

The Healing Power of Chinese Calligraphy



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How many people today know what calligraphy is? According to the western etymology, calligraphy is defined as a “beautiful handwriting”, while the Chinese term for it, *shufa*, can be defined as the “method of writing”. It is also a set of skills and techniques for positioning and inscribing words that portrays integrity, harmony, some sort of ancestry and rhythm. Are you amazed by the beauty of calligraphy? Looking at the Chinese calligraphy would sometimes make us wonder how someone could have such a beautiful handwriting.



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Before I start writing about any stories related to calligraphy, I would like to experience it by myself first. Then, it would be more entertaining. There are some challenges in writing this topic. It is not so hard though it makes me frustrated. Personally, my interest in learning the Chinese language makes me want to know more about the Chinese culture. Chinese calligraphy is one of the Chinese cultures. That is the main reason why I write about this topic.

It makes me thrilled because I have never tried this activity before. I have been trying hard to look out for a Chinese calligraphy class and thankfully, I found one. It makes me over the moon. Finally, I can learn something new. I quickly contacted the centre but it broke my heart. Unfortunately, it is temporarily closed because of the Covid-19. So, there is no other choice but to learn it myself through watching the YouTube videos. Firstly, of course, we need the tools. I spent about RM 100 and actually, we can spend below RM 50 only for one brush, ink and the papers.

While doing some research about Chinese calligraphy, I found many interesting facts that are more related to mental health. I never knew that practising Chinese calligraphy can be one effective therapy for cancer patients. It is a therapy in reducing the depression faced by the patients.



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Surprisingly, there are many mental benefits linked to the practice of calligraphy. Firstly, calligraphy writing can strengthen our mind. This activity needs a lot of patience. We must always stay calm and relaxed. We cannot rush when learning Chinese calligraphy or the script will turn out badly. I admit that sometimes I feel fed up trying out this activity for the first 30 minutes. But I tell myself that I shouldn't give up. Giving up easily would mean failure. We should challenge ourselves in doing an activity that needs a lot of patience and it can make us mentally strong.

Besides, it can also help to enhance our focus on a task at hand. Can you imagine what would happen if you do not stay focused when writing Chinese calligraphy? The result would be a mess. We need to control our handwriting. The way we hold the calligraphy brush can affect the result of our writing. We must clear our mind and just take a deep breath and start it. When we start to feel that we are already going into our own world then we can start. Sometimes, we do not realize that it is already more than 2 hours practising this. It means that we have put our focus on the task.

Chinese calligraphy can also be an alternative therapy for reducing anxiety and stress among breast cancer patients. Breast cancer is the most common cancer among women in worldwide. According to National Cancer Institute (NCI, 2014), anxiety and distress can also affect treatment and play a role in a patient's overall quality of life. In relation to Chinese calligraphy, it is about an exercise to increase self-reflection and self-cultivation. The writing process also requires full of concentration, depending on how we grab the brush, control the

speed of movement of writing and grinding the ink. We also control our breathing when we write the stroke of Chinese character. It is all about concentration and mindfulness.

Based on Andrews University Research on The Effects of Chinese Calligraphy on Reducing Anxiety and Comorbid Depression Levels Among Breast Cancer Patients in Hong Kong (2017), one of the participants who was diagnosed with first stage of breast cancer said practicing calligraphy makes her able to forget her worrying and also helps her focused and relaxed. Her state and trait anxiety levels show a substantial reduction.

Thus, it shows that Chinese calligraphy writing can be an effective therapy in reducing anxiety and stress among patients. Most of the cancer patients would feel distressed with their conditions. So, the alternative to reduce their stress maybe doing some activities that can clear up the mind for a while and forget all the problems. Everything that happens in the world has its own reasons, try to cooperate with the consequences that coming into our life no matter what it is. If one day you or your close friends diagnosed with breast cancer, what would you suggest to reduce the anxiety and stress?