

Writing Tips for *How We Heal*

We're excited that you've decided to try to write your own meditations for *How We Heal* from Hazelden Publishing, a new crowdsourced collection of daily reflections by sexual trauma survivors in recovery. *How We Heal* is a one-meditation-per-day collection. If you're familiar with *24 Hours a Day* (aka *The Little Black Book*), then you'll recognize the format.

What are meditations?

Meditations or reflections provide a short daily affirmation, story, or reminder that can help center and support people in recovery from alcohol and/or drugs.

- They are typically 150-200 words followed by a 15-30 word statement of intention.
- They can come in many forms such as a story, poem, insight, memory, prayer, share, or quotes (though please try to not use quotes from songs, poems, or other creative works from others as they require obtaining formal permission from the owner).

Who are the readers?

Daily meditation readers are typically in recovery, or related to someone in recovery, and benefit from a daily message to support them in their journey of taking life a day at a time. The readers are people just like you, who have the shared experiences of sexual trauma and addiction. Some may need encouragement to enter recovery while others commit time each day to read or listen to recovery material—they are invested heavily in their recovery.

How do I get started?

- Start writing! We often can get caught up in planning what to write. Starting to write will get your writing juices flowing. Once you have something on paper, you can then refine the work.
- Selecting a theme and/or concept(s) may be helpful for getting started. They are not required for inclusion in a meditation, however, they can be useful starting points and you may find that they help you recall or articulate experiences that you'd like to share. Themes can include "Justice" and "Drinking to Forget." Concepts can be feelings like anxiety and happiness or they can be judgments or situations like perfectionism, relationships, reclaiming laughter, or finding help.
- This is **your** meditation—use your stories, words, tone, language, whatever is authentic to you.
- Since this collection is for those with the shared experience of sexual trauma and alcohol and/or drug dependency, use whatever language is most appropriate to share your experience and connect with others.
- In your messages, others will hear caring, support, honesty, reassurance, knowledge, respect, and encouragement. Sexual trauma survivors with dependency on alcohol and/or other substances will find strength and hope from content that is just for them.
- As you refine your work, consider experiences and reflections that you believe will be helpful for others.

- It is also helpful to look at other meditations. It is more than ok to follow the structure or style of others. While your meditation should be from your own experiences and in your own words, there are many similar experiences that have been put to paper. This is a project where we have individual contributors who have shared experiences and it is expected that there will be some similarities among the contributions.

So what's the structure of a meditation?

There's a title, theme, body of the meditation, and a statement of intention.

1. **Title:** Name it what you'd like! These are typically 5-10 words.
2. **Theme:** This is helpful for the editors as they pull together the entirety of the collection. You can use these themes or feel free to write your own. We list some here, but there are more at the end of these instructions:
 - a. Drinking to Forget
 - b. Dealing with Stigma and Shame
 - c. Activism and Advocacy
3. **Body of Meditation:** There are typically 5 components:
 1. situation, problem, event
 2. impact on self and/or others
 3. thoughts, feelings, perceptions
 4. solutions, actions taken, personal recovery-focused routine(s)
 5. insights, realizations, reflections, intentions
4. **Intention:** The intention is the takeaway message of the meditation. Examples:
 - a. I will fight to live my life without numbing.
 - b. Today I will keep looking for the answers I need. And I will help others with their questions.
 - c. I will commit to honesty as a service to myself and to everyone I meet.

What does a meditation look like?

Here are a few examples.

Theme: Support and Community

TITLE: *Keep Looking*

MEDITATION: When I asked for help, when I looked around for a friendly face, when I reached out for someone who understood, I kept coming up with blank stares. It was hard to find someone who knew what I was going through.

But I had to keep looking. I knew that once I found the right person to talk with, I'd be able to keep going. Someone has done this before me. I needed to start with someone who'd been where I was. I needed to start with a group of survivors. They would know where to go. And they did.

Through them, through my group of sisters who'd also been molested, I found a therapist. And through that therapist, I found treatment for pills. And with them both, I found recovery. But I had to keep looking.

INTENTION: Today I will keep looking for the answers I need. And I will help others with their questions.

Theme: Shame and Vulnerability

TITLE: *I am not my Darkest Moment*

MEDITATION: The harm done to me does not define who I am or who I will become. I determine the role this experience will play in my life—by doing the necessary footwork to eliminate any shame that I have about what happened to me. I can also be safe in my vulnerable exploration of what happened to me, whether in writing or finding a trusted person to unpack my pain and truth with. In exposing my shame, I make room for hope and healing.

INTENTION: Today I will remember I am not the sum of my broken parts, rather I am the creator of becoming my whole self.

I've written a meditation, what's next?

When you have a written meditation, please submit it through the online form on this page: <https://www.hazelden.org/store/publicpage/meditations-anthology-writing-detail>.

Our editors will review it and may reach out for clarifying questions. Depending on the response and the number of submissions we get, some people might have more than one meditation published—or we might have so many that we can't use them all. We'll get back to you about our plans for your writing. We appreciate your help so much.

What are some more possible themes?

It might be hard to come up with an idea of what you could say to others. Here we have some ideas for themes. As we've worked with people who are survivors of sexual trauma and in recovery for addiction to alcohol or other drugs, we've seen some common themes. Maybe you could start here:

Memory/Flashbacks How do you handle what you remember? What you don't remember? How have you coped with memories?

Triggers When you see or hear something or someone that reminds you of your trauma or your addiction, what do you do? How do you get through it?

Cravings Recovery is physical, mental, emotional, and psychological. We have cravings for so many reasons. What do you do when you face a craving?

Mental Health Trauma causes so much harm, not just physically—but also mentally. Recovering from addiction requires us to dig deep into our mental health. What helps you? How do you do it?

Justice When we talk about sexual trauma, we also have to talk about victims, survivors, perpetrators, and criminals. It brings with it so many questions about justice. In another light, we might also have to face the issue of justice if our substance use has involved breaking any laws. How have you faced the issue of justice in your recovery?

Shame and Vulnerability To heal ourselves, we have to be vulnerable. We might have to face issues of shame, something anyone can carry, but especially those of us who have been traumatized. We don't deserve shame, we didn't ask for shame, but we carry it with us. How can we? How do you? Share with us.

Love and Relationships It can be hard to trust, to feel, to love, to let others in. This is true for people who face addiction, but it's particularly true for those of us who are survivors of sexual trauma. What are your thoughts about this? How do you have or develop relationships with friends, family, and partners?

Sexual Health How have you addressed sexuality, sexual health, and aspects of sexual relationship? What can you share with others?

Spirituality Spirituality is central to recovery for many people. How do you relate your recovery to spirituality?

Personal Growth People often look to how their experiences have shaped them; how they grow because of their trauma. Have you experienced this? How have you been able to not only survive—but also thrive? What can you tell others as they look into their own futures? What can be an inspiration to them?

Support and Community Where do you find support and encouragement? How did you reach out and find help? What can your experience tell others?

Activism and Advocacy Some people, not all, find empowerment in activism. It certainly is not required as part of recovery or healing, but it can help. Have you experienced this? What have you found as you've advocated for yourself, others, or the survivor community?