

Therapeutic Writing – Journals and Diaries

If you only do one kind of writing for the benefit of your wellbeing, do this: write regularly in a journal or diary.

Diary or Journal?

One disadvantage of a dated diary is that unless you write in your diary every day you will end up with wasted pages that can end up making you feel guilty! I prefer a journal – in other words a blank notebook in which I write only when I feel like it, and with no wasted pages. Another advantage is that I can write as much or as little as I feel like each day with no restrictions on space.



If you decide to use a diary, do get one with enough space for you to write as much as you want to. Perhaps a page per day?

If you use a journal, be sure to date every entry so you can look back in the future and see how things have changed.

Ideas for What to Write in Your Journal or Diary

The first rule is...THERE ARE NO RULES!...but here are some ideas:

1. Write first about what you did during the day and where you went, then add your thoughts, feelings, hopes and fears.
2. Once an hour for a whole day, write down 1 word that sums up how you feel. Then at the end of the day choose 1 or 2 of the words to write some more about.
3. Write lists – your favourite films/books/people, your shopping list, things to do before your next big birthday.
4. Write letters to your journal as if it were your best friend.
5. Freewriting or head chatter – it's good to do this for a few minutes every day. Time yourself for 5 minutes and write down whatever comes into your head without stopping.
6. A potted history of you.

7. Write a letter from you in the present day, to you some time in the future, or you in the past. Or from a past you to the present you.
8. The story of how you want your life to be in 5 years.
9. Write down what you dreamed about during the night – this works best if done as soon as you wake up.
10. The best thing and the worst thing about the day.
11. Write about a memory of a person, place or event – go for detail, especially about what you could see, hear, feel, smell and taste at the time.



Further Reading

1. Words for Wellbeing blog: <http://trioross.wordpress.com/>
2. Facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/home.php#!/WordsForWellbeing?fref=ts>
3. Therapeutic Writing handouts: Writing for Wellbeing, Mindful Writing, Freewriting, Reflective Writing, Fictional Characters, Random Input.
4. Email Carol at writing.year@cumbria.nhs.uk for copies of handouts and to enquire about ordering the Words for Wellbeing book (£9.50 including P&P)
5. The Creative Journal by Lucia Capacchione. Published by Franklin Lakes, New Jersey.
6. The Aspiring Author's Journal by S. Morgenstern and T. Bronn (2005) (translated by G. Rosner). Published by Harry N. Abrams, New York.
7. Journal to the Self: Twenty-two paths to personal growth by Kathleen Adams (1990). Published by Grand Central Publishing, New York.
8. Therapeutic Journal Writing. An Introduction for Professionals by Kate Thompson. Published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London.

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