personal experiences rather than creating something completely foreign. Through the scaffolding approach, students were able to improve their writing ability (2003).

In a case study of an at-risk adolescent, referred to as ‘Alice,’ Bernardo (2014) revealed how creative writing could be used to aid in social skill building. Alice had problems at both home and school, with dropping grades and a mother who was not sure
what to do to help her child. Through creative writing, Berardo opened the lines of communication with Alice, building a rapport. This overlapped with an increase in Alice’s self-confidence and a growing ability to regulate her emotions (2014).

Smitherman and Thompson (2002) exposed how creative writing can be used to help at-risk adolescents with self-expression. In small groups, adolescents participated for up to nine months studying creative writing. Many commented on the self-awareness and depth exhibited in the anthropologies created through the program (2002).

One of the largest programs for creative writing is National Novel Writing Month (Nanowrimo). According to Kim (2014), the program encompasses a seemingly impossible challenge, as writers are encouraged to write 50,000 words of a novel during the month of November. Since its creation in 1999, the program has grown to include 400,000 writers, 2,000 classroom, and 200 countries in 2014. Participates in this creative task include people from all walks of life and age groups. Through the Young Writer Program, Nanowrimo promotes goal setting, project management, and self-efficacy to budding writers. Nanowrimo is more than just a challenge, it is a community that people can join and enhance writing and organizational skills. 816 volunteers, titled Municipal Liaisons coordinate in-person and online write-ins, where participants can interact (Kim, 2014). Teachers often implement Nanowrimo to meet a number of different goals. Barack (2009) interviewed teachers who cited Nanowrimo as a tool to aid in writing and social connection.

Writing teachers often see first hand the effects writing has on students. Personal themes weave into writing no matter the assignment and teachers acquire written evidence of experiences and feelings (Bishop, 1993). Though writing teachers tend to keep creative
and academic writing separate, Harris (2001) argues that the two have a place and can be used together. Regardless of the type writing aids students in creating an identity and builds communication confidence. Through the manipulation of language, students are better equipped to understand and give meaning to past experiences (2001). Bishop (1993), a writing teacher for fifteen years, testifies to writings therapeutic value inside the classroom in her article. Bishop witnessed students using writing assignments as a catharsis. However, the feelings being released were dangerous. Issues of student privilege to privacy arouse with papers describing suicidal thoughts or actions. Due to this phenomena, Bishop calls for writing teachers to be well connected to the campus counseling (1993).

**Poetry therapy**

Poetry therapy often refers to several types of writing in the context of therapy such as poetry writing, songwriting and story writing. For the purpose of this project poetry therapy will be broken down into those different types of writing. This section will focus solely on poetry being used in the context of therapy (Green & Drewes, 2013). According to Eva-Wood (2004), poetry therapy can be beneficial to use in therapy and groups, especially in the treatment of adolescents. The researcher indicates that even though many adolescents find the idea of poetry to be a scary abstract concept, in practice poetry can open doors that otherwise would remain closed. By exploring the meaning of poetry in a group dialogue, adolescents can relate the material to personal experiences; this makes learning poetry easier. It also helps adolescents learn how to express emotions in a healthy manor (2004). Through this form of self-expression, adolescents are able to come together and bond in groups (Golden, 2000).
Golden (2000) conducted a study that indicated the use of poetry interventions resulting in high levels of group cohesiveness. Three poetry related techniques were used in the course of the study. The first utilized preexisting literature for the clients to read and ponder both individually and together. For best results, it is vital that the material be relatable to members of the group. The second involved individual writing in which each member writes on his or her own poetry. The third was collaborative writing in which each member contributes to a combined piece of work. Creating topics or steams can aid in both individual and collaborative writing. Groups that utilized the collaborative writing intervention saw the largest increase in group cohesiveness due to the group working together on a task. Individual writing helped members improve self-awareness, leading to improved self-esteem and increased group interaction. (2000).

Poetry therapy has also been used in conjunction with other forms of therapy. Olson-McBride and Page (2012) examined how poetry interventions improve self-disclosure in group therapy. One intervention that promoted self-disclosure was the ‘theme song.’ The adolescent participants were encouraged to bring a theme song of his or her choosing to the group. This aided the participants in introducing themselves, expediting the process of getting to know everyone in the group and feeling comfortable with one another (2012). Gooding (2008) revealed, that a combination of poetry and music therapy unlock emotions that individuals may have trouble expressing normally. In this case study, the researcher followed an individual with Asperger’s syndrome. His use of coping skills and ability to express emotions were monitored. Through poetry and music, he was able to create an outlet for his intense emotions. Gooding suggests that poetry is a catharsis for individuals who normally do not let out emotions (2008).
A successful implementation of poetry as therapy with teens is The Pongo Publishing Teen Writing Project. Created by Richard Gold (2014) in 1992, Pongo helps at-risk teens express feelings through poetry. Gold referenced many reasons for the use of poetry when working with teens. Volunteering in a school for special needs, Gold discovered that he was able to engage the students through poetry and many wrote about issues that they refused to speak about in individual therapy. Serving as a catharsis for personal pain and growth, poetry became his focus. Later on he added the possibility of publication through an anthology or a collection of works created through Pongo. In order to be published, the adolescents had to sign a waiver and to protect confidentially all names are changed. This served as a goal for the teenagers in the program and a great motivator. Since it is every writer's dream to be published and hence acknowledged for their work. In it’s over 20 years the Pongo Writing Project has helped thousands of at-risk teens process through trauma and exhume strengths (Gold, 2014).

**Song Writing Therapy**

Song writing therapy is often used in conjunction with poetry therapy due to the similar nature of the activities (Gooding, 2008). Roberts (2006) utilized song-writing therapy for children and adolescents experiencing bereavement. Children were able to tell stories of their lost loved ones. Creating art based around loved ones allowed for the children to work through the pain, accept the loss, find meaning, and challenge previous notions about the world. Three forms of songwriting interventions were used in the study word substitution song writing, computer-based song writing, original song writing, improvised song writing. Word substitution song writing is also referred to as song parody, when words of already composed songs are changed to fit the meaning the child
chooses. Children nowadays are raised in a technological era and have become accustomed to its use. As such, many enjoy technological utilization in therapy for things like computer-based writing. For this form children are able to take parts from songs and turn them into something new. One of the hardest forms is original song writing, where the child creates the song from scratch. Lower inhibitions aid younger children in improvisational songwriting; this form can become permanent through recording the songs as each one is formed. The children of this study gained a valuable new coping skill and were able to better communicate thoughts and feelings (2006).

**Personal Narrative or Journal Writing**

Another successful therapeutic technique is Personal Narrative writing; this technique requires individuals to write their own story. The idea is that people are the authors of their own stories sparked the creation of Narrative Therapy by White and Epston (1992), who held that an individual’s reality was based around the narratives that the individual shared. The goal of the therapy is to help people learn how to reframe and tell the preferred narrative. Therapists focus on unique events and can point out to individuals that certain problems are not always a problem. With new states of minds, clients of Narrative Therapists are able to share new stories with the world (White & Eptson, 1992).

Narrative therapist can take this a step further and have the client write down his or her story. By writing his or her life tales, a person can construct personal meaning for life’s hardships and accomplishments (Freedman & Combs, 1996). This autobiographical approach leads to self-reflection and allows a client time to process and understand events the client may not have had a chance to reflect on in the past. Lamsa and Hiilos
(2008) used this Narrative approach with twenty-two female managers in the transitional stage of their careers to investigate the autobiographic intervention effects. These females were asked to write an autobiography of their careers. Reflecting on the career path allowed the women to uncover personal strengths. These women were given a chance to reflect on their lives in a way in which they never had before. Many reported realizing just how hard it was for them to struggle with being a mother and a career woman (Lamsa & Hiillos, 2008).

Journaling is similar to the autobiographical approach in that the person has to write about his or her own life. It differs in that people journal shortly after the event occurred while the autobiographical approach can be used years after the event. Horneffer and Jamison (2002) illustrated the effectiveness of using journal as an intervention in a study where ninety-one college students were asked to journal for fifteen minutes on two occasions and were compared to the control group. Improvements in emotional health were found in the treatment group. This improvement was found to be greater in males; the authors theorized that this was due to the notion that there are fewer opportunities for males to express feelings (Horneffer & Jamison, 2002).

**Expressive Writing**

Expressive writing is one of the most researched forms of writing when it comes to the realm of therapy. Smyth (1998) published a meta-analysis concluding that writing about trauma helped to reduce the impact of said trauma. Since that time, more studies on more diverse populations have been conducted. What separates expressive writing from journaling is the length of time between the event and writing. Journaling occurs the
same day or soon after. Expressive writing can be done years after the event (Pennebaker & Chung, 2010).

Though most interventions work best soon after the trauma occurs, expressive writing may be the exception (Pennebaker & Chung, 2010). Walker, Neil, and Croyle (1999) asked women undergoing breast cancer treatment to write about the treatment they were receiving. No difference was uncovered between this group and the control group (Walker, Neil, & Croyle, 1999). Pennebaker and Chung (2010), two of the most well-known researchers in the area of expressive writing, suggest that the intervention be utilized one to two months after the trauma occurs. This time gap prevents the client from obsessing about the event in a negative fashion. Over thinking about trauma can increase the negative affects of trauma. This time period suggestion came from a combination of studies by Pennebaker and other researchers (2010). Cohn, Mehl, and Pennebaker (2004) conducted a study confirming this, analyzing 1100 users of an Internet site both two months before the September 11 attacks and two months after yielded interesting results. There was an increase in posts within the first two weeks of the attacks and these posts used first person singular. I-word messages are associated with depression (Cohn et al., 2004). Since this type of writing is correlated with the aftermath of trauma, some time is needed before expressive writing can be used as an intervention to help prevent the use of first person singular writing (Pennebaker & Chung, 2010).

According to Pennebaker and Chung (2010) much research has been done to try to uncover why expressive writing is such an effective intervention; However, no singular reason has been discovered. Instead, several connected reasons are hypothesized to be in effect. First is the inhibition theory, which holds that healing from trauma is
inhibited when an individual does not confide that trauma to another person. This theory is difficult to test and has little evidence to back it up. Another hypothesis holds that once a traumatic experience is put into words, the individual is able to process the emotions felt, and creates a context for individuals to find meaning from the experience. Last is the idea that once an experience is written down, individuals are able to create their own story. Though the exact reason for the phenomena has not been uncovered, there is a high correlation between writing, specifically expressive writing, and health benefits (Pennebaker & Chung, 2010).

**Health Effects of Writing**

Several types of writing have been shown to be useful in the treatment of depression. Sloan, Marx, Epstein, and Dobbs (2008) have indicated that expressive writing helps lower at least one symptom of depression, maladaptive rumination, which consists of either brooding or reflective pondering. The maladaptive rumination is brooding, when there is an intense cognitive focus on an event. Those with this type of rumination style often wonder what could have been done to prevent such an event. Brooding has been linked to depression, possibly due to the tendency to focus on the negative of life events. Expressive writing allows for a person to confront these negative thoughts in a new way. Expressing these thoughts and feelings helps restructure how a person thinks about the event (2008).

Lowe (2006) conducted a meta-analysis of the health related effects of writing, which indicated that writing could lead to a boost in a persons immune system, lower levels of chronic pain, and the re-frames of events so the individual could handle trauma in a healthier way. Individuals released the “bottle up” feelings that come with traumatic
experiences through writing, which boosted the immune system and lead to healthy reframing. According to the researcher, writing about trauma is not the only way to feel better it is sometimes just as helpful to write about joyful events. Lowe discussed various types of writing that could be utilized as interventions to help the individual including poetry writing and expressive writing (2006).

**Writing as Mindfulness**

Mindfulness is an evidence-based practice for the treatment of depression in adults (Ames, Richardson, Payne, Smith, & Leigh, 2013). In her review of the literature Lang (2013) explains that Mindfulness was taken from Buddhism. Mindfulness is a mediation technique used by Buddhist. By utilizing mindfulness a person stays in the present moment with a stance of non-judgment. An individual does not focus on worries from the past or future. When those worries enter a person’s thoughts, the worry is acknowledged and then let go (Lang, 2013). Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy with teenagers is still in the beginning phases of research and development. Ames, Richardson, Payne, Smith, and Leigh (2013) conducted a study to see if the technique could be as effect with adolescents as it is with adults. Participants went through an eight-week group. That focused on themes related to mindfulness. Analysis of the data showed a reduction in depressive symptoms (Ames et al., 2013).

Writing is often used as a tool to help individuals implement mindfulness. Through writing a narrative, a person opens up to personal experiences with acceptance (Moore, Brody, & Dierberger, 2009). Even though Ortner and Zelazo (2009) were not attempting to find how writing affected emotional regulation in a study, writing was still utilized as a tool to implement mindfulness. Participants in the study wrote about an
event that was personally emotionally triggering. A decrease in anger and negative affect was uncovered at the end of the study (Ortner & Zelazo, 2009). Moore et al, (2009) examined the effects writing has on the individual and mindfulness skills. Participants were divided into two groups, one wrote about traumas and another wrote about daily events. Towards the end of the study, the participant’s mindfulness and depression were analyzed. Those in the trauma writing group decreased depressive symptoms and increased mindfulness significantly (Moore et al, 2009).

**Conclusion**

This literature review has revealed the many benefits creative writing has in the overall health of adolescents and in the treatment of depression. Creative writing can both challenge adolescents and a low cost intervention in the treatment of depression. Which can aid the adolescent in many aspects of life, including mental health and academics. The next chapter will cover the details of this project, including an outline of how to break down the group sessions and a workbook to be completed during the group.
CHAPTER 3

Audience and Implementation Factors

Adolescent years are difficult, the added stress of a diagnosis such as depression changes the experience into something truly unbearable (Cortazal, 2010). Given that NIMH (2013) estimates nearly 2.6 million adolescents suffered from depression in 2013, this diagnosis is a severe problem that today’s youth face. This project focuses on creating a low-cost yet highly interactive intervention for adolescents. Cortazal (2010) states not having an early intervention lead to many costs. Adolescent depression has many short-term consequences such as low grades, but the long-term consequences can be as devastating as suicide. However, parents face barriers getting children help, including a limited understanding of depression and inadequate number of affordable interventions (Cortazal, 2010). Smitherman and Thompson (2002) illustrated how creative writing can be an affordable intervention to use with adolescents in groups. The intervention is engaging and instils a coping skill that can be used for years to come (2002).

The purpose of this project is to create a creative writing group for adolescents. Adolescents will need to have been diagnosed with depression for admittance into the group. The following sections of the chapter will cover the development of the project, it’s intended audience, the personal qualifications required to run the group, the equipment necessary, and a brief outline of the curriculum.

Development of Project

The idea for this project steamed from personal experience from Nanowrimo. Creative writing was a catharsis that aided me during my later teenage years and into
adulthood. Completing Nanowrimo for the first time felt empowering. I felt like I could
do anything after conquering such a major challenge. My original plan for the project was
to center the group around Nanowrimo, however the program itself is copyrighted. That
would also limit the group to having to be done during a certain point of the year
(November).

My experience working at a high school sparked my interest in focusing on the
adolescent population. Students had difficulty with issues such as low mood and self-
esteem but had limit resources to utilize. Parents and schools have limited time and
resources to aid these students. I could see first hand, the need for a cost effective
intervention. Pulling from my own coping skills to deal with the hardships of adolescents,
I believe that writing is a low cost intervention that can be instilled as a positive coping
skill for later use as well.

Through my research I found that several types of writing appear to have the same
empowering effect on participants as Nanowrimo. This lead me to decide to keep the
types of writing varied throughout the course of the group. Most of the research focused
on poetry writing and expressive writing. Poetry writing was shown to be useful in
teaching at-risk youth how to communicate emotions. While expressive writing was
shown to have many health benefits. Little research was done on the specific effects of
creative writing. I pulled my information from several different sources including peer-
reviewed articles, studies, and books. Due to the evidence of group therapy working well
with adolescents, it was decided that the project would be intended for small groups,
between 8-10 adolescents. The adolescents will meet once a week for 2-hour sessions to
ensure that the participants have enough time to write and share personal experiences.
**Intended Audience**

The following workbook is designed for the group treatment of adolescents who have been diagnosed with depression. Participants will need to be interviewed before acceptance into the group to ensure that the participants are a good fit. Acceptance will be dependent on severity of symptoms and appearance of a co-morbid disorder. Parents will need to give their consent to all participants under the age of 18. This group can be run in a school setting, agency, or community center. The workbook should be provided to each participant. Group leaders must ensure that each participant brings the workbook for each session. Should a participant miss a session, homework will be assigned to ensure the group runs on schedule.

**Personal Qualifications**

This adolescent group is designed to be conducted by an individual with one of the following qualifications: Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, Licensed Clinical Social Worker, Licensed Professional Counselor, Licensed Clinical Psychologist, and School Counselors. Marriage and Family Interns and trainees may conduct the group while under the supervision of a supervisor with the appropriate qualifications.

**Environment and Equipment**

A medium sized room is necessary for the group. The room must be quite and allow for no outside interruptions. The group is designed to be conducted at a school or community agency. Appropriate times should be set given the age of the participants, such as after school, to make transportation easier on the parents.

A workbook must be given to each participant in the group. Leaders should ensure that the workbook is brought to each session. Participants will need a writing
utensil for every session. Most sessions will require coloring utensils of some kind (i.e. crayons, markers, color pencils). One session will require the use of a poster board and scissors. Necessary materials will be included in the group leader guidelines in Appendix A.

Project Outline

Session one will focus on completing the business paperwork (parental consent, confidentiality, etc.), getting to know the group members, and starting the group on the path of utilizing creative writing. Session two will focus on building a sense of trust and community within the group through a friendly competition. The goal of session three will be to help the group members connect through coming together to write several stories. Past trauma will be addressed in session four along with the installation of hope for the future. Emotions and how to express them will be shown in session five. Session six will help group members view the world from a different perspective. Session seven will focus on how the participants see themselves versus how others see them, by changing the point of view. Personal settings will be examined in session eight. Session nine will focus on personal strengths by encouraging participants to think of themselves as the heroes to their own story. A plotting chart will be used in session ten to help participants see their ability to overcome obstacles. To help ensure that writing becomes instilled as a positive coping skill participants will be allowed to write their own creative story for session eleven. Session twelve will be the final session, participants will be allowed to share their writing and will be encouraged to keep writing in the future.
CHAPTER 4

Conclusion and Recommendations

Summary of Project

The purpose of this project is to develop a creative writing therapy group and corresponding workbook for the treatment of depression in adolescents. With the high amount of teenager’s diagnosed, yet low number of low cost resources, the need for such an intervention is great. The group will give guardians resources to help their teenage children. Teenagers will be able to engage with like-minded peers and build a support network around them. Writing is also a coping skill that the adolescents can use at anytime, at low cost. The group will also be a safe place for the adolescents to vent emotions and let go of past trauma.

Research, along with personal experience on creative writing, has illustrated how effective of a coping skill it is with teenagers. To create the lesson plans for the group, several sources where pulled from and then altered. Idea’s from the Pongo Teen Writing Project, Nanowrimo, studies and High School English lesson plans were altered to ensure therapeutic results and utilized in the project. It is important to remember that though this group will focus on writing, teenagers will need encouragement to help develop the skill into a coping mechanism.

The project is divided into six main sections. Sections one, two, three, and four exhibits the necessary research and logistics of the project. The last two sections include the group outline for the leaders and the workbook for the participants. Chapter one introduces the concept of utilizing writing as a tool to help teenager’s battle depression. The need for a low cost intervention to aid in the treatment of teenage depression is
illustrated. Terminology relating to this project and writing is defined. The limitations of time and little research are examined. Chapter two is a literature review that analyzes adolescent depression along with the usefulness of group therapy. The general topics of art therapy and goal setting in the treatment of adolescents are summarized. Next the literature review dives into the different kinds of writing and the research regarding the therapeutic effects, including the health effects of writing. Lastly, writing is argued to be a form of mindfulness.

Chapter three depicts the development of the project, how the project changed from it’s original concept. The intended audience and requirements for allowance into the group is provided. The rest of the chapter details the intended personal qualifications and environment and equipment necessary, ending with an outline of the group. Chapter four includes a summary of the previous chapters and the appendix. Recommendations for the implementation of the project and future research regarding writing as therapy will be addressed. Chapter four will end with a conclusion of the project. The project will then turn to the two appendixes. Appendix A will provide the group facilitators with an outline of the sessions and suggestions for how each session should be run. Appendix B will provide the workbook for the participants to utilize during the course of the group.

**Recommendations for Implementation**

Though it is not a requirement to run the group, it is recommended that facilitators also utilize writing. This will give the adolescents a role model for their own literary adventure. Facilitators will also have a better understanding of writing process to guide the adolescents through the use of personal experience. In order to instill the coping skill,
adolescents should be encouraged to write outside of the group and to continue writing after the group ends.

**Future Research**

During my research I found that there was a limited amount of peer reviewed information that focused on creative writing as an intervention. The most prominent forms of writing in research continues’ to be Poetry and Expressive writing. For future research, I recommend examining closely the effects of different forms of writing such as creative writing on adolescents and other populations.

**Conclusion**

Personal experience and research indicates that writing, when utilized correctly, can be an effective coping strategy for teenagers. Though more research needs to be conducted on creative writing specifically, there is enough evidence to conclude its usefulness. Due to the low cost of writing, teenagers that develop the coping skill will be able to use it at any time. The goal of the project is to aid adolescents in developing a long-term coping skill that can be used at any time. Implementers should encourage writing both outside and after the group to keep the skill going long after the group is finished.
References


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Harris, J. (2001). Re-writing the subject: Psychoanalytic approaches to creative writing and composition pedagogy. *College English, 64*(2) 175-204.


Appendix A

General Overview of the 12 group sessions:

Session 1

Goal: The goal of the first session will be to get to know the members of the group. Business such as the confidentiality agreement, attendance policy, and any other paperwork should be done by the end of this session. Also to help the group begin to feel comfortable with writing and the possibility of sharing feelings and creative works.

Topic: How to put the inner editor away while setting the muse free.

Materials required: The workbook, writing utensils, and coloring utensils (crayons, markers, color pencils, etc.).

Time-line:

1. Check in to learn everyone’s names and how they are feeling.
2. Address general housekeeping, such as attendance policy and confidentiality.
3. Pass out workbooks and begin the first task of drawing the inner editor.
4. Fill in the provided fill-in-the-blank poem based around the inner editor.
5. Share results of the inner editor.
6. Have each member draw their muses or reason for writing.
7. Fill in the provided fill-in-the-blank poem based around the muse.
8. Allow for those who want to read their poem to read it.
9. Closing check in.
10. Assign group members to find two meaningful quotes for homework.

Homework: Find quote that is personal and meaningful.
Session 2

Goal: Ensure the group members feel comfortable with self-discloser. Build

Topic: Joining together to create art.

Materials: Workbook, writing utensils, coloring utensils, scissors, and poster board.

Time-line:

1. Check-in with all group members.
2. Have each group member read the quotes they were assigned for homework.
3. Have the members to pair up.
4. Have the pairs combine the quotes along with lines that they write into a poem.
5. Distribute poster board to each pair to write the poem and illustrate around it.
6. When completed, have each pair set their poster board in various parts of the room. Other group members will have a chance to view the posters.
7. Once everyone has a chance to see all the posters each group member will receive a token to place in a small jar in front of their favorite poster. The only rule being that they cannot pick their own.
8. The facilitator will collect the jars and count up the tokens.
9. Whichever poster wins, receives a prize (something silly like they get to wear a special hat or sit in special chairs).
10. Closing check in.
11. No homework will be assigned at the end of this session.
Session 3

Goal: Connect to group members.

Topic: Everyone has a story.

Materials: Workbook, writing utensils, and coloring utensils.

Time-line:

1. Check-in with everyone.
2. Give everyone a couple of minutes to think of what the story of their lives would be titled.
3. Instruct participants to draw a cover for their stories, but do not have them write their names on the paper.
4. Have every participant pass their workbook to the right.
5. Give participants 5 minutes to start writing a story based on the cover they see before them.
6. After 5 minutes, have participants pass the workbooks to their right again.
7. Participants will get another 5 minutes to continue the new story in front of them.
8. Repeat until the participants have their own workbook again. Allow participants to end the story that has been written so far.
9. Allow participants to share the stories.
10. Announce to participants that the homework for this week will be to bring a picture from an important time in their life.

Homework: Bring a picture from important time in life.
Session 4

Goal: Learn how to let go of the past.

Topic: Letting go of past trauma’s while

Materials: Workbook, writing utensils, and coloring utensils.

Time-line:

1. Check-in with everyone.
2. Allow everyone to share the photo that they brought in.
3. Instruct participants to write a letter to the person in the photo (their former selves).
4. Let participants share what they wrote to their former selves.
5. Have participants draw what they picture their future selves to look like.
6. Have participants write a letter to their future selves.
7. Allow participants to share the letters that they wrote.
8. No homework will be assigned at the end of this session.

Homework: No homework at the end of this session.

Session 5

Goal: Aid group members in naming and coping with emotions. Also learn to recognize the emotions of others.

Topic: Emotions

Materials: Workbook, writing utensils, and coloring utensils.

Timeline:

1. Check-in with everyone.
2. Have participants think about the strongest emotion they have had within the last couple of days.

3. Do not let the participants state what emotion that is.

4. Have participants draw what that emotion felt like.

5. Have participants use descriptive language to explain what the emotion felt like.

6. Have participants share what they wrote.

7. After each participant shares, the rest of the group will guess the emotion was. After everyone has guessed, the person will reveal the emotion.

8. Discuss the similarities and differences in how each emotion is described.

Homework: No homework at the end of this session.

Session 6

Goal: To aid participants in viewing the world from other perspectives.

Topic: Changing perspectives.

Materials: Workbook and writing utensils.

Timeline:

1. Check-in with everyone in the group.

2. Have all participants think about the last time they disagreed with someone.

3. Have all participants write about that disagreement using as many details as possible.

4. Have all participants hand their workbook to the person on their left.

5. Let the participants read about the disagreement.
6. Participants will re-write the disagreement from the other person’s perspective.

7. Let the original participant read the new perspective on their disagreement.

8. Share with the group the differences that occurred between the two interpretations.

Homework: No homework at the end of this session.

Session 7

Goal: To aid participants in seeing the differences between how others see them and how they see themselves.

Topic: Different points of view.

Materials: Workbook, writing utensils, and coloring utensils.

Timeline:

1. Check in with group members.

2. Have participants think about how others see them, the mask they put on in front of others.

3. Have participants draw what they look like to others, they can use symbols or be literal.

4. Have participants think about a past event in their lives.

5. Challenge the participants to write about that event in the third-person.

6. Have participants think about how they view themselves.

7. Have participants draw what they look like on the inside, or their true selves.

8. Let participants write about an event in the first person.

9. Share with the group.
10. Allow participants to talk about the differences between the two different points of view.

Homework: no homework at the end of this session.

**Session 8**

Goal: To think about the setting of the participants lives and how to change it for the better.

Topic: The perfect setting and personal setting.

Materials: Workbook, writing utensils, and coloring utensils.

*Timeline:*

1. Check in with all the group members.
2. Have participants pair up.
3. Help participants fill in the form. If participants get stuck, give different prompts to aid them.
4. Allow participants to draw what the setting looks like to them.
5. Have participants draw what the setting looks like for their own personal story.
6. Have participants write what the setting for their story. Make sure they use as many details as possible.
7. Let participants share their personal settings.
8. Encourage participants to discuss the differences between their personal settings and the perfect setting they created with their partners.

Homework: No homework at the end of this session.
Session 9

Goal: Build participants strengths and ability to overcome obstacles.

Topic: Characterization of self and others.

Materials: Workbook, writing utensils, and coloring utensils.

Timeline:

1. Check-in with all the participants.
2. Have participants think of themselves as the heroes’ of their personal story.
3. Help participants fill in the worksheet.
4. Have participants think about their personal antagonist.
5. Have participants draw something that represents their antagonist.
6. Allow participants create their own hero using the worksheet. They can use this character in later sessions when they write their own short story.
7. Allow participants to draw an antagonist that their hero is going to face.
8. Encourage participants to talk about the experience of thinking of themselves as a character and the antagonist they face.

Homework: No homework at the end of this session.

Session 10

Goal: Help participants see strengths and ability to overcome obstacles.

Topic: Plotting your life.

Materials: Workbook and writing utensils.

Timeline:

1. Check-in with all of the participants.
2. Have the participants read the worksheet about plot.
3. Have participants plot out what their lives would look like.

4. Allow participants to come up with a plot for their own original stories.

5. Process with the participants what their stories look like when written down on paper.

6. Encourage participants to talk about the stories they plan on writing.

7. No homework for this session.

Homework: No homework at the end of this session.

**Session 11**

Goal: Instill writing as a positive coping skill.

Topic: Creating our stories.

Materials: Workbook and writing utensils

*Timeline:*

1. Check-in with the participants.

2. Have the participants talk about what they have learned and how they can put it all together into an original story.

3. Encourage participants to write with limited amounts of editing.

4. Encourage participants to reach out to others should they become stuck.

5. Have participants finish their stories for homework.

Homework: Finish the original story.

**Session 12**

Goal: To bring the group to a satisfying close. Also to instill a sense of hope in the participants.

Topic: Closing statements and feelings
Materials: Workbook, writing utensils and coloring utensils.

Timeline:

1. Check-in with the participants.
2. Allow each participant to read their story out loud.
3. Allow for positive feedback.
4. Let participants draw a cover page.
5. Process the feelings of the participants.
6. Encourage participants to keep writing.
7. Close up with final feelings about the group.

Homework: Continue writing.
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Introduction

This workbook is meant to be used in combination with group therapy to treat symptoms of depression in adolescents. The goal is to instill the coping skill of creative writing. Through creative writing, individuals can take control of emotions and situations, making them both powerful and meaningful. Adolescents are encouraged to use their own language to keep the activities in this book personal and meaningful. Though this book is a great start, adolescents should continue writing outside of the context of this book in order to fully utilize writing as a coping skill.
Welcome!

Hello and welcome to your very own writing workbook! There is lots of work to do so let’s get started! First thing we have to take care of is the nagging voice in the back of your head. That one that tells you, you can’t or shouldn’t write. Maybe it’s saying that you are not good enough. This voice is called your INNER EDITOR. Though the inner editor has a place, that place is not here. So, in the jail below draw what your inner editor looks like to you. Everyone’s is different. Some are small, some are big, some have claws or teeth. Take a moment to close your eyes and really think about what yours looks like. Now your inner editor doesn’t want to go to jail, so it’s probably saying something like “You can’t draw.” Ignore that! Some jail time will do your inner editor some good.
Good, now with the inner editor behind bars it’s time to write!
The first writing task will be a fill-in-the-blank poem. Don’t let the word “Poem” scare you. It does not need to rhyme. In fact, some of the best poems don’t rhyme. Just write whatever comes to mind. With the inner editor in jail, there’s no voice to tell you that you can’t do this. If you get stuck use the suggestions to help you.

My Inner Editor
My Inner editors name is ___________________________ (Borris? Mr. Nothing’s good enough?)
My Inner editor is always telling me ________________________________
(I’m not good enough, I can’t do this?)
My Inner editor looks like ________________________________ (A fairy, a goblin, a businessman?)
I was freighted of my Inner editors ____________________________
(Voice, Claws?)
Now I can see my inner editor’s true form
With ________________________________ (Claws, teeth, fat, muscle?)
Actually being ________________________________ (fluff, sparkles, candy?)
And ________________________________ (deep scary voice, big batwings?)
Standing for ________________________________ (A teacher, strive for perfection?)
My Inner editor has a place but not in this book
So in jail goes my inner editor
Now I can focus on ________________________________ (writing, creating?)
Now I get to tell myself ________________________________
(I can do this, I am good enough?)
But wait something is missing…

**YOUR MUSE!**

Yes, that creative being or mascot that encourages you to create and do your best. The Inner Editor puts your muse in jail, so now it is time to set your muse free. Draw what your muse looks like in the blank area below.
Your muse is delighted to be free from that prison! As a sign of appreciation your
muse wishes to help you write another poem!

My Muse

My Muse has a name ________________________________ *(Mrs. I can, Fay, Henry?)*
My Muse was always telling me ________________________________
(*I am good enough, I should create?*
But I never listened because ________________________________
(*My inner editor was too loud, I didn’t want to?*)
My muse looks like ________________________________
(*A bird, a person?*)
I like my muses ________________________________ *(Wings, smile?)*
Now I can see my muse’s true form
With ________________________________ *(smile, sparkling eyes?*)
Being ________________________________ *(Warm, comforting?*)
And ________________________________ *(soft voice, flowing hair?*)
Standing for ________________________________ *(confidence, love?*)
I ignored my muse
But now I set my muse free
Now my muse can help me ________________________________ *(writing, creating?*)
Now I can tell myself ________________________________ *(I can do this, I am good enough?)*
Great work today!

This week your homework will be to bring in two quotes that you find personal and meaningful to you. These can be from a poem, novel, T.V. show, anything! We will be using them for an activity so make sure to not forget to write them in the boxes on the next page!
CHAPTER 2
Quote 1

Quote 2
Great job finding those quotes! Now it is time to share with the rest of the group members! Take note of who else brought in a quote that you can relate to as well.

SHARE TIME!

Now remember a quote that you really related? Pair up with that person and prepare for the instructions for the rest of the activity.
In the lines below, combine your team’s four quotes into one poem. Feel free to write in extra lines to help your poem make sense. Remember that the poem does not have to rhyme. Later the groups will be voting on which team did the best job so be sure to do your best!
Alright, now that you have the rough draft completed it is time to transfer the poem to a piece of poster board. Be as creative as you wish in decorating the poster. As long as you are sure the other group members can still read the poem. Read the bullet points below for the rest of the instructions.

- Each poster will be given a number.
- After everyone has completed their own poster everyone will be given a chance to look at the other posters.
- Everyone will be given a small piece of paper to write the number of the team who they think did the best job.
- This piece of paper will be given to the facilitator.
- In order to keep teams from voting for themselves they must also write their name on the paper.
- The facilitator will count the votes and crown the winning team.
- The team with the most votes will get to cut out the star below and paste it to their poster.
You all did a great job!
Feel free to choose a star from below!
(Whether yours was voted the best or not)
Fantastic work today!

No Homework this week!
Chapter 3

Title of my life

Hello! To start off this week, think about what the story of your life would be titled. If you were to write a memoir or an autobiography about yourself, what would you call it? Write the title in the box below.

What would the cover page of that book look like? Draw the cover on the next page. Be sure to write the title somewhere on the page. **DO NOT** write your name on the cover.
Everyone has a Story

Read the bullet points below for the rest of the instructions.

- Give the person to your right your workbook.
- Once you receive the new workbook, you are going to look at the cover page and start writing a story based on what you see.
- But you are going to be timed. You only have 5 minutes so write quickly.
- At the end of the 5 minutes you will pass the workbook to the right again.
- Continue the story the last person wrote for 5 minutes
- Repeat the process until you have written in everyone’s workbook and have your own.
- Finish the story that everyone has written in your workbook.
- Share everyone work with the rest of the group.
Write the story in the line below
Fantastic work today! For next week be sure to bring a picture of yourself from an important time in your life. This can be as early or late in your life as you wish. Post the picture in the box below.
Chapter 4

Letter to the past

Welcome back. Thank you for bringing in a picture of your past self! Now write a letter to that person. You can talk about the things you have learned, the things you wish you had known, the crazy adventures you had before or after. Write what you would want to say to the person in that picture.

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__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
The Future!
In the box below, draw what you would like your future self to look like. This can be the moment you graduate, fall in love, etc. Think about what would make you happy in the future and draw yourself doing just that.
A Letter to my future self

Write a letter to your future self, the one that you just drew on the last page.
Chapter 5

Emotions

To begin this week, think of the strongest emotion you had in the last 24 – 48 hours (so in the last couple of days). Were you excited for something? Were you angry? Were you sad? Were you afraid? Without saying that emotion draw in the box below what that emotion felt like to you.
Emotion Writing

Now that you can see what that emotion looks like to you, it’s time to write what it feels like. Without writing the title of the emotion, write what that emotion feels like. How does it behave? How does it sound? What does it taste like?

For example: A wet blanket swallowed me whole. The more I tried to stand, the heavier the blanket became. (*Sadness*)

For example: Cracking his fist John had sit down. Red bombarded his eyes making him blind. (*anger*)
Sharing emotions

Once everyone is done, it is time to share. Follow the bullet points below.

- Decide who will share first.

- Once that person has shared, everyone else will try to guess what that emotion is.

- The person who shared will only reveal what the emotion was after everyone has guessed.

- Repeat until everyone has had a chance to share.

- See how many emotions you are able to guess right.
Chapter 6

Characters Perspective

Every character has a unique perspective. Think of the latest time you have a disagreement. Did you argue with some adults over cleaning your room? Did you have trouble seeing eye to eye with your friends? Describe what happened in the area below.

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

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________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________
Changing Perspective

Pass your workbook to the person on your left. Read the other person’s disagreement and think about what the other person was thinking or feeling at the time. Write about that same disagreement but in the other person’s perspective. For example, if your fellow group member wrote about a disagreement with an adult write like you are that adult.
Chapter 7

Different Points of View

Think about yourself from another person’s perspective. How does that person see you? What does that person see? Draw an image in the box below of how you appear to other people.
Third person Viewpoint

Now that you have a visual of how others see you, write about how others see you. Think about a past event in your life and write about it in third person. Third person means that the author uses third person pronouns like “he” or “she,” when talking about the main character (you).
Personal View Points

Now think about how you see yourself. Are there parts to you that you don’t normally share? Draw what you look like to you in the box below.
First Person Viewpoint

Now think about a past event in your life and write about it in the first person. First person is when the author uses first person pronouns such as “I” or “me.” This can be the same event or a different event.
Chapter 8

Setting

Every story has a setting. With a person near you, think about what the perfect setting would be. Use the questions below to guide you in creating this perfect new world.

What is the geographical location? ________________________________

(*Forest, desert, underwater?)*

What is the moment in time? ________________________________

(*Past, present, future?)*

What is the time of year? ________________________________

(*Winter, Spring, Fall, Summer?)*

What is the climate? ________________________________

(*Tropical, rainy, cold, warm?)*

What is form of government? ________________________________

(*Democracy, Anarchy, Monarchy?)*

What is the economic system? ________________________________

(*Capitalism, Socialism, Communism?)*

How many people are there? ________________________________

(*Is it a densely populated city, a small town, a single cabin?)*

What is the culture like? ________________________________

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

(*Behaviors, beliefs, values, symbols?)*)
Perfect Setting

In the box below use what you and your teammate talked about to help you draw what the perfect setting looks like.
Draw Your Setting

If your life was a story, what would the setting be? What would that setting look like?

Draw a snapshot of that setting in the box below. It can be your house, school, favorite place to hang out, etc.
Write Your Setting

Using as many details as you can, describe your setting in the lines provided below.

Assume that a person who does not know anything about your life is going to be reading this setting. What would that person learn about you through learning about your surroundings?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Chapter 9

Characters (The Hero)

One of the most essential components of a story is the characters. What if you were a character in a story? Use your own character traits to fill out the character sheet below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character Name:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical Appearance:</th>
<th>Personality:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Height:</td>
<td>Traits:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight:</td>
<td>Thoughts:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hair Color:</td>
<td>Feelings:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eye Color:</td>
<td>Ways of speaking:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interesting Quirks:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problems facing Character</th>
<th>Major Accomplishments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Antagonist

Every story has an antagonist. There are two kinds of antagonist, Physical and Abstract. A physical antagonist is a person or other character that has conflicts with the hero of the story. While an abstract antagonist is not a physical being, it can be a wide variety of sources of conflict. Some examples include: facing grief, a storm, illness, etc. If a hero cannot physically touch the antagonist then it would be considered abstract.

In the box below, draw what the antagonist in your life looks like, either physical or abstract.
Create Your Own Hero

Now its time to think like a writer. Create a character you would like to write a story around. Remember this is the hero of your story.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character Name:</th>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical Appearance:</th>
<th>Personality:</th>
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<tr>
<th>Problems facing Character</th>
<th>Major Accomplishments</th>
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</thead>
</table>
Create Your Own Antagonist

Who or what is your character fighting against? Is the antagonist physical? Or is the antagonist abstract? Draw the antagonist in the box below.
Chapter 10

Plot

Plot is vital for good story telling. The plot is made up of a sequence of events that can be broken up into five sections.

1. Exposition: The introduction. The event that starts the story off. This is where the reader is introduced to the setting and cast of characters.

2. Rising Action: The conflict is either introduced or increased during this section. A series of events happen to complicate the conflict even more. The characters have to navigate these events.

3. Climax: This is the event in the story when the conflict has reached its peak. The action is most intense at this point.

4. Falling action: These are the events after the climax; the conflict is beginning to wind down.

5. Resolution: This is the concluding event in the story. The conflict should be resolved at this point.
Plot Out Your Life

Let’s practice with plotting a story. What if your life was a story? Use the events in your life to fill out this plotting sheet below.

Climax

_____________________

Rising Action

_______

_______

_______

_______

_______

_______

Falling Action

________

________

________

Resolution

___________

___________

Exposition

___________

___________

___________
Plot a Story

Now that you have some practice with plotting it is time to utilize your new skill. Create your own plot for your own original story in the worksheet below.

Climax

___________________

Falling Action


Resolution


Exposition


Rising Action


40
Chapter 11

Write

It is now time to put everything we have learned together. In the pages below write your own original story. If you get stuck feel free to ask the people around you. Though writing is normally thought of as a solo activity, it is often helpful for writers to bounce ideas off of each other.
Great job today!
For homework finish the rest of your story!
Chapter 12

Share Your Work

You have completed writing your very own story! Congratulations! Now it is time to share it to the world or at least your fellow group members. Read what you wrote to the rest of the group. Allow for some positive feedback. Remember to also give positive feedback to others. For some extra fun create a cover page for your story on the next page.
Keep on Writing!

Here are some suggestions to help you keep on writing.

**Start a journal.** Remember to write in it as often as possible, even if that is just a couple times a week.

**Start a writing club** with your friends/fellow group members. Having some people to keep you responsible for your writing and to bounce idea’s off of can be helpful to many writers.

**Sign-up for NaNoWriMo.** Are you ready to take on one of the biggest literary challenges? Then find NaNoWriMo.com online and sign up.