

10 tips to get you started

JOURNALING

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BALANCE PSYCHOLOGIES

LET YOUR JOURNEY TO HEALING BEGIN

Journaling

Before you start your journaling journey, I always feel that the journal is as important as the writing. Get a journal that you are attached to, either something that's practical or pretty. This is yours so choose something that draws you to it, it will also be a vehicle for your daily inspiration.

10 TIPS TO GET YOU STARTED

1. TRY TO DO IT AT A SIMILAR TIME EACH DAY

Find a time that typically suits you and that fits with the way that your head works. If your mind is super busy in the morning, opening up 10 minutes to empty out your thoughts can make a significant difference to the day ahead. Equally, making time before bedtime will aid a good night's sleep, enabling you to clear out—this is far better than unacknowledged thoughts and feelings swirling around and contributing to anxiety plus you can process while you sleep. You don't need to journal in the same place each day but you might find that there's a special spot where you're in flow—I tend to journal in bed! By the way, you can find TEN minutes!

2. BUT DON'T STRESS IF YOU MISS DAYS HERE & THERE

You're going to find that there's days where for whatever reason, you don't journal. The good thing is that you will find that you miss it when you don't! Start off daily and try to keep going for at least three weeks (the typical time it takes to create or change a habit) and then from there you will find your rhythm. If you find that you're suddenly very averse to connecting with your feelings and thoughts, it's normally a sign that you really do need to journal!

3. WRITE IN A STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS FOR AT LEAST 8 MINUTES

I picked up this handy tip from my acupuncturist—it takes about 6 minutes to get into your subconscious, so you're getting into the nuts and bolts of what's really on your mind when you're 7-8 minutes into it. What comes out might surprise you.

4. DON'T EDIT

You're building your relationship with you so it's important, especially when starting out, to just get it out on paper, not to start analysing what you're saying or censoring you in a, "Ooh, I can't say that!" fashion. Sometimes what you write won't necessarily make sense but this is OK. Get it out of your system so that you can make way for more inner knowledge, insight and guidance. If words pop into my head and they don't, at first glance, connect with what I was just writing, I write them down anyway. This is what rumbles around in my head, apparently!

5. OBSERVATION OVER JUDGING EVERY TIME

There is no particular way that your journal is 'supposed' to be. Sometimes your writing will be neat, sometimes, if you're anything like me, you can barely read your own writing (haha). Sometimes it will be a very positive session and sometimes, you'll have a lot of unloading to do. This is OK. Whatever comes up, let it be rather than judging you. Don't judge your feelings, don't judge your thoughts— be a friend to you.

5. LISTEN TO YOUR INNER VOICE

Ask yourself a question and then try to sit quietly for a moment and listen for what comes up. If you are typically self-critical and aren't used to listening to you, pay attention to the quieter voice instead of the louder one.

6. WHIP OUT A PEN & PAPER (OR YOUR JOURNAL) WHEN STRESSED OR ANXIOUS

Journaling when you're feeling stressed, overwhelmed, anxious etc, is a transformative process that will not only help you to get in command of you by allowing awareness and clarity into the equation, but it's a form of self-soothing. You're giving a voice to your inner self, giving you an opportunity to not only assess the 'threat level' so that you can work out what is a real versus an imagined problem, but you also use compassionate investigation to help you to avoid treating feelings and assumptions as facts. Write in a stream of consciousness (as above) and try to keep your writing hand resting on the paper. Start with, "What I would like to empty from my solar plexus is..." and then write whatever comes out. It doesn't matter where you are— this practice could transform how you deal with sudden stresses at work plus it can help you gain clarity that will support you in dealing with conflict and criticism situations.

7. CONNECT TO YOUR INNER CHILD BY WRITING WITH YOUR NON- DOMINANT HAND

Write the question with your dominant hand and then answer with your non-dominant one. You will be surprised at what makes itself known. Notice any feelings that come up, the way that your body feels, and thoughts that pop up.

8. CHOOSE YOUR MEDIUM OF CHOICE

Choosing a lovely notebook is half the fun! People get very particular about what they journal in and with—use a pen that's a pleasure to journal with and store it inside.

9. LEAVE THE FIRST PAGE BLANK

If at some point you want to revisit your musings, number the pages, and highlight sections, keeping the first page blank allows you to add your own table of contents.

10. CUSTOMISE

Add doodles, bubble writing, times you got up and went to sleep, vitamins or medication you're taking, a food diary, a key success from the day, something you learned about you or life, one sentence that sums up the day, highlight key words, whatever you like—make it yours!