

**The Ultimate
Guide To**

+ 19 JOURNALING
PROMPTS FOR
PRACTICE

Journaling



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How often do you catch yourself ruminating and getting swept up in a spiral of negative thoughts?

Would you like to change something about your life but are you not really sure where to begin?



Journaling regularly can help you to sort through your thoughts, reduce stress and anxiety, and identify and put a stop to negative habits. By writing down how your day went and, more importantly, how you feel, you'll be able to get your negative thoughts off your chest and reflect on your emotions.

"The key to success is total honesty," says psychologist Ida Dommerholt. Because it's only when you're being really honest with yourself, and not just trying to sound good, that you'll be able to objectively recognize your feelings, insecurities, thoughts, behaviors and fears. "When you write about events that triggered a particular set of emotions, you automatically take a step back and observe the situation from a distance," explains Dommerholt.

Does that sound familiar to you? If you wrote a diary as a kid, you'll already know this principle of journaling. Instead of writing about the day's events, you need to focus on your inner journey.

You can ask yourself questions like: "How do I feel today?", "What did I do well today?" or "What went badly today?" This means there's no right or wrong, it's just about doing what feels good.



10 benefits of journaling

Journaling has scientifically-proven benefits and has been used as a form of therapy in the USA since the 1970s. Researchers at Pennsylvania State University investigated the impact that journaling has on people with anxiety as part of a [2018 study](#). After just one month, the test subjects displayed fewer symptoms of depression and anxiety. After two months, the participants even showed increased resilience

A further [study from 2001](#) showed that writing about stressful experiences reduces negative thoughts, as well as improving stress management skills and long-term memory

„In the journal I do not just **express myself more openly than I could to any person. I create myself.” - Susan Sontag**

Journaling can also make it easier to cope with traumatic experiences. In a groundbreaking [study from 1988](#), two groups of students were asked to write for four days at a time either about traumatic experiences or superficial topics.

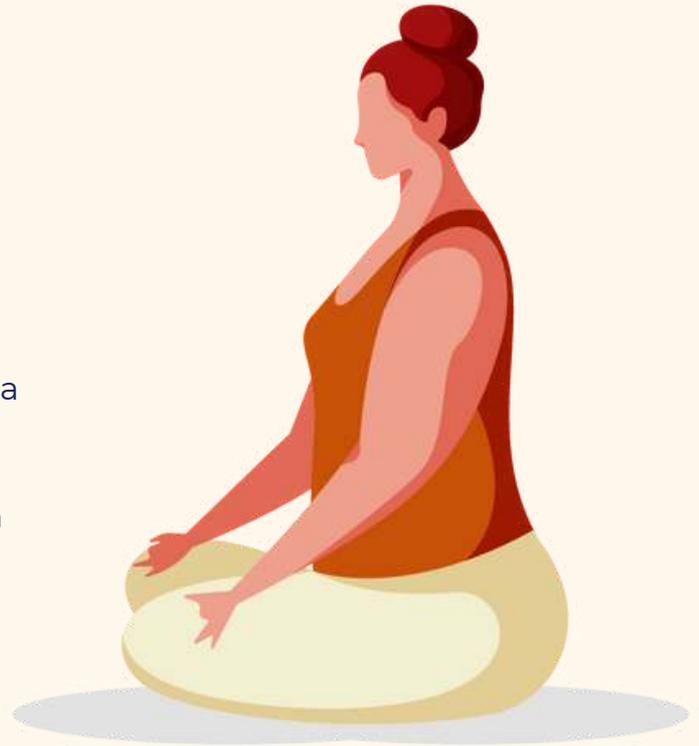
Six weeks after this writing experience, the groups that had to write about traumatic topics reported a more positive mood and fewer illnesses. Its ability to heal old wounds means that journaling has a positive effect on the immune system.



Here's a summary of **ten journaling benefits**:

1. Reduces stress and anxiety

Journaling allows you to get your negative emotions off your chest. By confronting them, you get better at recognizing the connection between your behavioral patterns and emotions. Journaling also has a cathartic effect. By addressing your strong feelings, you free yourself from their burden and this leaves more cognitive brain capacity for other things.



2. Makes negative habits obvious

Analyzing your entries after a certain period of time, will help you to recognize what makes you feel sad, angry or helpless. This means you'll get much better at recognizing unproductive behavioral patterns and you can put a stop to them.

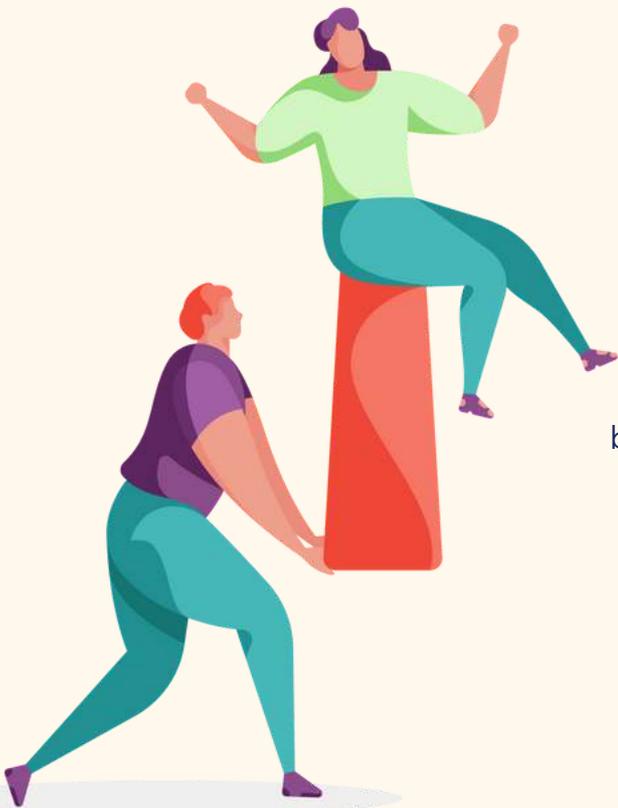
3. **Regulates emotions**

On the one hand, writing about your emotions helps you to let go of them, but you can also reflect on them. This means that your emotions won't have as much power over you in your day-to-day life.



4. **Improves your problem-solving skills**

By writing down all the things that have bothered you over the course of the day, you'll often discover new solutions to old problems. You'll learn to look at your problems from a different perspective and this will improve your general problem-solving skills.



5. Helps you to overcome trauma

It's not easy to write about difficult experiences, but it's also not easy living with unprocessed trauma. Writing it all down in an analytical way gives you back a sense of control and helps you to understand what you experienced.



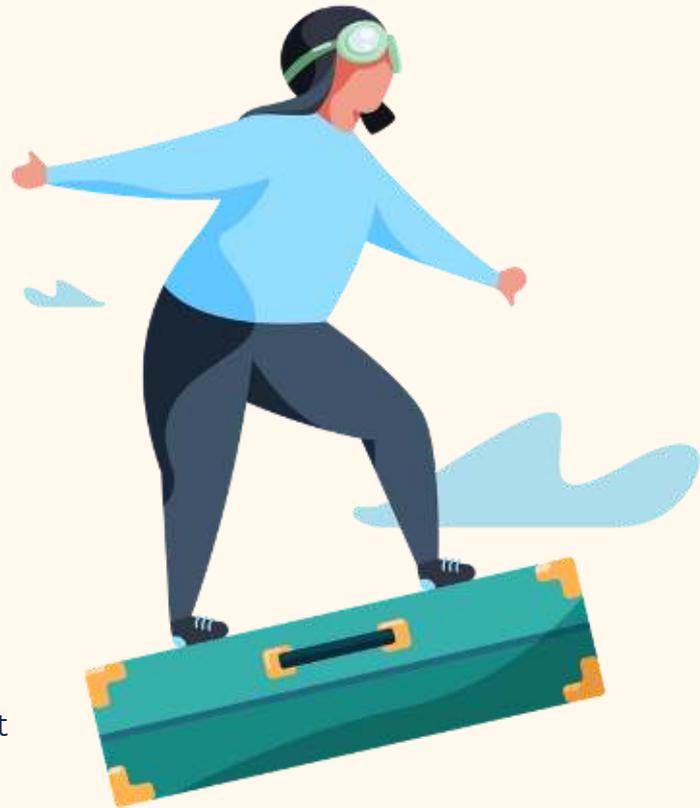
6. Improves your sleep

Journaling gives you the opportunity to write down your problems and to let go of everything that has built up over the course of the day. As part of your evening routine, journaling can be very freeing, putting a stop to your ruminating before you go to bed.



7. Helps you identify your goals

Some journaling techniques, such as bullet journaling, place a great emphasis on the future and achieving your goals by living a structured life and practicing mindfulness. If this is something you particularly want to address, you can select these future-orientated journaling methods. However, in general, any technique you use will help you to identify your goals. This is because documenting your feelings will make you aware of what matters to you in life and what is less important.



8. Increases your self-confidence

Journaling is about creating some order from the chaos of your emotions. By repeating it regularly, you'll reinforce your identity. Your self-confidence will increase and you'll feel stronger.

9. Promotes creativity

Journaling techniques like art journaling inspire you to be creative after a stressful day at work and allow your imagination to run free. But that's not all: Even traditional text-heavy methods are good for your creative-thinking skills. They help you to look at problems from different perspectives, which makes you more creative.

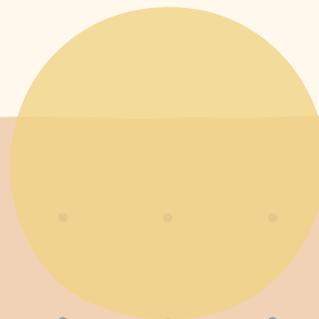


10. Trains your memory and IQ

Who would have thought that journaling also improves your memory and IQ? When you write down your feelings, your brain doesn't have to process as many sensations and emotions, which means it's better able to focus on other things – this improves your memory. [Studies](#) have also shown that there's a correlation between writing and intelligence. Your vocabulary and ability to express yourself may expand when you journal and this, in turn, has a positive effect on your IQ.



Not sure where to begin? We've collected together some **journaling prompts** for you in this handbook



1 What am I particularly grateful for today?

2 What did I learn today?

3 What was a particularly good moment from today?

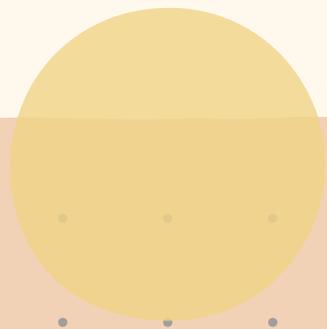
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How to start journaling

Since there aren't any rules when it comes to journaling, you can start however you like. Just remember to actually address your feelings – not what's on your schedule – and to make it a regular habit. "I look at journaling as a form of mental health hygiene – the equivalent of brushing your teeth," explains psychologist Dommerholt. "Five minutes of journaling can be part of your evening routine."

These tips and tricks can help you to establish a successful self-care routine:

- Take time for yourself every day
- Pick a time and place
- Set a time limit
- Be creative – or not (you could also work off a list)
- Be open
- Use journaling prompts for inspiration if nothing comes to mind



4 Which three things am I grateful for today?

5 Who would I like to do something nice for?

6 What have I done for my body today?

Popular journaling techniques

1. The three-questions method

There are no golden rules for journaling, but there are some inspiring approaches that can help you to get started. One of these is the three-questions method, used by bestselling author Alex Banayan to create more clarity and identify his behavioral patterns. It involves asking yourself these three questions when journaling and answering them in full sentences:

What filled me with enthusiasm today?

What drained me of energy today?

What did I learn about myself today?



Towards the end of the week or the month, you can analyze your entries to find out what regularly brings you joy and what gets you down. As a result, you'll find it much easier to make decisions, stop a habit, or consciously do things that are good for you. This way, you'll gain more clarity about your life, your goals, and your priorities.

2. Free writing

Are you one of those people whose inner critic is always showing up when you're trying to journal? It asks questions or makes comments like: "That's a stupid thought", "Why are you rambling on about this again?" or "You need to rewrite that last paragraph right now!"

Tipp:

Are you struggling to get your thoughts out? Then get them down on paper, even if it's just in the form of a shopping list or a to-do list.

Then the tried-and-tested [free writing method](#) by [Natalie Goldberg](#) might be of use to you. For this, you'll set a timer and just write flat out without editing any of your sentences or revising any of the passages as you go. It's about keeping your writing hand moving and outrunning your inner critic. That voice of doubt won't get the chance to find fault with anything you've written.

Free writing can be an incredibly effective tool if you're trying to process mixed feelings or release repressed emotions. It means that the feelings you've been bottling up have no escape. Over time, you'll get to know yourself better and it will also increase your self-acceptance.

3. Art journaling

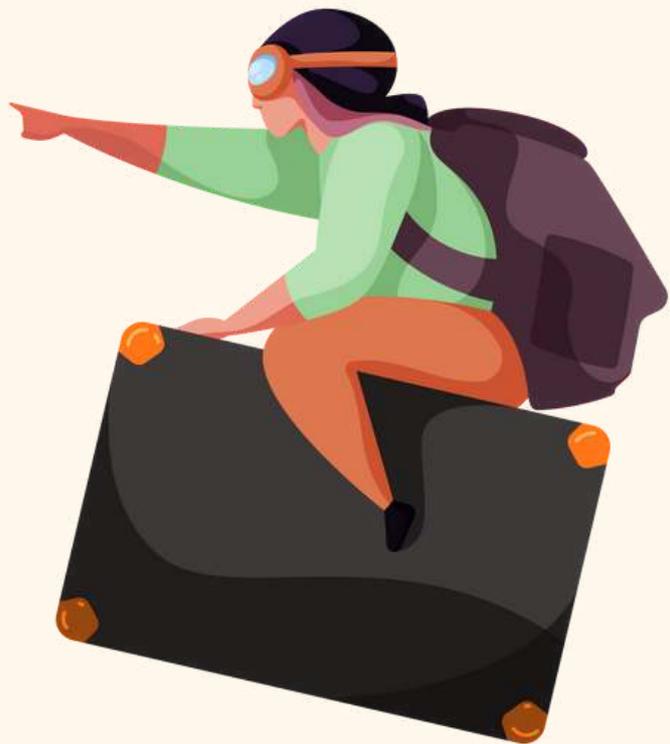
Do you like to doodle or draw? Then art journaling is the perfect method for you. It's not about designing the perfect sketch book that you can share on Instagram later. Art journaling is a good way to combine the therapeutic functions of art with the benefits of writing about your feelings



This form of journaling also gives you the opportunity to get creative. Whether you're working with photo collages or hand lettering, painting a bright watercolor picture or doodling with a ballpoint pen, art journaling helps open the door to your emotions and lets you explore and experiment with new ideas. Since your notebook is private, you can experiment without feeling that you're being judged – it exists in a world away from views and likes

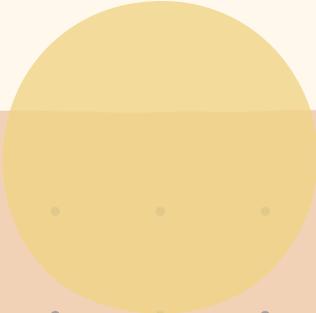
4. Bullet Journal

Instagram flat lays, washi tape and marker pens: the bullet journal, also known as the bujo, has become one of the most famous journaling techniques. It was invented by [designer Ryder Carroll](#), who used this technique as a student to manage his ADHD better.



As the subheading of his book suggests – "Track your past, order your present, plan your future" – this method is about structuring your life and transforming vague intentions into goals through daily routines.

Indeed, as with art journaling, you can get creative and design your journal in various ways, but you should try not to get distracted by perfectionism. Use the various social media posts about bullet journals as inspiration and not as the base standard for your own personal journal. You can keep your bullet journal minimalistic or bright and creative – whatever helps you to live your life consciously and not just get swept up in things.



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Have I moved enough?

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Did I get enough sleep?

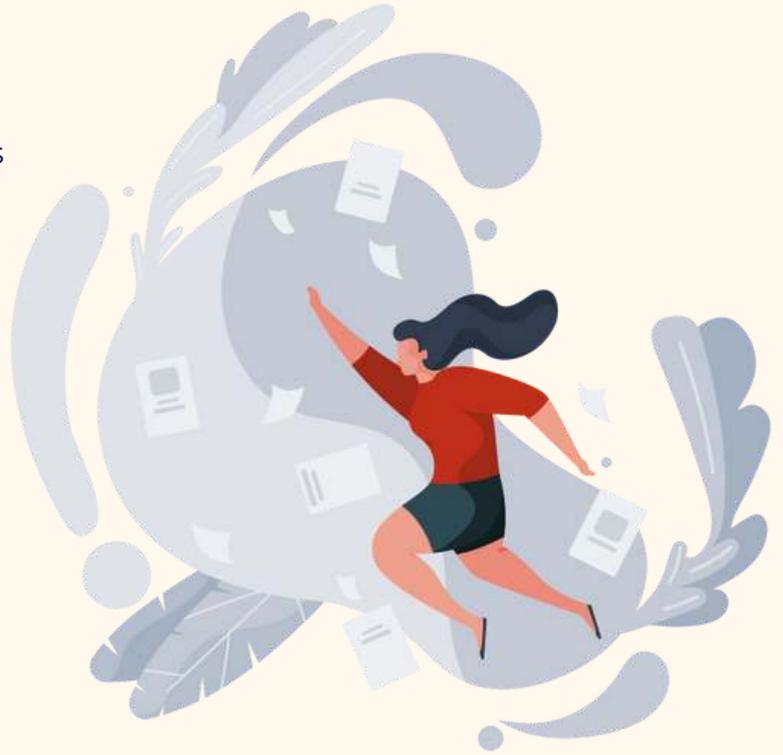
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Have I been eating healthily?

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5. The unsent letter

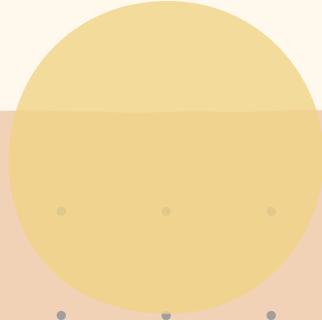
Knowing that you'll never send this letter will help you to get whatever is bothering you down on paper in a completely unfiltered way. Writing a letter can be an unbelievably powerful tool, especially if you have unfinished business with a person or you have a very strained relationship with somebody.



It means you can articulate unspeakable things and gain clarity about your feelings.

6. Gratitude journal

We all love to do it – complain. It's true, right? When you indulge in negative thoughts too often and you find it difficult to think positively, or to see the good things in your life, then gratitude journaling can help you. Writing down nice moments has a positive effect on your mental health and it helps you to recognize what you want to do more of and what you want to stay away from.



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Have I rewarded myself for good performance today?

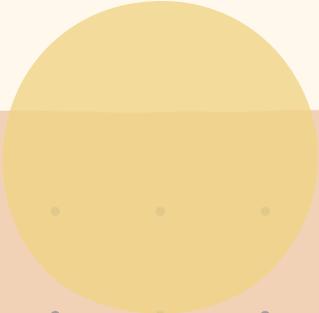
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What did I learn today?

12

What have I done today to improve myself?

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Have I worked on a personal project today?

14

What steps have I taken towards financial independence today?

15

How would I like to be in the future?

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7. The one-sentence journal

Does the thought of writing long journal entries make you feel under pressure before you've even begun? Then start by writing just one sentence per day. For example, you could answer questions like "What's the best thing that happened today" or "What did I learn today?"



The one-sentence journal will help you to keep going and develop a routine. It's perfect for new parents who don't have a lot of time, but still want to capture the most important developments in their child's life.

8. Listing

Yep. Writing lists can also be a journaling technique. If you don't feel like writing long journal entries, making lists might be the perfect method for you. You can get an overview of all the different areas in your life, from your relationships to your favorite books to the chores you need to do around the house. But lists aren't just for tasks. You can also use them to jot down items of clothing that you feel particularly comfortable in or to note down restaurants that you like.

9 Morning Pages

Gaining some clarity while you drink your first cup of coffee and shifting that morning brain fog – sounds good, right? Writing so-called morning pages was actually a method intended for artists, looking for ways to boost their creativity. In her book "The Artist's Way", Julia Cameron suggests this journaling method, which is supposed to immediately make you more productive for the day ahead.

As with free writing, you should write without making edits and without questioning yourself. The goal: Three pages each morning. It's true that incorporating morning pages into your routine will probably be difficult at first, but once you manage it, you'll be able to enjoy this quiet and productive time.

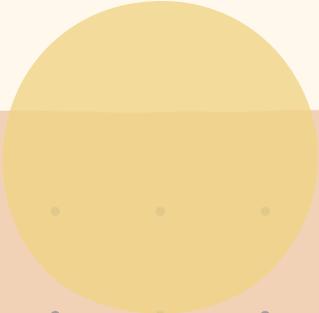


10. Vision board

Do you want to change your life? Do you often find yourself feeling trapped and thinking that you're not living life as well as you could be? Creating a vision board can help you to manifest your goals and dreams by bridging the gap between desire and reality.

To do this, you first need to figure out what you want in all areas of your life (for example, your career, relationships, and finances) and you then need to create a kind of pin board or collage – maybe with affirmations or quotes from newspapers and magazines. By mentally engaging with your vision board every morning and evening, you'll stay more connected to your goals. It will then become easier to prioritize throughout the day and to take actions that align with your dreams.





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Which 3 things immediately drag down your mood?

17

What negative thoughts come up when you talk to yourself?

18

What coping strategies do you choose to get through grief?

19

Where do you feel most comfortable?

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7-day challenge

Now that you've read this handbook, do you have a good sense of the positive benefits of journaling? Then it's time to put what you've learned into practice with our [7-day challenge](#).

Here's how it goes:

- Select the journaling technique that appeals to you the most.
- Get out your calendar and schedule a specific time for journaling.
- Don't think about it for too long and just get started!

On the seventh day, schedule a little closing ceremony and read through all your entries again. Afterwards, you'll have a sense of what filled you with gratitude the previous month, what you learned, and what made you feel less good about yourself. Jot down this analysis in your seventh entry and gain some more clarity about your life.

To finish off, you can also put together a short [summary about journaling](#) itself.

SUMMARY

- 1.** What was it like integrating journaling into your daily routine?
- 2.** How do you feel after seven days of journaling?
- 3.** Did you gain more clarity about your needs or goals?

Let's **openup**

Journaling is just one way to introduce more clarity and mindfulness into your life.

On our [blog](#), you'll find even more tips and tricks from psychologists, helping you to get to the bottom of whatever is bothering you.

Want to discuss personal matters?

[Book a consultation](#)