

# 21 writing it out

## for you to know

Writing can be an effective way to express and release feelings of anxiety. You don't need any special kind of writing talent because you are writing for yourself only.

Sean's counselor suggested that he start keeping a journal so he would have a private place to express his feelings of anxiety. Sean didn't know if he liked that idea. English had never been his best subject, and he hated having to write outlines and remember correct grammar and punctuation. His counselor said that Sean didn't have to worry about any of those things in his journal. Journal writing is personal. No one else has to be able to read it, so the writing doesn't have to be clear or organized or correctly punctuated. He said the journal was one place where Sean could write without using any of the rules he had learned in English class.

Sean decided to give it a try. The next time he felt anxious was right before gym class. They were starting a unit on volleyball, and Sean thought he was the worst volleyball player in the world. He thought his serve and his aim were poor, and he always felt like such an idiot when he missed the ball. He could feel his jaw muscles getting tight just thinking about it. Before going to gym, he took out his journal and started to write down what he was feeling. He didn't pay attention to how his writing looked; he just focused on getting his anxiety out. He found himself writing pretty fast at first, but as the emotion lost some of its power, he started slowing down. After a couple of paragraphs, Sean realized that he felt more peaceful. He still wasn't excited about volleyball, but he thought he could handle it. He was surprised when he actually missed fewer shots than usual on the court that day. His counselor said that was probably because he wasn't feeling as anxious, so he had better focus and control over his body.

directions

In the first space below, write all the English composition rules you can think of. In the second space, try writing a paragraph or two about your anxious feelings *without* using any of those rules.

Composition Rules

Writing Without Rules

## more to do

People are so used to following English rules when they write that sometimes it is hard to try to write without them. Describe what it was like for you.

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Try writing about your feelings the next time you feel anxious. Or at one time during the day, take the time to write about your anxious feelings in the past twenty-four hours. Tell how it felt to express these feelings on paper.

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When you write to release anxiety, you can use any kind of writing materials you like. The only important thing is that you are comfortable. Some people like to write in spiral notebooks with blue ink, some like to write on unlined paper with pencils or felt-tipped markers, and some like to write at the computer. What writing materials are you most comfortable with?

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Sometimes people are afraid that if they write about their anxious feelings, someone else will find and read what they have written. If that is true for you, you will need to find a way to maintain your privacy. Here are some options:

Shred your writing after you're done.

Keep your writing in a locked drawer.

Write so messily that no one can read it.

Keep your writing where no one will find it.

Throw your writing away when  
you're done.

Write in a book with a lock on it.

Write in code.

Circle any of the above ideas that might work for you. Write any other ideas you have here.

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