

Workshop “Mindful writing – free your mind”

(compilation of exercises created by ©Yuliia Danyliuk)¹

Exercise 1: Freewriting

I call this exercise „free your mind“. Personally, for me it is very simple, but extremely useful tool for clarifying my mind. I put literally everything from my head on the paper. Freewriting is one of the most popular techniques of emotional relief.

My inspiration was Julia Cameron, an American author and artist. She suggests in her book “The Artist’s Way” to practice Morning Pages. Those are 3 pages of text, which can be called “stream of consciousness”.

The leading rule is to write down only 3 pages in the morning, even if you don’t want to write. Julia claims, “There is no wrong way to do Morning Pages”. Moreover, it is not about writing. The main aim is to clarify your mind. In this way, you begin a new day without any burdened thoughts with a clear head.

I write my Morning pages rather in the evening. For me it is better to sum up what happened to me during the day. With the help of freewriting, I reflect on my feeling, emotions and different situations normally 15 minutes (I do not write 3 pages). Then my head is clear before I go to sleep. However, you can try freewriting in a different way, for example, in the morning, during the coffee break or in the evening. The main thing is to make yourself write. With the help of freewriting, you become more aware of your emotional state and your thoughts.

If you have much time, write 3 pages; if you don’t have so much time, write at least 15 minutes. If you make habit to write 15 minutes every day, you will see great results already in one month: you will be more in contact with your inner world.

- Main rule: write, write, write, and please do not stop! If you have nothing to tell, then write blablabla... thoughts come anyway.
- In your freewriting try to answer the following questions: How am I feeling right now? Which state I am in? (happy, free, worried, exhausted, anxious...) What is the reason that I am feeling like that?
- After freewriting: read it out loud for yourself. It helps you be better aware of your thoughts. This is my personal method, which helps me a lot.

Freewriting is for me something special: I forget about the reality outside and try to listen to, reflect on and accept the reality inside (reality of my inner world).

Book for inspiration: Julia Cameron “The Artist’s Way: A Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity”
https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/615570.The_Artist_s_Way

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Exercise 2: Elfchen-poem

The Elfchen is a form of the poem, which consists of five verses and eleven words, from which the name of the Elfchen (in German 11 – elf) can be derived. Each verse has a different number of words and answers a different question or gives different content and aspects.

The rules of the elf poem:

- ✚ 1 line - 1 word (the subject - noun).
 - ✚ 2 line - 2 words (description of the subject - adjectives, verbs, etc. - what does this word do, how does it behave).
 - ✚ 3 line - 3 words (description of the subject - where, how, when?)
 - ✚ 4 line - 4 words (your own addition to the topic, your own thoughts or feelings, what do you think about it anyway?)
 - ✚ 5 line - 1 word (a conclusion to the topic; answers the question, what comes out of it, so, the result) - you can use the last word first and vice versa, so sometimes you write the topic at the end.
- Thus, the poem has clear rules, a fixed structure, but many possible variations. The person is free to choose what to write.

I took the inspiration from this website: <https://wortwuchs.net/elfchen/>.

Exercise 3: Postcard-Exercise

Choose your favourite postcard / painting / photo. Preferably “art” cards, but any will do. Answer the following questions, but do not try to answer them „correctly”. There is no “right” or “wrong”, just listen to your inner voice.

- 1) What is the first detail you notice? Elaborate. A line or two lines.
- 2) What time of day is it, and what does this mean (for you)?
- 3) What is/are the main colour(s) in the card? What does it make you think of? A line or two lines in response.
- 4) What do you hear in the card? What does it sound like?
- 5) What is happening in the card? And why (your opinion)?
- 6) There is a detail in the card you haven't noticed till now. Write a line or two about it.
- 7) Write a line that follows from the last but including the word “always”.
- 8) If the painter/photographer had moved a fraction to the right, what would also be included in the scene? (What is happening just out of frame on the right?)
- 9) Bring someone (yourself? a friend?) into the poem in some way.
- 10) You have a maximum of five lines to finish the poem. Try to repeat a word or phrase from somewhere near the beginning of the poem. You may wish to end on a rhyme or half rhyme.

Note: If you cannot answer the question, then miss it. It is not about perfection, it is about enjoying the process of creating.

Exercise from the book: “Writing Poems” by Peter Sansom, p. 71.

Inspirational Books¹

Mindfulness:

- Ellen Jane Langer “Mindfulness”: the author explains the main principle of mindfulness and its features as well as how we can apply mindfulness to every aspect of our lives. That is my personal “must” to read first.
- Jon Kabat-Zinn “Wherever You Go, There You Are”: the author shows a simple way for cultivating mindfulness in your life.
- Jon Kabat-Zinn “Full Catastrophe Living”: Using the Wisdom of your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness.

Creativity:

- Julia Cameron „The Artist’s Way: A Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity”: this book is literally a great guide for those who want to start creating but have doubts in her/his head. Please, read! Once you start creating, you will find an unknown self.
- Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi “Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience”. This author is famous for his investigations regarding “optimal experience”, where he revealed that a state of consciousness called flow is the thing that makes one's experience genuinely satisfying. When we are in flow, we enjoy the process; we are creative and extremely involved in an activity.
- Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi “Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovering and Invention”: Creativity is about capturing those moments that make our life worth living. In this book, you will find out how flow relates to creativity and how you can boost/activate your creative self.
- Ellen Jane Langer “On Becoming an Artist: Reinventing Yourself Through Mindful Creativity”: “All it takes to become an artist is to start doing art”, says the author. This phrase became my personal life motto. As we are all waiting for some “right time” to come...waiting and waiting instead of acting. “Creativity is not a blessing some special few are born with or receive from above” – we all are creative in our own way. The main thing here is to want to awaken your inner creative child and start doing art. This book is a guide on how we can become more mindfully engaged in a creative process.

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