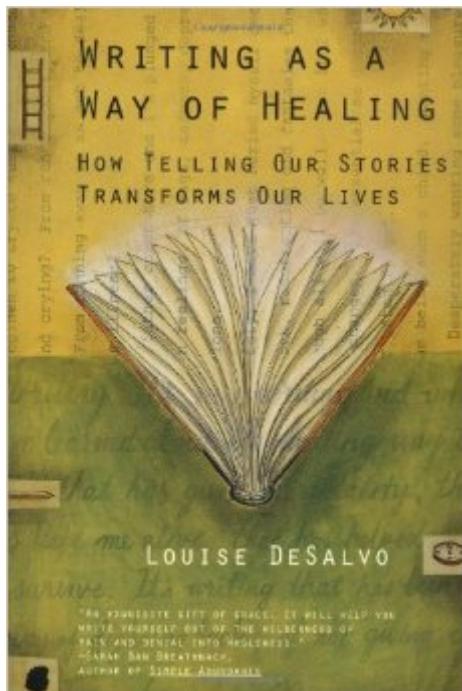


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# Writing As A Way Of Healing: How Telling Our Stories Transforms Our Lives



## **Synopsis**

In this inspiring book, based on her twenty years of research, highly acclaimed author and teacher Louise DeSalvo reveals the healing power of writing. DeSalvo shows how anyone can use writing as a way to heal the emotional and physical wounds that are an inevitable part of life. Contrary to what most self-help books claim, just writing won't help you; in fact, there's abundant evidence that the wrong kind of writing can be damaging. DeSalvo's program is based on the best available and most recent scientific studies about the efficacy of using writing as a restorative tool. With insight and wit, she illuminates how writers, from Virginia Woolf to Henry Miller to Audre Lorde to Isabel Allende, have been transformed by the writing process. Writing as a Way of Healing includes valuable advice and practical techniques to guide and inspire both experienced and beginning writers.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Louise DeSalvo, Ph.D. says, "writing has helped me heal. Writing has changed my life. Writing has saved my life." In her newest book, *Writing as a Way of Healing: How Telling Our Stories Transforms Our Lives*, DeSalvo provides readers with detailed instructions on how they, too, can heal themselves. Unlike most authors, DeSalvo doesn't advise writers to free-associate, or write whatever comes to mind in whatever order it comes, as a way of healing. She recommends, instead, choosing a traumatic event and fully exploring it. She says "to improve health, we must write detailed accounts, linking feelings with events." She cites numerous studies showing that people who wrote about traumatic events, and included the details of their emotions, initially had

negative feelings to overcome, but then experienced many long-term positive benefits. Those benefits were both mental and physical, including improvements to the immune system. She says "when we deal with unassimilated events, when we tell our stories and describe our feelings and integrate them into our sense of self, we no longer must actively work at inhibition. This alleviates the stress of holding back our stories and repressing or hiding our emotions, and so our health improves." A researcher into the therapeutic benefits of writing for more than twenty years, DeSalvo has filled her book with examples, including the effect of her mother's severe depression on her life, excerpts from diaries and journals of people like Virginia Woolf and Isabel Allende, and numerous essays from her writing students.

I have read a great many books on writing, and written a few myself. But *Writing as a Way of Healing* has gone straight to the top of my list of favorites, and I suspect that it will stay there for a very long time--perhaps for all time. But in the process of reading this book, I discovered I had to read the book that went before it, and now I want to tell you about both. Louise DeSalvo has been teaching English and creative writing for nearly twenty years. The first in her working-class Italian family to graduate from college, she escaped a soul-deadening home life--a depressed mother, an angry father--by reading, going to the movies, and dating, dating, dating. It wasn't until the late 1980's, when she wrote a scholarly book about the impact of childhood sexual abuse on the life and work of Virginia Woolf that she began to come to terms with her own childhood traumas and the lingering shadows of her mother's death and her sister's suicide. She dealt with her pain, anxiety, and depression in a memoir called *Vertigo* (now available in paperback, published by Plume), in which she explored her own story. *Vertigo* isn't a pleasant book, or easy--it's about hidden pain and the depression and despair into which a woman can fall when she attempts to avoid self-knowledge. But it is a necessary book, for through it, DeSalvo learns that the process of life-writing is also the process of healing. What she discovered in *Vertigo*, and what she subsequently put to use in her own teaching, is the subject and object of *Writing As a Way of Healing*. DeSalvo's section and chapter titles, by themselves, are helpful clues to the book's significance.

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