

Publication:

How should a virtual agent present psychoeducation? Influence of verbal and textual presentation on adherence. – Tielman, Neerincx & Brinkman

Psychoeducation content – Translated from the original Dutch

In this experiment you'll work on a very negative memory. You're probably not looking forward to this. After all, it's not fun to remember very negative experiences. It's understandable that it initially seems better to not recall these loaded moments. However, you've probably also noticed that trying to forget negative memories doesn't always work and even in the background they can have great influence. It's therefore often better to not forget these memories, but give them some attention. A good way to do this is to write about memories. This can have very positive effects. In past years, a lot of research has been done into writing about your negative memories. This process is also called 'Expressive writing'. Expressive writing is a method where people write about stressful and impactful situations. A person is asked to write about the most stressful and negative experience they have. Several studies show that this expressive writing can have very positive effects.

Although the research into expressive writing is certainly not done, it has shown to have positive effects in many areas. It can, for instance, provide new perspective, and make it look at yourself in new ways. Writing about negative memories can lead to personal growth, a more positive self-image, less anxiety and less negative feelings. It is important to note that writing about neutral experiences doesn't have these effects. In writing, it is important to really focus on the very negative moments in your life.

Except for the psychological effects, expressive writing can have more advantages. It has been shown, for instance, that people who've worked on their negative memories require less health care in the period afterwards. So expressive writing can also help to reduce physical complaints. Additionally it has even been shown to help improve academic results.

Important in expressive writing is that you really investigate your deepest emotions and thoughts. While you're working on the memory, you can also link it to other life events. For example how it relates to your youth, your parents, your relationship with others and your school or work. You can link it to who you want to be in the future, who you were in the past or who you are now.

You're going to work on your memory with the diary you've seen before. You can start with adding text, and write about your memory. Also try to involve the other possibilities, for instance add a map, or emotions. You can also use the internet to look up pictures that have a relationship with what you're describing.

During the rest of the experiment, try to keep in mind what you've heard here. How writing about your memories can have a positive effect, especially when it's about very negative memories. Try to really investigate your deepest emotions and feelings while writing.