

Therapeutic Writing: Giving Voice & Healing Trauma

Robbin Loonan, LPC & Samantha Dooley, LCSW

Why Journal

So often survivors have had their experiences denied, trivialized, or distorted. Writing is an important avenue for healing because it gives you the opportunity to define your own reality.

ELLEN BASS

- Helps to “I don’t want to talk about it”/ I can’t talk about it
- Helps process trauma/ difficult memories, thoughts, feelings
- Gives client a sense of control & Empowerment
- Allows for containment
- Express feelings & Organize thoughts
- Enhances Self- discovery/ Self- awareness/ Self- acceptance
- Aids self- discover and define our values, purpose, and dreams
- Provides an outlet for self-expression

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Sentence Completion

- (1.) I am proud of myself for...
- (2.) Asking for help...
- (3.) Today I feel...
- (4.) If I wasn't afraid, I would...
- (5.) I showed a lot of strength when...
- (6.) I feel happy when...
- (7.) When I'm alone, I...
- (8.) If I tell my story...
- (9.) I am good at...
- (10.) One thing that scares me is ...
- (11.) I hope...
- (12.) I wish..
- (13.) I feel angry when ...
- (14.) I have difficulty...
- (15.) In the future, I...
- (16.) This makes me feel better when I am sad
- (17.) I can take care of myself by...
- (18.) I feel safe when...
- (19.) My safe place is...
- (20.) To deal with stress, I...
- (21.) I dream about...
- (22.) I am proud of myself when...
- (23.) The most important person in my life is...
- (24.) I would like to believe...
- (25.) Sometimes I imagine...
- (26.) Trusting others...

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Some Journaling Tips

1. **Safety First.** Make sure you have a secure place for your journal. If you are concerned about others finding your writings, consider writing and then dispose of your pages or give to a trusted person to hold. To protect online journaling, use strong, unique passwords for all accounts and apps, consider two-factor authentication, and encrypt your journal entries.
2. **Write like there's nobody watching (or reading)!** Don't worry about grammar, spelling, or handwriting. Focus on simply getting all of your thoughts and feelings down. This may take practice.
3. **Try to find a quiet place to write with limited distractions.** However, don't worry if there is no "perfect" time/ place to write or you only have a few minutes.
4. **You might find it helpful to keep what you write s you can look at it in the future to see how your thoughts and feelings may change over time.** You may notice patterns, themes, and growth.
5. **It can be helpful to set aside time to write every day.** However, this is not mandatory! You can also use expressive writing when something stressful happens, when you are struggling emotionally, before bed, and/ or when you have a lot on your mind.
6. **Although there are many benefits of journaling, writing about traumatic events is likely to bring up distressing thoughts/ feelings.** So make sure you have a plan for coping/ managing distress. Healing breaths, containment, and affirmations (i.e. "I am safe now"; "It's over") can help.

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AFFIRMATIONS

Affirmations are short, powerful, yet simple statements designed to manifest a specific goal. ... Positive thinking affirmations are designed to encourage a life filled with positivity and gratitude. In short, positive affirmations are statements that are repeated to encourage and uplift the person speaking them.

- I am strong.
- I am good.
- I can do hard things.
- I am good enough just the way I am
- I am worthwhile.
- I am smart.
- I deserve good things.
- I am capable.
- I can set boundaries to protect myself.
- It's okay to say no.
- It's okay to ask for help.
- I deserve respect.
- I can ask for what I need and want.
- I don't have to be perfect.
- I am willing to see things differently, even if I'm not ready to yet.
- I am powerful.
- I am learning to respect the process when I do not understand it.
- I am allowed to feel good about myself.
- I accept myself exactly as I am
- I am grateful for who I am and can be.
- I am a powerful force for good in the world.
- I am on the right path. I am moving in the right direction.
- I am worthy of all things wonderful.
- I can let go of hurt and negative feelings.
- I am worthy, just as I am.
- I am safe now.
- It's okay to make mistakes.
- I am present.
- I can take care of and nurture myself.
- I am worthy of love and respect.
- I am a survivor.
- I am healing.
- I am not alone.
- I am calm.
- I am free.
- I believe in myself.
- I am special
- I am learning to let go of fear.
- I am kind and loving towards myself
- I am full of life and filled with possibility.
- I am enough
- I am not the negative thoughts I think.
- I am allowed to feel good about myself.

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Reading List

Writing to Save Your Life: How to Honor Your Story Through Journaling 1st Edition-
Michelle Weldon

I Closed My Eyes: Revelations of a Battered Woman Paperback by Michele Weldon

Writing to Heal: A guided journal for recovering from trauma & emotional upheaval by
James W. Pennebaker

Expressive Writing: Words that Heal Paperback by James Pennebaker (Author), John
Evans (Author)

Writing as a Way of Healing: How Telling Our Stories Transforms Our Lives by Louise
Desalvo

Let It Out: A Journey Through Journaling Paperback by Katie Dalebout

No Excuses Art Journaling: Making Time for Creativity Paperback by Gina Rossi
Armfield (Author)

Journal to the Self: Twenty-Two Paths to Personal Growth - Open the Door to Self-
Understanding by Writing, Reading, and Creating a Journal of Your Life – Kathleen
Adams

Your Brain on Ink: A Workbook on Neuroplasticity and the Journal Ladder (It's Easy to
W.R.I.T.E. Expressive Writing) Workbook Edition by Kathleen Adams (Author), Deborah
Ross (Author)

At a Journal Workshop: Writing to Access the Power of the Unconscious and Evoke
Creative Ability by Ira Progoff