

# Write a Coherent Narrative

**Prompt:** Write a coherent narrative, a story that makes sense of one of the traumas from your list. Describe what happened in the traumatic incident and how you felt. Then write about how you think this event impacts you in your life today.

## Tips for Writing a Coherent Narrative

### **Write as an adult.**

Maintain an adult perspective as you write your story. Write about events from your childhood in the past tense. Recognize that even though old emotions may be stirred up, these painful memories are not happening to you now. Do not write from a victimized point of view.

### **Write rationally.**

In order to develop coherence, your narrative must make logical sense. Writing rationally activates your linear, logical, language-based, left brain. If your narrative is logical, you will have more of a feeling of resolve after writing.

### **Write autobiographically.**

It's important to include specific, autobiographical memories when writing your coherent narrative. These are your stories, and you should be in them. Autobiographical memories are stored in the right side of your brain, and it is crucial to include them in order to develop coherence and integrate your brain.

### **Write intuitively.**

It's okay to write about things you *think* happened. A lot of our early or traumatic memories are hazy; they are implicit, not explicit, memories. If something feels right or true to you on an intuitive level, you should include it in your narrative. You don't need to be 100% sure it happened that way.

### **Write with feeling.**

It's important to include details of how you felt, as you write about your memories. Recalling emotions and bodily sensations can be an important part of resolving old traumas.

### **Write about how the past influences your present.**

Make connections. Notice how patterns or feelings from the past may be playing out in your life today. Are there elements of your early relationships that may be affecting how you feel with your partner? Is there a way you felt as a child that you may be projecting onto your own kid? When you make connections between how you felt in the past and how you feel in the present, you can begin to see the world more clearly. When you feel triggered in your daily life, you can return to your coherent narratives. Understanding where your feelings originated, you can then choose not to react impulsively to the old emotions.

### **Write with balance.**

Based on the adaptations your brain made to your early attachments, you are probably more comfortable writing from either a right or left brain perspective. You may feel overwhelmed or flooded with emotions and images when you write, or you may feel very rational but lack a sense of how you felt in the stories you are telling. It's important to find a balance—to acknowledge the emotions, while maintaining a rational perspective. This is how you integrate your brain and get the full benefits of writing a coherent narrative.

### **Write with self-compassion.**

Maintain a compassionate attitude toward yourself as you write. If you feel stirred up from writing about a painful or traumatic experience, be kind to yourself in the process. Recognize that suffering is part of the human experience, and you are not alone in your suffering. Seek out a friend or a therapist to talk to. A lot of people suffer from guilty feelings as they expose details from their family life. Don't go with the guilt. You have a right to tell your story and make sense of your own life.

