

Poetry Therapy (Its Pedagogy and Treatment) : A Therapeutic Enterprise on the Boundaries of Culture, The Real World and Therapy

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What is Poetry:

- **1.** the art of rhythmical composition, written or spoken, for exciting pleasure by beautiful, imaginative, or elevated thoughts
 - **2.** literary work in metrical form; verse
 - **3.** prose with poetic qualities
 - **4.** poetic qualities however manifested
 - *the poetry of simple acts and things*
 - **5.** poetic spirit or feeling
 - *The pianist played the prelude with poetry*
 - **6.** something suggestive of or likened to poetry
 - *the pure poetry of a beautiful view on a clear day*
- (As Found in Collins Online Dictionary)*

Poetry?

You can call it poetry
Poesy or just a ditty
It makes no difference to me
It just an opportunity
To say some things
Sometimes witty
Sometimes an observation
Often a feeling
Or perhaps what I'm dreaming
What's important is that it's succinct
Has rhymes
Most times
And expresses what I think

What is Therapy

- **1.** the treatment of disease or disorders, as by some [remedial](#), [rehabilitating](#), or [curative](#) process
- *speech therapy*
- **2.** a curative power or quality
- **3.** [psychotherapy](#)
- **4.** any act, [hobby](#), [task](#), [program](#), etc., that [relieves](#) [tension](#)

(As Found in Collins Online Dictionary)

Therapy?

Therapy
Gets you ready
To digest
All the shit you've done already
And steady
Your life moving it from misery
Damn near to ecstasy
All done by talking pleasantly

What is Poetry Therapy

Derived From Bibliotherapy:

- [bibliotherapy, n.](#)
- The use of reading matter for therapeutic purposes in the treatment of nervous disorders. (*Online Oxford English Dictionary*)
- Poetry Therapy is “*The use of language, symbol, and story in therapeutic, educational, and community building capacities (Mazza, 2012a, p. 1434)*”

Poetry Therapy?

(self reflection and steps to action)

When you think hope is gone
And you feel all alone
Take a moment to reflect on
The road you've been travelling on
The hardships and pains
Often have led to growth and gains
The world has always been difficult and hard
Requiring strength of character and heart
So if in the moment you're stumbling and struggling
That's normal and after grumbling
Take several breaths after the expected sighs
And take the next step on your journey
Exploring the human enterprise

Mazza's RES Practice Model

This model of poetry therapy involves three major components: receptive/prescriptive, expressive/creative, and symbolic/ceremonial.

In the **receptive/prescriptive component**, the therapist introduces a poem and encourage the person in therapy to react. Material is typically selected based on its ability to describe, explain and identify issues relevant to the content of the session. Selected material is usually read aloud by the therapist or the person in therapy so the tone and rhythm of the poem can be fully experienced. While the poem is being read, the therapist notes the verbal and nonverbal reactions of the individual, and these reactions are generally explored after the reading with questions such as, "I noticed you were smiling as the poem was being read. Can you tell me about your reaction?" "Is there a particular line in the poem that touched you?" "How does this poem make you feel?"

The **expressive/creative component** involves the use of creative writing—poetry, letters, and journal entries--for the purpose of assessment and treatment. The process of writing can be both cathartic and empowering, often freeing blocked emotions or buried memories and giving voice to one's concerns and strengths. Some people may doubt their ability to write creatively, but therapists can offer support by explaining they do not have to use rhyme or a particular structure. Therapists might also provide poems from which to work or introduce sense poems for those who struggle with imagery. A therapist might also share a poem with the individual and then ask them to select a line that touched them in some way and then use that line to start their own poem.

The **symbolic/ceremonial component** involves the use of metaphors, storytelling, and rituals as tools for effecting change. Metaphors, which are essentially symbols, can help individuals to explain complex emotions and experiences in a concise and penetrating manner. Rituals may be particularly effective to help those who have experienced a loss or ending, such as a [death](#) or [a divorce](#), to address their feelings around that event. Writing and then burning a letter to someone who died suddenly, for example, may be a helpful step in the process of accepting and coping with grief.

Benefits and effects

- The benefits of poetry as therapy may include the following:
- It offers a creative outlet. For people who already enjoy poetry and artistic expression, it may be a welcome addition to traditional therapy.
- Poetry may be an easier way for some people to express themselves and their feelings. Some clients struggle with directly sharing their feelings, but the metaphors of poetry may make this process easier.
- Poetry may help people with complex behavioral and emotional issues feel less alone. For example, some [lonely isolated individuals](#) can give voice to their experiences through poetry.
- Poetry can help educate clients about common emotions and communication issues. Reading other people's poetry may help a person feel less alone and encourage them to open up.
- Poetry gives clients the chance to explore challenging existential issues. For example, therapists sometimes use poetry with [clients who are dying](#), living in [nursing homes](#), or facing other life changing experiences.

References:

Mazza, N. (2012). Therapy and poetry. In R. Green & S. Cushman (Eds.) *The Princeton encyclopedia of poetry and poetics* (pp. 1434-1435). Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press.

Mazza, N.(2022). *Poetry therapy: Theory and practice* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.