

# **FULLNESS OF RELEASE: A Journal for Reflection and Releasing Emotions, and a Series of Illustrations Depicting Emotions, Trauma, or One's Life Experiences**

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## **Abstract**

Setting aside one's emotions or going through a bad/traumatic experience without ever assessing it can take one's mental health a great toll. Suppressing or repressing our emotions affects how we behave, think, and perceive life. Not everyone has a perfect way to release those pent-up emotions, which is why I propose to create a journal for specifically helping to release the trauma, and emotions, or to reflect on a person's experience. The journal is meant to help people get started or to experience how helpful journaling can be for their mental health. Along with those journals, I will be releasing digital illustrations based on the entries of the journals that will be given out to volunteers. The illustrations are a way of connecting the volunteers' emotions to others who have similar feelings or experiences.

**Keywords:** reflect, emotions, experiences, journal, illustrations, mental health,

## **Introduction**

I grew up in a household where negative emotions, topics of mental health, and expressions of love and care were not acknowledged or tolerated. I did not have a healthy way of expressing emotions growing up, I would resolve to hold back my tears till a knot in my throat formed. That aching feeling of that knot? I hated it so much. I would hide myself from crying or getting mad because I didn't want to show any signs of weakness.

In my teenage years, I resolved to harm myself, isolate myself, and self-sabotage myself when it came to events in my life that did not feel good at all. I did not know what to do with the emotions I felt, and it was leading me to depression and intense anxiety. My emotions were out of control and were constantly affecting me and the people who surrounded me.

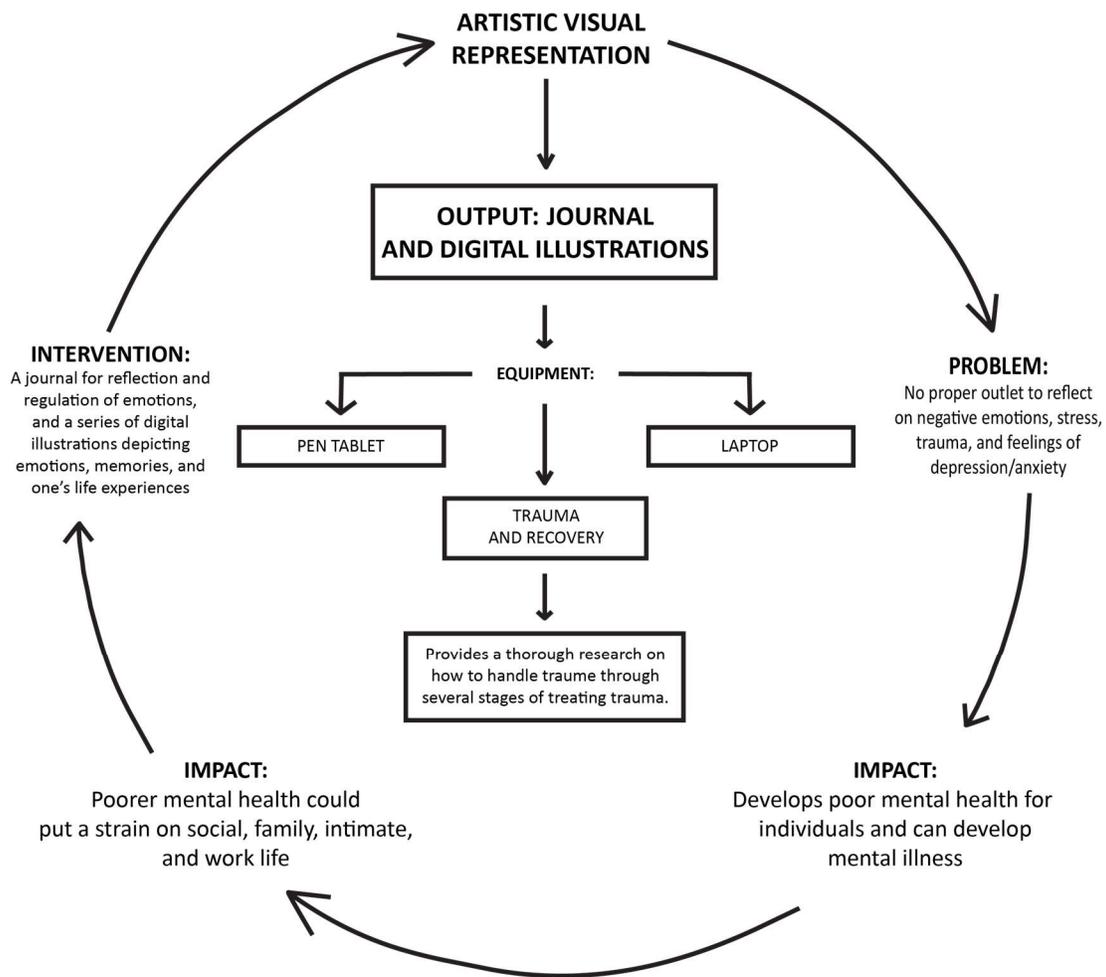
Later in life, in my small circle of close friends, I was introduced to journaling. They explained to me that it was their way of letting out their thoughts and events of what happened to them. I was intrigued by that idea, but I was not much of a writer, so, I combined writing and art to express myself fully. Writing and drawing the emotions, experiences, lessons, and traumas that I have encountered from when I was little to now, helped me assess and analyze what caused me to feel such negative emotions.

This gave me the idea to propose my thesis project which is a journal about helping both individuals with and without mental illnesses/disorders. For those diagnosed with mental illnesses/disorders, it helps them realize that journaling will be a great help in understanding traumatic, stressful, and emotional events. As for those who are not diagnosed with any mental illness/disorder, journaling is a great way to express their emotions as well. Most people have strong urges to express their thoughts and what they feel about certain events in their lives (Lepore, S. J., 1997).

Along with those journals, I plan to have a series of illustrations of different depictions of the entries of the volunteers who were willing to take on my journal. I gave them a week each to finish the journal and to return their journals to my hands. As I observe and read the entries, with the volunteers' consent, I will create illustrations based on those entries.

The goal of this project is for those who are struggling with their emotions, whether diagnosed or not, to give them the initiative to help themselves by letting them analyze, reflect, and accept the stressful, emotional, and traumatic events that they experienced. Re-opening yourself to these events may be stressful initially, but worth it in the long run.

Living in denial of your emotions will take far longer to take care of them, which is why once we start to recognize our feelings/emotions, we can tackle them or whatever is causing them. So, if you have feelings of anxiety let yourself be anxious for at least a couple of minutes then meditate. If you are feeling mad, then let yourself rage then reflect as to why you got mad. Be in touch with your emotions, accept that you are feeling a certain way, let yourself feel that way, and then act as to how you will lessen those unhealthy feelings (Pombo, E. 2019, February 1).



The creative framework I have created visualizes the process and important components of how I came up with my output. This section summarizes my research, including my chosen output, equipment, resources, target audience, problems, impacts, and solutions.

In the beginning stages of my project, I wanted my topic to be personal and emotional, and where the public can relate to and interact with it. I have always struggled to express my feelings due to how I was brought up. The validation of what I felt was not purely acknowledged with the relatives I grew up with, which has resulted in me developing a life of daily struggle to express what I felt and developed a habit of suppressing my feelings and trauma. I felt numb and choked up with emotions filling up inside me.

In my research, I searched out the reasons for why individuals avoid expressing or suppressing their emotions, or how they normally deal with their emotions. Do they reflect? Do they just simply suppress their emotions? How does this habit affect them daily? Did they develop some type of mental illness? I found out a few reasons as to why individuals tend to suppress or repress than express.

First, what does it mean to suppress one's emotions, trauma, or thoughts. Suppressing emotions are emotions that individuals choose to unacknowledged, which could result in failing to act on them or express them. We must know that emotions and trauma cannot be suppressed, they will leak out eventually in one way or another. It is nothing but extra energy that a person carries along with them everywhere (Parvez, 2024).

To stop this habit of setting aside/suppressing emotions and trauma, I brainstormed a solution to the problem. I pursued the output of creating a journal with prepared prompts and a series of illustrations. I want to bring light to journaling since it is something that not a lot of people go to when they need to release some of those pent-up emotions. Not a lot of people have access to therapy or a psychiatrist to help them with their emotions, trauma, or experiences that they need to reflect on, so, a journal is an easy way to alleviate some of that extra energy.

Following the making of the journals, I will be creating a series of illustrations based on the journal entries by volunteers who will use the journal to record their emotions, trauma, anxieties, and experiences they had. The illustrations are a way to create a connection to those who are also struggling with maybe expressing their emotions or struggling with anxiety or depression.

The **data gathering method** for this thesis project will be conducted with interviews. I have prepared a 13-question questionnaire. 6 of the questions will be asking them how they deal with their emotions, and what methods they use to calm themselves. 2 questions will be asked regarding why they haven't tried journaling. 5 questions will ask them how journaling has affected their mental health if they confirm with me that they have a history of journaling.

The **intended audience** for my thesis project is those who struggle to comprehend their emotions, stress, trauma, and of course, experiences that they want to record. People from the ages of 9-25 and any identifying gender would be the ideal target for my thesis project. Children at the ages of 9-12 before their teen years, can begin journaling for their emotional, social, and physical development. As for 13-25, I believe these ages can utilize my journal project to record their experiences in their daily lives, and during these years a lot of complex emotions come into play. Young adults and teenagers need a way to express these emotions and stress as they go through the critical years of their lives as they are being molded into adults.

For the **design process**, I have been studying different ways on what platforms people usually use to express their emotions, stress, trauma, and experiences. I have been researching and contemplating what prompts to lay into the journal and how I can better communicate with my audience.

For the illustration part of my project, with the returned journals in my possession, I will be reviewing, studying, and understanding the answers from each journal I gave out. With the basis of the answers to the prompts, I will be creating digital illustrations depicting the emotions, experiences, depression, anxieties, and trauma of the volunteers. I aim to have 5 individuals for this project to happen.

## Pre-Production

To start my project, I will be conducting interviews with five individuals who are either diagnosed or undiagnosed with a mental illness/mental health. I will be asking questions to ask what they usually do with negative emotions or how they deal with their trauma. I will also be asking if they have journaled before or if not, why did haven't they tried at the least?

Figure 1: 1<sup>st</sup> interview



Figure 2: 2<sup>nd</sup> interview



Figure 3: 3<sup>rd</sup> interview



Figure 4: 4<sup>th</sup> interview

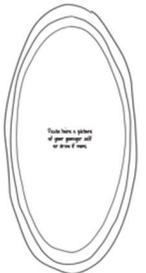


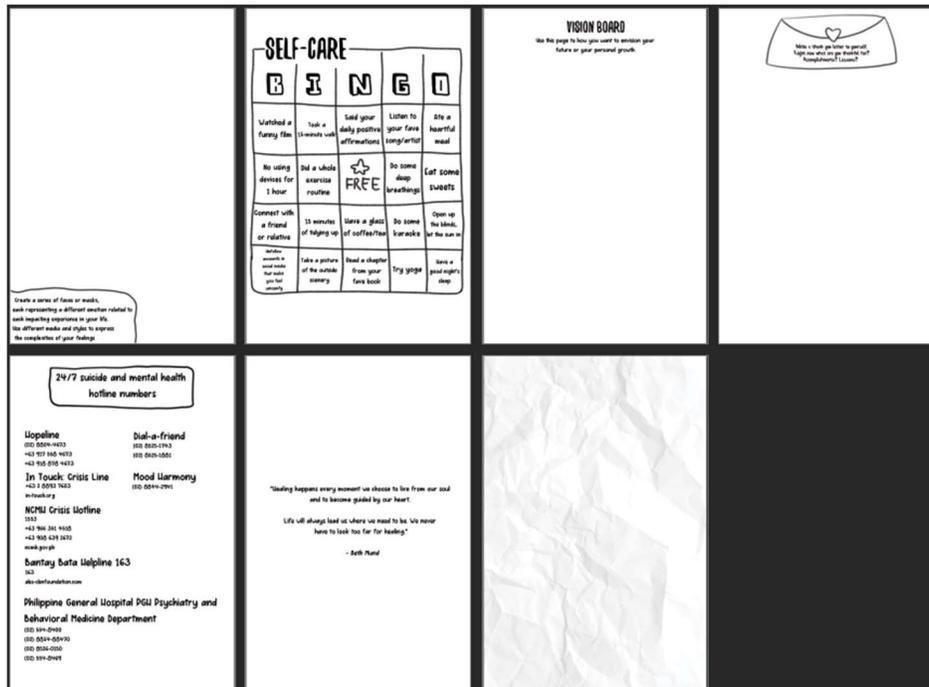
Figure 5: 5th interview



After the interviews, I will list down what prompts I will insert into the journal. I plan to place a prompt to help them access, analyze, or reflect on their emotions. There will be prompts that will ask them to write, draw, insert images, or combinations of the above for different prompts. I will be designing the journal's book cover to invoke feelings of melancholy or nostalgic feeling. I will sketch the pages as to how I want to lay them out and stylize them. I will use Adobe Photoshop for my journal's design and layout.

Figures 6-28: Page Layouts for the Journal

<p>Fullness of Release</p>  <p>by: vita</p>	<p>Breathe in.</p>	<p>Breathe out.</p>	<p>Now, let it all flow out.</p>
<p>ABOUT ME</p> <p>Draw or Paste a picture of yourself</p> <p>Favorite song</p> <p>Favorite color</p> <p>Random fact about me</p> <p>Age Birthday Height Sex Favorite color Favorite food</p> <p>Like</p> <p>Dislike</p>	<p>To start an art, tell me what your day or week was like. Write me if you were writing a novel. <i>Exaggerate</i> Be Creative</p>	<p>Fill this page with your favorite quotes.</p>	<p>Tell me how you feel. (Drawings in a circle)</p>
<p>Write a playlist that would describe your emotions today. Think about how these songs help you reflect or influence your feelings.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.</li> <li>2.</li> <li>3.</li> <li>4.</li> <li>5.</li> <li>6.</li> <li>7.</li> <li>8.</li> <li>9.</li> <li>10.</li> <li>11.</li> <li>12.</li> <li>13.</li> <li>14.</li> <li>15.</li> <li>16.</li> <li>17.</li> <li>18.</li> <li>19.</li> <li>20.</li> <li>21.</li> <li>22.</li> <li>23.</li> <li>24.</li> <li>25.</li> <li>26.</li> <li>27.</li> <li>28.</li> <li>29.</li> <li>30.</li> </ol> <p>Name this playlist:</p>	<p>Before or a dream you had what elements and moments stood out to you. How do you think they relate to your life or personal struggles?</p> 	 <p>Anything on your mind you seem you could not put into words, words pictures or draw or both.</p>	<p>STRESS? TRAUMA? Write, draw, paint, or make a collage of how you want to address and convey it to your own way. Have fun!</p>
<p>Write on a small area on this page of what you <b>FEAR</b>. Then, <b>REP THAT PIECE</b> of the page. <b>REP THAT PIECE</b> of the page. Repeat until you have nothing to fear.</p>	 <p>Think here a picture of your younger self or area of fear.</p>	<p>While looking at the picture or drawing of your younger self, write a letter to them.</p>	



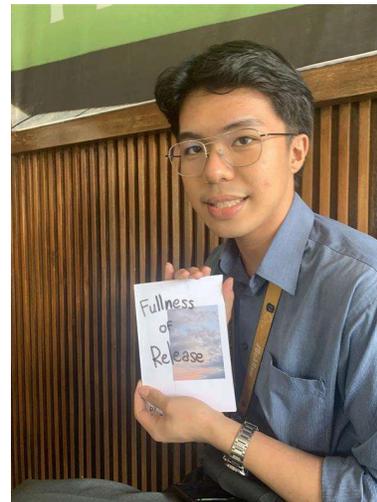
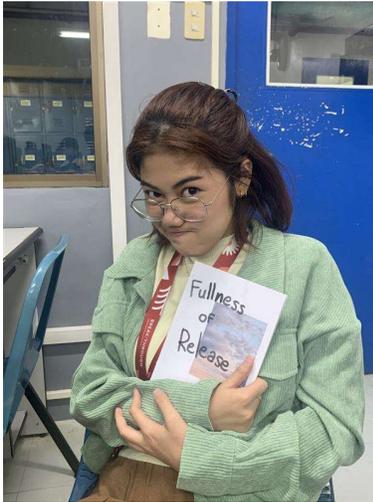
## Production

During production, I will have my completed journal printed to 5 copies. I will be handing it out to 5 individuals, who are either diagnosed with a mental illness/disorder or undiagnosed. I will give them one week to finish the journal, or if they finish it early, they may return it within the given week.

Figure 29: Printed copies of the journal



Figures 30-34: Pictures of volunteers



Once in my hands, I will begin the illustrations, since I have 5 volunteers, I will be creating 5 illustrations as well. I will be using Adobe Photoshop to sketch and create illustrations. Next, I will advise my mentor to see if there are changes or critiques that I need to address for each digital illustration.

### **Post-Production**

After making the final touches to my illustrations during the post-production, I will print them 11 inches in height and 13.5 inches in width and insert them into lightboxes. The reason for the lightboxes is because due to how colorful the illustrations are, the lightboxes will be able to show the details that if they were printed in paper, they will look flat and dull.

Figures 35-39: Digital illustrations of the project





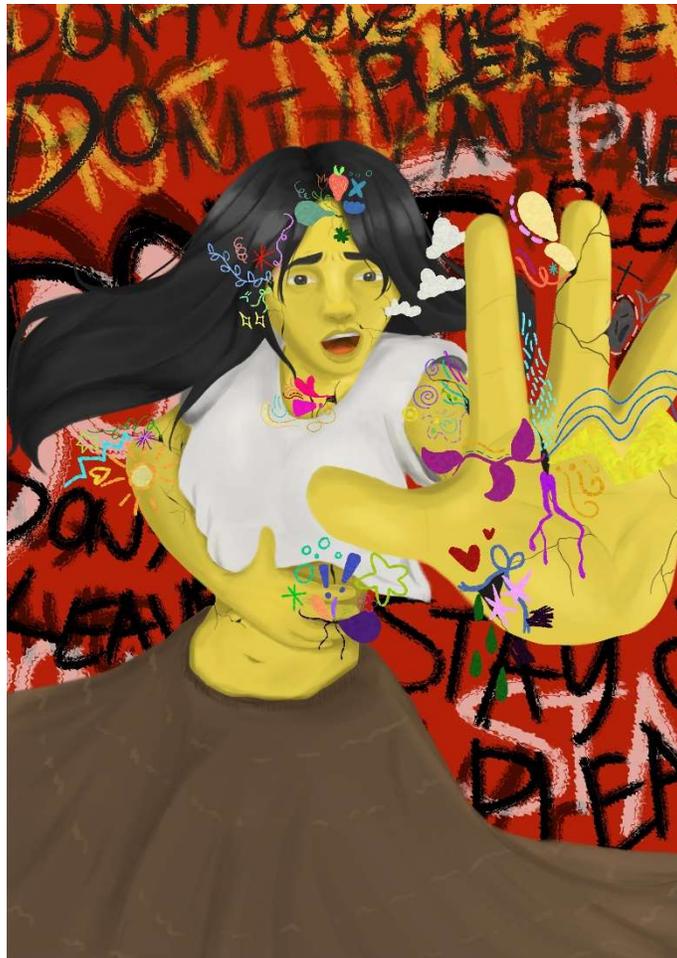


Figure 40: Picture showing the final product of lightboxes



After the lightboxes are printed and constructed, I will be exhibiting them along with other students' artworks. Through the exhibition I will be able to survey and ask the audience about their thoughts regarding journaling and the emotions that they feel when observing the illustrations. And of course, to answer questions about the whole project, and overall experience with the illustrations and journals.

Figure 41: Picture of displayed lightboxes and journals in exhibition with artist



Figure 42.1: Guests interacting with the journals and illustrations



Figure 42.2: Guest interacting with the journals and illustrations



Figure 42.3: Guest interacting with the journals and illustrations



Figure 42.3: Guests interacting with the journals and illustrations



Figure 43: Guests taking a picture with the artist



## Review of Related Literature

### Introduction

Having a healthy way to release all those negative emotions, stress, and trauma is important for one's mental health. Building it up or suppressing is just extra baggage that will cause great pressure on yourself and those around you. Protecting and checking in with ourselves is important for a healthy mind and body. We need a healthy way of expressing those emotions, stress, and trauma, one of those could be venting to a trusted person in our lives, but of course, we cannot just pour our baggage and add stress to whoever we are venting to. They have their problems, and all of us have different issues, emotions, anxiety, and trauma. There are therapy or psychological clinics, but not everyone has the resources to afford these services. The main problem is that not everyone has an easy way to release all that baggage.

### Suppressing and Repressing Emotions

Suppressed emotions are feelings that we choose to avoid because of having no idea how to manage them. Repressed emotions are emotions that we unconsciously avoid. Depending on how busy you are, you may set aside feelings from negative situations, but you must go on with life because you feel you do not have the luxury of time. Suppression can be a temporary solution if you later assess and reflect on those negative feelings you felt. On the other hand, repressed emotions are emotions that do not get the chance to be processed. Emotional repression can relate to experiences from childhood. We all learn our behavior and way of communicating from those who raised us. Expression of feelings/emotions can come easy if you were raised by people who frequently talked about their feelings, encouraged you to share your feelings, normalized positive and negative emotional experiences, and did not judge you for expressing your feelings (Raypole, 2024).

Though we cannot blame them, the adults who raised us may have had childhood experiences where their expression of emotions was denied or judged. They may do the same for their children since that is how they were brought up. If expressing your feelings in childhood

leads to painful consequences, you may have learned it was much safer to avoid it. And now as an adult, you might have to continue to bury your strong emotions or push them aside (Raypole, 2024).

There was this incident where I did not sleep at all through the night and that morning I was immediately lectured, and when I got to school, I could not focus and ended up not submitting any of my works which resulted in being lectured again by my teacher. I had all these built-up angry and sad emotions throughout the day, and I did not want to show it because I did not want people to think of me negatively in a way. When I got home, I poured out all my suppressed emotions onto my younger siblings.

This is one primary reason why people suppress what they feel, they do not want to be seen unlikable or seen in a negative light. Other reasons are that these emotions and trauma are painful when you experience or acknowledge them, they want to appear perfect to others and themselves, it is a symbol of weakness and lack of control, and lastly, the positive thinking movement encourages people to unacknowledged their negative emotions, again people do not want to be put in a negative light (Parvez, 2024).

## **Trauma**

Traumatic events can happen to anyone at any age. It can have lasting effects on the physical and mental well-being of the person. According to Spytka (2023), trauma is the result of stressful events that shatter your sense of security, giving you the feeling of helplessness in a dangerous world.

Trauma is associated with events such as physical or sexual assault, violence, or accidents. It can also involve responses to frequent events, like ongoing emotional abuse or childhood neglect. Trauma can affect many areas of your life, like emotional, social, and physical well-being. Due to the extreme stress trauma gives, it can trigger your body's fight, flight, or freeze response (Spytska, 2023).

To know if a person has trauma, according to Ryder (2022), flashbacks or nightmares, avoiding things that remind you of trauma, being aware of danger, easily startled, consciously or subconsciously being triggered, feeling guilt or shame, and feelings of overwhelming are signs that a person has trauma.

You see the signs, but what happens if you are left untreated? The overall experience with trauma unfolds in time. The initial stage comes with denial of what is happening, this becomes a defense mechanism. At the stage where you feel shocked, you will feel like inhibiting activities, disorienting, and disorganizing. After that feeling of shock, exposure or emotional response stage comes, this is where you start to feel strong emotions toward those traumatic events or the consequences. At this stage, the trauma either is healed or becomes a chronic disorder (Spytska, 2023).

## **Journaling**

Journaling is a way to release those pent-up emotions, in a way it is a coping technique that I would love to introduce. My personal experience with journaling has been helpful to my mental health, my well-being, and my relationships. Journaling is a journey to record your thoughts and insights identify your competencies and determine how to improve them (Cohen, 2019). Many people have a strong desire to express their thoughts and feelings (Lepore, 1997),

and this unending flow of thoughts can be overwhelming for people, especially those with a mental illness/disorder. Life is full of unexpected events, surprises, stirrings of information, and frustrations. Life's cycle of surprises creates negative emotions that can lead to emotional torment without a proper way to let go of these emotions.

Journaling is also a way to learn more about yourself and discover things you did not know until you wrote or reflected on them. Honesty and transparency could benefit you along your journaling journey (Johnson, 2019) because being honest about the experiences you had could help you reflect on why you have trauma currently affecting you (Colori, 2015). As you walk that journey, you can manage your thoughts more easily, and any intense feelings you have can be channeled into healthy and productive fuel. You just need to listen and focus rather than avoid those feelings (Johnson, 2019).

### ***Cognitive/Mental Reframing***

When you look at a glass of water that is halfway filled, how will you perceive it? Is it half full or half empty? It depends if you are pessimistic or optimistic, if you are pessimistic, you would perceive it as half empty, but if you are optimistic, you would perceive it as half full. That is what reframing is all about, its goal is to change the way you look at a stressful situation and change the way you experience it (Scott, 2023).

Reframing is also called restructuring, which makes sense since you are changing the way you perceive stressful, emotional situations. What's great about reframing is that it helps minimize the stressors in your life at how you perceive them and lets you relax more. It changes how you physically respond to stress because your body's response is triggered by the stress that you perceive rather than the actual stressful situation. If you perceive that you are threatened by a stressful situation, physically or psychologically, your fight or flight response kicks in (Scott, 2023).

Cognitive/mental reframing can be divided into four steps: learn about thought patterns, notice your thoughts, challenge your thoughts, and replace your thoughts. The first step is learning about your thought patterns. Are you more pessimistic? Maybe more optimistic? Acknowledging the way you think can greatly affect your stress levels. A solid understanding of the way you think, will give you a clear picture of how it negatively affects your life and see what steps you can take to change (Scott, 2023).

The next step is taking notice of your thoughts, basically catching yourself before slipping into those negative, stressful thoughts. It is all about taking note of your negative thinking, but not changing it at first, according to Elizabeth Scott, Ph. D. (2023), they recommend taking a journal and writing down what's happening in your life and thoughts about what you are going through, which you can look more closely and analyze them through your new way of thinking.

As you catch your thoughts, the next step would be to challenge your thoughts by looking for the truth and accuracy of those negative thoughts. You need to know if your negative thoughts are telling you half-truths or full-on lies. Try to rethink the way you always have and challenge every negative thought. The final step to reframing would be replacing your thoughts with every negative thought you have you could reframe them as discomfort rather than pain. It is a useful reframing trick that rather than looking at something negative, try to talk to yourself with less strong, negative emotions. Rather than viewing a stressful situation as a threat, view it as a challenge, and see it that there is a hidden "gift" in a stressful situation (Scott, 2023).

## ***Radical Acceptance***

Radical acceptance is all about accepting what you cannot control without judging them, which will reduce the suffering from stress. This technique is based on the concept that one's suffering is not from the actual pain from the situation, but rather from the attachment to the pain. Radical acceptance suggests non-attachment is the key to less suffering, though it does not mean being completely emotionless, but rather not letting your pain evolve into suffering. It means focusing on your thoughts and feelings to identify when you are opening yourself to feeling worse than necessary (Cuncic, 2022).

Radical acceptance involves accepting reality for what it is and not getting all emotional about reality. This coping technique can be used by those who are diagnosed with mental illnesses/disorders, those who are diagnosed should accept that they cannot control that they get a mental illness/disorder. They cannot change the fact that they are diagnosed with a mental illness/disorder (Cohen, 2019).

This coping technique, radical acceptance, is applied when you are unable to change what has happened or when something has happened that feels callous. Well, it does not mean you completely agree with what is happening or what has happened to you, but rather it gives you hope to get a chance to accept things for what they are and not fight against reality. This may be a hard pill to swallow, but it is much better than letting your emotions run wild, you can cause more misery for yourself when you avoid or dwell in your suffering and pain (Cuncic, 2022).

## ***Expressive Writing***

Expressive writing is all about the involvement in writing about your emotional, stressful, and traumatic experiences. It is a way that has been used by researchers to aid in the healing process from trauma and to intervene with the development of possible stress and stress-related illnesses. It is effective in reducing the possibilities of stress because it helps individuals organize their thoughts and feelings into an articulated narrative in which they can better understand their situation (Kupeli, N. et. al, 2019).

## **Visualizing Depression, Anxieties, Emotions, and Trauma Through Art**

As an artist, I create art to share what I feel or think or simply my imagination. It is a way for artists to express themselves from within. And it is not only limited to artists, but anyone can also create art to express whatever they feel. Especially to those who struggle with mental illness or those who have a hard time expressing their emotions or their experiences that words cannot simply do. Visualizing with art with what has been causing you to feel depressed, anxious, or to feel so many emotions can help you reflect and assess them.

Art can improve mental health because it helps people express their emotions, imagine their future, reinforce positive coping skills, notice thinking patterns, and strengthen their relationships (Mehlomakulu, 2020).

Everyone experiences anxiety in some way at some time in their lives. A team of visual artists from the University of New South Wales Art and Design and mental health researchers from the Black Dog Institute collaborated on a project called "The BIG Anxiety Project", where 200 individuals participated in this event where they explored the experiences of anxiety. The show presents the emotional state of being anxious which everyone experiences at times. The event

showed five presentations of art projects that relate to mental health and anxiety (Larsen, Vaughan, Bennett, & Boydell, 2018).

## Conclusion

In my findings I was able to grasp a better understanding of why people suppress/repress their emotions, what causes trauma, and the benefits of journaling. And with journaling, I learned how you use it to develop cognitive/mental reframing, radical acceptance, and learn expressive writing for the betterment of mental health.

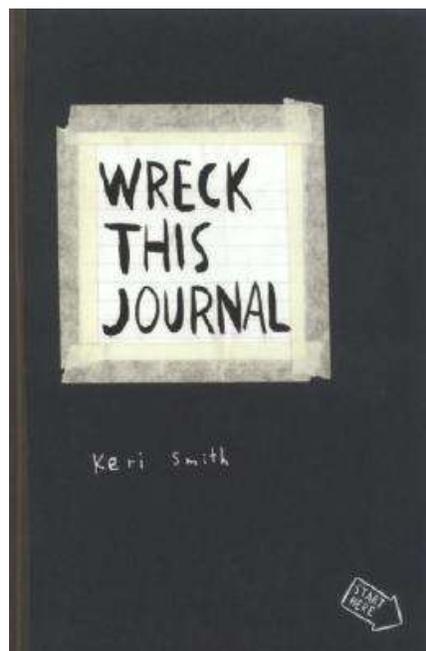
Suppressing and repressing emotions are influenced by several factors. It depends on how you were raised as a child and how the adults around you dealt with emotions. Did they validate or invalidate? Did they accept or judge your expression of your feelings? Other factors are the fear of being unlikeable, being seen weak, fear of losing control, and the pain that you must experience once you acknowledge those feelings. Speaking of experiencing the pain of acknowledging emotions, trauma can also give that pain. Traumatic events are painful events that you may have experienced at a certain time in your life. It leaves you in shock and greatly impacts different aspects of your life.

In resolving these problems, I've learned journaling can be a temporary solution to alleviate all the extra baggage in your heart and mind. The key to a successful journal is being completely transparent and honest with your emotions, anxieties, trauma, and feelings of depression.

However, there are no solid studies that you can use journals as a basis for diagnosing. There are also not many studies that specifically talk about the benefits of journaling, so, it requires intensive research. I recommend future researchers on this topic that they may find little resources, so interviews with psychiatrists and/ or therapists would be helpful in your research.

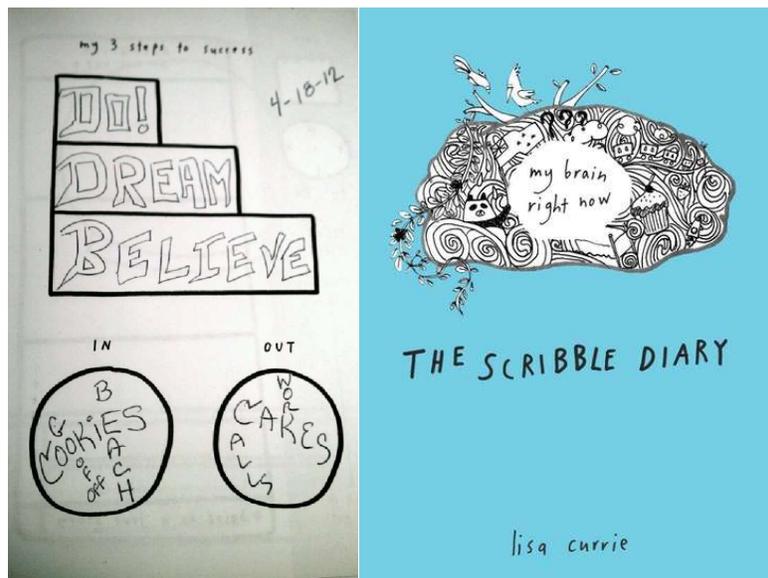
## Review of Related Works

Figure 44: Wreck This Journal by Keri Smith



Wreck This Journal is a journal by Keri Smith that encourages readers to become destructive, make the best of mistakes, and just be wild. The prompts in the journal may instruct you to poke holes in the page, burn the page, stomp on the page, or even paint with coffee. The quirky prompts inspired me to create creative prompts for my thesis project. I want my readers to be creative, immersive, and let loose with the prompts in my journal project.

Figure 45: The Scribble Diary by Lisa Currie



The Scribble Diary is a journal by Lisa Currie that encourages readers to doodle away their thoughts. The prompts in Lisa's journal encourage creativity, self-expression, and reflection. I loved the idea of using scribbles to express yourself, and that is what I plan as well for my journal. I want to lay out prompts that will ask readers to scribble their thoughts, emotions, and experiences.

Figure 46-47: reel screenshots from lifeonfilm.27 from Instagram



Lifeonfilm.27 is an Instagram account owned by an anonymous photographer. They roam around different cities, asking strangers to take a disposable camera and to take pictures of their trips or adventures, and return the camera to them within a week, will make a video out of the images. This concept is what I plan for my thesis project, with the journal that I will be making, I will be asking five individuals, three who are diagnosed with a mental illness/disorder, and two who are undiagnosed. I will give them each copy of the journal I made, and within a week, they will return it to me. With the volunteers' answers and inputs to each prompt from the journal, I will be creating illustrations based on them.

Figure 48: "Ever felt like your sadness is drowning you?" by Seif Hamza



As for how I want the illustrations to look, I will be depicting them in a way that will hope to catch the emotions, experiences, and anxieties that the volunteers for my thesis have portrayed in each of their journals. This art piece is by Seif Hamza titled "Ever felt like your sadness is drowning you?" and they portrayed very well the feeling of being drowned by one's emotions.

Figure 49: RIP by ToothlessEgo



This is an illustration by ToothlessEgo from deviantart.com. When I saw this it immediately made me feel and remember the times I had intense social anxiety. It's use of color and art style is very close to how I illustrate.

Figure 50: Restless by mcpotato



"Restless" is an illustration by mcpotato, and I love the use of the color palettes they used, and their art style. This is a perfect depiction of your mind full of thoughts, worries, and anxieties,

and how it makes you feel so numb is so spot on. The overall mood it gives is how I want to bring impact to the audience; to create a bridge between the volunteers and the audience.

## **Results and Discussion**

In my interviews with the volunteers and interviewees they all share common problems: suppressed emotions, unresolved problems, trauma, and lots of anxiety. I learned that every single person may experience anxiety, depression, and trauma, though the question is that how long it takes for it to resolve is the issue here. Most of the volunteers and interviewees have not tried journaling as their way to express their emotions, trauma, and anxieties. Again, they all usually just set them aside and eventually forgot it was there.

What surprised me is that most of them are aware of their suppression/repression of emotions. They are aware of their trauma, anxieties, and what causes them depression, they just do not know how to deal with them most of the time. There are a couple of interviewees that do journaling consistently, and they have informed me of the benefits of journaling. They told me that they became more aware of what causes them internal pain or how they feel about certain situations. They were able to reflect on the trauma that used to torment them every day, and from the moment they started to present day, they said they have a more stable mental health.

As for the exhibition, many overlooked the journals that were displayed. The audience were more focused on the lightboxes of illustrations. The color and details of the illustrations attracted them more than reading a journal written by another person. The goal of letting them feel emotions while observing the illustrations was achieved. I've had comments where they felt anxiety, restraint, happiness, bliss, uncertainty, and abandonment. It was insightful to hear comments from others as they view my work.

The ones who did take time with the journals told me that it was a unique idea to present. One agreed, a fellow journalist, that journaling really is a great way to release all the extra tension and emotions that you suppress and repress.

## **Conclusion**

Suppressing/repressing one's emotions, anxieties, trauma, and life experiences can have a great impact on a person's life. Based on my interviews with the five individuals, 3 out of 5 tend to suppress/repress their emotions most of the time. Due to this they have constant anxiety, feelings of numbness and depression, and have a hard time to express themselves. To those who volunteered to take upon the challenge of completing my journal project, they responded positively that they were able to reflect on some emotions and experiences that they were not able to. It helped them release the emotions that was building up inside them for a long time. Due to how well received the journals were with the volunteers and the positive results, it shows how helpful a journal can be to our mental health and well-being. With my illustrations, after showing the illustrations to a select number of people they were in awe of the details in the illustrations. Some said they felt connected to the illustrations I created.

## **Recommendations**

### **Research Topic**

This research is still open to more improvements in the timeline that was given to the volunteers to finish the journals. Some of them took more than a week to finish theirs. I also recommend that this research is not a basis for diagnosis of mental illnesses/disorders, but it is simply just helping people release suppressed emotions, trauma, and anxieties.

### **Creative Process**

The output of the journal can be improved with much thorough and research of what prompts to include that will help more individuals release their pent-up, suppressed emotions. I believe there are better ways to word out the prompts that were chosen for the journal. The printing as well may have some improvement, the stitches from the binding were seen at the front covers of the journals, especially with the design of the front cover and some of the pages within the journal. There is still more improvement for the layout and graphic design of the pages within the books, and a better choice for the font can be considered. I chose to use my handwriting more than a typeface, because it gave more an authentic feel when I used my handwriting than typing it out.

As for the concept of “I will give you this journal and return it to me, and I will create an illustration based on your entries” can be a different output other than digital illustrations. Animation, film, traditional painting, or photo series are also great choices for the output. Traditional painting or a photo series are doable in a short time, but I do recommend traditional painting since I feel like it would give justice to the emotions that were poured into each journal.

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