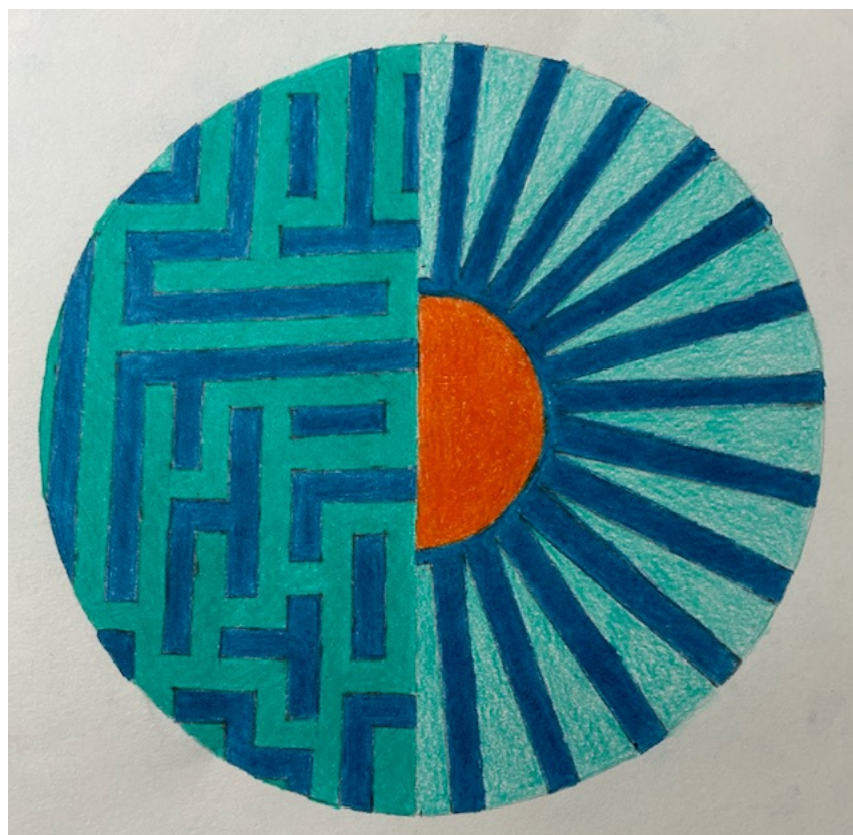




From a contributor below

POEMS ABOUT THE VALUE OF COUNSELING

Written by clients of
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between August - October 2024

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POEMS ABOUT THE VALUE OF COUNSELING

A distinguishing feature of the counseling service I offer is the creative way I help people handle change. Change is an important and necessary part of the human experience because it is only through change that we can grow. It can, however, be frightening, disorienting and painful. Clients come to counseling for a great many reasons: to contend with trauma past or current, when relationships end, when trouble befalls them of one sort or another etc. If they lack the ability to handle change well then a host of negative outcomes can result.

I employ a host of engaging techniques to help clients focus their thinking, expand their awareness and develop their unique human resources with which to address their clinical issues. These techniques include: deep relaxation, stretching exercises, and breath work; reflective writing and journal keeping; visualization, mental imagery and hypnosis; symbolic drawing and mandala art; psychodrama, role playing, and movement work; homework assignments and the development of realistic action plans. Published in the Journal of Counseling and Values in January 2001, "A psychosynthesis twelve-step program for transforming consciousness: Creative explorations of inner space," this article describes this approach in great detail. It can be found on my website, www.MichaelBrown.org, under "A library of articles by Michael."

Poetry can offer a clarifying lens through which to look at the challenges that confront clients. It can help them clarify their circumstances, marshal their resources and take the next step in their personal, professional or spiritual growth. Another purpose of this exercise was to inform, educate and inspire those who read them with the rich outcomes that can come from the use of such engaging techniques in counseling. During the months of August through October, 2024, I presented the following invitation to the 50 clients I was seeing at the time. 41 responded with the reflections found below.

Poetry Invitation To Clients

I invite you to take part in an interesting writing exercise. This technique will help you tighten your focus and attention on your clinical issue(s) if you are willing to give it a try. Also, if you are willing to let me share your thoughts with others, I will have you sign the release form below:

I, _____, give Michael Brown permission to publish my writing anonymously without any restriction as to where or when. _____ Date.

- A. You can choose not to write a poem.
- B. You can write one for the challenge of the exercise. We will discuss it in detail but it will remain private.
- C. You can give me permission to share it with others, anonymously of course, to protect your privacy and confidentiality.

A four line poem suggestion

- 1. First line, focus: What problem or issue brought you to counseling?
- 2. Second line, intention or need: What outcome did you hope to achieve through counseling?
- 3. Third line, what was helpful: What aspect, method or technique seemed most beneficial?

4. Summary thought, fourth line: What has improved, what is better, any conclusion you would like to make.

A poem can conform to many models.

- There is no rhyme scheme at all.
- The last word in line 1 rhymes with the last word in line 2. The last word in line 3 rhymes with the last word in line 4.
- This is called A, A; B, B.
- The last word in line 1 rhymes with the last word in line 3. The last word in line 2 rhymes with the last word in line 4. This is called A, C; B, D.
- A poem or writing in any form you choose.

N = 14. These poems were written by Veterans referred to me by the Veterans Administration and in active weekly one-hour sessions: 4, 6, 7, 13, 16, 18, 21, 22, 27, 28, 31, 34, 37, 41.

N = 19. These poems were written by women in active counseling with me: 5, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 22, 23, 24, 26, 30, 32, 33, 37, 38, 39, 40.

NB: The 10-Minute Miracle is a relaxation technique: three deep breaths followed by eight regular breaths done over and over again as a pattern for 10 minutes, 3-8/10. Mandala art is a technique wherein a client creates an image or symbol to illustrate the focus of a session and then colors, sketches or paints it within the confines of a circle.

1) I came to counseling to feel better emotionally and mentally.
 By slowly feeling better I have gotten out of my depression and negative thoughts.
 The most helpful element has been to be able to express myself freely
 because I can't do it around others.
 The process has been one arduous road, bumpy at times,
 but has showed me the way home.

2) Counseling has helped me deal with and fight back against my own struggles
 such as procrastination and poor decision making
 when dealing with critical issues and problems in my own life.
 One of the main things I use, that Mr. Brown has taught me,
 is to take the time and do the breathing exercise (Miracle).
 It focuses on my breathing, getting oxygen to the brain,
 and it slows the heartbeat down which, in return,
 gives me a relaxed, calm and an at-ease feeling.
 Another great thing, to spend time with people who mean a lot to me
 and I have activated a few great hobbies such as walking trails
 and seeing new historical sights.

Mr. Brown has also challenged me
 to own my shit and the part I play and not feel sorry for myself
 but to recognize what I did, forgive myself, and move on from it.
 Before I forget, one of the best things is Mr. Brown's availability to see me
 whether in the office or virtual given my unorthodox schedule.
 Last but not least I just want to say Thank You Mr. Brown!

3) Beaten down by my job, needing stress to decrease.
 Craving wisdom and guidance in every decision.
 Painting thoughts in a circle, 10 minutes of peace.
 Stating truths very quickly, with ruthless precision.

4) The chief VA psychiatrist said my mind wasn't right.
 I was hoping to stop my nightmares
 and get more than four or five hours of sleep at night.
 With the help of the 10-Minute Miracle
 under Doc Brown's instruction
 I don't have to worry so much about
 what was causing my destruction.

5) Sadness, Anxiety, Identity, Worth.
 Confidence, Boundaries Set.
 Mandalas, Soul-filled listening, Breath.
 Healing, Life-Skills Taught.

6) I need help to be calm and sleep.
 I received help and more so.
 Sleep came in the dark of the night and with sleep came peace.
 I received all I was looking for.
 Sleep has helped but not the 3-8/10 for me.
 I feel better than I have in years.
 Years of nightmares and fear.
 I'm glad I came for now I can rest without fear.

7) Counseling with Mike Brown will turn your frown upside down.
 Sitting in the chair the only prescription is air.
 Three deep breaths, excited to see what's next.
 Getting to the core is a big chore.
 With all these issues I might need a tissue.
 Drawing a mandala to capture my soul,
 trying to find peace can take a toll
 but with these tools hope and love become cool.

8) PTSD lingers like a shadow near.
 With therapy, support, & love
 healing begins, a path to clear
 to redefine, and rise above.

9) *Circle and loom*

Wrecked & sprawled & tethered craft strung on a reef;
 lashed & looted; numbed by sleet & rage & burning to be born.
*Can I find the earth, dig to rock, rebuild the green temple,
 purge the demon's black shit & snap all his tethers,
 midwife the burning new & rewrite the text?*
 Drift to a buoy, a star just this once pierces the cloud:
pour it in a circle.
 In your shame and rage and numbness, patterns surface, bastions shorn,
 you find not the earth but a vessel, a cauldron, a loom –
 to move, to transmute, to weave what was & what can be into what's next.

10) Grief and anxiety associated with my divorce and loss of my mother & sister.
 Relief from grief, anxiety and asshole abusers.
 Mandalas, as I'm a visual learner.
 My ability to cope with stresses in life and setting

clear boundaries for the path forward and future endeavors.

11) I was in mental and emotional distress.
The thoughts in my mind said I should no longer be alive.
I figured a bottle of pills would be best.
Mommy's asleep was all my son would recognize.

I sought counseling to understand the way I felt and thought.
My actions were a cry for help that I could not express to my kinfolk.
From what trauma and triggers had these emotions been taught?
The selfishness of my actions wasn't a joke.

Mandalas to release my inner most feelings and emotions were a helpful start.
The Luscher Color test clarified what makes me tick.
The deeper I dove, the more I realized that I'd been suppressing a lot.
I had a long road ahead of me; there was no easy fix.
I pressed past the fear, the pain, and the urge to resist.

I oftentimes review past mandalas and other written works to see just how far I've come.
I'm so thankful that God directed me to seek professional help, for it has helped to save my life.
I have tools and disciplines to help clear the mental and emotional scum.
Now, I use what I've learned to help others navigate their mental health plights.
To keep progressing will forever be my fight.

12) Returning to the space,
the familiar space where I find comfort.
My heart opens and my soul feels free,
warmth, safety, a sacred space.
I close my eyes and I breathe.
This is a soul searching, truth seeking journey.
I close my eyes and I'm guided to me.

13) Innocence, laughter, friends, accomplishments, strength and righteousness.
Home away from home.
War, the smell, sights, sounds and duty, the emptiness of emotions.
Home away from home.
Past is present and present the past.
Anger, fear and doubts cast the shadow.
Home away from home.
Through therapy, acknowledgment, understanding,
acceptance and growth is now the shadow I cast.
Home away from home.

14) When making the decision to meet with Mr. Brown 5 years ago,
depression was truly weighing me down.
I was hoping and praying for a way out of the daily torment
inside of my head and heart and I found the perfect counselor right in town.
Mr. Brown's counseling techniques have helped me tremendously
on how to handle this thing called life. The breathing exercise
(the 10 minute miracle) has saved my life.
I have learned different ways to handle life's disappointments,
heartaches, disagreements, criticisms, and even how to handle strife.

15) Not knowing what my heart holds,
going to counseling allowed my life to become unfold.
I wanted to face many traumas in life.
Sometimes it felt like I was pulling out a knife.

Being introduced to the 3 and 8
breathing techniques and doing it each day
helped me to see a lot more clearly and be calm along the way.

I am so glad to have counseling at hand.
I know I can deal with so much
and I have become a better person with a life plan.
Thank you Michael Brown

16) Her smile could light up any room,
pearly white teeth dance inside her beautiful brown skin.
I want to heal from this darkness of her being gone
but the pain continues to reside within.
I close my eyes to breathe deeply for
three then regularly eight times
while I count aloud to soothe my mind.
I release the energy ball of grieving because at some point
we all have to leave this old world behind.

17) I use to be tortured by addiction.
I hoped to learn self-control.
I have since been introduced to my subconscious.
I am now capable of solving many of my own problems!

18) Roses are reds violets are blue.
If I keep messing with you
I'll keep on learning, too.
But sometimes things need to be left alone.
But if you insist that I do this thing
what you going to think about when I put hot sauce
on all these chicken wings I'm about to eat?
But you said 'where is my poem?'
One more time I got to say
with me doing this I guess I'm going to save the day.
Have fun, be nice, cuz God blesses you every night.

19) When you've got a problem
with your thinker or your feeler
who you gonna call:
Soouul Healer!

20) Hoped to be understood, understand, let go of the tension, let love flow, heal our marriage.
Nature and imagery are my best friends, they guide me into myself to heal, grow, and love.
It can be difficult to follow my inner guidance and teachings. I am grateful when I do.

Marriage was tough and I felt crazy.
Hoped to be heard and find communion.

Nature and imagery are the gifts for me when I'm not lazy.
I continue to search for my broken parts to love and develop internal union.

21) *Life's demanding*

Life is challenging as much as it is rewarding.
There can be a lesson in pain, not all pain is the pain.
Some scars never truly heal, but over time you learn how to deal.
Find those that care and those that can help you feel.

22) His lust crushed my soul.
Alone I tried but could not win
with my soul alive.
A sexual violation cursed my soul, my very being.
I asked for assistance to find myself again.
I learned the violation does not define me.
My feelings of shame have dissipated
and I am feeling whole.

23) *The past, the present/outcomes*

PTSD and a shattered psyche brought me.
Please help me overcome the dread and anxiety!
Your presence, my creativity, cleansing festering wounds
brought healing and a more peaceful way to be.

Looking to the future

Here I am now, with limitations and aging.
How do I live with these and the fact life will cease?
What's a good way to be with what is, what may and will come?
Help me find the courage that leads to deep peace.

24) I struggle with stubborn, formidable pain that makes me want to hide away in a dark room.
I hope to be able to hold my own candle in the darkness.
A source from the outside comes with a mirror to help magnify the light.
With improved sight I am working to see the contours of the room and my place inside of it

25) The separation of my family brought me to counseling.
I wanted to be able to get through it.
I have been able to talk to someone who understands.
I've been able to really understand myself better and there is more to understand.
I can overcome challenges a whole lot better and deal better with stress.

I went to Dr. Brown for therapy.
It seemed he knew telepathy.
I felt alone. I felt afraid.
After doing 3 and 8 I feel amazed.
We draw mandalas to look into the soul.
The pieces come together there and help me feel more whole.

26) Physically present, spiritually away.
No colors, no brightness, just getting through the day.
Perspective, direction, adjust the point of view.
Less anxious, less worry - to see things anew.

Expression over repression, nothing left unsaid.
Still a work in progress, long road ahead.

Nothing solved in minutes, try to find the flow;
it takes more than 40 years for the mighty oak to grow.

27) Walls press closer each day
while others move through their moments.
I watch the vibrant circles appear,
and reach out – seeking, searching, – hoping to find where I belong.
Where do I belong:
With other people like me;
where I can be comfortable being myself;
where I don't have to put forth the energy to try to fit in;
where the people around me love me for being me;
where I can drop the outer shell of who I am
or think I need to be for others and just be myself;
where I can find other people who feel the same way as I do.

28) Lost in the echoes of a distant war,
I seek the peace that I once knew before.
Therapy guides me through the stormy night,
bringing back the calm, restoring my life.

29) In the shadows alone, I lost my way
looking for peace I would not betray.
Found in stillness, new visions unfold.
The path ahead holds stories untold.

From misery's grip I searched for light
hoping to escape an endless fight.
With quiet breath, a new world I see
but the work ahead calls to me.

From a life of chaos I sought peace,
a way out that wouldn't cycle back to grief.
With one man's magic I've quieted the strife.
There's more to do on this travel through life

30) No longer in denial,
I need structure that's reliable.
Compassionate teaching of many methods
gives me knowledge to support my efforts

31) *Do you believe this could be you*

When life's journey has yielded untold challenges, bruises, hurts and scars, and then smothered by inward shame. But afforded miraculous and undeserved mercy and grace despite it all. Oh, and no one really to confide in so it continues to churn and you walk on. Thus, one may find it hard to believe, but could this really be your story?

Never in your wildest dreams would you have claimed a partnership for such challenges leading to depression and at times, a "Downward Spiral." But upon looking in the mirror you even see denial yet you find "It's hard to believe, it could really be you."

Finally, after all, many have openly applauded you for extraordinary deeds and feats, and marks of success hand in the balance. But still, the reality of it all, is that unanswered questions and yearning for inward freedom continue to secretly cry within. However, despite the totality of the weight upon the mind, body and soul, there is a subliminal beacon of light that constantly beams and its rays draw you within its circle of life. Wow there is still "Hope."

Yes, I believe that this could be me. It is me!

- 32) Trying to reduce stress to have something I wanted, pregnancy, I came to counseling.
 I expected a short run in therapy -- a rocket, something fast, mesmerizing.
 The letting-go of a rebellious 13-year-old version and the emergence of the real me.
 Three deep breaths.
-

- 33) Here I was a 64 year old woman walking around this world;
 however in February my world was turned upside down.
 I was unsure of how I was going to move around anymore.
 All of this was due to my husband letting me down.
 I wasn't sure I could handle all of the ups and downs that were sure to come.

I knew that I wasn't okay and I so wanted some relief
 or someone to listen to my pain.
 I knew that over time I would have lots of positives to gain.
 Counseling allows you to look at things through different eyes.
 It allows you to be okay with all of the cries.
 Even though my world was destroyed by my husband
 I have found my strength once again.
 I almost feel that I can dance with the band.
 Even though my world was turned upside down
 I find myself being me again.

- 34) My inner monster brought me here.
 I'm here out of fear.
 If he gets loose could I be able to control?
 Would I just let go and let him do what he's trained to do?
 I come here to love what's inside of me.
 I have looked and crawled on for as far as the eyes can see.
 I have new tools and breathe to see where or how to get there.
 They lead me home where I can breathe and let the monster sleep.
-

- 35) In dead of night while I'm asleep
 I'll toss and turn and scream and weep
 but Michael Brown is here for me
 to teach me how again to breathe.
 Through art and breath and inner expression
 I learn to let go of self-repression
 and learn and grow and thrive and press on.

I could not think or drive or swim,
 the ocean of my mind morgue-dim.
 "So breathe and paint and sing a hymn," said him,
 "Perhaps your life may start again."

I rise on up into bright air,
 skin and muscle, bone and hair.

My soul takes flight with lesser cares –
unburdened past, unlocked despair.

O'er fields and mountains towering high
I dip my wings toward bluer skies.
My heart and soul aimed fast to my family
As together we sail into lifelong eternity.

36) The need for marriage counseling brought me to counseling.
I needed to resolve some problems and find common ground.
Being listened to fully and completely, and helping my son also;
learning to take a step back and breathe, much less passive aggressiveness;
taking ownership of my actions.

37) *Save Space*

A roller coaster through my mind,
Emotions high and depths I find.
Self-love blooms and love that's lost,
in seizures' waves my heart is tossed.

My son, he swims with stronger grace,
while I move on to find my place.
A house, my own, in life's new dance.
In business strength I take my stance.

Loneliness and stress entwined,
Strands of hair I watch decline.
In healing's light new paths I trace
and own the truths I now embrace.

For sanity, my soul's embrace,
Therapy—a safe space.

38) It is barely light
The sun is not up
The cool air on my arms

The paw on my face
The like on my cheek
Breakfast

Gone so long
Thinking of you
Mama

Bound so tight
My thoughts are imprisoned
Trying to grow - CHOP
Trying to create - CHOP
Hide, hide, hide in my books

39) Digging into wounds to see
their origins and what peels them
open to fester and weep.

Wanting the wounds to close and heal and
build an impenetrable layer where
I can be safe and content with
being alone inside.
I cover the walls in imagery and analogies
as I learn to value myself and
walk away
from those who offer
sandpaper instead of
a bandage.

40) To seek help for our relationship.
I hoped to argue less and have more rational interactions.
The Talking Stick has been most helpful.
Counseling is beneficial. It reveals things to me that allow me to cope,
Allows me to express thoughts and emotions I've internalized.

41) To improve the health of my marriage
Get to a healthier place in my marriage
The Talking Stick and breathing technique
Its been very helpful in dealing with stress
inside and outside in my marriage.