

MENTAL HEALTH X



BY
**FATIMAH AL-
SALEEM
& ERWIN WANG**

A poet has the power to impact how the reader feels through reading their poem. Specific words with positive connotations can make the reader feel uplifted and optimistic, while negative diction can foreshadow a sad event in the future to the reader. Words can affect how we feel about ourselves and the world around us and specifically poetry. We can feel the love, pain, sorrow, and grief of the speaker and maybe even relate that to our own lives. But if poetry can make us feel so many varying emotions, can it impact our mental health too? Let's dig deeper.

Due to the emotions poetry can incite in us, poetry itself can provide us with comfort and boost our moods during times of stress (Kelly, 2023). The combination of words and metaphors can become a channel in which we feel seen and represented, thereby reducing emotional stress ("The Healing Power of Poetry," n.d.). Through reading poetry, you can also feel your emotions being expressed. Individuals can feel more connected to themselves, thus benefiting their mental health.

For example, in Rumi's "The Guest House" he expresses the idea of welcoming all emotions through the metaphor of a guest house. These emotions can include sadness and joy. One can connect with this poem and refer to the "guest house" as the human being – we should be open and accepting to all emotions and we are not alone. Everyone feels all sorts of emotions. ("The Guest House by Jalaluddin Rumi," n.d.)

Additionally, poetry can help cope with isolation or loneliness. A new study by the University of Plymouth and Nottingham Trent University shows that poetry can help reduce feelings of anxiety ("Poetry is good for mental health," n.d.) Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, those who read and wrote poetry displayed more positive levels of overall well being. Poetry seemed to have helped them identify and express their internal emotions, thus improving their wellbeing through improving their mental health. They were more aware of their own emotions.

Now that we know the benefits of poetry on overall mental health, how can we use it to our benefit? We can listen to a poetry podcast while driving occasionally to help de-stress. For those of us who write, we can journal in a notebook to help express our emotions in a healthy way (kpelland99, 2023). Now, not all of us love poetry in general and that's ok. The main reason why poetry is so efficient for mental health is that it is a mechanism of self-expression in a healthy way. Replacing poetry with daily journaling, connecting with nature, or even listening to music can all be a healthy way to connect with our emotions. We can also talk to others, like our local wellness centers within our school or communities, to express our emotions. If we can identify our emotions and express them in a healthy manner, we can generally improve our mental health.

References

Kelly, R. (2023, February 2). The Therapeutic Power of Poetry: What's the Evidence? Inspire the Mind. <https://medium.com/inspire-the-mind/the-therapeutic-power-of-poetry-whats-the-evidence-208fa59fe09b>

kpelland99. (2023, April 27). Poetry promotes mental healing. Oregon Health News Blog. <https://covidblog.oregon.gov/poetry-promotes-mental-healing/>

Poetry is good for mental health, study shows. (n.d.). Nottingham Trent University.

The Guest House by Jalaluddin Rumi. (n.d.). Scottish Poetry Library. <https://www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/poem/guest-house/>

The Healing Power of Poetry. (n.d.). Google Arts & Culture. <https://artsandculture.google.com/story/the-healing-power-of-poetry/uAVR9WMpqwsMDg?hl=en>

Personal Sources:

- Ms. Rokoszak – helped me with examples of poetry in class
- Wellness center – helped me with resources for sustaining out mental health

ADHD X Poetry

...and School

By: Erwin Wang

Autism

In an education system that often emphasises standardised tests and rigid formats, the arts, especially poetry, can offer a breath of fresh air. However, beyond being just a creative tool, poetry holds surprising benefits for neurodivergent students, especially those with ADHD and autism. As teachers and administrators explore more inclusive ways to engage all learners, the question presents itself: Should we learn poetry in school? The answer may lie in the unique advantages poetry provides for students with different learning needs.

A Path to Focus for Students with ADHD

One of the defining characteristics of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is difficulty maintaining attention, especially in tasks that require sustained focus. Traditional classroom lessons, with long-form readings and complex lectures, can be overwhelming for these students. Poetry, however, offers a solution.

Poetry's compact nature and rhythmic structure allow students to engage with the material in manageable chunks. The rhyme, metre, and repetition found in many poems help keep attention, creating a sense of momentum that prose usually lacks. This can transform poetry into a tool for improving focus and retention. Adding on to this, poetry's vivid imagery and emotional depth provide a more engaging, multisensory learning experience. For students with ADHD, who often respond well to stimulation and change, the dynamic nature of poetry can make learning feel less like a chore and more like an exploration.

To further understand how poetry can support students with ADHD, I spoke with Farrell Chen, my good friend of 6 years and a current high school freshman who was diagnosed with ADHD at a young age. Farrell shared his experiences with how poetry impacted his learning and helped lessen the effects of ADHD on him.

