

## **Journaling**

“The unexamined life is not worth living.” – Socrates

Writing down thoughts, feelings, and patterns of behavior adds a proven boost to mental health. A person who journals has an increased awareness of self and he/she may be better able to release regret, frustrations and worries and positively integrate negative experiences. Writing can also help with the process of reconciliation and forgiveness. It can assist in bringing freedom from destructive patterns of thought and behavior and help to process and integrate negative experiences. Journaling brings clarity and perspective and facilitates growth and transformation. Just like holding a piece of paper too close to our eyes makes the words fuzzy and indistinguishable, thoughts kept unexpressed inside of us can seem jumbled together and keep us confused about them. The act of writing thoughts down is a powerful way to get them out of us and into a form where we can see them with clarity. Journaling is not just for writers. It is a simple but useful reflection tool – even if your spelling is atrocious. Below are several keys to journaling.

### **Make It Your Own**

Artistic types may enjoy adding art and color, while analytical minds may prefer lists or charts. Short bullet entries will suffice as well. It's more about *what* you write than *how* you write. If you're new to journaling, start simply. Try setting a timer for five or ten minutes and jotting down whatever comes to mind.

### **Keep It Your Own**

Keeping your journal in a safe place where it is not likely to be read by others will help you to process freely. It will allow you to record thoughts and feelings as they are, not as you think they should be. Allow your thoughts to flow unedited as you write. When you feel that you should edit something, reflect on why you think you should change it.

### **Keep It Up**

Writing regularly will help you observe how you are changing and growing. Try not to miss more than a few days at a time. You'll begin to identify patterns. Writing only when in crisis mode can make life seem like a series of problems; writing no matter what the circumstances will provide objectivity. In fact, when you're doing well is when you may have the most clarity and be able to capture lessons that you're learning along the way. Journaling is a way of remembering what's precious.

### **Take it to God**

Many of David's Psalms might be viewed as a type of journaling. Reading Psalm 13, one wonders if he ever meant for his heart's cries to be read by millions throughout the centuries: “How long must I struggle with anguish in my soul, with sorrow in my

heart every day?” (v. 2, New Living Translation). By expressing his pain, David was able to come to conclusions such as, “But I will trust in your unfailing love. I will rejoice because you have rescued me” (v. 5).

For more good tips on journaling reflectively, see [journaltherapy.com](http://journaltherapy.com).

“Why, then, do I set before You an ordered account of so many things? It's certainly not through me that You know them. But I'm stirring up love for You in myself and in those who read this so that we may all say, great is the Lord and highly worthy to be praised. I tell my story for love of Your love.”

– [Augustine of Hippo, \*Confessions\*](#)

“Successful journals break the deadlock of introspective obsession.”

– [Alexandra Johnson, \*Leaving a Trace: On Keeping a Journal\*](#)

Works Consulted:

[journalingsaves.com](http://journalingsaves.com)

[zenhabits.net/journal](http://zenhabits.net/journal)