Writing can help to support mental health from tennis players to nurses

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The impact of writing on wellbeing is finally becoming more well known. This World Mental Health Day, experts at online community WriteWell suggest that people consider writing as a way to support their health and wellbeing.

Writing about important personal experiences in an emotional way for as little as 15 minutes over the course of three days can bring about improvements in mental and physical health, research has shown.

Recently the mental health spotlight has been on tennis with Emma Raducanu's breathing difficulties at Wimbledon and Naomi Osaka sharing that she suffered from depression and social anxiety. A study published in the North American Journal of Psychology* looked at tennis players in particular and how writing can improve mood and performance.

Another group which has been in the spotlight this year is healthcare workers. A recent study showed that writing helped reduce their risk of post-traumatic stress syndrome and depression.

There have been more than 300 studies of the effects of writing on health. A range of benefits have been identified, including fewer stress-related visits to the doctor, reduced absenteeism from work, and an improvement in conditions such as migraine and sleep apnoea. Meanwhile, students who took part in expressive writing were found to do better in exams.

Andy Bell, deputy director of the Centre for Mental Health confirmed that creativity and writing can help and urged for an increase in opportunities for people. He said: "There is growing evidence about the benefits of participating in creative arts, including writing, to help people living with mental health difficulties, as well as to help to tackle prejudice and misunderstanding about mental illness.

"We need to create more opportunities for people to benefit from these approaches and to learn more about what works for diverse groups of people to improve their mental health and wellbeing."

One such opportunity is WriteWell Community launched earlier this year to support mental health and wellbeing through writing. A survey of WriteWell members showed that three-quarters of users found that the activities helped them to take a break and switch off from the world and nine out of ten saw creativity and writing as useful tools to support wellbeing**.

WriteWell offers people the opportunity to explore writing as a practical self-care tool to boost health and happiness. The community offers a non-judgemental space, where the *process* of writing is more important than the final product. With this in mind, no previous experience in creative or therapeutic writing is necessary.

Members are welcomed into a safe learning environment with a moderator managing the community day-to-day, helping members find and complete activities that suit their needs. There are creative taster tasks for those finding their way with writing as well as longer courses run in small groups on topics such as building resilience, navigating change and finding calm. Plus, there is a book group, live workshops with writing and wellbeing experts, and a library of online resources.

WriteWell has been developed by the Professional Writing Academy (PWA) which already offers advanced therapeutic writing courses and has nearly 10 years' experience of building online learning communities and premium courses.

Christina Bunce, Director of PWA explains why WriteWell was developed: "Over the years, we've seen how writing can support people's wellbeing through our creative writing courses. We know that writing can bring comfort and fresh insight, particularly during difficult times. So, we set up WriteWell to harness this power – to help people use writing as a self-care tool."

-Ends- Notes for editors below

Notes for editors:

* Vann B et al (2003) Emotive writing moderates the relationship between mood awareness and athletic

Media:

WriteWell. Write yourself a brighter future

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performance in collegiate tennis players. North American Journal of Psychology; 5: 2, 311-324.

** More details about this survey available on request

- For more information about the science behind WriteWell, visit: https://www.writewellcommunity.com/the-science/
- For more information on the research that supports the wellbeing benefits of writing, WriteWell has produced a 63-page briefing paper Ready, Steady, Flow: How writing for wellbeing could save our mental health.
- **Professional Writing Academy (PWA)** was the UK's first online writing school. It offers a wide portfolio of writing courses where would-be writers can come to learn regardless of their background, level of experience and location — at a time of the day or night that suits them. To date around 5,000 learners from 84 countries have completed PWA courses.
- The activities and courses draw on theory and practice from a variety of disciplines including: therapeutic writing, counselling, coaching, positive psychology and creative writing. They are developed for the Writewell Community by Kate McBarron and Carolyn Jess-Cooke, recognised experts in writing for wellbeing. Contact details for interview available on request.

- For more information go to writewellcommumity.com, watch our video or contact kathryn@writewellcommunity.com

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