



The Scarpante Method® of Therapeutic Writing: An Innovative Narrative Approach to Emotional Well-Being, Self-Awareness, and Personal Transformation

Running Title: The Scarpante Method® of Therapeutic Writing

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ABSTRACT

Background: Therapeutic writing has increasingly been recognized as an effective narrative practice capable of supporting emotional regulation, psychological well-being, and personal growth. While expressive writing has been extensively investigated through the work of Pennebaker and subsequent researchers, innovative methodologies continue to emerge by integrating autobiographical reflection, emotional awareness, and relational practices. The Scarpante Method® represents one such approach, developed in Italy through decades of educational, autobiographical, and therapeutic writing experience.

Objective: This article presents the theoretical foundations, methodological framework, and practical applications of the Scarpante Method®, highlighting its contribution to emotional well-being, self-awareness, and reflective practice across educational, healthcare, social, and organizational settings.

Methods: This paper adopts a descriptive and theoretical approach by examining the origins of the method, its guiding principles, educational structure, and practical implementation. The discussion is contextualized within the broader literature on expressive writing, narrative medicine, autobiographical practices, and emotional processing.

Results: The Scarpante Method® integrates autobiographical writing, handwriting, guided reflective exercises, empathic listening, and facilitated group dialogue into a structured pathway that encourages emotional awareness and personal transformation. Over the past two decades, the method has been implemented through educational programs, facilitator training, healthcare initiatives, schools, community organizations, and corporate well-being projects.

Conclusions: The Scarpante Method® expands current approaches to therapeutic writing by emphasizing authenticity, relational sharing, and emotional integration through narrative practices. Although further empirical research is needed to evaluate specific outcomes, the method offers a promising interdisciplinary framework for promoting psychological well-being and fostering reflective capacities in diverse personal and professional contexts.

Keywords: Therapeutic Writing; Expressive Writing; Reflective Writing; Narrative Medicine; Emotional Well-Being; Self-Awareness; Autobiographical Writing; Emotional Regulation; Scarpante Method®

Abbreviations: SW: Scarpante Method®; TW: Therapeutic Writing; EW: Expressive Writing; NM: Narrative Medicine; EWB: Emotional Well-Being

Introduction

Writing has accompanied human development for centuries, serving not only as a means of communication but also as a powerful instrument for reflection, identity construction, and emotional expression. Beyond its literary and educational purposes, writing has

increasingly been recognized as a valuable practice capable of supporting psychological well-being, facilitating emotional processing, and fostering personal growth. Over the past four decades, research in psychology, narrative medicine, and educational sciences has demonstrated that structured writing interventions may contribute

to improved emotional regulation, reduced psychological distress, enhanced self-awareness, and greater cognitive organization of stressful life experiences [1,2]. Among the various approaches to therapeutic writing, expressive writing has received considerable scientific attention. Originally developed through the pioneering work of James W. Pennebaker, expressive writing encourages individuals to write openly about emotionally significant experiences without concern for grammar, style, or literary quality. Numerous studies have associated this practice with improvements in psychological adjustment, stress management, emotional regulation, and, in some populations, physical health outcomes. While findings vary according to context and individual characteristics, expressive writing has become an established field of interdisciplinary research involving psychology, medicine, education, and behavioural sciences.

Parallel to developments in expressive writing, the emergence of narrative medicine has further emphasized the importance of storytelling as a means of understanding illness, identity, relationships, and lived experience. Rather than focusing exclusively on clinical symptoms, narrative approaches recognize that personal stories contribute significantly to meaning-making, resilience, and therapeutic relationships. Within this perspective, autobiographical writing becomes more than a recollection of events; it represents an active process through which individuals reorganize memories, reinterpret experiences, and reconstruct personal identity. The growing interest in reflective writing has also influenced educational settings, coaching practices, leadership development, and organizational well-being programs. Reflection through writing encourages individuals to slow cognitive processes, recognize emotional patterns, increase self-observation, and cultivate greater awareness of interpersonal dynamics. These characteristics have made writing an increasingly valuable resource across both clinical and non-clinical environments. Within this broader scientific and educational landscape, the Scarpante Method® of Therapeutic Writing represents an original Italian contribution that integrates autobiographical writing, emotional awareness, empathic listening, handwriting, and guided reflection into a structured developmental pathway. Conceived by Italian author and educator Sonia Scarpante following her personal experience with cancer, the method has progressively evolved from an individual healing practice into a comprehensive educational methodology applied in schools, healthcare settings, community organizations, facilitator training programs, and corporate well-being initiatives.

Unlike traditional expressive writing protocols, which frequently emphasize individual disclosure over relatively short writing sessions, the Scarpante Method® proposes a broader educational process centered on continuous personal reflection, relational dialogue, narrative sharing, and emotional integration. Handwriting occupies a central role within the methodology, reflecting the belief that the physical act of writing facilitates deeper connections between cognition, emotion, memory, and bodily awareness. Equally important is the creation of protected group environments where participants

may voluntarily share personal narratives while experiencing empathic listening, mutual recognition, and respectful interpersonal exchange. The purpose of this article is to present the origins, theoretical foundations, methodological principles, and practical applications of the Scarpante Method® within the context of contemporary research on therapeutic writing and narrative practices. Rather than evaluating clinical efficacy, this paper aims to describe the conceptual framework of the method, discuss its educational philosophy, and examine its potential contribution to emotional well-being, reflective practice, and personal development across diverse settings. By situating the Scarpante Method® within the broader literature on expressive writing and narrative medicine, this article seeks to contribute to the ongoing dialogue regarding writing as an accessible, person-centered resource for emotional care and lifelong learning.

Background and Origins of the Scarpante Method®

The Scarpante Method® of Therapeutic Writing emerged from a deeply personal experience that progressively evolved into an educational and reflective methodology centered on emotional awareness, autobiographical narration, and personal transformation. Unlike approaches developed primarily within academic or clinical research environments, the method originated from lived experience before being refined through years of educational practice, facilitator training, and interdisciplinary collaboration. Its creator, Sonia Scarpante, is an Italian author, educator, and expert in autobiographical and therapeutic writing. The origins of the method can be traced to a pivotal period in her life when she was diagnosed with cancer. This experience represented not only a significant medical challenge but also a profound existential turning point that prompted an intense process of self-reflection regarding identity, vulnerability, relationships, and the search for meaning. During this period, writing became an essential means of navigating emotional complexity. Rather than functioning as a literary exercise or creative endeavor, writing assumed the role of a private space in which thoughts, emotions, fears, and hopes could be expressed without judgment. Through letters, autobiographical reflections, and personal narratives, writing gradually became an instrument for emotional exploration and reconstruction. This experience laid the foundation for a broader understanding of writing as a relational and transformative practice capable of supporting psychological adaptation during periods of uncertainty and personal transition.

Scarpante has described this process as becoming a “student of illness,” emphasizing that adversity may create opportunities for deeper self-knowledge and renewed awareness. Within this perspective, illness was not interpreted solely as a source of suffering but also as an experience capable of stimulating reflection on personal values, emotional patterns, and life priorities. The resulting philosophy does not romanticize suffering; rather, it recognizes that reflective engagement with difficult experiences may foster personal growth, resilience, and meaning making when supported by appropriate emotional and relational resources. As writing assumed an increasingly central role in

this journey, recurring patterns gradually emerged regarding the relationship between emotional expression, autobiographical narration, and psychological awareness. These observations were subsequently translated into structured educational practices designed to help other individuals engage in similar processes of reflection and emotional exploration. Over time, these practices evolved into what is now formally recognized as the Scarpante Method® of Therapeutic Writing. From its earliest stages, the method was conceived not as psychotherapy but as an educational and developmental approach that encourages individuals to cultivate greater awareness of their emotional experiences through guided writing exercises. Participation does not require literary competence or previous writing experience. Instead, authenticity, emotional honesty, and personal reflection constitute the primary objectives.

The emphasis is placed on the writing process itself rather than on the aesthetic quality of the final text. An important characteristic distinguishing the Scarpante Method® from many forms of expressive writing lies in its integration of individual reflection with interpersonal dialogue. While personal writing remains central, opportunities for voluntary sharing within carefully facilitated groups encourage participants to experience empathic listening, mutual recognition, and relational support. In this sense, writing becomes both an individual and collective process, fostering connections between personal narratives and shared human experiences. Another distinctive feature is the emphasis placed on handwriting. According to the principles of the method, writing manually encourages a slower rhythm of thought, allowing emotional content to emerge with greater depth and authenticity. The physical movement involved in handwriting is considered an integral part of reflective practice, strengthening the connection between cognitive processes, emotional awareness, memory, and bodily perception. Although scientific evidence regarding the superiority of handwriting over digital writing continues to evolve, contemporary research suggests that handwriting may promote deeper cognitive engagement, enhanced memory consolidation, and greater reflective processing in certain learning contexts. The Scarpante Method® incorporates these insights while maintaining that the subjective experience of handwritten expression can facilitate emotional exploration for many participants.

Since its initial development in the late 1990s, the Scarpante Method® has progressively expanded beyond individual practice into a comprehensive educational project. A significant milestone was the establishment of La Cura di Sé ETS ("Self-Care"), a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting autobiographical writing, emotional education, and personal development through workshops, conferences, publications, and community initiatives. The organization has contributed to disseminating the method across multiple social contexts while fostering collaborations with educational institutions, healthcare professionals, and cultural organizations. The method has also generated an extensive body of educational literature. Since 1998,

Sonia Scarpante has authored numerous books exploring themes of autobiography, poetry, narrative, emotional healing, and therapeutic writing. These publications have progressively articulated the theoretical and practical foundations of the method while making its principles accessible to diverse audiences. Among the most representative works are: "Lettere ad un interlocutore reale. Il mio senso" (2003), "Non avere paura. Conoscersi per curarsi" (2010), "La scrittura terapeutica" (2013), "Esperienze e tecniche di scrittura terapeutica" (2015), "Non avere Paura" (2016), "Pensa, scrivi, vivi. Il potere della scrittura terapeutica" (2022), and "Le parole come Segni" (2026).

An additional milestone in the development of the method has been the creation of the Master's Program in Therapeutic Writing – Scarpante Method®, now in its tenth edition.

The program provides structured training for facilitators working in educational, healthcare, coaching, and social service settings. Combining autobiographical writing, reflective practice, empathic communication, and experiential learning, the program seeks to prepare professionals capable of guiding individuals and groups through writing-based pathways of emotional awareness and personal development. Today, the Scarpante Method® continues to evolve through interdisciplinary applications that extend beyond traditional educational contexts. Its principles have been incorporated into initiatives involving schools, hospitals, community organizations, narrative medicine projects, corporate well-being programs, executive coaching, and professional development. While additional empirical research is needed to evaluate specific outcomes associated with the methodology, its continued expansion reflects growing interest in writing as a structured practice capable of supporting emotional well-being, reflective learning, and interpersonal understanding. Rather than presenting writing as a therapeutic intervention in the clinical sense, the Scarpante Method® proposes a holistic educational framework in which autobiographical narration becomes a means of cultivating self-awareness, emotional literacy, authentic communication, and resilient personal growth. In doing so, it contributes to the broader international movement that recognizes narrative practices as valuable resources for promoting psychological well-being and human flourishing across the lifespan.

Theoretical Foundations of the Scarpante Method®

The Scarpante Method® is grounded in an interdisciplinary understanding of therapeutic writing that integrates principles from expressive writing research, autobiographical reflection, narrative medicine, humanistic psychology, emotional regulation, and experiential learning. Rather than relying on a single theoretical framework, the method combines complementary perspectives that collectively view writing as a process capable of facilitating self-awareness, emotional organization, meaning-making, and interpersonal understanding. Although developed independently through lived experience and educational practice, many of the principles underlying the Scarpante

Method® are consistent with contemporary research demonstrating the psychological value of reflective and expressive writing. The method therefore occupies a position at the intersection of narrative practice and personal development, emphasizing writing not merely as a communication tool but as a structured process of emotional exploration and identity construction.

Expressive Writing and Emotional Processing

One of the principal theoretical foundations of the Scarpante Method® can be found in the extensive body of research on expressive writing initiated by James W. Pennebaker. Since the 1980s, numerous studies have demonstrated that writing openly about emotionally significant experiences may contribute to improvements in psychological well-being, emotional regulation, stress reduction, and cognitive processing of traumatic or stressful events [2-4].

According to expressive writing theory, translating emotional experiences into language enables individuals to organize fragmented memories, construct coherent narratives, and reduce the cognitive burden associated with emotional suppression. Rather than eliminating painful emotions, writing appears to facilitate their integration into broader personal narratives, allowing individuals to reinterpret difficult experiences within more adaptive cognitive frameworks. The Scarpante Method® shares this emphasis on authentic emotional expression while extending the process beyond individual disclosure. Whereas classical expressive writing protocols typically consist of brief, time-limited writing sessions conducted independently, the Scarpante Method® proposes an ongoing educational pathway in which writing is integrated with guided reflection, facilitated dialogue, and relational learning. Emotional expression therefore becomes one component of a broader developmental process aimed at cultivating long-term self-awareness and emotional literacy.

Autobiographical Writing and Narrative Identity

Autobiographical writing constitutes another central pillar of the Scarpante Method®. Contemporary psychological theories suggest that individuals continuously construct and reconstruct their identities through personal narratives that provide coherence, continuity, and meaning across life experiences [5,6]. Life stories are not merely recollections of past events; they actively shape how individuals understand themselves, interpret present circumstances, and imagine future possibilities. Writing autobiographically encourages people to revisit significant experiences from new perspectives, identify recurring emotional patterns, recognize personal strengths, and integrate contradictory aspects of identity into more coherent self-understanding. Within the Scarpante Method®, autobiographical writing is viewed as an evolving dialogue between past, present, and future. Participants are invited to observe their experiences with curiosity rather than judgment, allowing memories to become opportunities for reflection rather than fixed representations of personal history. Through repeated narrative exploration, individuals may gradually

develop greater psychological flexibility and a more compassionate relationship with their own experiences. Importantly, autobiographical writing within the method does not seek objective historical accuracy. Instead, it values subjective meaning-making, recognizing that emotional truth often emerges through reflection on personal experience rather than through factual reconstruction alone.

Narrative Medicine and the Healing Value of Stories

The Scarpante Method® also shares conceptual similarities with the principles of narrative medicine, an interdisciplinary field developed primarily through the work of Rita Charon. Narrative medicine emphasizes the importance of listening to patients' stories as an essential component of compassionate, person-centered healthcare [7]. From this perspective, illness is understood not only as a biological condition but also as a lived human experience involving identity, relationships, fear, hope, and existential meaning. Narrative competence—the ability to recognize, interpret, and respond to personal stories—becomes fundamental for both patients and healthcare professionals. Although the Scarpante Method® is not limited to healthcare contexts, it similarly recognizes that writing enables individuals to give voice to experiences that might otherwise remain unarticulated. The written narrative becomes a space where emotional complexity can be explored safely, allowing participants to acknowledge vulnerability while simultaneously discovering personal resources, resilience, and new perspectives.

This narrative approach extends beyond illness to encompass life transitions, relational challenges, professional development, grief, personal change, and emotional growth.

Humanistic Psychology and Authentic Self-Expression

Humanistic psychology provides another important theoretical foundation for the Scarpante Method®. The work of Carl Rogers emphasized the innate human tendency toward growth, self-actualization, and authentic self-expression when individuals experience environments characterized by empathy, acceptance, and psychological safety [8]. These principles are reflected throughout the methodology. Writing activities are conducted within environments designed to encourage openness without evaluation or judgment. Participants are not expected to produce literary texts or demonstrate writing skills. Instead, the emphasis is placed on authenticity, emotional honesty, and respectful listening.

Facilitators trained in the Scarpante Method® adopt a non-directive approach that encourages participants to discover their own meanings rather than imposing external interpretations. This educational philosophy aligns closely with humanistic approaches that view individuals as active agents in their own processes of growth and self-discovery.

Emotional Regulation Through Reflective Writing

Current models of emotional regulation propose that adaptive psychological functioning depends not on suppressing emotions but on recognizing, understanding, and integrating emotional experiences into conscious awareness [9,10]. Writing provides a structured opportunity for this reflective process. By transforming emotional experiences into language, individuals may gain psychological distance from distressing events while simultaneously increasing emotional clarity. Reflection through writing allows emotions to become observable experiences rather than overwhelming internal states. Within the Scarpante Method®, emotional regulation is not pursued through control or avoidance but through acceptance, observation, and gradual integration. Guided writing prompts encourage participants to identify emotional responses, explore their origins, recognize behavioral patterns, and consider alternative interpretations of personal experiences. This reflective process supports the development of emotional literacy—the capacity to identify, understand, express, and communicate emotions with increasing awareness and intentionality.

Handwriting as an Embodied Reflective Practice

A distinctive theoretical component of the Scarpante Method® is its emphasis on handwriting as an essential element of reflective practice. While digital technologies have transformed contemporary communication, research suggests that handwriting may engage cognitive and sensorimotor processes differently from typing, promoting deeper encoding of information, increased attentional engagement, and more elaborate conceptual processing [11,12]. Within the Scarpante Method®, handwriting is understood not merely as a technical preference but as an embodied practice that slows cognitive activity and encourages sustained reflection. The physical movement of the hand, the sensory experience of pen and paper, and the deliberate rhythm of manual writing are believed to facilitate closer connections between thought, emotion, memory, and bodily awareness. Although empirical research has not conclusively demonstrated that handwriting is universally superior for emotional processing, the method considers the embodied nature of handwritten expression an important experiential component of autobiographical reflection. The slower pace associated with handwriting may encourage deeper introspection, reduce automatic cognitive responses, and create psychological space for emotional awareness to emerge more naturally.

Writing as Relational Experience

Perhaps the most distinctive contribution of the Scarpante Method® lies in its understanding of writing as a relational process. Whereas many therapeutic writing approaches focus primarily on individual introspection, the Scarpante Method® integrates personal reflection with empathic listening, voluntary sharing, and collective dialogue. Participants are invited—but never required—to share selected portions of their writing within psychologically safe group environments. This process transforms writing from an exclusive-

ly private activity into an opportunity for interpersonal recognition and emotional connection. Listening to the narratives of others often facilitates empathy, reduces feelings of isolation, and encourages the recognition of common human experiences across diverse life stories. From this perspective, emotional well-being is understood not solely as an individual achievement but also as a relational process shaped by authentic communication, mutual respect, and shared vulnerability. Writing therefore becomes both an instrument of self-discovery and a bridge connecting individual experiences within supportive communities.

Methodological Framework of the Scarpante Method®

Overview of the Method

The Scarpante Method® is a structured educational approach that uses autobiographical and therapeutic writing as a means of fostering emotional awareness, reflective learning, and personal development. Unlike standardized clinical interventions, the method is designed as a flexible framework that can be adapted to different educational, healthcare, social, coaching, and organizational contexts while maintaining a common set of methodological principles. The central assumption of the method is that writing facilitates a reflective dialogue between thoughts, emotions, memories, and lived experiences. Through guided autobiographical exercises, participants are encouraged to observe their inner experiences with curiosity rather than judgment, gradually developing greater emotional awareness and a more coherent understanding of their personal narratives. Rather than focusing on literary quality or technical writing skills, the Scarpante Method® prioritizes authenticity, self-expression, and emotional honesty. Participants are repeatedly reminded that there are no “correct” or “incorrect” narratives; the value of the process lies in the act of reflection itself. The methodology is typically facilitated within individual or group settings by trained professionals who create psychologically safe environments that encourage trust, confidentiality, and respectful interpersonal communication.

Guiding Principles

The methodology is built upon several core educational principles that remain consistent across different applications.

Authenticity

Participants are encouraged to write honestly without concern for grammar, style, or literary performance. Emotional truth is considered more valuable than linguistic perfection.

Self-awareness

Writing serves as a reflective practice through which participants observe emotional reactions, beliefs, memories, and behavioral patterns, promoting greater understanding of themselves and their lived experiences.

Non-judgment

Neither facilitators nor participants evaluate the content of written narratives. The absence of judgment supports psychological safety and encourages authentic self-expression.

Voluntary Sharing

Although group dialogue represents an important component of the methodology, participants always retain the freedom to decide whether or not to share their writing with others.

Respect and Confidentiality

Every writing experience occurs within a protected environment where confidentiality, empathic listening, and mutual respect constitute essential conditions for meaningful participation.

Reflective Continuity

The method encourages writing as a continuous developmental practice rather than an isolated exercise. Personal growth is viewed as an evolving process that unfolds through repeated reflection over time.

The Role of Handwriting

A distinguishing characteristic of the Scarpante Method® is its preference for handwritten writing whenever possible. Handwriting is considered an embodied reflective practice that encourages participants to slow the pace of thinking and become more attentive to emotional experience. The physical movement involved in writing by hand creates a sensory connection between cognition, memory, emotion, and bodily awareness that may facilitate deeper introspection. While digital writing may occasionally be appropriate in specific circumstances, handwritten writing remains the preferred modality because it minimizes external distractions and encourages sustained reflective attention. This preference aligns with educational research suggesting that handwriting may promote deeper cognitive processing, increased attentional engagement, and enhanced memory integration during reflective learning activities.

The Role of the Facilitator

Within the Scarpante Method®, the facilitator occupies a central educational rather than therapeutic role.

Facilitators are responsible for creating environments that encourage emotional safety, respectful communication, and reflective exploration. Their primary function is not to interpret participants' experiences but to accompany individuals throughout their writing process by offering structured prompts, attentive listening, and supportive guidance. Facilitators avoid providing psychological diagnoses or evaluating personal narratives. Instead, they encourage participants to discover their own meanings through reflective questioning and self-observation.

Essential facilitator competencies include:

- empathic listening;
- emotional sensitivity;
- effective group facilitation;
- ethical awareness;
- respect for individual boundaries;
- knowledge of autobiographical and reflective writing techniques;
- the ability to manage emotionally sensitive discussions while maintaining a psychologically safe environment.

The facilitator therefore functions as a guide who supports reflection without directing participants toward predetermined conclusions.

Phases of the Scarpante Method®

Although individual workshops may vary according to context and participant needs, the methodology generally follows a structured sequence of interconnected phases.

Phase 1. Preparation and Emotional Grounding

Each session begins with an introductory moment intended to create psychological safety and prepare participants for reflective work.

This phase may include:

- brief mindfulness or breathing exercises;
- moments of silence;
- reflective readings;
- poetry or literary excerpts;
- introductory questions designed to stimulate emotional awareness.

The objective is to reduce external distractions and encourage participants to adopt a reflective mindset.

Phase 2. Guided Writing Prompt

The Scarpante Method unfolds through autobiographical writing based on 10 core themes (a number that can be expanded according to the needs of the individual or the group). Participants receive a carefully designed writing prompt that serves as the starting point for autobiographical reflection. Prompts are open-ended and encourage exploration rather than problem-solving.

Examples of writing themes include:

- Home
- Letter to My Father

- Letter to My Mother
- My Needs

These themes invite participants to explore significant relationships, formative experiences, personal identity, and emotional needs through reflective writing. Rather than directing participants toward predefined conclusions, they encourage authentic self-exploration and the construction of personal meaning within a safe and structured process

Phase 3. Handwritten Reflective Writing

Participants engage in uninterrupted handwritten writing for a predetermined period of time.

During this phase:

- writing remains private;
- participants write continuously without editing;
- pauses and emotional reactions are accepted as natural aspects of the process;
- no literary expectations are imposed.

The emphasis remains on emotional authenticity rather than textual quality.

Phase 4. Personal Reflection

Following the writing activity, participants are encouraged to re-read their own narratives privately.

Reflection focuses on questions such as:

- What emotions emerged?
- Did anything surprise me?
- Which words appear repeatedly?
- What have I discovered about myself?

This stage promotes metacognition by encouraging individuals to observe their own emotional and cognitive processes.

Phase 5. Voluntary Narrative Sharing

Participants may choose to share selected passages of their writing with the group.

Sharing remains entirely voluntary.

Group discussion follows clear principles:

- attentive listening;
- absence of judgment;
- no unsolicited advice;
- respect for confidentiality;

- acknowledgment rather than interpretation.

Facilitators encourage participants to respond with empathic reflections instead of evaluations or problem-solving suggestions.

Phase 6. Integration

The final stage supports participants in integrating the insights emerging from the writing experience into their everyday lives. At this stage, the role of the Scarpante Method Facilitator is essential.

The facilitator creates a psychologically safe environment, guides the group through the reflective process, helps participants avoid becoming trapped in negative emotional spirals or repetitive rumination, and encourages constructive self-exploration and deeper self-awareness. Rather than interpreting participants' experiences, the facilitator supports each individual in discovering personal meaning and transforming reflection into greater emotional clarity and personal growth.

Integration may involve:

- identifying personal strengths;
- recognizing recurring emotional patterns;
- setting intentions for future reflection;
- planning continued writing practice;
- acknowledging personal resources discovered during the session.

The objective is not immediate emotional resolution but the gradual development of greater self-awareness and reflective capacity.

Flexibility Across Different Contexts

One of the defining characteristics of the Scarpante Method® is its adaptability.

Although the core principles remain constant, implementation varies according to the characteristics of each setting.

Examples include:

Educational settings

- emotional literacy;
- autobiographical identity development;
- reflective learning.

Healthcare

- emotional expression during illness;
- narrative medicine;
- patient-centered reflection.

Corporate organizations

- stress awareness;
- leadership reflection;
- communication;
- team cohesion;
- workplace well-being.

Coaching

- personal values;
- leadership identity;
- career transitions;
- decision-making.

Community and social care

- resilience;
- inclusion;
- emotional support;
- interpersonal dialogue.

This flexibility enables the methodology to be adapted without compromising its underlying educational philosophy.

Ethical Considerations

Because writing may evoke emotionally significant memories, the Scarpante Method® places considerable emphasis on ethical facilitation.

Participants are informed that:

- participation is voluntary;
- sharing personal narratives is optional;
- confidentiality is respected;
- individuals may discontinue activities at any time without consequence.

When writing activities reveal psychological distress requiring specialized intervention, facilitators are encouraged to recommend appropriate mental health professionals. Consequently, the Scarpante Method® should not be considered a substitute for psychotherapy or clinical treatment but rather an educational and reflective practice that may complement broader well-being initiatives.

Applications of the Scarpante Method®

Overview

Since its development in the late 1990s, the Scarpante Method® has progressively expanded beyond its original autobiographical framework to become an interdisciplinary educational approach

applied across multiple professional and community settings. Its flexibility allows facilitators to adapt the methodology to different populations while preserving its core principles of reflective writing, emotional awareness, empathic listening, and personal meaning-making. The method has been implemented in educational institutions, healthcare environments, nonprofit organizations, facilitator training programs, coaching settings, and workplace well-being initiatives. Although these applications differ in objectives and participant characteristics, they share a common emphasis on using autobiographical writing to promote reflective learning, emotional literacy, and interpersonal understanding. The following sections describe the principal areas in which the Scarpante Method® has been adopted.

Educational Settings

Education represents one of the primary contexts in which the Scarpante Method® has been implemented. Schools increasingly recognize the importance of fostering not only academic achievement but also emotional competence, self-awareness, and relational skills. Within this broader educational perspective, reflective writing provides students with opportunities to explore emotions, identity, relationships, and life experiences in structured and supportive learning environments. The Scarpante Method® has been introduced in middle and high schools through workshops designed to encourage autobiographical reflection, emotional vocabulary development, and respectful communication. Participants are invited to write about experiences relevant to their developmental stage, such as friendship, family relationships, fears, aspirations, change, and personal strengths. Group discussions following writing activities encourage students to practice empathic listening while recognizing similarities and differences in personal experiences. Rather than evaluating written texts from a literary perspective, facilitators emphasize authenticity, emotional expression, and reflective dialogue.

Educational objectives commonly include:

- developing emotional literacy;
- strengthening self-awareness;
- encouraging respectful communication;
- promoting empathy and social inclusion;
- supporting reflective learning;
- fostering resilience during developmental transitions.

These goals are consistent with contemporary educational research emphasizing the importance of social-emotional learning (SEL) as a foundation for lifelong well-being and academic engagement.

Healthcare and Narrative Medicine

Healthcare constitutes another important area of application for the Scarpante Method®. Illness often affects not only physical func-

tioning but also identity, relationships, emotional balance, and existential meaning. Reflective writing provides patients with opportunities to articulate experiences that may be difficult to communicate verbally while supporting processes of emotional exploration and narrative reconstruction. Within healthcare settings, the method has been used in workshops involving patients, caregivers, and healthcare professionals. Writing activities encourage participants to explore themes such as vulnerability, hope, resilience, fear, acceptance, gratitude, and personal transformation. The methodology aligns conceptually with the principles of narrative medicine by recognizing that stories contribute significantly to understanding illness beyond biomedical perspectives. Writing allows participants to reconstruct personal narratives that integrate both suffering and personal resources, promoting greater coherence between lived experience and emotional understanding. For healthcare professionals, reflective writing may also encourage greater awareness of professional identity, compassion fatigue, empathic communication, and patient-centered care. Narrative reflection has increasingly been recognized as a valuable educational strategy within medical and nursing education for developing narrative competence and reflective clinical practice. Although the Scarpante Method® is not intended as a clinical treatment, it may complement broader psychosocial support initiatives by offering structured opportunities for emotional expression and reflective dialogue.

Community Organizations and Social Care

The Scarpante Method® has also been implemented within non-profit organizations, cultural associations, and community-based initiatives aimed at promoting inclusion, personal development, and social participation. Community writing groups create opportunities for individuals from diverse backgrounds to share personal stories within environments characterized by mutual respect and psychological safety. Such settings may reduce feelings of isolation while encouraging participants to recognize common human experiences despite differences in age, culture, profession, or personal history.

Writing activities frequently address themes including:

- life transitions;
- grief and loss;
- family relationships;
- identity;
- migration;
- caregiving;
- resilience;
- personal values.

The collective dimension of autobiographical writing encourages participants to develop empathic listening skills while recognizing

the diversity of individual life experiences. Rather than seeking consensus, the process values respectful dialogue and reciprocal recognition. Within community contexts, the method contributes to creating spaces in which narrative becomes an instrument for strengthening interpersonal relationships and promoting emotional well-being through shared reflection.

Corporate Well-being and Organizational Development

In recent years, organizations have increasingly acknowledged the relationship between employee well-being, psychological safety, communication quality, and organizational performance. Contemporary workplaces require employees and leaders to navigate uncertainty, complexity, interpersonal conflict, rapid technological change, and increasing emotional demands.

Within this context, the Scarpante Method® has been adapted for workplace well-being initiatives, leadership development programs, and organizational learning activities.

Corporate workshops generally focus on reflective themes such as:

- leadership identity;
- workplace relationships;
- communication patterns;
- stress awareness;
- professional purpose;
- organizational change;
- emotional resilience;
- collaboration.

Writing exercises encourage participants to examine their own experiences rather than evaluate organizational processes. Reflection frequently serves as a starting point for conversations regarding leadership behaviors, team dynamics, emotional intelligence, and psychological safety. Unlike traditional training programs that emphasize knowledge acquisition, writing-based reflection encourages participants to connect learning with lived professional experiences. This experiential approach may facilitate deeper engagement, personal insight, and increased awareness of relational dynamics within teams. Within organizational settings, the Scarpante Method® is positioned as an educational and developmental resource rather than a therapeutic intervention. Its primary objective is to encourage reflective leadership, authentic communication, and emotionally intelligent workplace relationships.

Future empirical studies could further investigate its potential contribution to employee engagement, stress management, team cohesion, and leadership development.

Coaching and Professional Development

The Scarpante Method® has also been integrated into individual and group coaching programs designed to support leadership development, career transitions, and personal growth. Reflective writing encourages clients to examine personal values, decision-making processes, professional identity, and long-term aspirations. Rather than generating immediate solutions, the writing process allows individuals to slow cognitive activity, recognize underlying beliefs, and clarify priorities.

Typical coaching themes include:

- leadership identity;
- career transitions;
- purpose and motivation;
- self-confidence;
- emotional awareness;
- communication;
- work-life integration.

Within coaching relationships, writing functions as an instrument for deep reflection between sessions while supporting continuous learning throughout the coaching process. The methodology aligns with contemporary coaching psychology by emphasizing client autonomy, reflective inquiry, and self-directed learning rather than advice-giving or prescriptive interventions.

Facilitator Education and Professional Training

One of the distinguishing characteristics of the Scarpante Method® is its structured approach to facilitator education. Through the master's Program in Therapeutic Writing – Scarpante Method®, professionals receive interdisciplinary training combining autobiographical writing, reflective practice, empathic listening, group facilitation, educational methodologies, and ethical principles. Participants come from diverse professional backgrounds, including education, psychology, healthcare, coaching, social work, counseling, and nonprofit organizations. The curriculum integrates theoretical study with experiential learning, encouraging future facilitators to engage personally in the writing practices they will later guide professionally. This experiential dimension reflects the educational philosophy that authentic facilitation requires personal familiarity with reflective processes before supporting others.

The training program contributes to maintaining methodological consistency while allowing flexibility in adapting the Scarpante Method® to different professional environments.

Current Development and International Perspectives

Although originally developed in Italy, interest in the Scarpante

Method® has gradually expanded through publications, conferences, educational collaborations, and international dissemination activities. The methodology has attracted attention among professionals working in autobiographical writing, narrative medicine, emotional education, coaching, and personal development. Current initiatives include expanding facilitator education, developing educational resources for younger populations, strengthening interdisciplinary collaborations, and exploring opportunities for international research partnerships. Future development would benefit from multicenter studies examining participant experiences, educational outcomes, and the potential contribution of the methodology across different cultural and organizational contexts. Such research would further strengthen the evidence base supporting the educational applications of the Scarpante Method® while contributing to the broader field of therapeutic and reflective writing.

Summary

Across diverse settings, the Scarpante Method® demonstrates considerable adaptability while maintaining its foundational principles of authenticity, autobiographical reflection, emotional awareness, empathic listening, and respectful dialogue. Whether applied in schools, healthcare environments, community organizations, coaching programs, or workplaces, the method positions writing as an educational practice capable of fostering reflective learning and meaningful interpersonal connection.

While further empirical investigation is necessary to evaluate measurable outcomes in different populations, the growing range of applications suggests that the Scarpante Method® represents a promising interdisciplinary framework for promoting emotional well-being through narrative and reflective practices.

Discussion

The growing recognition of writing as a tool for emotional reflection, meaning-making, and psychological well-being has generated increasing interdisciplinary interest across psychology, education, healthcare, and organizational sciences. Within this evolving landscape, the Scarpante Method® represents an original educational framework that extends traditional expressive writing by integrating autobiographical reflection, empathic listening, handwriting, and facilitated group dialogue into a structured developmental process. Although the method shares several conceptual foundations with established approaches to expressive writing and narrative medicine, it also introduces distinctive elements that contribute to the broader discussion regarding the role of narrative practices in promoting emotional well-being.

Positioning the Scarpante Method® Within the Therapeutic Writing Literature

The scientific literature on therapeutic writing has largely been shaped by the pioneering work of Pennebaker and colleagues, whose

expressive writing paradigm demonstrated that writing about emotionally significant experiences may improve psychological adjustment and, in some circumstances, physical health outcomes [13,14]. Traditional expressive writing protocols generally involve individual participants writing privately for short periods over several consecutive days. The primary mechanism proposed by this research involves emotional disclosure, cognitive processing, and the gradual construction of coherent narratives that reduce the psychological burden associated with emotional inhibition. The Scarpante Method® shares the emphasis on authentic emotional expression but differs in several important respects. First, it extends writing beyond emotional disclosure by incorporating a continuous educational process aimed at developing self-awareness and emotional literacy over time. Reflection is not limited to isolated writing sessions but becomes an ongoing practice integrated into personal development. Second, autobiographical narration occupies a more central role than in many expressive writing protocols. Participants are encouraged not only to describe emotional events but also to explore identity, relationships, personal values, life transitions, and existential meaning through repeated narrative reflection [15-18].

Third, the methodology introduces facilitated relational components that encourage empathic listening and voluntary narrative sharing. In this respect, writing becomes simultaneously an individual and interpersonal experience, expanding its potential educational function beyond solitary reflection. These distinctions suggest that the Scarpante Method® may be understood not simply as another expressive writing technique but as a broader narrative-based educational methodology.

Writing as a Relational Rather Than Individual Process

One of the most distinctive aspects of the Scarpante Method® is its understanding of writing as a relational activity. Many established writing interventions focus primarily on the internal psychological processes associated with emotional disclosure. While these mechanisms remain relevant, the Scarpante Method® emphasizes that emotional growth frequently occurs within interpersonal relationships characterized by empathy, acceptance, and authentic communication. Voluntary narrative sharing transforms individual reflection into collective learning. Listening to others' stories allows participants to recognize shared emotional experiences while appreciating the uniqueness of individual perspectives. This process may reduce feelings of isolation, strengthen interpersonal understanding, and encourage emotional validation. From an educational perspective, this relational dimension aligns with contemporary theories of social learning, dialogical education, and community-based reflective practice, all of which emphasize that knowledge and personal development emerge through interaction as well as individual cognition. Future research may explore whether this combination of personal writing and facilitated dialogue produces outcomes that differ from those associated with individual expressive writing alone.

Emotional Awareness as an Educational Competence

Another important contribution of the Scarpante Method® concerns its conceptualization of emotional awareness. Rather than presenting emotional regulation as the suppression or control of emotional experiences, the method encourages participants to develop increasing familiarity with their own emotional processes through observation, description, and reflection. This educational perspective is consistent with contemporary models of emotional intelligence and emotional regulation, which emphasize awareness, acceptance, and cognitive integration rather than emotional avoidance [10]. Writing encourages participants to identify recurring emotional patterns, examine personal beliefs, recognize behavioral responses, and consider alternative interpretations of lived experiences. Through repeated practice, participants may gradually develop greater emotional vocabulary, improve reflective capacity, and increased psychological flexibility. Importantly, the methodology views emotional awareness as a learnable competence rather than a fixed personality characteristic, suggesting that reflective writing may contribute to lifelong emotional development across educational and professional settings.

Handwriting and Embodied Reflection

The emphasis placed on handwriting distinguishes the Scarpante Method® from many contemporary writing interventions that rely primarily on digital technologies. While current scientific evidence remains inconclusive regarding whether handwriting is inherently superior to typing for emotional processing, research has demonstrated that handwriting engages sensorimotor systems differently and may encourage deeper cognitive engagement, sustained attention, and more elaborate information processing.

Within the Scarpante Method®, handwriting is not presented as a universal requirement for effective reflection but rather as an experiential practice that slows cognitive activity and promotes mindful engagement with emotional experience. Future neuroscientific research may further clarify the relationship between manual writing, autobiographical memory, emotional processing, and reflective learning.

Educational Rather Than Clinical Positioning

An important consideration concerns the appropriate positioning of the Scarpante Method® within the broader helping professions. Although the methodology addresses emotional experiences, vulnerability, and personal growth, it should not be interpreted as a psychotherapeutic intervention. Its primary purpose is educational and developmental rather than clinical. The facilitator does not diagnose psychological conditions, interpret unconscious processes, or provide psychotherapy. Instead, facilitators create structured environments that encourage reflective exploration, empathic listening, and personal meaning-making while respecting participant autonomy. This distinction is particularly important from both ethical and professional perspectives. Individuals experiencing significant psychological distress should receive appropriate assessment and intervention from

qualified mental health professionals. Within such contexts, reflective writing may represent a complementary resource but should not replace evidence-based psychological or psychiatric treatment. Maintaining this distinction strengthens the methodological clarity of the Scarpante Method® while supporting responsible implementation across educational and organizational settings.

Strengths of the Method

Several characteristics distinguish the Scarpante Method® within the broader field of therapeutic writing.

First, the methodology integrates multiple complementary disciplines—including autobiographical writing, narrative medicine, humanistic education, reflective practice, and emotional literacy—into a coherent educational framework. Second, its adaptability allows implementation across highly diverse settings without fundamentally altering its guiding principles. Third, the emphasis on facilitator education contributes to methodological consistency while supporting ethical practice. Fourth, the integration of individual reflection with voluntary group dialogue introduces an important relational dimension that has received comparatively limited attention within traditional expressive writing research. Finally, the methodology promotes accessibility. Participants require no literary training or previous writing experience, making reflective writing available to individuals with diverse educational and professional backgrounds. Collectively, these characteristics position the Scarpante Method® as a flexible educational resource capable of supporting reflective learning throughout the lifespan.

Limitations

Despite its promising conceptual framework, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, much of the current evidence supporting the Scarpante Method® remains descriptive and practice based. Although the methodology is theoretically consistent with broader research on expressive writing and narrative medicine, relatively few empirical studies have specifically evaluated its effectiveness using standardized research designs. Second, the diversity of implementation contexts presents methodological challenges for evaluating outcomes. Educational workshops, healthcare applications, coaching programs, and organizational interventions differ substantially in participant characteristics, objectives, and duration, making direct comparisons difficult. Third, many potential outcomes associated with reflective writing—including self-awareness, meaning-making, emotional literacy, and resilience—are multidimensional constructs that require carefully validated measurement instruments. Finally, facilitator competence likely represents an important variable influencing participant experience. Future research should examine how facilitator training, group dynamics, and implementation fidelity contribute to educational outcomes. Recognizing these limitations strengthens rather than weakens the credibility of the methodology by demonstrating appropriate scientific caution.

Directions for Future Research

The continued development of the Scarpante Method® would benefit from a systematic research agenda integrating qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method approaches.

Future investigations may include:

- randomized or quasi-experimental studies comparing the Scarpante Method® with other reflective writing interventions;
- longitudinal studies examining changes in emotional awareness, resilience, and psychological well-being over time;
- qualitative analyses exploring participants' lived experiences of autobiographical writing;
- educational research evaluating emotional literacy and reflective learning outcomes in schools;
- organizational studies investigating leadership development, psychological safety, and workplace well-being;
- healthcare research examining patient and caregiver experiences within narrative-based interventions.

International collaboration would further contribute to cross-cultural validation of the methodology while facilitating comparison across educational and healthcare systems. Such research would strengthen the evidence base supporting the Scarpante Method® and contribute more broadly to the expanding interdisciplinary literature on therapeutic writing and narrative practices.

Overall Interpretation

Taken together, the available theoretical foundations and practical experience suggest that the Scarpante Method® offers an original contribution to the field of therapeutic writing by integrating reflective writing, autobiographical narration, empathic dialogue, and emotional education within a coherent developmental framework. Rather than proposing writing as a solution to psychological distress, the methodology positions reflective writing as an educational practice capable of supporting self-awareness, emotional literacy, interpersonal understanding, and lifelong personal development. Its originality lies not in replacing existing expressive writing approaches but in expanding them through a relational, educational, and experiential perspective that recognizes writing as both an individual and collective process of meaning-making.

Conclusion

The Scarpante Method® of Therapeutic Writing represents an innovative narrative-based educational approach that places writing at the intersection of emotional awareness, autobiographical reflection, relational learning, and personal development. Emerging from the lived experience and long-term educational work of Sonia Scarpante, the method has progressively evolved from an individual practice of self-expression into a structured framework applied

across educational, healthcare, social, coaching, and organizational contexts. This manuscript has described the theoretical foundations, methodological principles, and practical applications of the Scarpante Method®, positioning it within the broader international fields of expressive writing, narrative medicine, reflective practice, and emotional well-being research. The methodology shares important principles with established approaches to therapeutic writing, particularly the recognition that transforming experiences into narratives may support emotional processing, meaning making, and self-awareness. At the same time, it introduces distinctive elements, including the central role of handwriting, the integration of autobiographical exploration, and the importance of facilitated relational dialogue. A fundamental contribution of the Scarpante Method® lies in its understanding of writing as more than a cognitive activity. Writing is approached as an embodied and relational practice through which individuals can explore personal experiences, recognize emotional patterns, strengthen self-understanding, and develop more authentic communication with themselves and others.

The method adopts an educational rather than clinical perspective, emphasizing reflection, emotional literacy, and personal growth while recognizing the importance of appropriate professional boundaries. Its applications across diverse environments demonstrate its flexibility and potential contribution to initiatives aimed at promoting psychological well-being and reflective capacities throughout the lifespan. Nevertheless, further empirical research is required to evaluate the specific outcomes associated with participation in the Scarpante Method® and to identify the mechanisms through which its components may influence emotional awareness, resilience, interpersonal connection, and personal development. Future studies using qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method designs will be essential for establishing a stronger evidence base. Within the expanding international field of therapeutic and reflective writing, the Scarpante Method® offers a distinctive contribution by emphasizing the transformative potential of personal narratives. It proposes that writing can become a space of listening, awareness, and connection—an accessible human practice through which individuals may explore their experiences, construct meaning, and cultivate a deeper relationship with themselves and with others.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

Sonia Scarpante is the founder of the Scarpante Method® and Founder and President of La Cura di Sé Association. Lara R. Dassi is a Scarpante Method® facilitator and a member of the Board of Directors of La Cura di Sé Association. These professional and organizational affiliations are disclosed in the interest of transparency. The authors declare that they received no external funding for this manuscript and report no additional financial or commercial conflicts of interest.

Author Contributions

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Conceptualization: Sonia Scarpante developed the foundational principles and educational framework of the Scarpante Method®.

Writing – Original Draft Preparation: Sonia Scarpante and Lara R. Dassi led the writing, organization, and preparation of the manuscript, integrating the theoretical foundations, methodological principles, and practical applications of the Scarpante Method®.

Writing – Review and Editing: Sonia Scarpante and Lara R. Dassi jointly reviewed, revised, and approved the final version of the manuscript.

Methodology: The methodological description reflects the principles and educational practices of the Scarpante Method®, originally developed by Sonia Scarpante.

Ethical Considerations

The Scarpante Method® is an educational and reflective writing approach and does not constitute psychotherapy or a clinical intervention. Participation in activities based on the methodology follows principles of voluntary engagement, confidentiality, respect for personal boundaries, and psychological safety. When implemented in settings involving individuals experiencing significant emotional distress, appropriate collaboration with qualified healthcare or mental health professionals is recommended.

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