

# Journaling

## A KICK START GUIDE

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Inspiration, tips and prompts to help you to (re)start and maintain a regular journaling practice.



## CONTENTS

- 01**      What is journaling?
- 02**      Why journal?
- 03**      Benefits of journaling
- 04**      How to start journaling
- 05**      31 journaling prompts to get you started
- 06**      Overcoming writer's block
- 07**      Things to keep in mind

# WHAT IS JOURNALING?



Journaling is a type of therapeutic writing.

In its simplest form, it is the act of writing down your thoughts, feelings and experiences.

Initially, some people may consider journaling to be the same as keeping a diary, however, journaling is an intentional practice that goes beyond simply writing an account of your day.

Journaling gives you a safe space to explore and express your emotions and work through any issues or concerns, without judgement or interruption.

It can be used to support personal wellness, incorporated into a regular mindfulness practice and used alongside professional therapy, where appropriate.

Journaling can be an extremely powerful tool for reflection, clarity and healing and when done consistently, it helps you to get to know yourself on a deeper level.

A regular journaling practice can strengthen self-love, increase self-confidence, boost self-esteem and improve self-awareness.

Over time, whilst developing a stronger connection with your intuition and inner voice, you'll be able to notice patterns of behaviour, recognise triggers, identify your core values and beliefs as well as gain a deeper insight into your greatest fears and biggest dreams.

# WHY JOURNAL?



Anyone who knows me will tell you that I swear by journaling and it is something I use with all my clients.

I truly believe that if I hadn't discovered journaling and maintained a journaling practice, I most definitely would have engaged in some form of reckless or self-destructive behaviour.

Journaling was a healing balm and saviour to me at one of the lowest points in my life.

When I felt lost, alone and misunderstood, my journal gave me an outlet to voice my feelings without judgement.

Journaling helped me to gain clarity and make sense of what I was feeling and allowed me to express myself in a healthy way, rather than lashing out or simply shutting down.

So, journaling is something dear to my heart and something I encourage everyone to do.

# THE BENEFITS OF JOURNALING



Do you ever find yourself in a full-blown conversation, only to realise that the conversation is actually happening in your own head?

I'm a self-confessed "over-thinker" so this happens to me on a regular basis.

Years ago, my tendency to over-think was crippling at times.

I found it impossible to make decisions and spent hours, sometimes days and weeks, agonising over possible outcomes if I made the "wrong" decision.

The longer I spent in my head and the more I thought about things, the more irrational and extreme my thoughts would become.

Sometimes, my mind was my own worst enemy.

*Does your mind work with you or against you?*

Had you asked me this ten years ago, without a doubt I would have said my mind worked against me.

But in 2009 I discovered journaling.

*"Journaling is like whispering to one's self and listening at the same time."*

*- Mina Murray*

Journaling was recommended to me as a tool for getting in touch with my “negative” emotions.

I used to be one of those people who almost never shared my darker, more painful feelings and experiences.

My default response whenever anyone asked me how I was doing, was “I’m cool”.

Regardless of what was happening in my life and how I was really feeling, my reply was always the same.

I began writing a journal to acknowledge and face emotions I had buried and suppressed for probably my entire life.

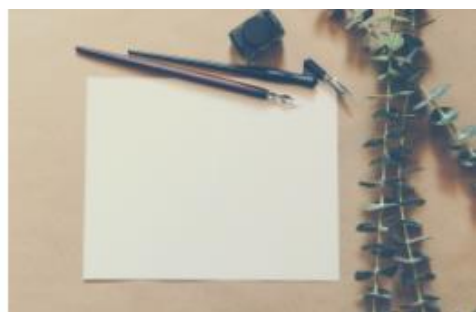
Initially, it was a challenge as I was an extremely private person and I had a huge fear that someone might find my journals and discover how I really felt.

I also felt that I didn’t deserve to feel sad, upset, lonely, angry or any of those feelings. There were people in the world with much worse lives than me so my view was that I should just suck it up, keep smiling and get on with life.

I’m also acutely aware that everyone has their own sh\*t to deal with, as well as the fact that a lot of people don’t genuinely care about your problems.

Thankfully, I was introduced to journaling and began to discover the benefits of writing a journal.

Over time, I’ve discovered that with journaling, I can get my mind to work with me and that it’s actually a really powerful ally.





## 7 BENEFITS OF WRITING A JOURNAL

Writing a journal is more than simply recording a description of your daily life.

Research has found that writing about traumatic, stressful or emotional events results in improvements in both physical and psychological health.

I can vouch that writing a journal has definitely helped me to maintain my mental and emotional wellbeing.

Different people get various benefits from journaling but here are 7 benefits of writing a journal that I have experienced:

### IMPROVED CLARITY

This is absolutely the number one benefit I've experienced from regularly writing a journal.

Writing in my journal allows me to identify and explore the root causes of my emotions and fears.

It enables me to separate myself from my thoughts and allows me to put things into perspective and context, by giving me enough just enough distance to look at them rationally and objectively.

My journal also helps me to solve problems and aids my decision making.





## AN EASY WAY TO MEASURE PROGRESS

Looking back through your journal means you can identify habits and recurrences of behaviour, both positive and unhealthy.

It helps you to identify what does and doesn't work as well as highlighting what needs improving and what needs ditching.

After some time, you will see patterns emerge in your behaviour and moods, which gives you the opportunity to make changes as well as identify any triggers.

Additionally, if you ever have second thoughts or doubt any decisions, you can look back through your journal and remind yourself of the reasons or motivation for your choice.

## A SAFE SPACE TO VENT

On social media, venting has become common practice. However, it's not always helpful or healthy venting.

Your journal gives you a safe, non-judgemental space for you to vent about the driver that cut you up on your way to work or your work colleague who gets on your last nerve.

Most of us have someone we go to, to let off steam, but we don't always feel comfortable expressing ourselves completely.

We often censor what we say – whether it's due to a fear of being judged, or if you're anything like me, you may be conscious of sharing “negative” energy – but as a result, we can end up feeling extremely frustrated.

And we can often act out that frustration in a toxic way if we leave it unsaid.

I was the Queen of holding things in, but with my journal I can let it all out, then let it go – not always immediately, but eventually, depending on the size of the issue or concern.



## LIMITLESS CREATIVE THINKING

My journal gives me the freedom and confidence to dream without limitations.

I capture all the ideas that come to mind, no matter how “unrealistic” they may seem. And by simply writing these ideas down, it’s much more likely that some of them will become a reality.

Sometimes, we can have what seem to be the craziest dreams and most outlandish ideas and we wouldn’t dare to share them with friends or family.

However, your journal is a place where you are free to express your deepest dreams and desires.



## A DEEPER RELATIONSHIP WITH SELF

Journaling has been one of the most powerful tools for not only getting to know my authentic self but also embracing my true self – warts and all!

Writing a journal is a continuous journey of self-discovery as it enables me to explore my feelings and thoughts, without judgement.

It’s never an enjoyable experience when someone points out your faults and weaknesses.

Journal writing increases self-awareness and I find it a kinder, more gentle way to face my “shadow” personality.

Writing in my journal challenges my thoughts, beliefs and values and forces me to constantly look at what is driving my behaviour.

It also highlights any toxic feelings, thoughts, habits and emotions, and gives me a safe space to confront them.



## A SIMPLE TOOL FOR MANIFESTING

My journal is a place where I set my intentions, usually, in line with the lunar cycle.

Every new moon I'll read a few astrological predictions and then I'll reflect on what I want to manifest over the coming lunar cycle.

Your journal allows you to take control of your life by choosing what you want and then exploring what you can and need to do to create the life you want to live.

I also use my journal to set my intentions for the day ahead by writing affirmations, quotes and possibilities.

## AN OPPORTUNITY TO SLOW DOWN

I keep a handwritten journal and it's what I encourage others to do.

Of course, in the world of smartphones, there's a huge selection of journaling apps to choose from, but for me, it doesn't have the same effect.

Writing by hand is becoming an ancient craft, so if you spend most of your day using a computer and smartphone, handwriting in your journal forces you to use your brain in a different way.

I touch type and have a fairly fast typing speed so writing by hand forces me to slow down and think more about what I'm writing.

That in turn, helps me to focus on how I'm feeling.

Additionally, having a regular journal writing practice means I commit to time for myself and disconnect from the world and technology.

It's time I spend with myself, by myself.

This can be uncomfortable at times, but it forces me to face my authentic self, which provides an opportunity for growth.

# HOW TO START JOURNALING



*So, what you need to start writing a journal?*

A notebook and a pen.

That's it.

That's all you need to enjoy the benefits of writing a journal.

Simple!

Well, maybe in theory, but for many people, the reality of getting started with journaling can be very daunting.

The rest of this guide is designed to help you (re) start and maintain a regular journaling practice.

# GETTING SET UP



## GET YOURSELF A NOTEBOOK

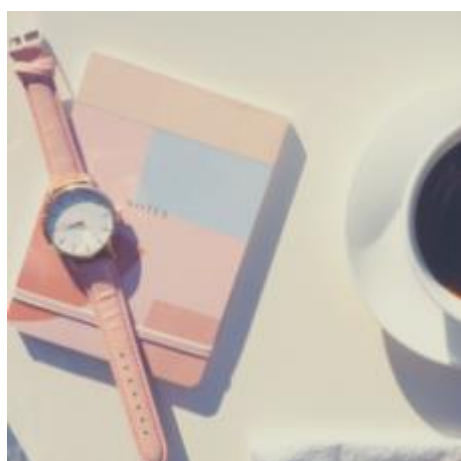
You'll obviously need something to write in.

I recommend using a journal that is nice to look at with good quality paper as there will be days when you'll resist writing in your journal so you need something you're attracted to.

If you plan to keep your journal with you when you're out and about, I recommend getting A5 but of course, you can use A4 or B5, if you prefer.

*“Documenting little details of your everyday life becomes a celebration of who you are.”*

*- Carolyn V. Hamilton*



## SET ASIDE SOME TIME

There is no set amount of time you have to journal for.

If you only have a few minutes, start with what you have and as you begin to feel the benefits, it's likely you'll gradually find more time to journal.

You can write first thing in the morning, during your lunch break or in the evening before you go to bed.



## FIND THE RIGHT ENVIRONMENT

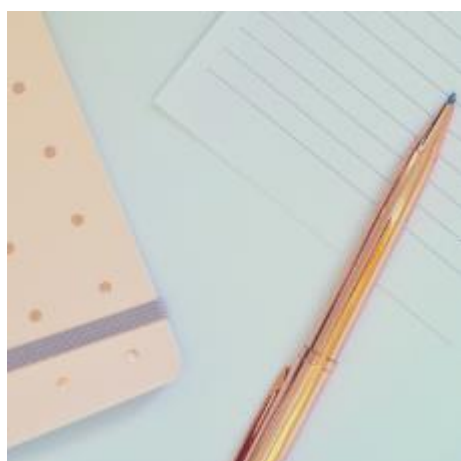
In bed or on the sofa. With music and candles lit or in silence with cup of tea.

There is no right or wrong place to write in your journal.

You simply need a space where you can have some privacy and feel comfortable and relaxed, without any interruptions.

*“Journal writing, when it becomes a ritual for transformation, is not only life-changing but life-expanding.”*

*- Jen Williamson*



## PUT PEN TO PAPER

Now, it's time to actually start writing.

Start by writing the date.

You may instinctively know what to write next. If so, go ahead and let the ink flow.

If not, the prompts in the following section can help you to get started.

# USING JOURNALING PROMPTS



So you've got your notebook, a pen and you've made yourself comfortable but now you're faced with the blank page of a fresh notebook.

Where do you start?

What do you say?

What don't you say?

You can of course just put pen to paper and see what flows, but sometimes even that can be a struggle, especially if you're new to journaling or are not really a fan of writing.

Journaling prompts are a great way to get you writing without overthinking or becoming too overwhelmed or intimidated by a blank page.

There are many ways you can use journaling prompts to help and inspire your journaling practice.

Here are just a few ideas to get you started with the prompts in this guide:

- In numerical order, responding to one prompt each day. You could answer in ascending order for one month, then in descending order for the following month.
- Pick a number at random and respond to that prompt in your journal.
- Pick a couple of “core” prompts to respond to each day. For example, every time I journal I ask myself how I'm feeling, what I need and what I am grateful for.
- Follow your instincts. What prompt are you most drawn to?
- Answer the prompt you feel most triggered by. It normally means there is something there that needs to be explored further.



# 31 JOURNALING PROMPTS TO GET YOU STARTED



## 1. How do I feel?

You can add something specific in there such as How do I feel about... – myself, my body, my partner, my job, my health, etc.

It can be about someone or something you are either currently struggling with or alternatively, grateful for.

## 2. How do I want to feel (today)?

Again, you can be more specific and ask how you want to feel about a particular person, situation, concern or experience.

## 3. What do I need?

You could choose to narrow the question by asking what you need today, in a particular area of your life or with regards to a specific situation.

## 4. What am I grateful for?

List at least 5 things and if you want to expand it, you can also say why you're grateful for each item on your list.

## 5. What has been my biggest lesson or achievement?

Again, you can choose to focus on a particular area of your life or a time period, such as today, this week, this month or this year.

6. What brings me the most joy in life?
7. Who or what do I need to let go of or at least distance myself from?
8. I feel happiest when...
9. What do I feel happy about right now?
10. What am I excited about today?
11. What am I looking forward to?
12. How can I experience more joy, happiness and/or peace in my life?
13. What changes do I need to feel healthier, happier and more fulfilled?
14. What is my happiest memory from today/this week/this month?
15. I feel most at peace/relaxed when...
16. I feel most loved when...
17. When I am alone I feel...
18. When I am surrounded by people I feel...
19. I want/need to forgive...
20. What is currently my biggest fear, worry or concern?
21. What is the main cause of stress in my life?
22. What is most important to me right now?
23. Where or with who do I need stronger personal boundaries?



24. What am I dreading?
25. What do I feel sad, upset or angry about right now?
26. Who or what do I feel resentful towards/about right now?
27. What do I feel disappointed about right now?
28. How can I reduce the stress in my life?
29. What I am currently lacking in my life? What do I need more of?
30. I need to tell the truth about/be honest with...
31. What do I feel guilty about right now?

# OVERCOMING WRITER'S BLOCK



There will be days when you struggle to fill a page and other days when you have to force yourself to stop writing.

Sometimes you'll be actively avoiding and resisting connecting with your emotions.

Other times you'll want to write but feel stuck about what to write.

Think about anything you've tried or experienced recently i.e. a new restaurant, route home, exercise class, skin care product, etc.

How did you feel about it? What did you think? Would you recommend it? Why/why not?

Here are some additional prompts to get you writing something:

- Today I ate \_\_\_\_\_ and it...
- I recently visited [person/place] and I felt...
- A song I currently enjoy listening to is \_\_\_\_\_ because...
- Today the weather is/was...
- A TV show or film I watched recently was...
- I'm currently reading...

Sometimes writing about seemingly mundane or every day topics can act as a doorway into feelings that are difficult to tackle head on and can often allow us to access emotions we need to express in a safe and non-threatening, non scary, non overwhelming way.

If you choose to re-read what you've written, you may find that the emotions you're expressing are actually nothing to do with the topic you began writing about. Or, you may find that you automatically move into writing about the thing you were avoiding.

Alternatively, you may write a very vanilla entry and that too is absolutely fine because you showed up and put pen to paper and by continuing to do so, eventually you will get to where you want or need to be.

Whatever you choose to write, I advise always aiming to fill at least one A5 page (with average size handwriting).

### ADDITIONAL PROMPTS TO GET RE-STARTED

- Write either “I feel”, “I think” or “I wonder” and then write whatever comes to mind.
- Pick a quote, mantra, prompt or song lyric and write down any thoughts and feelings that are provoked.
- Make a gratitude list writing at least 10 things that you are grateful for.
- Review your day – simply write an account of your day in as much detail as you can.
- Choose to write for a set amount of time or for a specific number of pages.



## THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND



Many people are put off writing because of negative experiences at school.

Even the thought of writing a journal could spark bad memories of red pen, crosses and teacher's handwriting scribbled all over your work.

However, the beauty of journaling is that it is just for you. For your eyes only (unless you choose to share of course).

So, you don't need to be a "good writer", have neat handwriting or perfect spelling, grammar or punctuation, to write a journal.

Your journal is not a place for perfection. It's completely unedited writing.

You're also not limited to writing. You can be as creative as you want.

You can include drawings, collages, poems, photographs and more; anything that you find interesting, inspiring or simply a memory you want to capture.

If you adopt a regular journal writing practice, your journal will become a place for you to be fully self-expressed, get to know your true self and as a result, experience deeper self-love, awareness and acceptance.

It is likely that your journal will become your most trusted confidant, so write honestly and authentically.

Journaling is one of the most affordable and accessible tools that has the power to transform, manifest and heal.

With this guide, you can make journaling part of your daily life and access all the benefits it has to offer.

# ABOUT ME



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Please feel free to connect with me to update me on your journaling journey and to receive free journaling resources.

I kept a diary, on and off during my teens but discovered journaling approximately 10 years ago, in my late twenties.

I have been journaling regularly ever since and although I can go days and sometimes even weeks without journaling, I always return to it.

Journaling keeps me grounded, gives me clarity and calms my overthinking mind.

Personally, I prefer to use an A5 journal with blank pages and normally write using a *Bic* biro or a *Muji* ballpoint pen in either blue or black ink.

I'm a bit of a stationery addict and I tend to stock up on journals and notebooks with pretty covers from my favourite brands during their sales.

I don't have a set time when I journal or even a particular place. Some days I write half a page, other days I can write 5-6 and occasionally even more.

I journal whenever I need to, wherever I can.

Journaling is my most effective, important and valued self-care practice and I hope that this guide helps you to get as much out of journaling as I have.

*“Write what should not be forgotten.”  
- Isabel Allende*