

Writing Study Questionnaires

On the following pages are a number of different questionnaires used for a variety of studies. Many overlap from study to study. Feel free to mix and match as needed.

From Richards et al (2000)

Right now, to what degree are you currently experiencing each of the following, where:

1 = not at all 3 = somewhat 5 = a great deal

Racing heart___	Nervous___
Upset stomach___	Sad___
Headache___	Guilty___
Dizziness___	Happy___
Shortness of breath___	Contented___
Cold hands___	Fatigued___
Sweaty hands___	Constrained___
Pounding heart___	Anxious___

Overall, how personal was the essay that you wrote today ___

Overall, how much have you told other people about what you wrote today ___

Overall, how much did you reveal your emotions in what you wrote today ___

How much have you wanted to tell another person about what you wrote today ___

How much have you actively held back from telling others about what you wrote today ___

Briefly below, describe how you feel about what you wrote today:

THANK YOU

[Note: A version of this questionnaire was also used in Pennebaker & Beall, 1986 wherein participants completed the separate emotion and symptom items both before and after writing. If you want this kind of information in your own study, feel free to change the emotion and symptom items to match your needs.]

From Pennebaker, Colder, & Sharp, 1990

Last Day of Writing -- Coming-to-College Study

ID # _____ Date _____

In answering the following questions, consider all three days of your writing.

1. Overall, how personal were the essays that you wrote:

_____ personal _____ personal

2. Prior to the experiment, how much had you told other people about what you wrote:

_____ not at all _____ a great deal

3. Overall, how much did you reveal your emotions in what you wrote:

_____ not at all _____ a great deal

4. How much have you actively held back from telling others about what you wrote:

_____ not at all _____ a great deal

5. Prior to the experiment, how much had you wanted to talk with someone about what you wrote:

_____ not at all _____ a great deal

6. Over the last 3 days, how difficult has it been for you to write during the experiment:

_____ not at all _____ extremely

7. In general, how sad or depressed have you felt over the last 3 days:

_____ not at all _____ extremely

8. In general, how happy have you felt over the last 3 days:

_____ not at all _____ extremely

9. During your normal day, to what degree have you thought about this experiment since it began:

_____ not at all _____ a great deal

10. Since the beginning of the study, during the hours that you were not involved in the experiment, to what degree have you thought about the topics that you wrote about:

_____ not at all _____ a great deal

Follow-up Information (Coming-to-College Project)

Congratulations. You have completed the first, and most time-consuming phase of the experiment. As you know, different people will be participating in this same study at other times during the semester. PLEASE, do not talk with anyone about your experiences in this study until the semester is over.

Because we are interested in your attitudes and behaviors, we will be contacting you two more times to fill out brief questionnaires. The next time will be on the last day of classes in your Introductory Psychology class. The last time will be sometime during the Spring semester.

Your cooperation so far is appreciated more than you know. For many people, this has been a difficult experiment. If you have any questions, problems, or would like to talk, please feel free to contact Dr. Pennebaker anytime during the day (692-3727). Others that you can contact include:

Counseling and Testing Center for psychological services	692-2211
Student Health Center for psychological, psychiatric, and general medical services	692-2141
Dr. Mike Best, chairman of Psychology Department	692-2438
Dr. Alan Brown, chairman of the Human Subjects committee	692-3420

Again, thank you for your help.

Final In-Class Questionnaire, Coming-to-College Project

1. When did you participate in the study (check one):

___ 1st week of September ___ 1st week of November

___ 1st week of October ___ 1st week of December

Answer the following questions on a scale from 1 to 7 with 1 being "not at all" and 7 being "a great deal":

1. Since your participating in the writing experiment, how much have you thought about what you wrote?

2. Since the writing experiment, how much have you talked to other people about what you wrote? _____

3. Looking back on the experiment, to what degree do you feel that the experiment had a positive longlasting effect on you? _____

4. Looking back on the experiment, to what degree do you feel that the experiment had a negative longlasting effect on you? _____

5. Since the experiment, how happy have you felt? _____

6. Since the experiment, how sad or depressed have you felt? _____

7. Looking back on the experiment, to what degree has this experiment been valuable or meaningful for you (not counting the extra credit you will receive)? _____

8. Now that the experiment is completed, could you tell us how it may have influenced you in the longrun? What have been the positive effects as well as the negative effects?

9. If you had the chance to do it over again, would you participate in this study:

definitely yes___ probably yes___ don't know___ probably no___ definitely no___

10. Any other comments you have about the experiment will be greatly appreciated (Use back if necessary):

6-Month Follow-up (Coming to College Project)

April 14, 1988

To Writing Experiment Participants:

Last fall, you helped us by participating in a large 3-day writing experiment as part of your Introductory Psychology course. On the last day of the study, you agreed to fill out one last questionnaire -- which we are including. Could you please complete the enclosed questionnaire and return it by way of Campus Mail? We have included a self-addressed envelope for your convenience.

This experiment has become even more important than we originally thought. Indeed, it may serve as the basis by which SMU changes some of its ways of orienting new students. Unfortunately, we cannot tell you the exact nature of our results until you mail us the enclosed questionnaire.

If you would like a synopsis of our experimental findings, please write your name and mailing address below. As soon as we receive your questionnaire, we will mail you a copy of our major results. Note that we need your social security number on the questionnaire. Your name and address will not be included as part of the data. As always, we promise complete anonymity and confidentiality concerning everything you have done as part of the experiment.

We cannot begin to tell you how much we appreciate your help with this project. If you have any questions about the study, please drop by and see any of us in Room 3 of Hyer Hall. Again, thank you so much for your help.

Sincerely,

James W. Pennebaker Michelle Colder Lisa Sharp
Professor of Psychology Graduate Students in Psychology

YES, I would like to receive a copy of the results of the writing study. My mailing address is:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City and Zip: _____

ID # _____

Answer the following questions about your thoughts and behaviors that have occurred since mid-January, 1988 (this Spring semester).

1. How many times since the beginning of the Spring semester have you written out your thoughts in a diary, letter, or journal? (Don't count the times you have done this for a class) _____

2. Since the beginning of the Spring semester, how many cigarettes have you smoked a day? _____
3. Since the beginning of the Spring semester, how many hours of sleep have you gotten each night? _____
4. During your average week since the beginning of the Spring semester, how many times have you engaged in strenuous exercise? _____
5. Since the beginning of the Spring semester, how many alcoholic beverages have you had to drink during the average week? _____
6. Since the beginning of the Spring semester, how many aspirin or aspirin substitutes (e.g., Tylenol) have you taken during the average week? _____
7. Since the beginning of the Spring semester, how many days has your activity been restricted due to illness? _____
8. How many traffic tickets have you received since the beginning of the Spring semester? _____
9. Since the beginning of the Spring semester, how many times have you gone to the Student Health Center, a private physician, the Counseling Center, or other professional for:
 Illness _____ Injury _____ Checkup _____ Other health _____
 Depression _____ Career Counseling _____ Other Psychological _____
10. Overall, how well do you think you have adjusted to college life (check a place on the scale that reflects your feeling):
 _____ _____ _____ _____ _____
 not well fairly well extremely well
11. Overall, since coming to college, how happy have you felt?
 _____ _____ _____ _____
 not happy fairly happy extremely happy
12. Overall, since coming to college, how sad or depressed have you felt?
 _____ _____ _____ _____
 not sad fairly sad extremely sad

Longterm Thoughts About the Writing Experiment

All of the following questions refer to your thoughts and feelings surrounding your participation in the 3-day writing experiment that you participated in during the Fall semester as part of your Introductory Psychology course.

Answer the following questions on a scale from 1 to 7 with 1 being "not at all" and 7 being "a great deal":

1. This Spring semester, how much have you thought about what you wrote in last semester's writing experiment? _____
2. This Spring semester, how much have you talked to other people about what you wrote? _____

3. Looking back on the experiment, to what degree do you feel that the experiment had a positive longlasting effect on you? _____

4. Looking back on the experiment, to what degree do you feel that the experiment had a negative longlasting effect on you? _____

5. This spring semester, how happy have you felt? _____

6. This spring semester, how sad or depressed have you felt? _____

7. Looking back on the writing experiment, to what degree was the experiment valuable or meaningful for you? _____

8. Now that the experiment is completed, could you tell us how it may have influenced you in the longrun? What have been the positive effects as well as the negative effects?

9. If you had the chance to do it over again, would you participate in this study: definitely yes____
probably yes____
don't know____
probably no____
definitely no____

10. Any other comments you have about the experiment will be greatly appreciated (Use back if necessary):

Final Mailing, End of Second Semester

Summary of Writing Experiment Results

Purpose of the study: Over the last 5 years, we have found that writing about traumatic experiences is good for peoples' health. In this study, we wanted to learn two things: 1. Is it physically and psychologically beneficial to have beginning freshmen write about their deepest feelings about coming to college? 2. When is the best time to write about coming to college -- as soon as the students arrive at college or after a few months?

Procedures used in the study: Overall, 130 students were randomly assigned to write about one of two topics for three consecutive days. The Experimental Group wrote about their deepest thoughts and feelings about coming to college; the Control Group wrote on non-emotional topics, such as their plans for the day. In addition, students participated in the study at one of four times -- during the first week of classes in September (Wave 1), the first week of October (Wave 2), of November (Wave 3), and December (Wave 4).

Overall, we were most interested in the effects of writing on physical illness and psychological adjustment to college. Measures of health and illness were based on the total number of health center visits people made for illness in the months preceeding and following their participation in the study. Psychological adjustment was measured by the questionnaires that everyone periodically filled out.

Preliminary Results. By the end of the first semester, two important effects had emerged. First, those people in the Experimental group visited the health center for illness significantly fewer times after participating than those people in the Control group. Further, it did not matter if people wrote at the beginning of the semester or later on. In short, writing about upsetting experiences had very positive health effects in the first few months after coming to college.

Second, people in the Experimental group admitted being a little more home sick by the end of the first semester than those in the Control group. There were no differences between the two groups for feelings of depression, happiness, etc. We are particularly interested in learning about the longterm effects from the questionnaires that people have recently mailed.

Implications of these findings. Our preliminary findings indicate that writing about important psychological events such as coming to college has very positive effects of people's physical health. The psychological value is still not known. We are predicting that the Experimental Group subjects will evidence better longterm adjustment than those in the Control Group. If these effects continue to be found, we hope to implement a program whereby all entering freshmen will be asked to write about their deepest thoughts and feelings on entering college.