



JOURNALING





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Journaling is an extremely useful tool for self-exploration, and it also enables you to record and evaluate the daily/major events in your life; providing you with another powerful tool to manage any challenges you face and through the process, improve your mental health.

Some known benefits of journaling:

- A greater sense of self-awareness (e.g., being more keenly in touch with your thoughts and feelings, understanding your strengths and weaknesses)
- Relieve stress and pent-up emotions or cognitions
- Boost your memory
- Inspires creativity
- Set and track goals
- Better organization of your thoughts (e.g., the listing of complicated feelings and thoughts, allowing for an objective view of thoughts and emotions)
- Allows you to keep a record of important events which have occurred in your life (e.g., reminders of memorable events and/or people, recall positive instances which highlight strengths)
- Improves overall subjective quality of life



SOME TIPS:

- Journaling needs to be integrated into your life and **become a habit** in order for you to reap its benefits
- Setting aside **flexible time slots** daily or weekly, and **quiet spaces** is important in cultivating the habit of journaling
- **Focus on quality** rather than the quantity
- **Think, write, and then reflect** on the content
- Remember that **there is no right or wrong** when it comes to journaling
- **Self-expression can come in many different forms** –
 - You can draw, doodle, paint, fold, design, or even record audio clips
 - The medium for journaling is less important than its content
- Ultimately, it should be an activity that is **beneficial for you**, and not be the reason for any stress or anxiety



GRATITUDE JOURNALING

A simple and fun method of recording our daily lives and the positive events which occur in it. It encourages us to recognize and be thankful for what we possess in life; and to focus on what we have, rather than what we lack. By being grateful for the little things in our lives and focusing on the positive, we can be distracted from the temporary negatives that often appear in life.

To begin, here are some simple questions you can utilise:

1. What is something that made you smile or feel happy about recently?
2. What was one activity you enjoyed today? How did it make you feel?
3. What are some things you have now that you didn't have in the past (e.g., a week ago, a month ago, or even a year ago)
4. What are you grateful for today? (hint: it could be literally anything)
5. What lessons in the past year are you thankful to have had?
6. Were there any surprises that you felt thankful for recently?



The questions above are more specific and useful for day to day gratitude journaling but here are some broader themes you can also be thankful for:

1. **People** - Who are the individuals in your life that you are grateful for? It could range from your friends to your family and even to your teachers. Try to think of concrete examples of things they did or times that made you feel grateful for their presence.
2. **Places** - Where are you grateful to have been? This could be places locally or even overseas. Try to remember the feelings involved when experiencing these places.
3. **Experiences** - What are some of your life experiences which you're thankful for?





REFLECTIVE JOURNALING

This method focuses on helping us to deepen our understanding of ourselves, better understand our desired goals and aspirations, and expectations of the future. It also provides us with an opportunity to determine if these future-oriented aspects are aligned with our current beliefs and values. Additionally, by looking inward and better understanding ourselves, we will be able to grow and flourish.

Here are some helpful prompts which could help your reflective journaling journey:

1. **Write a letter to your younger self.** What would you have done differently? What would you have kept the same? What would you want to tell yourself if you had the opportunity to do so?
2. **Write about a challenging situation** (e.g., in school, at work, in life, etc.) from your past and what steps you took to overcome it. How did you come up with the solution? What were your thoughts during those times? Would you have done anything differently?
3. **Recount a time when you did something good** (e.g., in school, at work, in life, etc.) that gave a deep sense of satisfaction or meaning. What made you feel that way? What were some of your thoughts during those times?
4. **Write an encouraging note to your future self.** What do you hope to achieve? How would you cheer yourself on? What would you want to keep the same or have changed by then?
5. **State a goal that you aspire to attain and list out concrete steps to achieve it.** Using the specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-based (SMART) framework can be a helpful guide for crafting such a goal.
6. **What are some values or beliefs that you hold deeply?** How did you come up with them? How can you utilize them more in your day to day life?
7. **What are some strengths that you think you possess?** How can you use them in daily life? How can you improve and enhance these strengths?
8. **What are some flaws that you think you possess?** How would you go about improving on them should you choose to? Why do you think they are flaws? Is there another way of looking at these perceived flaws?



COPING STRATEGIES-ORIENTED JOURNALING

This method helps you identify coping strategies or techniques which you can use to manage stressful or challenging situations. Two common strategies for coping are the **problem-focused** and **emotion-focused** orientations. Problem-focused strategies attempt to resolve the challenging situation while emotion-focused ones seek to reduce the negative emotions that derive from these difficult scenarios. They are best used to identify what works for you and to be aware of how to better cope in the future.

1. Think of a stressful or distressing situation in the past where you have managed to cope successfully, what triggered it?
2. How did you cope during those times? What was helpful or unhelpful in the process?
3. Were your coping strategies more problem-focused or emotion-focused? What other similar methods could you have used?
4. What would you have done similarly or differently if such a situation arises again?
5. Are there any people around you who could have been included to make the coping process more successful, or resources you could have sought?





NARRATIVE JOURNALING

This method allows us to gain a greater sense of control over our life stories and separates us temporarily from them, providing us with a broader perspective by which to view our experiences. This technique helps us to organize our life narratives, understand more about ourselves and inculcate a deeper sense of appreciation for everything we have accomplished thus far. However, it is important to note that while engaging in this activity that we do not get lost in the past and start dwelling in it. Our past has contributed to who we are today, but do not define the people we can be.

1. Decide on an exciting and meaningful title to your story (e.g., Jamie's wonderful adventures)
2. How would you break down your life based on significant periods within it? (e.g., Primary school, secondary school, junior college/poly/ite, etc.) There is no fixed way to do so.
3. Identify key moments within each of these blocks of time and elaborate on them. (e.g., talk about the people present in these periods, your feelings during those times, why these memories meant so much to you, etc.)
4. Write about turning points in your life that gave you a new direction or meaning in life, or which changed it for better or worse that you think should be remembered. Describe it in as much detail as possible.
5. Dedicate the last chapter to writing a narrative about how your life will turn out. This section can be based on a time horizon of 5, 10, 15, or even 30 years down the road. Dream big and wide. It could serve as inspiration for whenever you feel jaded or down in the future.





Journaling

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