

Transcript for podcast on Journaling, A Wellness Tool

Hello. My name is Ralph Elwell. I'm here today to talk with Pat Nemec about a journaling manual that can be found on the UIC Solutions Suite website. Thanks for taking the time to talk with me, Pat.

Sure! It's great to be able to introduce another of our health tools.

So, let's start with you telling our listeners about the manual titled, *Journaling, A Wellness Tool*.

OK. To start, let me explain that journaling is an activity that many people use to write or record their thoughts, experiences, and emotions. A journal can be used in different ways, such as reflection, challenging unhealthy thought patterns, or keeping track of life's little gifts. *Journaling, A Wellness Tool* is a workbook that people can use to try out journaling and to decide if this is a useful wellness activity to add to their routines.

Who can benefit from journaling?

The *Journaling Wellness Tool* can be used by anyone who wants to begin to use this activity to improve his or her personal wellness. To get started, all that you need is either a pen or a pencil. The 18-page manual has color enhancements, but it can be printed in black and white.

The manual has been used in workshops and by groups of people who want to start a wellness journaling group or project. When working in a group, this *Wellness Tool* provides group members with a guide to practice. The group works together to discuss the process and experience of journaling and to provide support to one another.

What would someone get out of journaling?

As we describe in *Journaling: A Wellness Tool*, there are many benefits to journaling. The benefits cross over many wellness dimensions. For example, a person can use a journal as a way to track progress in certain areas, like exercising or saving money. A journal that involves reflecting on experiences can help a person process emotions, deepen a spiritual connection, or guide professional development. When using the *Journaling Wellness Tool*, a person thinks through what unique benefits he or she would want from keeping a journal.

From what you say, it sounds like there are different kinds of journals.

Definitely! The *Journaling Wellness Tool* describes five different kinds of journals, although there are more. These five are called stream of consciousness journaling, thought-provoking journaling, illustrative discovery journaling, gratitude journaling, and reflective journaling. The *Journaling Wellness Tool* describes these different types and includes a practice exercise to experience keeping each type of journal.

I think our listeners would be interested in hearing a bit more about these options.

Sure. First, I'll tell you about "illustrative discovery journaling," since you may not have heard about that one. This process involves using pictures to record and reflect on thoughts and feelings. People might use drawings, magazine cutouts, or other expressive approaches. Although there is no specific exercise for this type of journaling in the workbook, it shows a picture made out of construction paper cut-outs. Often the process of putting together a picture gives a person a chance to think about recent experiences, and the person may find that the creative process relieves stress.

The section on "thought provoking journaling" includes an exercise focused on writing about a personal goal, progress made, and the plans and hopes for the future, relative to that goal.

So, once a person tries out some of these exercises, what is the next step?

Once someone decides to keep a journal, and has some idea of what to put in it, there are some other questions that need to be answered. For example, the person needs to think about whether the journal will be on paper, in a notebook, or even a "virtual" journal kept on a computer, phone, or online site. Another important question is how public to make the journal. Of course, a journal can be as private or public as a person might wish, but this needs to be thought through carefully before sharing anything publicly, such as on a blog or other website.

This tool sounds like it would be good for anyone interested in a creative way to support his or her personal wellness. Thanks so much for talking with me, Pat.

You're quite welcome! It's great to have the chance to share this resource and others. Our listeners can find *Journaling: A Wellness Tool* online as part of the UIC Solutions Suite to promote wellness, self-direction, and employment for people in recovery from mental health conditions.