

**Writing Paths** 



You hold in your hands much more than just a training module: it is the result of carefully considered work, a process designed to provide keys, words, and perspectives in the face of endometriosis.

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This module developed in collaboration with Eduardo Berti is much more than a learning tool: it is an invitation to build bridges between medical knowledge and personal experience, to weave an alliance where care becomes a shared act, and to imagine together a fairer, more enlightened, and more humane future. By reading these lines, you too contribute to putting words to the illness and tracing paths towards a more respectful, enlightened, and hopeful care.

# #1

## SELF-DATED POEM A "self-dated poem" reflecting the date of the day.

It is a poem of eight lines, as our way of recording the date generally consists of eight digits. For example: 27 11 2025.

In self-dated poems (invented by Benoit Richter, a close author of Oulipo), each line is counted in number of words according to the date of the day. To explain better: if we are on November 27, 2025, the first two lines (corresponding to the day) will have 2 and 7 words respectively, the third and fourth lines (corresponding to the month) will have one word each, while the last four lines (corresponding to the year) will have two, zero, two, and five words respectively.

Thus, the poem will have this aspect:

(2) —— two words (7) ————— seven words (1) — one word (1) — two words (0) (blank verse) (2) —— two words (5) ———— five words

Use this form to write a sort of poetic journal. Write one poem per day. Naturally, the eight lines of your poems will never have the same number of words day after day.

An example of a self-dated poem that could have been conceived on June 14, 2026: suffering

she arrives, she leaves

this nausea deep within me long, profound

abdominal pains, something like a low blow

Propose to another person to write self-dated poems in collaboration with you. This can be done alternately. In this case, you will write the poem for April 3, the other person will write for April 4, you will respond on April 5 with a new poem, and so on.

Get to work!





## CHINESE PORTRAIT Create your "Chinese portrait" of endometriosis.

A Chinese portrait, a variant of an old riddle game popular in the 17th century, consists of establishing the portrait of a person (or any other subject) through a series of comparisons.

In the classic Chinese portrait, it involves completing sentences such as "If I were a country, I would be...", "If I were a song, I would be..." or "If I were a dish, I would be...". This allows for approaching the central theme from multiple angles.

Here is a sort of "fill-in-the-blank sheet" —not exhaustive—aimed at creating a Chinese portrait of endometriosis.

If endometriosis were a color, it would be...

If endometriosis were an animal, it would be...

If endometriosis were a season, it would be...

If endometriosis were a film, it would be...

If endometriosis were a feeling, it would be...

If endometriosis were a fictional character, it would be...

If endometriosis were an element, it would be...

If endometriosis were a sound, it would be...

Propose to complete these same sentences not only to women suffering from endometriosis but also to people (women or men) who are not affected by it. Sharing this game with unaffected individuals should shed light on unknowns about the illness, fantasies, or erroneous perceptions.

Add other possible ideas to these eight prompts: "if endometriosis were a sport...", "if endometriosis were a part of the human body...", "if endometriosis were a famous painting...", "if endometriosis were a piece of clothing...".

Come on, have fun!

# **8**#3

# LISTS Create a list according to your desires.

Sei Shōnagon is a Japanese author from the tenth century. In her collection "The Pillow Book", she recounts her years as a lady-in-waiting at the imperial court.

Throughout the pages of her book, one of the masterpieces of Japanese literature of the time, Sei Shōnagon gathers impressions and anecdotes from her life, but also creates a series of "lists of things". Among them are inventories of "things that make the heart race", "things that have refined grace", "things that just pass by", "things that are despised", "tumultuous things" and even "things that gain from being painted" followed by "things that lose from being painted".

Each of her lists varies in length: four, eight, twelve images or examples.

An excerpt, translated by André Beaujard:

"Things that evoke a sweet memory of the past"

Dried hollyhocks.

Objects that were used for the doll festival.

A rainy day, when one is bored, finding the letters of a man once loved.

A night when the moon is bright.

Use lists to talk about endometriosis.

Write, for example, the list of "things one cannot do when the pain is intense", but also "things one can do despite intense pain". Or the "things one almost never says out loud about endometriosis" or the "things one could do to raise awareness in society about endometriosis".

Let yourself be carried away by words!



## ALPHABETICAL PORTRAIT Create an alphabetical portrait of endometriosis.

An alphabetical portrait is a list of words (possibly accompanied by complements or even short phrases) that evoke a specific subject and are arranged like an alphabet book.

To create your alphabetical portrait, choose a series of key words: ten, fifteen, or twenty words, for example, that you feel are representative of endometriosis.

Arrange them in alphabetical order. Be careful: you must not choose more than one word that starts with the same letter.

In his famous "Don Quixote", for example, Cervantes offers us an alphabetical portrait of the perfect lover, and to do so he uses all the letters of the alphabet: affectionate, caring, warm, sweet, elegant, strong, gallant, honorable, upright...

You can also try to use the entire alphabet. In any case, once the words are chosen (disability for "h", illness for "m", belly for "v", etc.), write a short text of three or four lines based on each term from your list.

You can: (a) say what this word represents for you, (b) tell a little anecdote related to the word, (c) write a little poem, (d) propose a sort of humorous definition, (e) present the word as if you had to explain it to an extraterrestrial...

Try not only to express yourself pedagogically but also in a playful and poetic manner.

Each word from your list can inspire a different style. It is the alphabetical form that will give coherence to your whole!



#### INSTRUCTIONS Imagine instructions related to the illness.

Drawing inspiration from user manuals, write instructions related to endometriosis.

For example, "Instructions for going to work with endometriosis".

You can write your instructions in the imperative or infinitive. You can parody cooking recipes or instructions for assembling objects. You can number (or not) each step.

Three examples that could inspire you to write or invent other instructions of the same kind:

Instructions for explaining what endometriosis is to an eightyear-old child.

Instructions for traveling by plane (or in other means of transport) in case of endometriosis.

Instructions for sports in general or for a specific sport in case of endometriosis.

You can accompany your instructions with some illustrations: drawings made by yourself or by a designated person; as well as collages, or simply images found: chosen, cut out, and glued in the margin of the text.

In his book "Cronopes and Famous", Julio Cortázar offers "Instructions for crying". Here is an excerpt that could give you some ideas:

"To cry, turn your imagination towards yourself (...) Once the tears appear, one should cover their face with both hands, palms turned inward. Children will cry with their arms folded over their face preferably in a corner of their room. Average duration of crying, three minutes."



# To go further

"Write, let no one hold you back, let nothing stop you," proclaimed Hélène Cixous. Here are some resources and suggestions that could help you achieve this! Reading and writing form an endless dialogue, feeding like a campfire. Read, write, follow the motto of Clarice Lispector: "I write for myself, to feel my soul speak and sing, sometimes cry...".

#### Julio Cortázar Cronopes et Fameux



#### **CRONOPES AND FAMOUS**

Book by Julio Cortázar. Do you know how to climb stairs with awareness? Stories as fantastic as they are absurd.



#### **OULIPO**

A wealth of ideas and suggestions for writing in this "provisionally definitive alphabet book". Playful, creative, and inspiring.



#### **SEI SHÔNAGON**

A reduced version of her "Pillow Book", published by Folio and limited to her delicate and lucid lists.



#### AN IDEAL PRESENCE

The daily life of a palliative care unit from the perspective of the healthcare staff in search of an "ideal presence", rather than the "ideal distance" that is recommended.





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