Key Points . . .

➤ Expressive writing may provide opportunities to recognize and explore the experience and meanings of living with metastatic breast cancer.

➤ Translating distress into language, through expressive writing, ultimately may allow an individual to move beyond an experience.

➤ A correlation existed between enhanced emotional well-being and greater use of positive words than use of negative words in expressive writing texts.

➤ Cost-effective and easily implemented, expressive writing is an intervention that can be prescribed and guided by nurses as part of patient care.

QOL for women with stage IV metastatic breast cancer. Nursing, through research and clinical practice, has the opportunity to identify and expand the concept of writing interventions and to apply them in practice.

Literature Review

Disclosure and formation of narrative through expressive writing were linked to positive health outcomes in a model described by Pennebaker and colleagues (Graybeal, Sexton, & Pennebaker, 2002; Pennebaker & Beall, 1986). Disclosure is defined as the release of previously unshared or unexpressed thoughts and feelings, resulting in reduced psychological work of inhibition. Psychological work of inhibition is the subconscious effort to repress thoughts or emotions, which may result in physical, psychological, or social distress. Pennebaker and Seagal (1999) believed that translating distress into language helps people move beyond negative experiences. The theoretical background of disclosure began with description of a cathartic process, which reduced cumulative stress (Pennebaker & O’Heeron, 1984). More than a cathartic experience, disclosure in the Pennebaker model uses concepts from psychoanalytic theory and employs the process of retelling an event or life issue with the intention of changing the teller’s perspective. The change in perspective facilitates...