

# Writing can be a therapy after a traumatic stress

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This study demonstrates that writing therapy resulted in significant and substantial short-term reductions in post traumatic symptoms (PTS) and comorbid depressive symptoms. Writing therapy is an evidence-based treatment for PTS, and constitutes a useful treatment alternative for patients who do not respond to other evidence-based treatments.

A group of Dutch investigators has summarized the [research findings](#) that are concerned with the effects of writing after a traumatic stress.

Face-to-face [psychological treatments](#) have difficulty meeting today's growing mental health needs. For the highly prevalent posttraumatic stress (PTS) conditions, accumulating evidence suggests that writing therapy may constitute an efficient treatment modality, especially when administered through the Internet.

A group of Dutch investigators therefore conducted a meta-analysis to investigate the efficacy of writing therapies for PTS and comorbid depressive symptoms. The literature was searched using several structured and unstructured strategies, including key word searches of the PubMed, Web of Science, PsycINFO, and PILOTS databases. Six studies met eligibility criteria and were included in the analyses. These studies included a total of 633 participants, of which 304 were assigned to writing therapy. Across 5 direct comparisons of writing therapy to waiting-list control, writing therapy resulted in significant and substantial short-term reductions in PTS and comorbid [depressive symptoms](#).

There was no difference in efficacy between writing therapy and trauma-focused [cognitive behavioral therapy](#), but caution is needed since this finding was based on only 2 direct comparisons.

Writing therapy is an evidence-based treatment for PTSD, and constitutes a useful treatment alternative for patients who do not respond to other evidence-based treatments. Internet adaptations of writing therapy for PTSD may be especially useful for reaching trauma survivors in need of evidence-based [mental health care](#) who live in remote areas or who prefer to retain their anonymity.

**More information:** van Emmerik A.A.P. et al Writing Therapy for Posttraumatic Stress: A Meta-Analysis. *Psychother Psychosom* 2013;82:82–88.

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