

WRITING AS

# SELF-CARE & WELLNESS

FOR HEALTH CARE  
PROFESSIONALS.

**Ideas for Journaling & Meditation**

# GREETINGS!

## WELCOME TO WRITING AS SELF-CARE & WELLNESS.

You give so much of your time and energy taking care of people and helping them to get well. To express our thanks, we have designed this booklet for you, to encourage you to use reflective writing as a way to care for yourself, emotionally.

Research shows that writing down feelings and memories can boost our immune system. The practice of hearing yourself feel and think can help lighten the heart. It can help you gain perspective on your busy, complex life.

We encourage you to take a few minutes from your day to care for yourself: using words to express your life—your feelings and experiences. You don't have to write every day to feel more relaxed and unburdened. Writing for 15-20 minutes, several times a week, can make a positive difference.

This booklet is meant as a companion to your journal, to help you get started if you haven't journaled before or haven't in a long while. It contains invitations to different ways of writing. Feel free to try some ideas and ignore others. Feel free to invent your own ideas. Use your journal in any way that works for you.

### THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IS TO TRUST YOURSELF!

Trust whatever wants to be written. Trust your inner voice: write the words, feelings, and images that arise in you. You don't have to share what you write with anyone, unless you so choose. Write whatever you need to say, using whatever words you need. Write in any language or mix of languages that flows from your heart and mind. Don't worry about spelling or grammar or punctuation; none of that matters here!

**Speaking your heartfelt truth to these pages will honor your unique, important life. Speaking your truth will energize you to continue the caregiving work that you do.**

We appreciate the vital gifts that you bring to our community. Thank you!

Sincerely,

*The Wellness Team of The Ecumenical Center*

## WRITING AS MEDITATION & SELF-CARE: GROUNDING THE SELF

*Deep within the stream  
a huge fish lies motionless  
facing the current.*

**James W. Hackett**

When I feel overwhelmed by a situation, I often take a moment to stand still (this can be done sitting down as well), close my eyes, and “drop down” into my center. I mindfully connect with my inner strength and resilience, imaged for me by this large fish, described in this poem.

When I first met this short poem, the idea of a solitary fish holding its own “ground” before a powerful force caught my imagination. Something about the word “facing” caught my heart, made me see how much courage and energy it takes to “face” whatever the force might be: deep uncertainty, a full unit of sick patients, quelling a pandemic, working and raising a family, constantly meeting the needs of others, or multi-tasking various responsibilities. Making my presence deeply real to myself allows me to be more attentive and responsive to other people. For me, empathy for others begins with feeling solid within myself.

### *Invitation:*

Consider memorizing a few lines from a poem, scripture, prayer or inspirational writing that helps you feel calm and strong. Select a single image that you can quickly recall in the midst of demands. You can also create your own clear image of someone or some living being (animal or plant) that means inner strength to you.

Consider writing the image here in your journal. You can also draw the image if you like. Return to this image as often as you need to, until it lives inside you, and you can recall it whenever there is need.

## WRITING AS SELF-CARE & WELLNESS: SAVORING BEAUTY

Sometimes our overworked minds and our feeling-heavy hearts can keep us awake at night. Caring for patients, many of whom might be very ill, and witnessing their suffering as well as their recovery can give us a lot to unpack in the quiet of our own stillness. It is natural to feel overwhelmed by all that you do at work and at home.

Awareness of beauty can comfort us when we are witnessing others suffer or struggle intensely. One night, sitting at my kitchen table, I noticed the full moon rising in the east. Then I glanced at the single ivory rose, freshly opened, in a vase before me on the table. The bright roundness of the rose echoed the shining presence of the moon. This image, these words, began to form in my mind. Notice that the three lines are parts of a single sentence. It made me happy to create this simple piece of writing.

### NIGHT ROSE

*Upon my kitchen table  
a full moon blooms  
petal by creamy petal.*

**Cyra S. Dumitru**

#### *Invitation:*

Sit quietly, and consider your day. What images, sounds, smells, tastes, textures felt by your skin and your heart, or words spoken or overheard, come to mind? What is most vivid and lingering in your heart and mind? Write down these sensory details as a kind of list, as sentence fragments. Notice which items on your list are longest and most interesting to you. Can you turn these longer entries into sentences? For fun, try breaking the sentences into short lines, however it feels right to you. Shaping lines from sentences is very much a felt process—a form of play.

**BEAUTIFUL MOMENTS I WANT TO REMEMBER:  
LISTS & DESCRIPTIONS**

## A BEAUTIFUL MOMENT I WANT TO REMEMBER

**EVEN MORE:** *(You can spend time with as many special moments as you like!)*

## WRITING AS SELF-CARE & WELLNESS: RELEASING STRONG FEELINGS

Your working days can be very difficult. Long hours. Physically demanding. And, sometimes heartbreaking, distressing things happen at work: deeply emotional moments, and moments that cut deeply into your heart. There often isn't time to speak these moments to colleagues at work who could most relate to your situation.

You can't help but carry these moments home. They linger inside of you. Take up room. You might feel you need to speak them, but don't want to tell your family members or your friends—perhaps you want to protect loved ones from the sadness of the situation, or from some other feeling.

Here, you can write anything you want. Let it go. Release the feelings that you carry with you. You can scream by writing your words really BIG. You can curse all you want. You can cry, allowing teardrops to moisten the pages.

### *Invitation:*

Using the following sentence as a starting point, you can write descriptions of what you experienced that is heavy on your heart. Simply tell what happened.

*The situations that I carry from work that I am reluctant to speak to my family or to my friends are:*

## WRITING AS MEDITATION & SELF-CARE: SIMPLE GESTURE AS POWERFUL PRESENCE

### ELOQUENCE

*As your heart muscle weakens  
and your body edges  
toward stone,  
the lit wick of your spirit  
brightens and lifts.*

*“When I didn’t know better,” you laugh,  
remembering some former fretfulness.*

*As your son reaches  
to switch on the nebulizer,  
he stops:  
leans toward you,  
rests his forehead upon yours.  
Mother/son hold and fill.*

*Nothing is spoken.  
Everything is said.*

**Cyra S. Dumitru**

Witnessing this moment shared between my husband and his ailing mother is one of the loveliest interactions I have ever observed. It was spontaneous and heartfelt. No words were involved, rather pure touch. Forehead to forehead!

#### ***Invitation:***

Reflect upon moments of kindness or empathy expressed through gesture or quiet action that you have offered to someone or witnessed take place or perhaps received: holding a hand, patting someone’s shoulder, filling a glass with water, a smile. Tell what happened, whether it happened at work, at home or elsewhere.

Then read what you have written. Let these kind gestures fill your heart and soul with radiance. Let them give you joy and energy for this important, beautiful, generous work you are doing.

## WRITING AS SELF-CARE & WELLNESS: FREE WRITING

### *Invitation:*

Here are lines from poems written by nurses, male and female, from around the country. Try selecting a line that speaks to you, and use it as a way to **begin** your own free writing. Think of it as a doorway into your own experience, into your own heart and mind. See what flows from you. Trust what comes up. It is okay to change any word or to add words to these “prompts”. You can use more than one sentence within a single free write.

Look beneath my mask, look beyond these layers of protection & see

\_\_\_\_\_

If a wish had been a wand, then \_\_\_\_\_

Strong enough to bear \_\_\_\_\_

With my fingertips \_\_\_\_\_

One bright, frail moment \_\_\_\_\_

My hands listening drew me forward \_\_\_\_\_

There was an indescribable energy in the room \_\_\_\_\_

Standing vigil over the workings of their body \_\_\_\_\_

This is the sound of trouble \_\_\_\_\_

I recall healing's presence \_\_\_\_\_

Imagine this \_\_\_\_\_

I've sometimes thought a ceremony would help \_\_\_\_\_

Our bag has no more tricks, no more drugs, no more gizmos

\_\_\_\_\_

This moment I felt the change \_\_\_\_\_

## WRITING AS SELF-CARE & WELLNESS: A STORY TO TELL

*Everybody has a story to tell  
and everyone wants someone to listen—  
being able to tell that story  
is part of a healing process . . .*

### ***Invitation:***

The poem above is formed from sentences written by health care professionals. Is there a story in particular that you need to tell? It doesn't have to relate to your work; it might connect to some other part of your unique life. Write what happened, using details of sight, sound, touch, smell, taste. Write about your feelings related to what happened. What do you feel now as you write? Why do you feel that way? Seek support if you need to. If it helps, begin with:

I will never forget when \_\_\_\_\_

## GREETINGS ONCE AGAIN!

We at The Ecumenical Center hope that you have found this booklet inspiring and useful. We hope that you feel even more connected to yourself and to your experiences as an outcome of writing.

Should you wish to share any comments about your experience of using this booklet and journaling, we welcome hearing what you have to say. Any feedback is helpful.

Should you wish to share some of your writing with someone who will listen with an open, nonjudgmental heart, someone who feels honored to witness your experience, whatever it might be, please let us know.

Should you wish to continue writing, and you need more ideas, please let us know.  
You can be provided with plenty more ideas for writing!

Should you wish to gather with other health care professionals to share your writing and to hear their writing, please let us know.

For any of these reasons, please contact:

**Cyra S. Dumitru, PRACTITIONER OF POETIC MEDICINE**

The Ecumenical Center for Religion & Health

Email address: [cdumitru@ecrh.org](mailto:cdumitru@ecrh.org)

Should you wish to seek additional emotional support, beyond writing as wellness ideas, please contact:

**Mary Bell, LPC OR**

**Elisabeth Hand, MT-BC**

The Ecumenical Center for Religion & Health

Phone number: **210-616-0885 ext. 226**

