Electronic Journal Writing: Communicative Freedom for Adults with Brain Injury
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ABSTRACT
This study explored the effects of electronic journal writing as an alternative form of communication. It was predicted that an electronic journal would ease the communication barrier for people living with brain injury. Subjects in this investigation were tested before and after the ten week study. Pre- and post measurements included depression (BDI-II), community involvement (Community Involvement Questionnaire), anxiety (Beck Anxiety Inventory), self-esteem (The Harrill Self-Esteem Inventory) and cognitive abilities (BTHI).

Background
According to Barry Lane’s writing as a road to self-Discovery, work done with inmates revealed that writing could be an effective means to improve personal growth, emotional expression, and personal enrichment. Participating with a writing program could provide people with a sense of empowerment and self-actualization.

Subjects
The six participants in this study were ages: 41–61 (mean = 51). None of the subjects showed signs of aphasia. They were members of SteppingStones, a non-profit organization in Portsmouth, NH. SteppingStones provides support and services for people living with brain injury in the seacoast area.

PROTOCOL
The writing group met weekly. After each writing piece, members received a positive e-mail response. Members were prompted to write in a new setting each week, including poetry and descriptive sensory writing. Members were encouraged to share their ideas with one another before they began to type their new responses.

At the end of each session, members would e-mail their work to the researcher. Therapy writing groups should also be conducted over a longer period of time. This may lead to significant positive results on standardized testing.

Results
T-tests were conducted as pre- and post treatment evaluations. An ANOVA analysis was completed to see if there was a significant decrease in the participants’ feelings of isolation based on diagnosis of brain injury. Neither of these tests provided significant results.

Survey Questions and Responses:
Would you join an online writing group again? 5/6 participants responded: Yes
Do you believe this online writing group offered a new method of communication? 1 participant responded: No change
Two participants responded: Yes, it did.
Three participants responded: Yes, it definitely offered more communication opportunities.

Positive Influence
Two participants expressed that therapy writing inspired them to begin plans for their own books.

One participant plans to find a part-time job using creative writing.

One participant responded: Yes, it made me feel special and grateful to be alive.

Participants’ Quotes:
“It (journal writing) helped me express my thoughts.”
“It (journal writing) made me realize I can write; I would never do before... It made me feel comfortable about expressing my feelings... I am not afraid to express myself.”

Further Research
Different pre- and post standardized testing should be used to more accurately evaluate the participants’ ability to communicate through writing. A sample writing piece, for instance, could be evaluated with a writing subtest to compare communication progress before and after therapy.

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Regardless of standardized statistical analyses, participants enjoyed therapeutic journal writing. However, due to the nature of writing, it is difficult to evaluate progress with numerical values.