



# Journaling

*A Wellness Tool*

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## *A Wellness Tool*

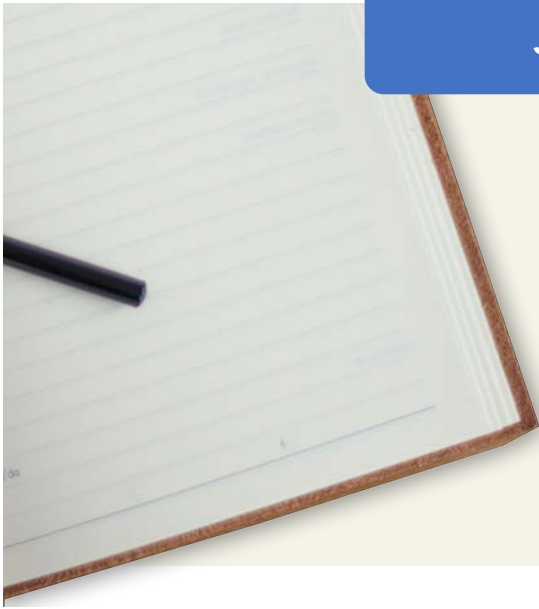
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Swarbrick M (2022). Journaling: A Wellness Tool, Collaborative Support Programs of New Jersey Wellness Institute  
This tool was updated based on a tool originally developed by John Garafano, BS, CPRP, CFT and Clare Celano CSPNJ Wellness Institute

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## JOURNALING



Journaling is a method of writing down your thoughts, experiences, and emotions in a notebook. Journaling involves reflecting on steps toward one's life ambitions, challenging negative thought patterns, and even showing your appreciation for small positive things in your life. Writing can benefit your mind by allowing you to work through challenging situations, express inner emotions, and find an outlet for your creativity.

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*How can writing in a journal be useful for you? How can you benefit? If not, have you ever thought of journaling before and what has stopped you from doing so?*

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# JOURNALING FOR WELLNESS<sup>1</sup>



Keeping journal has been known for centuries to support emotional wellness. As we have described in past issues, a gratitude journal spans the emotional and spiritual dimensions. The typical approach to keeping a gratitude journal is to write daily of things you did, received, or encountered that day that made you feel grateful. This can help a person whose negative mood or depressive symptoms impact their daily activities and/or sense of enjoyment or satisfaction. Journaling is part of many practices of mindfulness. Mindfulness, including journaling, also is a key part of Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT). Many Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) and DBT self-help work-books are built around written exercises, which are a form of journaling. In CBT, journaling can take many forms and is used to assist people in becoming more aware of their harmful thoughts and behaviors, while also establishing healthier coping skills and incorporating growth and change into their lives. A journaling assignment may involve identifying specific thoughts, resultant feelings, and related behaviors, and then to journal about any changes that result from altering those thoughts. Journaling can help you to become mindful of physical wellness, such as through using use a food diary, sleep log, or pain tracking chart. Other ways to use a journal in managing health conditions include tracking physical activity and medication use. To promote intellectual wellness, consider journaling about topics that interest or inspire you. Journals are a key tool for structuring creative writing, graphic arts, and myriad other academic pursuits. Books that start as someone's journal are among some of the most popular books we read. Journaling is an activity that has positive impacts on many wellness dimensions.

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Peggy Swarbrick and Pat Nemec, (2021). Journaling for Wellness. Words of Wellness 2021, Volume 13 Number 6. Collaborative Support Programs of New Jersey.

# WELLNESS BENEFITS OF JOURNALING

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*List or draw the wellness benefits  
in each of the 8 dimensions*  
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**Physical Wellness**  
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**Social Wellness**  
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**Mental/Emotional Wellness**  
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**Occupational Wellness**  
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**Environmental Wellness**  
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**Financial Wellness**  
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**Intellectual Wellness**  
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**Spiritual Wellness**  
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## TYPES OF JOURNALING

There are several different types of journaling including:

- Stream of Consciousness
- Thought Provoking
- Illustrative Discovery
  - Reflective
  - Gratitude

# STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS JOURNALING



Stream of Consciousness writing is when you use your journal to write down anything that you are feeling. This type of writing is most helpful in working through something you are struggling with including emotional, social and health challenges. Stream of Consciousness usually involves fast, easy and non-stop writing. Sometimes this is where the real truth lies when you are writing without censoring.

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**EXERCISE**

*Write about a problem, issue, or anything at all that you are currently facing. Start with five minutes and increase time as you go, try not to let the pen stop.*

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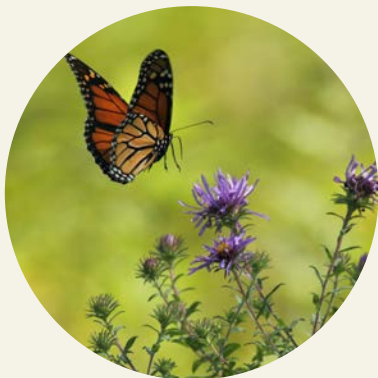
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# THOUGHT PROVOKING JOURNALING



Thought Provoking Journaling is a slow thoughtful writing and takes time to record what you want to say. This type of journaling begins with a subject matter in mind and you write about that experience. Some people find it helpful to read a quote and write about how that quote is relevant in their life right now. You can use this type of journaling to record personal goals or special projects you are working on. You can also write down personal successes already accomplished. You can also listen to music or look at a picture and discuss how that art pertains to your life.

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## EXERCISE

*Write about a goal that you are working on. Describe where you are with this goal, how it makes you feel to have accomplished even the smallest steps, and where you hope to be a year from now with that goal.*

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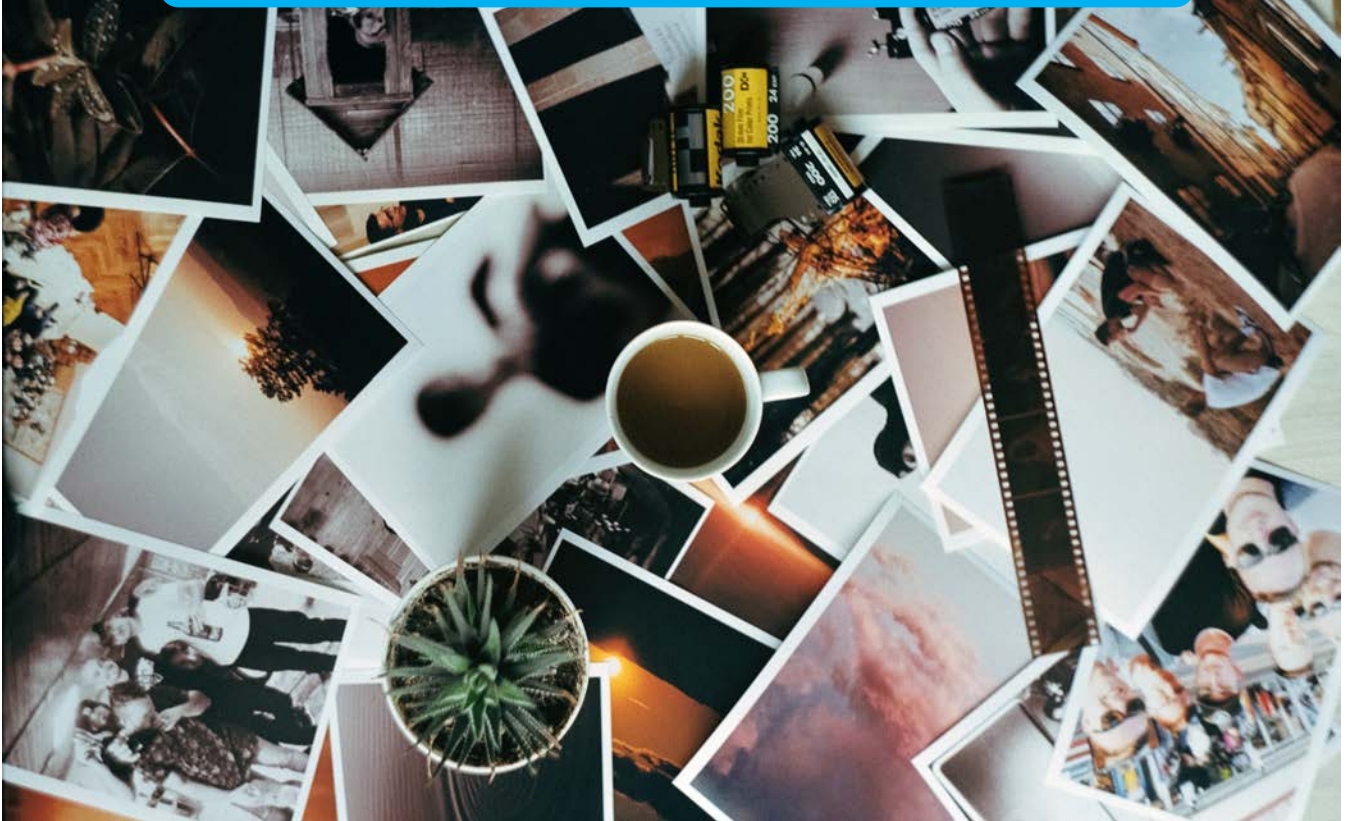
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## ILLUSTRATIVE DISCOVERY JOURNALING



Not everyone connects with writing or enjoys the writing process. Some of us are more visual in the way we learn and express ourselves. Illustrative discovery journaling is a method which uses visual pictures to record emotions and thoughts. Illustrative discovery journaling can benefit those with a more visual learning style by using images, drawings, magazine cutouts, and other visually creative ways to express oneself.

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*“How you look at a situation is very important, for how you think about a problem may defeat you before you ever do anything about it. When you get discouraged or depressed, try changing your attitude from negative to positive and see how life can change for you. Remember, your attitude toward a situation can help you to change it... you create the very atmosphere for defeat or victory.”*

-Franco Harris

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# REFLECTIVE JOURNALING



Reflective Journaling is similar to using a diary except you are not writing to “the diary” you are recording your thoughts to yourself. Reflective journaling can help you in finding your true beliefs and explore spirituality in a personal way. Record dreams, moods and feelings at the moment and write them in detail with this journaling technique. Music, your favorite beverage, and scented candles may help to make this writing even more enjoyable. Some people find it helpful to reflect on past memories and why they are important.

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### EXERCISE

*Write about a positive memory that you can think of. Why is this memory important to you? How do you feel when you think about this memory? What emotions does this memory evoke?*

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## GRATITUDE JOURNALING



Gratitude journaling is a method of journaling which utilizes self-reflection to take notice of and find value in daily achievements, both big and small. Negative thinking can be overwhelming, and may be detrimental to one's personal recovery and wellness plan. It can be helpful to create a separate journal which only contains things you are grateful for. Some people have found it helpful to establish a time each day to write in this journal, such as before bed, to make sure to always appreciate daily success. Another option could be to try to write at least 5-10 things you are grateful for each day. One approach that seems to work for people is to do timed gratitude writing where you write everything you are grateful for over the course of 5 minutes. Some people have even tried to write 100 things they are grateful for each day, even small things like shoes and a pencil could be worth your gratitude.

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### EXERCISE

*Write about something you are grateful today.  
Describe why you are grateful, and how you feel.*

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## JOURNALING STRATEGIES

When considering how to start journaling, it can be important to choose the best strategy to meet your needs such as a notebook, computer, mobile device/smart-phone, etc. You may also want to choose the type of journal (gratitude, illustrative discovery journal, reflective journal). You also may want to consider what type of writing instrument (type of pen, pencil) works best for you.

Since a journal is deeply personal, you may want to consider if you will share your journal with anyone. Some people never share their journal because it is too personal while others benefit from sharing their writing with close friends, family, and even therapists.

It may also be helpful to have a time each day to journal so as to condition yourself to the routine of writing.



*What are fives strategies you can use?*

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Journaling: Ballas, P., Fraser, M., Watson, L. R. Journaling for mental health. Health Encyclopedia. Retrieved from <https://www.urmc.rochester.edu/encyclopedia.aspx>.  
Pennebaker, J. W. (2004). Theories, therapies, and taxpayers: on the complexities of the expressive writing paradigm. *Clin. Psychol. Sci. Pract.*,11(2):138–142. doi: 10.1093/clipsy.bph063

<https://psychcentral.com/lib/the-health-benefits-of-journaling>

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Expressive writing through journaling can be a powerful way to process stress, trauma, and different emotions.

<https://psychcentral.com/lib/the-health-benefits-of-journaling/>

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How To Begin Journaling

<https://penzu.com/>



*My Journal*



A series of horizontal blue lines for writing, filling the majority of the page below the dotted line. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page.

*My Journal*



A series of horizontal blue lines for writing, contained within a rounded rectangular border. The lines are evenly spaced and cover most of the page area below the dotted line.

*My Journal*



A series of horizontal blue lines for writing, filling the majority of the page below the dotted line. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the journal page.