

A Social Emotional Writing Workshop for Tumultuous Times:

“FINDING the ESSENCE”

Created and led by Crystal Chan

Students use their own words in a clear, methodical, and tender way to describe their anxiety, grief, frustration, and even strange joy in these exceptionally complex times. Bilingual optional (Spanish), trauma-informed approach.

Illinois Social/Emotional Learning Standards

- Identify and Manage One's Emotions and Behavior (1A)
- Recognize the Feelings and Perspectives of Others (2A)
- Use Communication and Social Skills to Interact Effectively with Others (2C)

Illinois Common Core Writing Standards

- Narrative Writing (W.8.3)
- Production and Distribution of Writing (W.8.4, 8.5)
- Range of Writing: Reflection and Revision (W.8.10)

American School Counselors Association Standards

- ASCA Student Standards Mindset Standards (M1, 2, 4, 5)
- ASCA Student Standards Self-Management Skills (B-SMS 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10)
- ASCA Student Standards Social Skills (B-SS 1, 2, 4, 6)

Program Overview

Crystal opens the workshop by reading a selection from her novel, *Bird*, and inviting students to share if they feel that adults are deeply listening to them in these tumultuous times. Then, they are walked through the process of freewriting, or stream-of-consciousness writing. The freewriting questions prompt students to name their losses, ways that they have grown, and strange joys that they may have encountered. The students then reduce their freewriting through two rounds of whittling away until they have a piece of writing that is haiku-esque in nature, with their experiences and feelings clarified. Crystal also introduces the concept of deep listening and models how to practice it with each other. The students then divide into breakout groups, alternating between deeply listening to their classmates' experiences and speaking the truths of their own experiences that might have surfaced in their freewriting. At each stage, Crystal uses her own writing as an example and utilizes a trauma-informed approach throughout.



Why This Workshop is Important

This workshop helps students understand and unpack their world in a time when mental distress among youth is rampant. As students find their emotions revealed, they discover a sense of empowerment and agency. Reluctant writers experience the felt sense of the power of words, the relevance of the writing process, and the need for rounds of edits, not as a form of tedium but as the necessary step to reveal clarity and even self-discovery. This process underscores to students the value of their mental health and their intrinsic worth, no matter the tumultuous state of the world around them.

Crystal Chan offers social, emotional, and embodied workshops for those who are processing how these tumultuous times have affected them and how they can engage in self-care and reconnect with others. Crystal is also an international children's author who has been published in 10 countries. She lives at the intersection of writing, embodiment, and emotional health.

crystal@crystalchan.net • www.crystalchan.net