

Table 2: Description of Qualitative Studies of Writing Interventions

Study No	Study (Year)	Area Under Study	Participants	Data Collection Method	Method of Analysis	Themes	Conclusions	Score
10	Phillips and Rolfe (2016)	The experience of counselling clients who choose to write reflectively between counselling sessions	5 UK participants, aged between 30 and 65; 4 White British, 1 British Asian; 4 female, 1 male; 3 were counsellors themselves	Short reflective writing task on relationship to and purpose of writing and impact on therapy, followed by semi-structured interviews around writing task	IPA from a psycho-dynamic perspective	<p><u>Catharsis:</u> Releasing the blockage of suppressed feeling reduced distress</p> <p><u>Expressing and exploring the self:</u> Writing as a container for (often disowned aspects of) the self</p> <p><u>Containment and safety:</u> Making the material and therapy manageable</p> <p><u>A therapeutic bridge:</u> Holding onto and internalizing therapy</p>	Writing can function ‘as a self-container, a transitional object when a direct encounter with a counsellor may feel too threatening’	100%

11	Showell (2012)	The experience of CFT compassion ate letter writing in adults with EDs	7 participants from a UK outpatient ED service, aged between 19 and 37; 6 White, 1 mixed race; 6 female, 1 male; 6 diagnosed with BN, 1 diagnosed with AN; length of ED: 18 months – 15 years	35 – 60 minute semi-structured interviews	IPA	<p><u>The alien concept: leaving familiarity:</u> The difficulty of acknowledging past experiences and self-loathing</p> <p><u>Letter writing as a journey:</u> Acceptance, expression and externalization of difficulties. Valuing the shared experience of the group</p> <p><u>Finding self-compassion:</u> Connecting to others and to self with and without ED. Writing replacing ED behaviours long-term.</p>	Supports maintaining factors in transdiagnostic CBT-E model  Letter writing can have a disinhibitory effect, as well as helping to process cognitions  Group experience is key to benefit	100%
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12	Merrell et al. (2011)	The expressive writing of maladaptive perfectionists about stress, perfectionism, performance expectations and coping	14 US university students on a psychology course, taking part in a larger EW study on campus for course credit, who scored highly on APS-R; $M_{age} = 18.93$ (SD: 1.2); 100% White/European American; 5 male, 9 female	Expressive writing produced over 3 20-minute sessions in a lab (with 2-4 days between each session) was collected and analysed	CQR	<p><u>Stress</u>: Arising from perceptions of academic inadequacy</p> <p><u>Relationships</u>: Can be supportive or hurtful</p> <p><u>Coping</u>: By avoiding, engaging with support network, exercising or drinking</p> <p><u>Expectations</u>: High personal and parental expectations</p> <p><u>Perfectionism</u>: The cost of constant striving</p> <p><u>Academic/professional goals</u>: Committed and fearful or unsure</p>	Self-criticism and high standards featured highly, as well as a desire to please others	90%
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7	Johnston et al. (2010)	The expressive writing and the writing about superficial topics of participants with symptoms of BN	40 UK students scoring at or above the medium-range cut off for BN on the BITE and with BMI of $\geq 18.5$ ; $M_{age}$ : 28.9 years (SD: 9.8); $M_{BMI}$ : 25.7 (SD: 7.4); 76.3% White; 11.25% male	4 20-minute writing sessions completed on computers at home on 3 consecutive days. 37 scripts submitted over email and analysed. Quali feedback also collected after every writing session and analysed.	Frame-work approach	<p><u>Feedback and writing by EW group</u> ascribed benefits of the task to ‘catharsis, decreased avoidance, an increased awareness ... of thoughts and feelings, a more positive or realistic perspective, increased motivation to change, and development of guidance for action.’</p> <p><u>Less helpful effects noted in writing and feedback in EW group</u> included lack of new insights or solutions, uncertainty about how to move forward and increased self-criticism’</p> <p><u>Feedback by control group</u> ‘reported</p>	Quali findings generally confirmed and explained quanti findings in same study. Of interest, ‘the perception of writing as less shaming than face to face discussion helps explain the finding that those with high levels of body shame were most likely to benefit’ from EW	70%
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APS-R: The 'Almost Perfect' Scale – Revised; AN: Anorexia Nervosa; BITE: Bulimic Investigatory Test – Edinburgh, to measure bulimic symptomatology; BN: Bulimia nervosa; CBT-E: Fairburn's transdiagnostic Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Eating disorders; CFT: Compassion-Focused Therapy; CQR: Consensual Qualitative Research paradigm; ED: Eating disorder; EW: Expressive writing; IPA: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis; M<sub>age</sub>: Mean age; M<sub>BMI</sub>: Mean Body Mass Index; Quali: Qualitative; Quanti: Quantitative; UK: United Kingdom