

Writing Away the Stigma for Young Adults (WATSYA)
Eight-Week Writing Workshop // Your True Story, Well Told

Mental illness affects one in five young people (ages 13–18)—a rate of occurrence that is staggering compared to cancer, broken bones, and the other physical ailments we hear about regularly. And yet, there is still a powerful stigma attached to mental illness, which often makes it hard for people to ask for help. If you've ever faced the challenges of mental illness, or seen its impact on family or friends, then you likely know the isolation caused by stigma.

This multi-week workshop at Creative Nonfiction is a chance to write about your experiences with mental illness—whether your own or someone else's—and the stigma surrounding it. In addition to learning the basics of creative nonfiction, such as crafting scenes and characters, finding your audience, and revising your work, you'll also receive training on how to prepare a portion of your work to be performed aloud at a public event. You'll gain control over your story and your experiences, and the event will allow a larger audience to better understand and appreciate what it's really like to live with mental illness.

You'll also become part of a special cohort of young adults working together to dismantle the stigma surrounding mental illness and show that people affected by mental illness can survive and prosper emotionally, creatively, and academically. Part of working together and dismantling the stigma means sharing what you're writing each week with the workshop group. If you're feeling shy, you may ask the instructor or a peer writer to read for you. This workshop will help you find your voice and help advocate for change.

Workshops will be led by author Yona Harvey, an assistant professor at the University of Pittsburgh, an award-winning author of both poetry and essays, and a writer for Marvel Comics.

What is creative nonfiction?

Simply put, creative nonfiction is true stories, well told—factually accurate, artful prose about real people and events. [Learn more here.](#)

Who should apply?

Any resident of Allegheny County in grades 9–12 with a true story to tell about the challenges or the satisfactions of confronting mental illness—whether your own or that of a friend, peer, or family member. You must also be prepared to travel to the Creative Nonfiction Foundation (5119 Coral Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15224) for weekly workshops.

Application Deadline:

Friday, March 2, 2018 (11:59 PM EST)

How to Apply:

Step 1: Register for a free account at [Submittable.com](https://www.submittable.com)*

This link takes you to Creative Nonfiction's online Writing Away the Stigma application. Signing up for Submittable and applying for the project are both free of charge.

Step 2: Provide the following demographic and contact information.

First and Last Name: _____

Home Address (Street, City, State, Zip): _____

School: _____ Grade: _____

Name of Parent or Guardian**: _____

Parent or Guardian's Email: _____

Parent or Guardian's Phone: _____

How did you hear about this project? _____

What is your favorite book? _____

What should we know about you? / What's one thing that makes you unique? _____

Gender (optional): _____ Preferred Pronouns (optional): _____

Race (optional): _____

These fields are optional and will not impact your acceptance into the program.

Step 3: Attach writing samples and a personal statement about your interest in the project.

1. Creative writing sample:

Please submit between 750 and 1,000 words as a sample of your writing skills. The sample can be an article, a writing-focused school project, or a combination of pieces of fiction, poetry, essay/creative nonfiction. We are looking for writing that is clear, concise, vivid, and interesting.

2. Personal statement:

In 250–500 words, tell us why you want to participate in the Writing Away the Stigma project and what you hope to accomplish here. You may want to talk about how you've been impacted by the stigma of mental illness. Overall, this is a chance for us to get to know you a little better.

All attachments should be typed and double-spaced (poems may be single-spaced) and should be submitted as either a Microsoft Word or PDF file.

Schedule of Events:

All applicants must be available to attend workshops in Pittsburgh on the following dates. The weekly workshops are tentatively scheduled to run from **6 PM until 8:30 PM each Wednesday**.

Workshops—The eight workshops will take place on Wednesdays, March 7, 14, 21, 28*** and April 4, 11, 18, 25, 2018.

Readings—All accepted participants should expect to attend and participate in a “graduation” reading scheduled for the evening of **Friday, May 4, 2018**. There will also be three additional readings in various Pittsburgh locations in May/June; we expect each participant to attend at least one of these events.

Creative Nonfiction Writers' Conference—Participants who complete the program will have the chance to win a scholarship to attend the 2018 Creative Nonfiction Writers' Conference, scheduled for **May 24–26, 2018**.

**You may submit a paper application, but the application and attachments must be received, not postmarked, by the deadline (March 2, 2018).*

***If accepted, a parent or guardian will be contacted to sign a permission slip.*

****This date is subject to change due to spring break.*

We look forward to reading your work! If you have any questions, please email Lauren at information@creativenonfiction.org or call 412-404-2975.