

# Read to Cope with Everyday Challenges: Benefits of Bibliotherapy

*Presented by*

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# My Bibliotherapy Journey

- 2009 - Bibliotherapy research at Western University, London, ON
- 2010 - Bibliotherapy program on HIV/AIDS, South Africa
- 2011-2012 - *Read to Connect* program in Toronto
- 2014 - published a scholarly manuscript “Healing through Books”
- 2015-2017 - *Bibliotherapy for Staff* program at RVHS, Toronto
- 2016 - *Book Break* program, St. Michael’s Hospital, Toronto
- 7 scholarly publications and more than 20 presentations, training workshops, and interviews

# What is Bibliotherapy?

- Books, reading & communication around texts.
- The systematic use of books to assist individuals in dealing with mental, physical, emotional, developmental, or social problems.

Tukhareli, N. (2014). *Healing through books: The evolution and diversification of bibliotherapy*. Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press. 206 p.



# Therapeutic Power of Reading

Connecting with a “right book” at the “right time” can help

- escape and be in a different place, where you can relax and de-stress;
- find your voice; articulate your thoughts and feelings;
- reflect on your situation and get a fresh perspective;
- feel that you are not alone.



# Books as “silent therapists”

- “Books have functioned for centuries as silent therapists for incalculable numbers. Both factual and fictional writing can provide readers with models to give them insight into the nature of the human condition and problems of living.” du Plock, S. (2005). Silent therapists’ and ‘the community of suffering. *Existential Analysis*, 16(2), 300-309.
- The readers “find what they need in what they read” (Joseph Gold).



# Literature as a Source of Life Experiences

Bullying

Aging

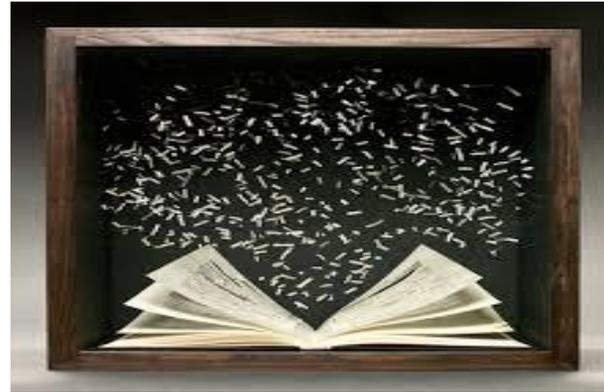
Unemployment

Health Issues

Caregiving

Loss & Grief

Relocation



Loneliness

Divorce

Poverty

Parenting

Domestic Abuse

Homelessness

Heartbreak

# Bibliotherapy Types

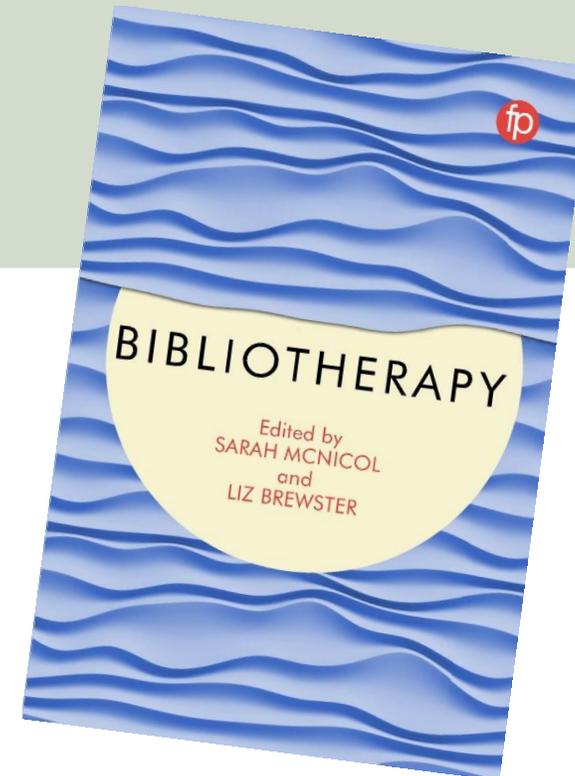
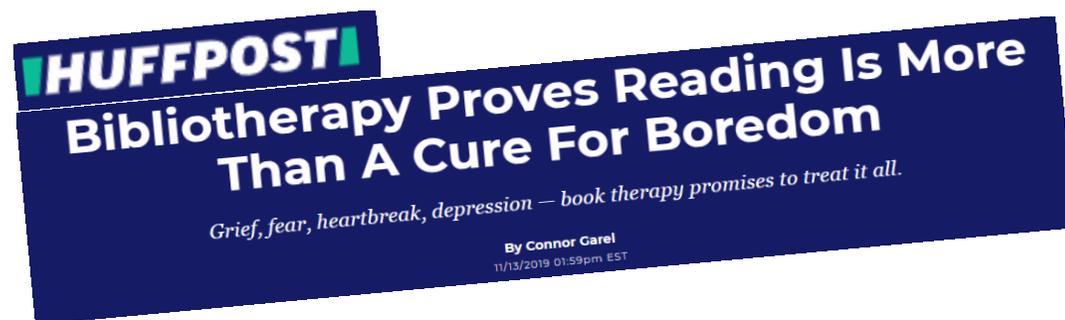
## Clinical Bibliotherapy

Medical  
Therapeutic  
Prescriptive

Self-help Bibliotherapy  
Cognitive-behavioural Bibliotherapy  
(CBB)

## Non-clinical Bibliotherapy

Social  
Creative  
Developmental  
Informal



# “A Reading Revolution”

- Jane Davis and the *Shared Reading* movement in the UK.  
<https://www.thereader.org.uk/>
- “Literature isn’t a luxury but a life-changer.” (Jane Davis)
- Shared Reading groups in public libraries, schools, community health centers, care homes, shelters, prisons, rehab units, corporate boardrooms, job centres, etc.



bringing about a reading revolution

# Reading for Wellbeing and Resilience: The bibliotherapy-based reading program in Ontario

- Thematic compilations of readings to address “life problems” and promote health, well-being, and resilience.
- Reading materials of all genres and different cultural and spiritual traditions.
- Educational or informational components.
- Read-aloud sessions in small groups (“shared reading” groups)

Tukhareli, N. (2018). Read to Connect: Reading to combat loneliness and promote resilience. In McNicol, S. & Brewster, L. (Eds.) *Bibliotherapy*. London, UK: Facet Publishing

# Themes Addressed

- Living through difficult times. Resilience.
- Loneliness and Isolation
- Power of Forgiveness. Compassion.
- Responsibility. Bringing meaning into your life.
- Positive attitude
- Power of Gratitude. Appreciation.
- Unconditional love. Giving.
- Connecting to Nature
- Aging

# Reading Materials

- Parables
- Short stories
- Excerpts from novels
- Poetry
- Biographies, autobiographies, and memoirs
- Self-help books
- Excerpts from manuscripts in psychology, philosophy, etc.
- Journal and magazine articles



# Session Structure

- Warm-up activity
- Read-aloud activity: the facilitator reads the selection aloud clearly.
- Guided group discussion: the facilitator initiates and furthers a discussion allowing each member to contribute ideas and feelings about the literature.
- Writing activity (optional).
- Follow-up activity: participants' final reflections and comments; facilitator's summary.

# Benefits

- Flexibility (clients, settings, materials)
- Accessibility: attracts people with low literacy (not a *book club*)
- Effective tool for health promotion and patient education
- Promotes well-being and resilience
- Promotes empathy and a sense of community



Photo: Irene Cooper

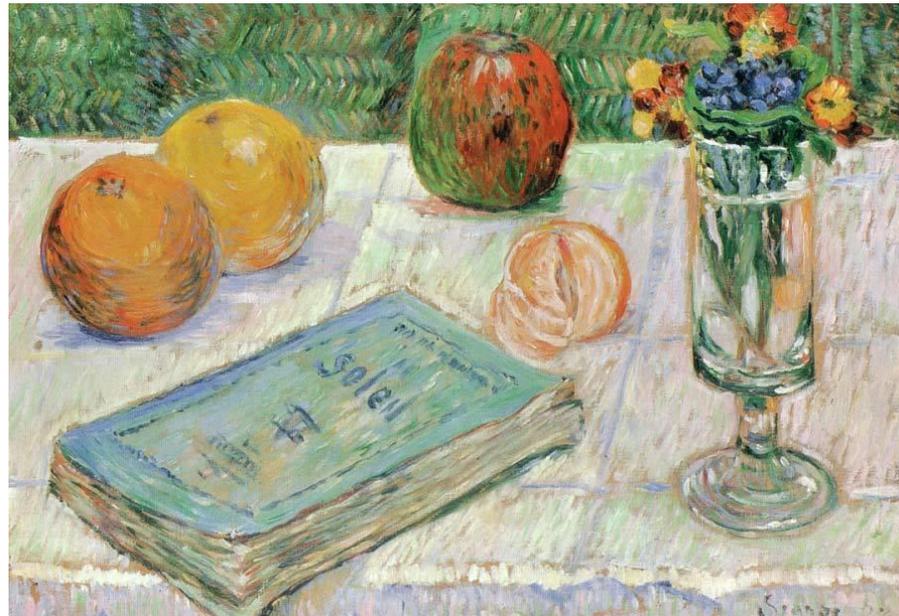
# Bibliotherapy & Traditional Support Groups

- A bibliotherapy-based reading group can be viewed as a specific type of a support group that involves a systematic use of books (in a variety of fictional and non-fictional genres) and a guided discussion around books to assist individuals in dealing with “life problems.”



“The only end of writing is to enable reader better to enjoy life or better to endure it.”

- *Dr. Samuel Johnson*



# Thank you!

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*\* Images of book-cut sculptures courtesy of Su Blackwell*