

# Journaling

Keeping a journal is a really good way to help us to reflect and to keep a track of our reflections and insights.

Reflection is good because:

- It helps us to understand ourselves better
- It helps us to unload our worries and stresses
- It helps us to find and make sense of our innermost thoughts and feelings
- This helps us to learn and grow
- It reduces our burdens
- It helps us to make sense of life
- It helps us to change things<sup>1</sup>



## What is a journal?

A journal is a place where you record your thoughts and feelings and your reflections on what you have done and experienced. Most people use a notebook but a blog is a kind of on-line journal.

It is nice to use a notebook that is special to you in some way - perhaps covered in a material you like such as smooth suede or sequined silk; perhaps with stickers or an inspirational saying decorating the front, or a favourite image.

## How do I journal?

There isn't a right or wrong way to journal - it's up to you to do what you like and find helpful. The hints below are just suggestions that some people have found helpful - take from them whatever works for you.

- **Routine:** some people like to write in their journal every day, or at least every week - setting aside a special time can help e.g. every Sunday morning
- **Reflect:** don't just record a diary of facts. Write down what has happened in your life that you find significant, then reflect on your thoughts and feelings about this
- **Create:** reflection and learning are creative processes. Try drawings, exercises, using different colours, collecting sayings and images that speak to you - make your journal a creative scrapbook of inspiration!
- **Be positive:** a journal isn't a place to be hard on yourself or to repeat negative thoughts that keep you stuck in a bad place. Try to make sure you include positive thoughts, celebrations, ideas for changing things in your life you don't like, tools that help.
- **Don't panic:** a journal shouldn't be a chore or something that you've got to get right. Use it in a way that helps you, don't journal if you don't feel like it, don't judge your journal, it's only for you no-one else
- **Learn:** use your journal to recognise patterns in your life and learn from them. Read it back to see how you have changed and be encouraged by how you have

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1 Photo by [Gabrielle Henderson](#) on [Unsplash](#)

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grown. Look for repeated mistakes and negative patterns and try to find ways you can handle the same situation differently next time.

## Journal ideas

Here are some ideas of questions to reflect on and activities to get you started:



- What gave me energy today? What drained me?
- What was good/bad this week?
- I have done well on...I'd like to be better at....
- What I struggle most with is....what might help is....
- What makes me happy/angry/sad?
- I wonder why....?
- When people do this....I feel....perhaps this is because....
- What I would like to get better at is....one way I could do this is...

- If I were president of the world I would.....
- If I were an animal/colour/sound/plant/place I would be...
- Write a poem about this week
- Describe your favourite person and what you like about them. Then find a way to tell them what you feel.
- Write a letter to yourself about your strengths
- Think about how you can help someone else in the world
- Draw a page of feelings - use colours, shapes, words, patterns<sup>2</sup>
- Write down three things you are worried about. Then for each one think of one person or organisation that can help you and two things you can do about your worry. Now you have nine good things and no worries!



- Each new year, write your goals for the year. You could do the same each season or month too. Break down each goal into steps e.g. if you want to learn to play the guitar, today you could start with researching music teachers. Review them regularly and record your process. If you feel stuck, reflect on whether you have set yourself too much to do -or whether there is another route you need to take



- Celebrate your achievements, however small. Write or draw a certificate of achievement or a congratulations page in your journal. Give yourself a small treat - time off to walk in the park, a favourite food. Invite a friend to share your celebration!