



Our voices are vital.

# Writing about Difficult Subjects... and Surviving

## GIVE YOURSELF TIME

It's important to give yourself time to process and heal after a difficult experience—however long it takes, and whatever this looks like for you—before you write creatively about it. When you are ready to begin writing, remember to go slow and take plenty of breaks.

## TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

Make a list of ways to take care of yourself if writing triggers tough feelings and use it to help you prepare for a writing session, take a break from one, or treat yourself afterwards. On the list should be simple activities that bring you pleasure. A good way to approach this list is to think about the 5 senses and ways to indulge them. Try to be “mindful” or present when performing the activity, but if your attention wanders (which is normal), gently try to return to your senses.

- Sight – watch a funny video; buy yourself flowers; look at pictures you like
- Sound – listen to music; take a walk and pay attention to sounds you hear
- Smell – put clean sheets on your bed; burn incense; light a scented candle
- Touch – use a stress toy; pet an animal; hug someone; take a warm bath
- Taste – eat a favourite food or meal

## DEVELOP A ROUTINE

Many people find consistency comforting and helpful. Develop a writing routine and stick to it. Write in the same place at the same time. Light a candle, say a mantra. Do what works.

## SET UP A SUPPORT SYSTEM

Writing is hard at the best of times. Make a list of people you can turn to for support. These are people who will listen to you and encourage you. They won't judge you or try to convince you to stop writing.

## SOLICIT GENTLE FEEDBACK

Wait until you're ready, then carefully choose a trusted reader. Ask specific questions. Listen. Take notes. Practise self-care if you receive feedback that's difficult to hear. Take some time away from the work before returning to revise it.

## KEEP A RECORD

Keep a journal to briefly record the ways that you took care of yourself while writing. Just record the essential information in point form: what you wrote about, how many pages, and what you did to feel better afterwards. This way you will have a record that you can refer to later of what helped you to process difficult emotions.