

# Journaling- A Wellness Tool!

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Collaborative Support Programs of New Jersey



[www.welltacc.org](http://www.welltacc.org)

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**Record one thing you are grateful for ...**

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## Benefits of Journaling

There are a number of benefits associated with journaling. Research shows some of the benefits correlated with Journaling/Expressive Writing are:<sup>1</sup>

- Fewer visits to the doctor, primarily stress related
- Improved immune system, liver, and lung functioning
  - A reduction in blood pressure
  - Reduced absenteeism from work
  - After a job loss, faster re-employment
  - Better mood and feelings of well-being
  - A reduction in depressive symptoms
- Improvements in memory and grade point averages
  - Reduction in post-traumatic symptoms

There are also benefits related specifically to our Wellness Dimensions which include:

### Physical Wellness

- Increased performance with sports
- Increased effectiveness with diet and exercise
- Help keep track of medical needs, appointments, and tracking medication/treatment effects

### Social Wellness

- Increased ability to work through challenging social situations
- Reduce anxiety in public by having a journal to write in

### Mental/Emotional Wellness

- Process emotions and think through actions related to personal challenges
- Reflect on positive experiences and develop sense of gratitude

### Occupational Wellness

- Track career achievements and new knowledge learned
- Reflect on professional growth and set career goals

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<sup>1</sup> As cited by Baikie, K. A. and Wilhelm, K. (2005). Emotional and physical health benefits of expressive writing. *Advances in Psychiatric Treatment*. 11: 338-346.

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## **Environmental Wellness**

- Provide an escape from difficult environments
- Help develop a sense of gratitude for nature

## **Financial Wellness**

- Help track where your money is going
- Journaling about things you are saving for can be a great way to motivate your effort

## **Intellectual Wellness**

- Help track progress toward academic goals
- Help you to reflect on things you have learned and process how you can use them in your personal/professional life

## **Spiritual**

- Journaling can be a way to connect with a higher power
- Can assist in prayer, reflecting on spiritual writings, and developing a sense of appreciation

**What do you see as the benefits of journaling and expressive writing?**

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“How you look at a situation is very important, because how you think about a problem may defeat you before you ever do anything about it. When you get discouraged or depressed, try changing your attitude from negative to positive and see how life can change for you. Remember, your attitude toward a situation can help you to change it... you create the very atmosphere for defeat or victory.”

-Franco Harris

### Illustrative Discovery Journaling

Not everyone connects with writing or enjoys the writing process. Some of us are more visual in the way we learn and express ourselves. Illustrative discovery journaling is a method which uses visual pictures to record emotions and thoughts. Illustrative discovery journaling can benefit those with a more visual learning style by using images, drawings, magazine cutouts, and other visually creative ways to express themselves.







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## Journaling Strategies

When considering how to start journaling, it can be important to choose the medium that best suits your needs such as a notebook, computer, mobile device/smart-phone, etc. You may also want to choose the type of journal (gratitude, illustrative discovery journal, reflective journal). You can also consider what type of writing instrument (type of pen, pencil) works best for you. It can be helpful to consider reading a few books on journaling to get ideas about how you could enhance your own journaling. Since a journal is deeply personal, you may want to consider if you will share your journal with anyone. Some people never share their journal because it is too personal while others benefit from sharing their writing with close friends, family, and even therapists. Some people join a “journal club” to discuss their own process with others, and work on strategies to keep journaling going. It may also be helpful to have a time each day to journal so as to condition yourself to the routine of writing.

**What are five strategies you can use?**

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)

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## Electronic Journaling

Electronic journaling is the wave of the future for many. Most social media websites, such as Facebook and Twitter, are based on the concept that people enjoy sharing their lives publically. There are other websites, such as LiveJournal, which allow the user to privately or publically post content into their journal and control to whom they want to provide access. A growing trend has been with the usage of SmartPhones and journaling. For phones like the iPhone, there are applications that allow you to journal and keep a private website. Here are some general resources:

- My Diary. [www.my-diary.org/](http://www.my-diary.org/)
  - Free website which offers a space for journaling online. You can share your journal entries with others and read other public entries from other users.
- Live Journal:[www.livejournal.com](http://www.livejournal.com)
  - Online journaling site which allows you to post your journal online. There is also a social networking capacity to this medium so that only designated “friends” can comment on your posting.
- Myspace:[www.myspace.com](http://www.myspace.com)
  - Social media platform which allows you to post diaries publically for others to read.
- Facebook:[www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)
  - Most popular social media site which allows you to post short updates regarding your life. You can post pictures, videos, and text for others to read.
- iPhone applications for personal journals- these applications can be used on your smartphone to track your journal. This can be a convenient way to write, even while you are traveling.
  - Kemba
    - [www.appshouter.com/kemba-personal-journal-iphone-app-review/](http://www.appshouter.com/kemba-personal-journal-iphone-app-review/)
  - iDiary
    - [www.triplecreeks.com/idiaryiphone.aspx](http://www.triplecreeks.com/idiaryiphone.aspx)
  - Memento App-
    - [www.momentoapp.com](http://www.momentoapp.com)











