

# Journaling for Your Emotional Well-Being

Writing about emotional upheavals in our lives can improve our emotional well-being by providing a healthy outlet for personal expression, and a way of sorting through difficult emotional experiences in order to eventually come to place of more clarity and problem-solving ability. There are many ways to journal that may be beneficial to you, so keep in mind that the following ideas are rough guidelines rather than absolute truth. Feel free to experiment on your own and see what works best for you.

A good time to start journaling is when you are feeling emotionally distressed. Once you begin writing, write continuously. Don't worry about spelling or grammar. Don't filter your expression or worry about what someone else will think of what you are expressing. It is for your eyes only.

You can write with pen and paper, or you can type on a computer and save it in a document or start a folder. If you don't enjoy writing or are worried about privacy, you can talk into a tape recorder, do a "voice memo" on your phone, download an locking "diary/journal" app on your phone, do a video recording of yourself, or even start an anonymous or private online blog.

## What to Write About:

- Something that you are thinking or worrying about too much
- Something that you are dreaming about
- Something that you feel is affecting your life in an unhealthy way
- Something that you have been avoiding for days, weeks, or years
- Anything you feel like writing, i.e. a letter, a poem, your goals, lessons you are learning, inspirational quotes, memories, your strengths and weaknesses, self-help worksheets, etc.

**Sometimes it is helpful to have a more structured guideline, in which care you could follow some of these suggestions:** *Over the next four days, I want you to write about your*

*deepest emotions and thoughts about the most upsetting experience in your life. Really let go and explore your feelings and thoughts about it. In your writing, you might tie this experience to your childhood, your relationship with your parents, people you have loved or love now, or even your career. How is this experience related to who you would like to become, who you have been in the past, or who you are now?*

*Many people have had traumatic experiences, and almost all of us have had major conflicts or stressors in our lives - you can write about them as well. You can write about the same issue every day or a series of different issues. Whatever you choose to write about, however, it is critical that you really let go and explore your very deepest emotions and thoughts.*

Warning: Many people report that after writing, they sometimes feel somewhat sad or depressed. Like seeing a sad movie, this typically goes away in a couple of hours. If you find that you are getting extremely upset about a writing topic, simply stop writing or change topics. Consider setting aside some time to do some self care afterwards, or have a plan to do some kind of enjoyable activity to help boost your mood. Do not allow yourself to sink into a pit of despair and wallow in the misery. Do something to reward yourself for doing this healing work - help pick yourself up and be your own best friend.

### What to do with your Writing Samples:

The writing is for you and for you only. Their purpose is for you to be completely honest with yourself. When journaling, it is helpful to ensure that no one else will see it unless you decide to share it with them (in part or in whole). Whether you keep it or save it is really up to you, but my personal suggestion is that you save it for a least a few months and then revisit it with a fresh perspective. This can be a very rewarding gauge of your personal growth, which can allow you to see for yourself the changes you have made over time. It can also serve as a helpful reminder for you to not regress to earlier, less mature or less healthy ways of thinking/coping.

Some people keep their samples and edit them. That is, they gradually change their writing from time to time as a way of updating their perspectives and re-writing their narrative towards a

healthier and more empowering ending. This can be a way of achieving a sense of closure or resolution to a situation in which there was none. They become the author of their own CHOSEN reality as a way of breaking out of patterns of victimhood or feelings of powerlessness. This may or may not be right for you. Trust your instinct here.

Some other options: Burn them. Erase them. Shred them. Flush them. Tear them into little pieces and toss them into the ocean or let the wind take them away. Release them and give them back to the earth to be transformed.

### Some References for Writing, Journalling, or Diaries:

There are some outstanding books by people who have an intuitive and practical approach to writing. Each author approaches journalling or diary writing in very different ways. If inclined, check out these various resources for more ideas. Don't be shy to try some new things and decide what works for you.

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Fox, John (1997). *Poetic Medicine : The Healing Art of Poem-Making*. Tarcher Press

Jacobs, Beth (2005). *Writing for Emotional Balance*, New Harbinger Publishers.

Pennebaker, James W. (1997). *Opening Up: The Healing Power of Expressing Emotion*. NY: Guilford Press.

Pennebaker, J.W. & Evans, J.F. (2014). [\*Expressive Writing: Words that Heal\*](#). Enumclaw, WA: Idyll Arbor.

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