

Journaling Your Way to Better Health

Journaling is one of the most powerful tools for self-growth. Simple but effective journaling can help both physically and mentally. A pen coupled with paper can serve as a powerful tool. Scientific evidence supports that there is a lot of value in journaling. Begin journaling and begin experiencing these benefits:

- ◆ Clarify thoughts and feelings—taking a few moments to jot down thoughts and emotions will quickly get the author in touch with their internal world.
- ◆ “Know Thyself” —By writing routinely, one gets to know what makes them feel happy and confident. They will also become clear about situations and people who are toxic for them—important information for well-being.
- ◆ Reduce stress—Writing about anger, sadness and other painful emotions helps to release the intensity of these feelings. Doing so will help the person feel calmer and better able to stay in the present.
- ◆ Solve problems more effectively—Typically, we problem solve from a left-brained, analytical perspective, but sometimes the answer can only be found by engaging right-brained creativity and intuition. Writing unlocks these other capabilities, and affords the opportunity for unexpected solutions to seemingly unsolvable problems.
- ◆ Resolve disagreements with others—Writing about misunderstandings rather than stewing over them helps to understand another’s point of view. In addition to all of these wonderful benefits, keeping a journal allows one to track patterns, trends, improvement and growth over time. When current situations appear insurmountable, one will be able to look back on previous dilemmas that have since resolved. Holding back thoughts and feelings is really very hard work. Over time, exerting effort not to think about a worrisome topic or feel an unpleasant emotion becomes a major source of psychological stress. Constant stress can lead to severe illness. Research confirms that writing about emotions can prevent illness, dissipate anger, ease depression and facilitate problem solving. Here’s how to get started:

◆ Set aside 20 minutes on four consecutive days. If the journalist wishes to write for more than 20 minutes at a time-or beyond the four days-it's okay to do so. If not, simply put the journal aside. Feel free to return to it whenever feeling troubled.

◆ Choose a private place. Find a spot with no distractions of sounds, sights, or smells. Using a pen and paper, typewriter, computer, or even a tape recorder start expressing your thoughts continually. Writing without pausing makes it easier to avoid self-censorship which can avoid addressing key issues. Put down whatever pops in mind. Don't worry about grammar, spelling, or writing style.

◆ Write what is felt. Some people use a journal simply to record their day-to-day experiences, but the only kind of writing associated with enhanced health is that in which one's deepest thoughts and feelings are freely explored.

◆ Write only for yourself. Writing with the idea that what is written will be shown to someone else makes it hard to be frank.

◆ Pick topics that create worry or fright. Choose an experience frequently thought about or even dreamed about, but one that is difficult to discuss openly. It might be something from long ago, or something that just happened.

◆ The most important rule of journaling is that there are no rules. Knowing the benefits of journaling and how to begin this journey of healing, is the first step. The next step is putting pen into action, and reaping positive outcomes.

The benefits of journaling include:

- ◆ Reduces stress
- ◆ Reduces the "scatter" in life
- ◆ Increases focus
- ◆ Brings stability
- ◆ Organizes thoughts and ideas
- ◆ Heals

- ◆Provides a valuable self- therapy tool
- ◆Recalls and reconstructs past events
- ◆Detaches and lets go of the past
- ◆Heals relationships
- ◆Balances and harmonizes
- ◆Soothes troubled memories
- ◆Empowers
- ◆Fosters growth
- ◆Provides a vehicle for expressing and creating
- ◆Plants seeds in the mind
- ◆Starts the sorting and grouping process
- ◆Creates more results in life
- ◆Focuses and clarifies desires and needs
- ◆Allows freedom of expression
- ◆Enhances breakthroughs
- ◆Makes problem-solving easier
- ◆Eases decision-making
- ◆Holds thoughts “still” so they can be changed and integrated
- ◆Offers new perspectives for better decisions
- ◆Brings things together for better understanding
- ◆Shows relationships and wholeness instead of separation
- ◆Is flexible and easy
- ◆Applies to any life situation
- ◆Provides a quick path to self understanding
- ◆Has no rules

To read more about journaling, refer to the following web sites:

<http://psychcentral.com/library/journaling.htm>

<http://healthierliving.org/health/journaling.html>

<http://health.discovery.com> , search word “journaling”

The book titled, *Opening up: The healing power of expressing emotions*, by James Pennebaker, PhD, Guilford Press, 1997

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Reference:

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