

Journal Writing for Yourself and Others

- The word “journal” may mean 100 different things to 100 different people – i.e. a notebook of ideas and ramblings of a writer, for a psychologist a tool for self analysis, for most of us, a day to day diary, a log of action and reaction.
- Why should I keep a journal?
Writing is not just a legacy, but a therapy
- Are there different kinds of journals? (gratitude, discovery, day to day, travel)
- What method should I use? (hand written vs. computer)
Hand written: more personal; could be tiring; harder to locate specific passages;
Computer: faster, more legible; can find particular entries quickly; easy to duplicate; but lacks personal touch; could be lost if computer crashes
Online journals: “blogs” was 2004 #1 word readers sought to define – per Merriam Webster online. Remember: once a blog is published it’s out there for anyone and everyone to see.
- What tools are needed?
Permanent ink, notebook or bound book - archival paper
- How do I get started?
Keep your pens nearby, create a home for your journal in your private space
Ask yourself: what do you want to accomplish by doing this?
Date each entry in your journal.
Note the time, place, and any details regarding your mood and emotions that will be necessary for context when you read back on your work.
- How often should I write? (daily, weekly, occasionally)

- **What should I write about? (Examples)**
 - Snippets of events in your life. A sentence or paragraph about a funny, embarrassing, happy, or infuriating experience.
 - Description of people you meet each day
 - Historical events – issues of the day, events in your family (national elections, 9/11, new baby)
 - Describe what you feel at any given moment.
 - Write of your faith, courage, challenges, how you reason
 - Be willing to be vulnerable. Let them see the real you, your struggles & triumphs.
 - Let them see your heart; it will encourage others in their own lives.
 - When you let them see you struggling to meet your daily challenges with faith, they will be encouraged that maybe they can do the same

- **How can I make it more interesting?**
 - Use descriptive words, details, drawings and diagrams

- **What are the benefits / blessings of keeping a journal?**
 - Gratifying pursuit
 - Clarity of thought
 - A way to gain insight, refine observations or express feelings
 - A creative process to record one's innermost thoughts in a special book invented especially for that purpose
 - A way to chronicle a journey

- **What do you want people to know/say about you after you are gone?**

- **Who gets the journal when you die? Does one person get everything? Others may never see it. Make copies?**

- **Online resources:**
 - Journalingprompts.com – get ideas daily on what to write
 - Lifjournal.com – challenge: finding particular entries / quotes to spark your entries / thought provoking questions / easy to share with others / track behaviors, qualities, goals

- Inspiring quotes

“Experience is the raw material of life. It is abundantly available to every person. We can use it to discover, grow and change; or we can simply let it happen and keep breathing until something else happens, never using what we have learned to positively influence and shape future generations. ” (Virginia Pearce, *A Heart Like His*, p.84)

“Wouldn’t all of us love to have a journal, a memoir, a letter, from those we have loved and lost? Shouldn’t all of us leave a bit of that behind?” (Anna Quindlen, *Newsweek Magazine*, 22 January 2007, 74)