



## Wellness Through Words - Expressive Arts Programs

### Intended Audience

For all members including people living with cancer, family members and significant caregivers.

### Program Description

Writing and sharing stories is a gratifying way to capture life experiences, express emotions and give voice to meaningful thoughts and wisdoms. Self-expression is a central theme in many Wellspring Calgary programs. Writing programs are led by qualified facilitators with enhanced understanding of the power of personal expression when dealing with chronic illness and health and wellness. A variety of genres are introduced, including poetry, prose, blogs and journaling, offering participants multiple choices for creative expression.

### Benefits and Impact

Writing is an effective tool for self-discovery, personal reflection and emotional release. Research indicates that expressive writing helps people with chronic illness in areas of mood, anxiety, pain management and overall stress. In some instances, writing and sharing is cathartic, helping people to transition to places of higher awareness and resolve. Often it is reported that writing and sharing in whatever medium or measure it unfolds, gives meaning to experiences and promotes wellness.

### What to Expect at a Session

Members partaking in a Wellspring Calgary writing program are thoughtfully guided on a journey of self-expression. Some will choose a familiar writing style, such as poetry or journaling. Others may choose a method that is less familiar to them, such as stories with photos or blogging. Some will select a public medium for sharing their stories, while others will choose private participation. There is no 'right' way to participate at Wellspring Calgary other than to be present and mindful.

*\*Those interested in publishing their stories will be introduced to various publishing options.*

### Participant Comments

*"This awakens me to live in the present moment."*

*"How important our voices and our stories are to us and to others."*

*"The healing I am moving through came through words."*

### What the Research Says:

A study examining the effects of written emotional expression on breast cancer showed that individuals who shared "their deepest thoughts or feelings regarding breast cancer" or their "positive thoughts and feelings regarding their experience" had "significantly fewer medical appointments for cancer-related morbidities," and those that shared their deepest emotional thoughts had "significantly decreased physical symptoms," when compared to the control group who only wrote about "facts of their breast cancer experience." (Stanton AL, Danoff-Burg S, Sworowski LA, Collins CA, Branstetter AD, Rodriguez-Hanley A, Kirk SB, Austenfeld JL. 2002. Randomized, Controlled Trial of Written Emotional Expression and Benefit Finding in Breast Cancer Patients. *Journal of Clinical Oncology*. 20(20): 4160 – 4168.)

### Program Frequency:

**2 hours** per week  
**1-3 hours** per program  
**1-3 programs** per session  
Winter, spring/summer, fall

Optimum Class Size: 8-16

### Related Programs:

Story in the Photo  
Telling our Stories  
Writing is Good Medicine  
Writers' Studio

