

Fostering Resilience During COVID-19 Epidemic Through Reflection and Writing

Codruta Soneru, MD, et al.*

Hospital employees are not immune to the health threats and emotional strain COVID-19 has brought upon the world, but we are expected to leave our emotions and fears at the door as we care for others.

The 55-word story creative writing method can be a tool for professional growth (*Fam Med* 2010;42:400-2). It uses poetry and prose elements to encapsulate key health care experiences (Table) and stimulates personal reflection. Writers and readers of the stories gain insight into intense emotional or professional moments; the brevity of the pieces add impact.

Amid the challenges posed by COVID-19, we asked coworkers and families to share the pandemic's impact on their lives in self-healing 55-word stories. The stories reveal their fears, concerns, hopes, and strengths.

This exercise allowed our participants to gain introspection about how the pandemic has affected them. Writing helped deal with the stress. They report that it gave them a voice

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How to Write a 55-Word Story
1. Think of a compelling story based on your experience.
2. Write down everything you can think of.
3. Don't edit, just write (phrases, words, key chunks of memory).
4. Put it away.
5. Read over your writing and begin to clarify the idea or story line that you want to convey.
6. Begin editing, sometimes ruthlessly.
7. Share your work with others for reactions and feedback.
8. Keep editing until you get to 55 words. a. Title doesn't contribute to word count but shouldn't be more than seven words. b. Contractions count as single words. c. Eliminating articles (the, a, an) can help with word count.
9. If you cannot cut enough words, you probably have material that either would lend itself to a longer essay or become multiple 55-word stories.
10. Given the brevity, formatting can make a big difference. Experiment with line length, indentations, hanging indents, and other use of white space.

and an opportunity to explore and express feelings of trepidation, anxiousness, worry, and fear. It was helpful acknowledging that the things that matter to us give us hope and positivity, provide value in our existence, and ensure the ability to persevere.

The following is a sampling of the 55-word stories. Go online for more stories and participants' comments on the writing experience.

From Anxiety to Intention by Tara Maple, RN

Mom of three boys, PACU Nurse, Educator, Wife. Pandemic brings waves of anxiety, new challenges, now I am all those things and a teacher. Choosing to ride my anxiety, channeling a life of intention. Restoring happiness, creating connection, facilitating growth. Deeper relationships, living a life of intention. Making the space for living, not just life.



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A 10-Year-Old's Perspective by Daniel Soneru, 4th-grade student

You might be feeling stressed about COVID-19. Don't be scared everything will be ok if you just stay home and don't come in contact with sick people. Everything has an end. For the people working at hospitals thank you for helping everyone that is sick and everybody thanks you for always being here for us.

Class of 2020 by Huynh (Wendy) Nguyen, MS

As an immigrant Asian-American fourth year medical student, 2020 was supposed to bring me joy but instead brought fluctuations of fear and disappointment. Fear of exposing my family. Once clinical rotations, Match day and graduation were canceled, the disappointment consumed me. As I read of hate crimes on Asian Americans the fear settled back in.

Don't miss 21 more 55-word stories. Read online at: asamonitor.pub/3cKrc14.

In the Know: You're Vaccinated... Now What?

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How about Brazil?

Bad Idea!

Brazil is one of the countries whose government has actively spread false information about COVID-19. The results have been horrific, and viral evolution is taking very unwelcome turns in Brazil. After apparently reaching herd immunity through infection alone in Manaus, Brazil (at a terrible cost in lives lost), cases surged again in December and January (*Science* 2021;371:288-92; *Lancet* 2021;397:452-5). As noted by Sabino et al., there are four explanations: 1) the

earlier estimate of 76% infection could be an overestimate, 2) immunity may have begun to wane by December, 3) the B.1.1.7 and P.1 variants may be causing re-infection, and 4) the B.1.1.7 variants and the P.1 variant may have raised the herd immunity threshold because of increased infectiousness.

Brazil does not report vaccination data, but the Bolsonaro government has been openly hostile to vaccination (asamonitor.pub/3lISXRF). Brazil seems to be running its own experiment in coronavirus evolution, along with promoting disproven and discredited therapies, and generally mismanaging the pandemic. I don't recommend signing up for this experiment.

Is it safe to take a cruise to Antarctica to see the solar eclipse on December 4, 2021?

Probably

My wife, Pamela, and I (SS) have signed up for a cruise to visit Antarctica at the end of this year to see a total solar eclipse (asamonitor.pub/3vwHjba). I had never imagined visiting Antarctica or even the possibility of seeing a total solar eclipse there. However, after learning of this eclipse, it immediately bubbled to the top of my bucket list. If you haven't seen a total eclipse, it is truly one of nature's wonders.

Full vaccination is a requirement for both the travelers and the ship's crew. If you are vaccinated, then we invite you to join us! ■

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