


INTRODUCTION

My Story, My Terms A Storytelling Workbook for Survivors

In this #MeToo era, survivors around the world have come forward to share their experiences of sexual harassment, abuse, and/or assault as means to heal, seek justice and demand social and legal change. There's no question that the surge in public survivor accounts are having a powerful and transformative impact on cultural attitudes and public policy. The goal of this workbook is to guide individuals through the healing power of storytelling and help those who are considering sharing their stories make an informed decision about doing so.

How, when, and if you decide to share your story with others is entirely up to you. It is a highly personal decision and no one should be compelled to share their experiences publicly. Regardless of whether or not you choose to share your story publicly or just write it for yourself - the purpose of this workbook is to give you the tools to harness the healing power of storytelling and to write your story in a way that is purposeful and meaningful to you. This is your place to decide how and when your story is told. This is your roadmap and resource for telling your story—on your terms.

Some common goals survivors have in telling their story on their terms include: releasing stress and trauma; using creativity as part of their healing; raising awareness about gender-based violence; connecting with other survivors and inspiring others; and pushing for social change.



The purpose of this workbook is to give you the tools to harness the healing power of storytelling.

THIS WORKBOOK HAS BEEN CREATED FOR YOU.

This trauma-informed workbook was created for you and every survivor of sexual or gender-based violence who wants to reframe and reclaim their stories and experiences in the #MeToo era. This workbook is intended to create a safe space for survivors who are searching for a place to write, share, reflect, and heal. You do not need any prior writing or storytelling experience. Sexual violence can come in many forms, including: sexual harassment, rape, forcible touching, date rape, marital rape, child sexual abuse, molestation, human trafficking, intimate partner violence, and dating violence. Forms of sexual violence happen to people of all ages, races, ethnicities, genders, sexual orientations, religions, professions, physical and mental abilities, and incomes. While changing systems and addressing perpetrators are both critical, that is not the purpose of this workbook. This workbook is about you. It's about your journey, your healing, and your story.

Here's what you'll do in this workbook

- * Reflect, write, and share your experiences as a survivor of sexual violence.
- * Focus on expressive writing and storytelling.
- * Use your writing and voice as a tool for personal, political, or social change.
- * Learn safety guidelines for navigating the process of sharing your story with others.

Our key tips for getting the most out of using this workbook

- * This workbook is intended to be used by survivors with wide ranging experiences of sexual violence. You may find that some activities and guidelines don't fit your experience. Apply what makes most sense to your experience.
- * If you are working with a counselor or therapist, let them know you plan to complete this workbook. This workbook was written for individual survivors of all forms of sexual violence and can be used by survivors independently, with a therapist, in a self-help group, or as part of group therapy.
- * Think about the right time and place to do this workbook. Consider choosing a specific time and schedule.
- * Make room for emotions and thoughts to arise while you are completing and reflecting on the activities.
- * Plan to do something relaxing or refreshing after you have been using this workbook. For example, call a friend, listen to nice music, take a relaxing bath, or get some exercise.
- * Feel free to write in the spaces provided in this workbook or to get an accompanying notebook or journal for more space. You may also want to write your story on your computer or device. Find what works best for you.
- * This workbook is intended to be an ongoing project and process. This is not intended to be done all at once! In fact, there is no timetable. The activities can be used and revisited as you wish.

Keep in mind

This workbook provides information about trauma, healing, writing, storytelling, and resilience, along with tips and guidelines for you to feel protected as you prepare to write or share your story. This workbook may help you better understand and process your own personal reactions to the experience. It is not intended as a replacement for counseling or therapy.