

# Writing the Spirit

with

**Judy Clinton**

Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> November ~ 10am - 4.00pm  
at

Vention Cottage,  
Heddons Mouth,  
Parracombe, North Devon EX31 4QA

Do you like writing?

Do you like sharing with other people  
about your life experiences and your responses to them?

Are you wanting to become more self-aware?

***This workshop could be for you!***

We'll spend the day quietly together in the beautiful setting of Vention Cottage. I'll lead us into simple exercises to enable us to write spontaneously – no need for thinking it out, getting all the spellings right etc.

Then we'll share the writings with the rest of the group (always optional) in an atmosphere of acceptance and interest – no criticism. Your works are precious because you wrote them, not because they are 'brilliant writing'.

***It's the process, not the end result that matters.***

***This method of working is simple but very powerful – have a go and see!***

**£35 for the day**

*(Drinks provided but please bring packed lunch)*

To book (essential) or for further information,  
contact Heather Holt on [hholt.exmoor@btopenworld.com](mailto:hholt.exmoor@btopenworld.com) or phone : 01598 763438



*I am an experienced facilitator and have a reputation for providing a safe atmosphere in which you can be yourself. I am a writer and have worked extensively in education and the social work fields and believe passionately in the power of writing to reveal and heal.*

## WRITING THE SPIRIT

You are receiving this attachment because friends, associates and workshop participants have agreed to help me get the work that I do further known, and they have thought that you could be interested. I would be grateful if you could give me a few minutes of your time to see if you are, and/or if you in turn could pass this on to other people.

I have been running workshops for over ten years now, using a particular method of writing and sharing. The purpose of these workshops is to increase awareness in the participants: of themselves, of other people and of life at all levels. It appeals to people who want to be creative, to know more about themselves in a general way, and to those who have specific issues they want to address. I have had male and female participants, able-bodied and ill people, and I have worked with people from eighteen to ninety-two years old.

My workshops have their origins in work started by Gillie Bolton, a research fellow at London University into the therapeutic power of writing. She produced a booklet in the 1990s, 'Writing the Spirit' which encouraged Quakers ( who are also known as members of The Religious Society of Friends) to explore their personal and spiritual lives through a particular kind of writing and sharing, to be done in groups, within that spiritual community. I found this method so powerful when I worked with it that I started to take it out to mental health day centres (I was a social work assistant at the time) and found it worked potently there too. Over the years I have worked in many different contexts with a variety of people. Every time the method amazes people in its powerful simplicity.

Writing the Spirit, as the name suggests, presupposes that there is a spirit (name it what you will) that operates both in us and through us that is much wiser, and far more aware, than we are able to be in our busy day-to-day lives. I like to think of it as the creative spirit that animates all of life, the one that makes the plants grow, the stars shine and prompts us to grow straight and true (we can call that spirit God, Life-Force, Higher Self, or anything else that feels right for us.)

When we are still, we can, if we listen, access the deeper part of ourselves that experiences life much more richly and creatively than normal, and it is that part which knows what our next move in life must be. So my workshops are rooted in silence: we start in silence, we write in silence, we listen in silence and then we share out of that silence. The workshops are therefore predominantly quiet affairs – though that does not mean that they are dull, or relentlessly serious. We often laugh a

lot and there can be very animated exchange, but there is plenty of time for personal reflections and writing on one's own. This means that both introverts and extraverts feel comfortable with the workshops.

The writing that we do is spontaneous, i.e. it is not premeditated and planned. This is important, and a key element of this work. We are so tutored in thinking things out with our intellect, and planning our writing in a carefully structured way that we are unused to writing 'raw' – of those things that comes straight out of our experience and feelings. Often what we think with our intellect is not what our experience actually is; it may simply be our conditioned response from our education and background. So the writing is stimulated by a variety of exercises to encourage immediate responses that are so often much more authentic and 'alive' than a planned piece. Participants are very often surprised by what they write and yet come to recognise it as true for them. It is a very experimental way of working that can be challenging, but usually yields unexpectedly positive insights. I have found that, whatever stimulus I use, people will write whatever they need to be writing at that time, however remote the connection may seem to be to the initial stimulus.

The sharing component is a precious part of the process. (I never pressure anybody to share, it is up to each person to make that decision). When a person decides to read, the rest of the group listens acutely in an attentive, caring, silent and non-judgmental manner. This is a self-discipline for the listeners ( so often we don't listen fully to one another) and is a gift to the reader (how rarely we are truly listened to, without interruption or comment). The aim of the silent listening is to receive what is read as precious because it has come from that person, not because it is 'good' writing.

If the person who has read is happy to receive feedback, the group will make comments that are fully focussed on what that person has read, seeking to amplify to that person what they have sought to say – it may include leading questions, reflections or even a stunned 'Oh' if the piece has been especially moving. Giving good feedback is an important skill in itself and is something that develops with practice.

We often find that common themes arise within groups and when the workshops are extended ones (weekend retreats for instance) participants can find that they have the very person within the group who can bring light to bear on something they are dealing with at that time. A group energy very quickly builds up and I am always amazed at just how quickly people are able to be very open with one another and to enter fully into the process. As a facilitator I feel very privileged to work in this atmosphere of trust and vulnerability.

I usually keep the groups small – rarely exceeding ten participants, which means that people do not

feel intimidated and we can stay together as one group. We have some very intimate and deep times together. Most people say that they feel so much better by the time they leave, especially when they have spent an entire weekend in a beautiful place. (I plan all of my workshops to be in lovely surroundings, I think that is very important.)

And if you want to know about my background? I was originally trained as a primary teacher and later moved into advice work, counselling and social work. I have always had a keen interest in complimentary therapies and healing. I have been a Quaker for sixteen years and within that context have learnt a great deal about the nature of silence and our ability to be united in a power that is greater than any of us. My personal life has been challenging at times, which makes me empathetic with those who suffer. I have a great love of people and am continually fascinated by them.

This way of working is very versatile, in that people of all different kinds of abilities, background and interests can unite within one group. I've worked with disabled people (mentally and/or physically), in church groups, within conferences for particular purposes and with the general public. Soemtimes the workshops have been general, at other times using specific themes. I am always open to taking this work into different arenas.

Currently many of my regular workshops are run locally (in Gloucestershire) but I also facilitate groups in retreat centres elsewhere in England and Wales and have taken the work to Quaker Meetings throught the country. My fees are negotiable.

Do you feel that you might like to take part in one of my workshops? And/or do you know individuals or groups of people who might? If so, or if you would like to know more specific details, please contact me – either on my email address: [judyclinton@googlemail.com](mailto:judyclinton@googlemail.com) or by phone: 01452 863627

Thank you for giving me your time.

With very best wishes

Judy Clinton

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