

# Letters to Myself

A SERIES BY TINO MELCHOR



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tino Melchor is a former undergraduate research assistant with the PUENTE Lab. He is currently pursuing his Masters in Social Work (MSW) with a commitment to serving historically marginalized communities. He has worked closely with curanderos and community healers, drawing inspiration from traditional healing practices that emphasize storytelling, symbolism, and relational care, while also drawing influence from multiple fields, including social work, philosophy, Muay Thai, Mexica cosmology, and men's work, to inform his creative and healing-centered perspective. His lived experiences, including the loss of his father at a young age, deeply shape his creative voice, informing a body of work that centers grief, resilience, and the quiet emotional labor carried by many individuals and families. Through poetry, Tino explores the spaces where language falls short and where healing begins not with answers, but with awareness.



## Why Art as a Medium for Mental Health?

Although clinical definitions of mental health are essential, they often fail to capture the lived experience of distress. Research suggests that artistic expression can supplement traditional mental health frameworks by giving form to internal experiences that are difficult to articulate verbally<sup>1</sup>. Expressive writing and poetry allow individuals to externalize emotions through symbolic language, supporting affect labeling, meaning-making, and emotional clarity, and have been linked to reductions in stress and improvements in emotion regulation<sup>23</sup>. As a result, art functions not as a replacement for clinical care, but as complementary, culturally flexible and accessible complement that fosters reflection, connection, and healing.

Some of Tino's Poems can be found throughout the toolkit, or for more poems and resources, please visit [puentelab.com](http://puentelab.com).

### Letters

#### What is mental health?

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#### Un momento

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#### Silent Suffering

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#### How are you really?

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#### So what now?

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# References

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2. Baikie, K. A., & Wilhelm, K. (2005). Emotional and physical health benefits of expressive writing. *Advances in Psychiatric Treatment*, 11(5), 338–346. <https://doi.org/10.1192/apt.11.5.338>
3. Kaimal, G., Ray, K., & Muniz, J. (2016). Reduction of cortisol levels and participants' responses following art making. *Art Therapy*, 33(2), 74–80. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07421656.2016.1166832>