

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

Project title: The Experience and Significance of Creative Writing at Times of Difficulty or Distress

You are invited to take part in a research study to explore people's experiences of creative writing. My name is Michelle McCartney and I am a Trainee Clinical Psychologist. This study, which will form part of my doctorate in clinical psychology, has been reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Committee at Christchurch Canterbury University. In order to help you decide if you would like to take part, please read the information below.

What's the study about?

This study will be looking at the experiences of people who have used creative writing at a significant or difficult time in their lives. I am interested to hear how people have come to use creative writing, whether it has been helpful or unhelpful to them, and in what ways. I hope that the findings from this study will contribute to developing a better understanding of how creative writing can be used for therapeutic or self-help purposes.

Why have I been invited to take part?

If you have used creative writing for personal benefit or development *within the past 5 years* and are willing to reflect on and share some of your experiences, I feel that you would be able to make an important contribution to this study. Ideally, you would have engaged in this writing spontaneously rather than as part of a structured writing therapy. To participate, you must also be over the age of 18, a fluent English speaker and be resident within the UK.

What happens if I decide to take part?

If you decide to take part in the study, I will ask you to write your responses to some questions about your experiences of creative writing. I will ask for some background information (e.g. gender, writing experience) so that I can accurately describe the general characteristics of the group of people who participate in the study. I will also ask if you would be prepared to be interviewed to further discuss these experiences. If you would, I or a colleague may contact you at a later date to arrange a meeting.

What are the possible advantages of taking part?

Taking the opportunity to reflect on your use of creative writing could be a beneficial and interesting experience. As it involves self-reflection, it may be therapeutic in some way. If you would like, when the study is completed I will let you know of the results. You may find it interesting to see how you and others like you have found creative writing to be helpful in your life. In the broader sense, your participation will help to develop our understanding of how creative writing may be used in a therapeutic way.

What are the possible disadvantages of taking part?

Writing or talking about your experience of creative writing at a significant or difficult time in your life might put you into contact with some previously difficult experiences and thus could be upsetting. Please note that you are free to withdraw from the study at any time if you do not wish it to continue. If you do experience distress while taking part in this study, and feel in need of further support, please contact your GP who may be able to arrange a referral. I the researcher will be available throughout the study to discuss about any questions you might have. You can email me at creativewritingirp@googlemail.com or leave a telephone message on 07508871797 and I will get back to you as soon I can.

What will happen to the information I give?

All information that I collect from you during the study will be kept strictly confidential. All data will be placed on a password-protected computer and stored in a locked secure place at all times. Any details that potentially could identify you will be removed or changed. At the end of the research I will write a report, and provide you with a written summary of the results. The results may then be published in academic journals and presented at conferences or for training purposes. *Please note that participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time before the final report is submitted.*

If I want to take part, what will happen next?

If you decide you want to take part in this study, please write your responses to the questions enclosed and email them to me at creativewritingirp@gmail.com. If you would be willing to be interviewed, please leave an email address or mobile telephone number at which I can contact you. Your name or any contact details will not be stored with your written account or on any interview transcript.

Thank you for reading this information sheet, and if possible, participating in the study. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need any further information.

Yours sincerely,
Michelle McCartney.

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