

**Literature and Coping Skills**  
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**Lecture – 10**  
**Poetry Therapy - 2**

Hello, everybody, I am Ajit K Mishra your course instructor for Literature and Coping Skills. I am back again with another lecture on poetry therapy. In my last lecture, I talked about poetry therapy from a variety of perspectives, and I am sure you might have liked those ideas. And you might have decided to explore the area yet further, since it is of great importance to us, our emotions, our life and our existence.

So, if you remember I talked about these important aspects the last time we met, I talked about poetry therapy, poetry as therapy, poetry and healing, poetry and voicing. And Nicholas Mazzas, multi-dimensional RES model poetry therapy. So, we discussed quite a few very critical elements of poetry therapy in our last meeting. I am going to extend that discussion further with a few other things.

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## Poetry Therapy



- Voicing and Healing
- Name it to Tame it
- Poetry as Therapy
- Poetry and Therapy
- Max Ehrmann "Desiderata"
- Danna Faulds "Allow"

Today, I am going to talk about voicing and healing, how they have very, very closely allied ideas, and how voicing finally leads to healing. If you remember, I talked about voicing briefly in my last lecture; I am going to extend that idea today. At the same time, I am also going to talk

about the ‘name it to tame it’ a concept developed by Daniel Siegel, very popularly called Dan Siegel, the famous psychologist, and author.

I am also going to talk about poetry as therapy by extending that idea yet further, and poetry and therapy. And I am going to conclude with two very interesting and very inspiring poems one by Max Ehrmann, Desiderata, which means things to desire, and Danna Faulds, Allow. So, let us take a look at each of these components in detail.

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## Voicing and Healing

- *I felt I lost my edge  
and then I lost my place  
but the tragedy is  
I have so much to say.*
- Perturbed at the inarticulateness of feelings
- Expressive urge revisited - the outer manifestation of an inner state
- Voicing and authentic existence
- Mirroring of expression through poetry

So, start with voicing and healing. We all know that voicing is very, very important human activity, we have a voice, so that we can express how we feel, what we feel, what we think, and a variety of other things. So, this is a voice that makes us aware that we exist, and we have an authentic existence, our existence is important.

We matter, our life matters to us and people around us. So, voicing is such an important activity, that it leads to a lot of therapeutic benefits for us humans. So, voicing actually leads to healing. And how does that happen? We are going to take a look at that. I am going to take the same lines that I used in my last lecture, just to help us discuss the idea of voicing and healing in greater detail.

So, if you remember I talked about these lines in my last lecture by saying that these lines were uttered by a cancer patient at the University of California, Los Angeles Department of oncology.

So, the cancer patient, it was in fact trying to voice his ideas, his thoughts. While saying “I felt I lost my edge, and then I lost my place. But the tragedy is I have so much to say”. The tragedy is not that the patient has lost so many things in life.

The patient has passed through such a traumatic experience. What is more important for the patient is that he has not been able to say all those things that he wants to say or desires to say. That is the reason why I have underlined the last line, which is in fact, a very, very important thing for all of us because it conveys such a critical message to all of us to decipher and to work up.

So, I have so much to say. So, that is a universal human desire a universal human condition, we humans have so much to say, and we do not know how to say all those things that we want to say, and the gap between the desire to say or of things, and the inability to say or do so, results in a kind of anxiety that we all pass through.

Therefore, it is important that we begin to take note of this particular message, this important human activity, that is, we have a lot of things to say, and we must find ways to say what we want to say, so that we can take care of our disturbing and distressing emotions, which continue to disturb us unless we decide to say.

So, the problem is, most of us now do not know how to say that. Or we do not think it is important to say and we keep repressing our desires to express ourselves and that results in some kind of disturbance, because a disturbance springs from the idea that we cannot articulate our feelings well or completely.

So, the inadequacy to or in articulating our ideas completely, our feelings completely leads us to a state of anxiety, because we all know, we have so much to say, and we do not know how to say so much. And we also know that we have not been able to so, say so much. Therefore, that leads to some kind of disturbance in us. So, that brings us back to the idea of expressive urge, if you remember, I talked about expressive urge, briefly in my last lecture.

So, the expressive urge is one of the strongest urges in the humans, we humans are visited by this wild kind of urge, which is expressive, if we cannot express will continue to feel disturbed and distressed, because we are basically an expressive creature. So, expression is a hallmark or

expressiveness is a hallmark of human existence, if we cannot express ourselves, we will be in trouble.

So, you can recall those ancient days, those primitive days, when humans did not have access to language, yet they expressed themselves in numerous ways. So, we all are visited by different kinds of emotions and feelings, which result because of the different kinds of experiences that we undergo or pass through, and these emotions and feelings gradually built in our selves.

And they want us to express channelize them when we do not do so when we do not know how to do so that leads to lots of problems. So, I can cite the example of our committees who was taking a bath in a nude condition in his bathtub. And he was thinking about the principal, he was struggling with an idea.

So, the moment he got to discover got to know that idea, he just sprang out of his bathtub and ran down the streets, shouting, Eureka, Eureka. And while doing so he was absolutely unaware that he was knew he was not wearing clothes, people were looking at him in all and shock, where he was absolutely unaware. And he was absolutely unconcerned about those approaches, he was more concerned about expressing his excitement.

So, that is the power of expressive urge. Because we continue to experience all kinds of ideas in us and we need to express them as soon as possible. So, an expressive urge is in fact the outer manifestation of an inner state. So, what I feel what I think needs to be expressed, so that it is manifested externally or outwardly, and thus leads to some kind of therapeutic effects, some kind of healing, relaxation.

Therefore the expressive urge is very, very important. So, when we come to poetry, it is one of the finest forms of expressive arts. And that is the reason why we always find a match in poetry, because it allows us to express our ideas, our feelings and emotions in such a smooth manner, that we are comfortable with it or interacting with it.

So, that brings us to the question of voicing and authentic existence. Because if I am unable to voice, my thoughts, my feelings, my experiences, that means I am not leading my life



authentically. And I must tell you that when I discussed these existential concerns and existential questions, I talked about this particular thing.

So, by taking our eyes off, or by taking your mind off, that particular existential question does not ensure that it will not return to us, it will not return to haunt us or disturb us, it will continue to do unless we decide to voice our experiences and emotions. So, voicing is a very powerful tool that allows us to ensure our authentic existence. So, this will, in fact, lead to the mirroring of expression through poetry and comes to poetry, as I have already told you, it allows us to find a match, find a sink.

And it allows us to find the channel through which we can also express ourselves, while engaging in poetic experiences. We can also express ourselves. For example, if we find a character in a piece of poem who is talking about his or her traumatic experiences, and who is also showing how he or she is struggling with those experiences, we generally or we gradually begin to feel the same because of the mirroring of expressions.

So, the mirror neurons get fired and then we can quickly connect with that character. And then after a while, we become that character. And we begin to express ourselves. So, poetry that way, in fact, allows us to voice our experiences and feelings, and thus, express ourselves properly, and ensure our healing as well.

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**Name it to Tame it**  
**Daniel Siegel**

- Emotions are a core aspect of human experience
- **Name it to tame it**, a tool to make our emotions inform, not overwhelm us
  1. During intense emotional responses, our limbic brain pumps stress hormones to our muscles to prepare us for fight-flight action.
  2. We need to name the emotion to activate our executive brain

So, with that, I will take you to this wonderful, wonderful concept, name it to tame it, that was developed by Daniel Siegel, he was a he is a very famous psychologist and author. And I would like all of you to watch his Ted presentation at the same title, name it to tame it. Now, that is a very, very important concept, because it talks about the process of naming. And it also talks about the process of taming through performing the action of naming. So, naming is an action that we can perform, if we want to tame a variety of things.

And what are those things those disturbing emotions, those distressing emotions? So, name it to tame it. That means if I can name my feelings, my emotions both positive and negative. That means I am in a position to release that excessive amount of pressure which is built within me. So, name it to tame it is not only an idea or concept, but also a very important tool, which helps us take care of our expressive urge and expressive concerns.

So, before we discuss it any further, let me tell you that emotions are a core aspect of human experience. Of course, if I am experiencing an emotion of love, or affection, that means I will feel energized to create something new to engage in life's proceedings and look forward to life and its rewards.

If, and that is the reason why most people find it good to engage with positive emotions. But when it comes to negative emotions, people try to run away from it by taking a flight. And they do not want to remain faced with those challenging and negative emotions. But if we look at the effect or impact of emotions on us, we will find that the negative emotions also help us with a lot of things.

For example, if I am walking down the street, in a dark night, I may experience some kind of fear in me. So, that fear is not going to destroy me that fear is in fact going to tell me that I must do something to protect myself. So, that fear also makes me do a few things, so that I can protect myself. So, negative emotions are not bad, that way, they may disturb us, they may challenges, but at the same time, they can also prepare us.

So, that is the reason why we need to approach negative emotions through a positive standpoint, so that we can make the most of those negative emotions, or those disturbing and distressing emotions. So, name it to tame it, I have already told you that it is a tool to make our emotions

inform us, not overwhelm us, because most often when we are visited by negative emotions, strong emotions, our executive brain stops functioning.



So, therefore, we do not know what to do. And we do not know how to respond to that particular situation, everything goes blank and we are lost. We do not know what to do, so therefore, because the limbic brain is activated, and it in a way overwhelms the executive brain. So, it is very, very important that we understand that these emotions are here to inform us, they are not here to overwhelm us. So, how do we overcome this particular situation?

So, it happens during intense emotional responses, that our limbic brain pumps stress hormones so rapidly to our muscles, that we are faced with the fight or flight action. And most often, we prefer the flight action; we do not prefer the fight action, because that is exactly what we mean by this action tendency. So, whenever there is danger, we prefer to escape that. So, that is, that is a natural human approach.

But that is exactly where we need to name the emotion so, that we can activate our executive brain. And once the executive brain is activated, it will lead to the calming of the limbic brain, and will feel relaxed. So, how will this naming happen? For example, there is something that is disturbing me, or I am afraid, I can continue to say yes, I am afraid, yes, I am afraid because I am awake. And I am aware of it. Yes, I am afraid. And why am I afraid? If I begin to name the things that I am really scared of, I am afraid of, than I am gradually performing that function.

So, I am not afraid anymore. So, that will gradually lead to the activation or reactivation of the executive brain and the limbic brain will be put to rest. So, it is very, very important that we understand the naming process. So, the naming process, developed by Daniel Siegel is very, very arcane to the expressive urge that I talked about a while ago. So, it is all about the expressive urge and how well we can take care of that, whether we can name our experiences, well or not.

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## Poetry as Therapy

- Human emotions and core affects:  
Reward (happiness), Punishment (sadness), and Stress (fear and anger)
- **Emotion** is an innate, powerful, and principally **unconscious** process, but it should also be known to the consciousness
- Freud stated that it wasn't he, but the poet, who "discovered the unconscious."

That brings us to the idea of poetry as therapy. I hinted at this particular aspect of poetry yesterday, if you remember. Now, take a look at this particular thing. If you remember, while discussing emotions, and our emotional wellbeing I talked about basic human emotions. So, if we focus on those four core, human emotions will find this hole.

That is happiness, sadness, fear and anger. So, reward punishment and stress affects these are the affects happiness, then sadness, the fear and anger, these are important effects. So, if we understand that these are the effects that will be with or within us forever, it will be good for us. So, that we become aware and begin to treat each of these emotions with the same kind of approach, the same kind of attitude, it is not that will prefer our reward emotions.

And we will try to run away from those punishment and stress emotions for stress effects. So, if that happens, we will not be comfortable with ourselves with our existence. So, it is very important that we take equal care of each of these effects, starting with the reward, and punishment and stress we must understand that emotion is an innate, inherent, natural, powerful and principally unconscious process.

But it should also be known to the consciousness. So, that is the reason why emotion regulation, which I have already talked about, is so very important emotion management or emotion regulation, because we need to bring those emotions at the unconscious level to the conscious



level, so that they can be dealt with properly, and they do not continue to disturb us or distress us.

So, in fact, the idea of this paradox, that emotions are both unconscious, and they should be available to the conscious state as well, was developed by Freud. So, Freud paradox is still unresolved. Now, Freud has also summed up this idea, with a very popular saying, says that it was not he, but the poet who discovered the unconscious.

So, that is the power of poetry, which a psychologist cannot do, the point we can do, the point we can, in fact, present right before us a variety of emotions, a variety of characters, experiencing a variety of emotions and passing through a variety of conditions, and experiences.

And when we begin to engage with these characters, we discover the unconscious emotions as well. And that is the reason why Freud has said that the poet has discovered the unconscious. So, the point has reached even those regions, which scientists or psychologists have not been able to. So, that is the power of poetry as therapy.

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## Poetry and Therapy

**Poetry can often**

- Be used as a vehicle for the expression of emotions that might otherwise be difficult to express
- Promote self-reflection and exploration, increasing self-awareness and helping individuals make sense of their world
- Help individuals redefine their situation by opening up new ways of perceiving reality



So, poetry and therapy – So, what exactly poetry does, how exactly poetry exerts its therapeutic effects on us. So, poetry can be used as a vehicle for the expression of emotions that might be otherwise difficult to express. So, it suddenly gives us a channel. In the same way, as a film gives

us a channel, we begin to engage, we begin to immerse and we find the channel through which we are also expressing our emotions.

So, that is, that is how the therapy happens. While we are doing so, we are feeling relaxed, and we are feeling easy. So, it also promotes self-reflection and exploration because while engaging with the experiences and actions of a character, you are also reflecting on yourself? And you are exploring, it increases self-awareness. And it also helps us make sense of our world. So, our sense making process becomes enriched with through all these stages, through the stages of self-reflection and exploration, self-awareness, and sense making, it becomes a richer.

So, that is why it is therapeutic. And then it helps us redefine our situation by opening up new ways of perceiving reality, because we can predict the future. If you remember I talked about modeling with the help of which we can predict what is going to happen. Similarly, poetry as a piece of simulated modeling can help us, you know, predict what is going to happen in future. And we can, in a way, you know, go for new ways of perceiving realities. So, that is why we can say, poetry and therapy are interlinked. They are complimentary to each other.

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Desiderata  
Max Ehrmann

- Go placidly amid the noise and haste,  
and remember what peace there may be  
in silence.  
As far as possible without surrender  
be on good terms with all persons.  
Speak your truth quietly and clearly;  
and listen to others,  
even the dull and the ignorant;  
they too have their story.

Cont.

So, that brings us to this wonderful, wonderful poem. It was, in fact, composed as a prose poem composed by the American poet, Max Ehrmann. The Desiderata is derived from the Latin word, which means ‘things to desire’, or what are those things that we desire in life, and how we can take care of our desires.

So, before I begin to talk about the lines, let me tell you that the impact of this point was so great that even an American psychiatrist Merrill Moore, went on to say that, “This particular piece of poem needs to be bottled and should be sold in the market or with a title, “Doctor, Ehrman magical soul medicine.”

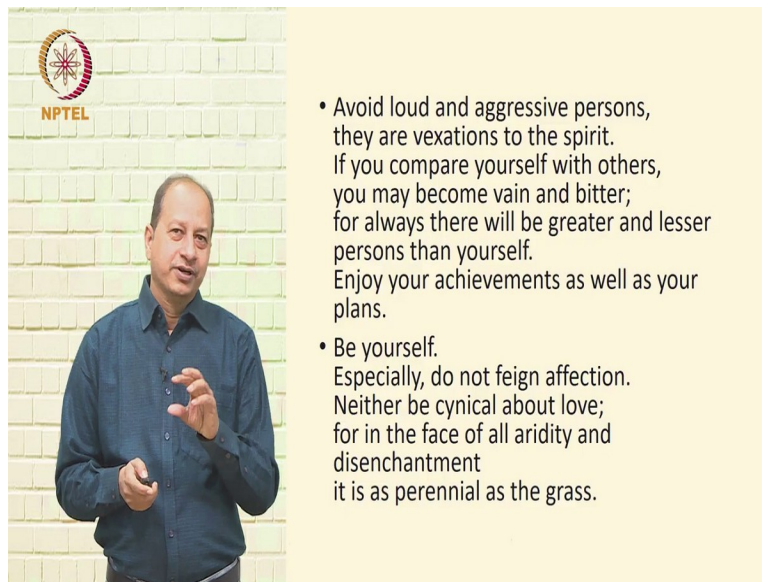
So, Moore used it, use this poem to your treat large number of people. So, he performed poetry therapy, and it served as one of the samples and most popular samples used way Moore. So, that was the impact of the Desiderata. And you can also explore for more information about the Desiderata over the net. And you will be surprised to see that this has been so impactful historically, all through.

So, when we look at the poem, I must tell you that I have not picked the entire point, it is quite long, and I decided to pick only those important segments that we can focus on in this lecture. And I encourage you all to read the entire poem, so that you can get a clearer understanding of it go placidly amid the noise and haste and remember what piece there may be in silence, as far as possible, without surrender, be on good terms with all persons speak your truth quietly and clearly. And listen to others, even the dull and the ignorant, they too have their story.

So, the entire stanza is talking about the meaning making process, everything has meaning, even the silence, even the speech, voice, everything has meaning. So, it actually encourages us to do a lot of things. So, there are two very important things that we can do, when it comes to you know, developing coping strategies, the first can be, developing goal oriented strategy or goal oriented behavior. So, when you look at the title, things to desire in life, if these are the things that you desire, they become they constitute your goal.

If you have a goal, then you need to inculcate a goal directed behavior. So, for that goal directed behavior to be actualized, you need to approach it, stages in stages, or step by step. So, this is how you can approach the whole thing. And then let us take a look at the other stanza.

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The slide features the NPTEL logo in the top left corner. A man in a blue shirt is shown from the waist up, gesturing with his hands as if speaking. To his right, a yellow background contains two bullet points of text.

- Avoid loud and aggressive persons, they are vexations to the spirit. If you compare yourself with others, you may become vain and bitter; for always there will be greater and lesser persons than yourself. Enjoy your achievements as well as your plans.
- Be yourself. Especially, do not feign affection. Neither be cynical about love; for in the face of all aridity and disenchantment it is as perennial as the grass.

Avoid loud and aggressive persons. You can also avoid the same thing in you. If you are too loud and aggressive, then you cannot focus. If you are loud and aggressive, it is a free possibility that your limbic brain will be activated and it will definitely result in the loss of functionality of your executive brain you will not be able to think resonate, or even know what to do and how to respond. Because that is, that is the expression to the spirit, that will definitely kill the spirit that will definitely blind, the executive side of our brain.

So, then if you begin to compare yourself with others, that means you are not being honest to yourself. And it is always a good idea to be in oneself, than going and comparing with others. And then enjoy your achievements as well as your plans. And you come to yourself, now be yourself. We have been talking about self-management, self-regulation, in connection with emotions, but that is not the only thing.

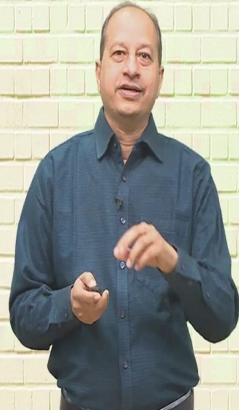

In connection with everything, everything that is related to our existence needs to be approached from that perspective first, so that we can move beyond that. That means it all begins with self-discovery, self-assessment, self-analysis, leading to self-discovery, and then self-regulation, self-management. So, if we are able to do all these things, then we are ready to move beyond ourselves to the greater the larger world.

So, be yourself is one of the most popular expressions we generally come across. And it is so popular that now it is become a cliché expression, but it still carries a lot of weight, be yourself.

And then it comes to the idea of love. Love is one of those things that will always help us return to the Safe Mode. That means the longing for love. If we long for love, that means we will do things, which will ensure that we return to the safe mode, the idea of love is going to help us continue or feed our life instinct, and then keep our death instinct aside.

And then it can also help us in the face of all disenchantment and a aridity. That means, they will be the attacks of those negative emotions. But if we have or cultivate that ability to convert those negative emotions into positive ones, then it can happen because it is as perennial as permanent as the grass. So, that is the message we derive from Desiderata by Max Erharmn. So, that is very, very important. Now we can switch to the next poem that I have selected for a brief discussion, from the perspective of poetry therapy.

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Allow  
Danna Faulds

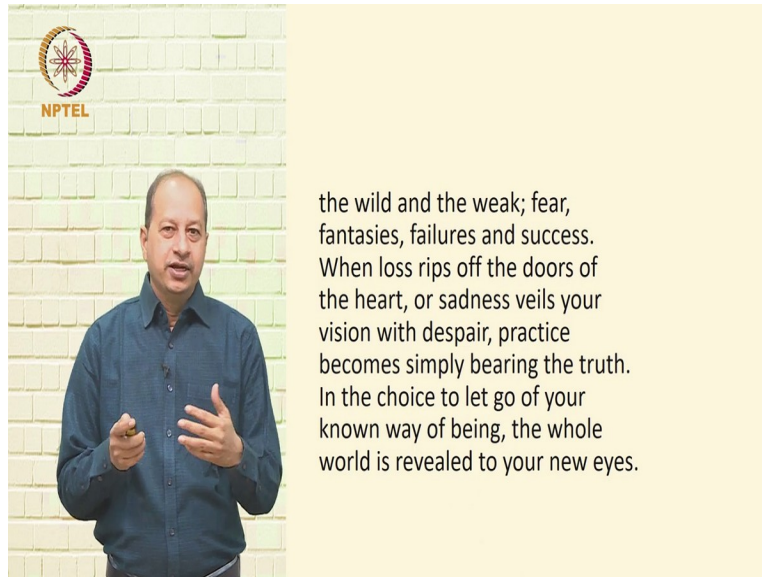
There is no controlling life.  
Try corralling a lightning bolt,  
containing a tornado. Dam a  
stream and it will create a new  
channel. Resist, and the tide  
will sweep you off your feet.  
Allow, and grace will carry  
you to higher ground. The only  
safety lies in letting it all in –

Allow when you look at this particular thing, allow that means we are not allowing various things, including we are not allowing ourselves to speak and express properly or adequately. So, allowing is one of the biggest things that we can do. There is no controlling life, you cannot control you need to accept the fact that there is no controlling life, you may be extremely powerful, but you'll still not be able to control your life. So, in that condition what you do?

You try corralling a lightning bolt containing a tornado damage stream and it will create new channels. So, for example, you are faced with a great challenge, and you are trying to dam it to block it. Once you try to do that, it will create new channels. So, find alternative ways you will

discover them. So, you cannot resist. If you begin to resist, then that the tide will definitely sweep you off your feet. So, the whole idea is to allow and you will find grace everywhere. So, that is the idea.

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So, these are some of the things that we are visited by those distressing and disturbing emotions, like fear, failures, fantasies, but at the same time we are also visited by success. So, when all these things happen, when lots of rips of the doors of the heart or sadness fails your vision, disturbs your vision with despair. The only thing that you can think about is practice because practice becomes simply bearing the truth.

That means you allow it, you allow that to happen to yourself, do not run away from it. Do not try to escape, because escape will never make you wiser, stronger. Running away from those problems will not help you solve those issues. So, it is very important that you decide to allow those things to come to you happen to you.

Because once they come to you happen to you, you will stand up and decide what to do and how to overcome those issues. So, that is how the whole world will be revealed to your new eyes rather same eyes, but your perspective will change, it will lead to a new perspective.



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The image shows a man in a blue shirt speaking, with the NPTEL logo in the top left corner. The background is a light-colored brick wall.

**References**

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- <https://allpoetry.com/desiderata---words-for-life>

So, that is how we come to the end of today's lecture. I am sure you must have liked the things that I talked about today, you can explore these ideas beyond this discussion because these ideas are so very important, so critical for our existence that we always need to, take them further. So, thank you very much for joining me.