



ARTS FOR HEALTH

CREATIVE WRITING



**MARK PEARSON
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ARTS FOR HEALTH

Series Editor: Paul Crawford, Professor of Health Humanities, University of Nottingham, UK

The Arts for Health series offers a ground-breaking set of books that guide the general public, carers and healthcare providers on how different arts can help people to stay healthy or improve their health and wellbeing.

Bringing together new information and resources underpinning the health humanities (that link health and social care disciplines with the arts and humanities), the books demonstrate the ways in which the arts offer people worldwide a kind of shadow health service – a non-clinical way to maintain or improve our health and wellbeing. The books are aimed at general readers along with interested arts practitioners seeking to explore the health benefits of their work, health and social care providers and clinicians wishing to learn about the application of the arts for health, educators in arts, health and social care and organisations, carers and individuals engaged in public health or generating healthier environments. These easy-to-read, engaging short books help readers to understand the evidence about the value of arts for health and offer guidelines, case studies and resources to make use of these non-clinical routes to a better life.

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|---------------------|--|
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CREATIVE WRITING

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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FOREWORD: CREATIVE PUBLIC HEALTH

The Arts for Health series aims to provide key information on how different arts and humanities practices can support, or even transform, health and wellbeing. Each book introduces a particular creative activity or resource and outlines its place and value in society, the evidence for its use in advancing health and wellbeing, and cases of how this works. In addition, each book provides useful links and suggestions to readers for following-up on these quick reads. We can think of this series as a kind of shadow health service – encouraging the use of the arts and humanities alongside all the other resources on offer to keep us fit and well.

Creative practices in the arts and humanities offer a fantastic, non-medical, but medically relevant way to improve the health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities. Intuitively, we know just how important creative activities are in maintaining or recovering our best possible lives. For example, imagine that we woke up tomorrow to find that all music, books or films had to be destroyed, learn that singing, dancing or theatre had been outlawed or that galleries, museums and theatres had to close permanently; or, indeed, that every street had posters warning citizens of severe punishment for taking photographs, drawing or writing. How would we feel? What would happen to our bodies and minds? How would we survive? Unfortunately, we have seen this kind of removal of creative activities from human society before and today many people remain terribly restricted in artistic expression and consumption.

I hope that this series adds a practical resource to the public. I hope people buy these little books as gifts for family and friends,

or for hard-pressed healthcare professionals, to encourage them to revisit or to consider a creative path to living well. I hope that creative public health makes for a brighter future.

Professor Paul Crawford

PREFACE

This book brings together two distinct disciplines – creative writing and healthcare, with a particular emphasis on mental health and well-being. The authors are both practitioners in therapeutic writing and bring their experiences of this practice from the real world into the pages of this book. One writes from a background in mental health; the other from a background in creative writing. Their voices chime in their strong belief in the power of creative writing as a tool to help people manage their well-being. Each voice expresses these beliefs in its own way and this freedom of expression is a principle at the heart of the various forms of therapeutic writing that this book touches on.

We have wanted from the outset not to blend our voices to create a bland flavour of writing for the reader. Instead, we have explored areas of particular interest to each of us and relevant to our own professional practices and we speak about these in our own individual ways.

We hope this book provides an overview for those new to the concept of creative writing as a well-being practice. We will take you through a brief overview of the history of some of the key development in the field of writing as a therapeutic practice and offer some definitions. We'll explore how writing can be good for you, and ways that it can help you as healthcare professionals, as writers or those new to writing. We tap into our professional practices by looking at some of the ways that we've developed our own approaches to therapeutic creative writing, cutting across mental health and menopause, and integrating other philosophical practices, such as mindfulness, into this way of working and considering the ethics that underpins this work. We hope that it might encourage some of you to pick up a writing tool of your choice and just write.

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