



Journaling:

Writing as a practice, a hobby, a process, a healing.
Celebrate moving the pen across the page!

Hello!

Millions of words are written about journaling.
Here is a small missive, with **three** sections,
to help you journal for your wellbeing.

- ~The why, how, and what of journal writing
- ~Treasures that matter
- ~Expressive writing considerations





Why journal?

- ~ Idea development
- ~ Goal setting and attainment
- ~ Stress reduction
- ~ Removing creative blocks
- ~ Improving writing skills
- ~ Mood elevation

What to use and when?

Fountain pen, easiest to write with over time
Paper, lined or unlined; dots;
A book, not loose sheets of paper
Choose a time and place

How?

Timed writing, stream of consciousness
for perhaps 15, 20, 30 minutes
In the morning
In the evening
Regularly
How much?
Whatever comes



What to write about?

- ~ Conversations you had, heard, wished for
- ~ Gratefulness
- ~ Dreams, daydreams, night dreams
- ~ Letters, to send or not
- ~ Interviews with yourself or others
- ~ Perhaps, things you might do in your future (not goals)
- ~ Personal history, memoir writing
- ~ Firsts, doing new things, taking risks
- ~ Epiphanies usually come about the third page

What you write does not have to be profound!

- ~ Eavesdropping
- ~ Fiction writing
- ~ Personal audit: How am I feeling today? Feeling great? Feeling grumpy? What else?
- ~ Distractions fall away when writing

Just do it. Just write! Start NOW!

- ~ Description of place
There is power in describing where you are and what is around you.
- ~ Great lines of the moment:
"Here is an expression of our connection."
~ This I believe. This I know to be so.
Your core value system
- ~ Habits, Rituals
- ~ Reflections on a quote, a line from something you read such as:
"Live in the sunshine, swim in the sea, drink the wild air." -- Emerson
- ~ Lists, brainstorming
- ~ Rules you live by
- ~ Famous sayings from your family or elsewhere that speak to you
- ~ Fantasies and meanderings
- ~ And, so much more!



Some tricks and tips!

- ~Skip the first page of the journal.
- ~Use a leather cover with paper in it to enhance the feel and the experience.
- ~Write in 10 minute timed segments.
- ~Don't let the pen stop.

Keep your head down and keep going.

- ~Reward yourself for doing your writing.
- ~Change of place/pace, write in different places: under a tree, in a funny place, sitting on the wall, and more.
- ~Minimize distractions, mental and physical.
- ~Keep a list of asides, things you think of that need to be done or attended to. Write them down; get them off your mind.
- ~Just visiting: pretend you are from another planet or write from an observer's point of view.
- ~Write the narrative you would like to take forward in your life.





Treasures that matter
An experience!
A basic focus for our lives

There is a range of things to attend to, handle, manage, experience, and do in anyone's life. Tuning in to what matters helps us to have a good life. A treasure can be a thing, a person, or an experience. It can be tiny, small, large, or enormous. It can be brief and ongoing. It can be something or someone we knew was significant at the moment, or not.

A treasure: What is a treasure?

A treasure is something cherished, valued, prized, honored, important, life-altering, meaningful, or valuable in an emotional way, a financial way, or otherwise.

Paying attention to, noticing, focusing energy on, preserving, honoring, noting, and resting with the awareness of—these are some of the ways to celebrate a treasure. Sometimes we take for granted a treasure until it is gone. Sometimes we know this thing, experience, or person will be savored for all time. These treasures can be part of our legacy, our private and most personal thoughts or memories, our secrets never to be revealed, or things to be shouted from the rooftop, enshrined, touted, shared, and revered. Of course, as always, all the choices are good. The challenge is always to see, find, discover, and know what and who we want to be and celebrate in this life.

Read each question that follows. Take time to ask yourself the questions. You may choose to celebrate what is or was, or to challenge yourself to go deeper into the range of your thoughts, feelings, memories, experiences. Keeping your writing on an upbeat note is a good thing. Looking deeper inside is a good thing, too. Think about what will take you where you want or need to go. Consider responding to a question or two or three that you don't like or would most likely turn away from, and also the question(s) that make you smile, that you are attracted to answering. Facing what you don't like or are uncomfortable with is often a path to the greatest self-awareness, learning, something that contributes to your ongoing or future self and life.

These questions are guides to prime or stimulate your memories and your thoughts about your life. THEY ARE NOT INTENDED TO BE ANSWERED IN A LITERAL MANNER. Read through each of them and react to the ones that open windows for you. Each life is unique and the priming questions have a different impact on each person.



SOME PROMPTS TO GET YOU STARTED

1. What are your favorite treasures? Choose one. Make a list. Sort. Sift. Collect them.
2. Are your treasures things? A person or people? An experience or experiences?
3. What criteria do you use to put something on a treasures list?
4. Does something that is treasured need to be positive? Are things/people/experiences that were negative, scary, uncomfortable, or embarrassing treasured, too? Can something or someone who shaped your path in life—pulled you toward or away from where you were headed—be a treasured and significant thing/person/experience?
5. If you describe in exquisite detail what that treasure is, what matters to you to include?





6. If you acknowledge and write about a treasured thing that matters, will you say what it is, where you got it, how much it cost, why it has meaning, who you want to have it if you were to give it away or had to give it away? What personal meaning do you want the recipient to understand is embedded in it?

A possible format for writing about a THING . . . Each of us has treasured "things" we hold on to and value. If you wish, you may show your treasured item to someone with whom you want to share your writing or take/keep a photograph of it.

~ Describe what the object is, where and when you got it, and from whom. How did you feel and what was your first thought when you saw it, brought it home, used it for the first time?

~ What is it that makes it special for you? What is its value—sentimental, financial, other?

~ Does it symbolize something for you?

~ How would it affect you, how would your life be different, if you never had it or you lost it?

~ Do you have any new revelations when thinking and writing about this object, some new thinking that may not have occurred to you before giving it this time and attention?

~ Is there someone you would like to give this object to now or at some future time? Now or later? Why that person? For example, I have a beaded bracelet I made from the beaded necklaces my mother left behind. The bracelet has some value in itself, but its most important worth is the memories I have of seeing my mother wearing those beads. I have a particular person in mind who I believe will value the bracelet as much as I do. I will give it to her when the time is right.



7. If you acknowledge and write about a treasured person:

Will you include things like:

~ Where you met (e.g., at birth, at the grocery store, etc.)?

~ When you knew that person mattered—as specifically as you can recall—when that awakened sense of the meaning of that person came to you, if you know?

~ Why they are so important, significant, impactful to you?

And,

~ Do you want to tell them, what might you say? Have you let them know along the way what they have brought to you and to your life?

~ Do you want other people to know why this person matters so much?

~ Now that you have noticed, written, acknowledged this person in your mind, heart, and soul, what is different for you than before this awareness occurred?





8. If you acknowledge and write about a treasured experience, will you include:

~ What happened?

~ Where you were physically, emotionally, mentally when you had the experience?

~ Whether you understood its import at the time, and if not, what enhanced its value after the time of it occurring?

And,

~ What was the pivotal moment/thing about the experience—the very specific detail(s) that riveted this time in your mind and heart?

~ As you focus, remember, and re-experience what happened: what do you see now that maybe was not apparent at the time of the experience or along the way as you held it inside of you without reviewing it?

~ Do you want to tell anyone about it, share it? If so, who and why? If not, is it meaningful to you to do something active with it such as write it down, save it for a day or week or however long, and then tear it up, burn it, toss it?





Not all experiences, even treasured ones, need to be shared.

9. What is the most difficult thing you have dealt with that had a treasured impact on your life (e.g., my father's watch and what it brings to me as I remember the good he brought me along with rest)?

10. Who is the most difficult person you have encountered that has had a treasured and significant impact on your life (e.g., the romantic partner that did not work out but taught you one, two, three, or more of the most important things you now know)?

11. What is the most difficult experience you have lived that had a treasured impact on your life?

12. As you take stock of TREASURES THAT MATTER—a thing, person, or experience—what do you notice about yourself? What surprises you? What is confirmed for you?

13. Now what?





A FEW WRITING IDEAS

1. Use all your senses.
2. Give your writing all the best stuff you have. When you go back to the well, miraculously there is always more to work with, so no need to save for later.
3. Paint a picture with YOUR words. Or, of course, you could draw an illustration, too.
4. Use concrete detail and avoid abstractions. The facts won't change over time. Your interpretations might.
5. Write straight to the emotional core of things: you are writing about things that have been or are important to you.

~ You may write about your childhood, the time when you found everything so intensely interesting and felt things so deeply. You may write about your adolescence with all its roller-coaster emotions, idealism, and realizations. Or you may write about your continuing development as an adult. Don't be too distant. Write with care and truth, with empathy and understanding for you the child, the young person, the person you are now. Try to understand what she or he was feeling. Learn from that child's experience, from the experience of a human being trying to make sense of life.

~ Exploring your life and understanding the child you were will give you insight and compassion. You will see the details in a different light. You may notice things you hadn't before. And when you share, you will turn on a light for others so they can see the significance of their own lives more clearly.



Expressive Writing

What's on your mind and in your heart?

Expressive writing, from the inside: It is a free-form way to capture your inner voice(s), your hopes, dreams, wishes, fears, doubts, memories, experiences, connections, and more. It is a way to note what is on your mind and in your heart. Leave your inner critic at the door before you write. She or he will be waiting there for you when you are ready. This is uncensored writing, just for you. Be sure to find and keep a private place for what you write so you can truly write what you want and need to say.

Highlight your emotional experience rather than the details of what happened. Let your full expression happen. It does not have to be sequential or follow any rules. Just let whatever is inside of you come out.

James Pennebaker, PhD, at the University of Texas, Austin, developed an expressive writing protocol to uncover the potential health benefits of writing about emotional upheaval. Pennebaker's research, known as the Pennebaker Paradigm, has been replicated many times with positive outcomes.





Here are broad outlines of this approach.

1. Time: Write a minimum of twenty minutes per day for four consecutive days.
2. Topic: Write about something extremely personal and important to you.
3. Write continuously: Do not worry about punctuation, spelling, and grammar. If you run out of things to say, draw a line or repeat what you have already written. Keep pen on paper.
4. Write only for yourself: You may plan to destroy or hide what you write. Do not turn this exercise into a letter. This is for your eyes only.
5. Observe the Flip-out Rule: If you get into the writing, and you feel that you cannot write about a certain event because it will push you over the edge, STOP writing!
6. Expect heavy boots: Many people briefly feel a bit saddened or down after expressive writing, especially on the first day or two. Usually this feeling goes away completely in an hour or two.





The Pennebaker Writing Prompt

Write for twenty minutes. In your writing, let go and explore your very deepest emotions and thoughts about the most traumatic experience in your entire life. You might tie this trauma to other parts of your life: your childhood or your relationships with others including parents, lovers, friends, relatives or other people important to you. You might link your writing to your future and who you would like to become in your future or to who you have been, who you would like to be now, or who you are now. Not everyone has had a single trauma but all of us have had major conflicts or stressors and you can write about these as well. All your writing is confidential. No sharing of content. Do not worry about form or style, spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, or grammar.

Give yourself some time after writing to reflect on what you have written and be compassionate with yourself. If you are worried about someone else seeing what you wrote, put your writing in a safe place or simply tear it up or shred it. But if you are not concerned that someone may read what you wrote, you may want to keep it so that you can come back to it.

A week or two after you have completed the four days of expressive writing, you may want to reflect on what you notice in your life, how you feel, and how you behave.

Check out these links to work by Dr. Pennebaker:

~ [2017 APPLE Interview](#)

~ <https://liberalarts.utexas.edu/psychology/faculty/pennebak>

~ Pennebaker, J.W. (2004). Writing to Heal: A Guided Journal for Recovering from Trauma and Emotional Upheaval (pp. 18-26).



Another Format to Consider

Write an uncensored account of whatever has deep resonance and meaning for you. Then, rewrite what you have written about from an observer's point of view. That could be a real observer (e.g., someone else in your family, someone else who was present, or an imagined person). Next, rewrite what you have written in a narrative way about how you want to hold and think about the experience going forward.

Check out [Pinterest.com](https://www.pinterest.com)
for endless journaling ideas!

Notes from Bonnie Bernell, John F. Evans, Susan Thom



