Therapeutic letter writing (TLW) is a well known strategy in counseling and therapy. However, its effectiveness as an educational tool in undergraduate nursing programs has not been studied. The authors conducted a qualitative study to examine students’ and recipients’ responses to writing and receiving therapeutic letters.

Students (n=74) were interviewed in focus groups. Recipients (n=16) were interviewed individually and in focus groups. Data were analyzed using qualitative description, and there was broad consensus that TLW promoted clinical learning and the development of therapeutic relationships. Study limitations include data collection from only one nursing school, assignment only added to clinical courses that permitted long-term relationships, clinical instructors were not interviewed, and data collected via focus groups could have been influenced by group dynamics, either positively or negatively.

Implications for nursing education practice include TLW as a strategy to cultivate students’ relational skills and their understanding of patients’ perspectives. Writing therapeutic letters is an effective way to promote student reflection on developing relationship skills in nursing care.