

Journaling Handout – Healthy Living

Created by Justin Bower, Logan County 4-H Educator

MENTAL HEALTH – GOALS – LIFESTYLE

1) Why do you want to journal?

There are many reasons to start a journal. Ask yourself, why do you want to start journaling? What do you want to write about? What's the goal of journaling? You might want to record something in a journal, use a journal to organize your life, use the journal to self-process your life, or to set goals. You might even want to journal to do all of those things. Here are some examples of reasons to journal:

- Writing/Art Journal (for inspiring artists to contain their works)
- Dream Journal (to record dreams and analyze them)
- Food Journal (to record document recipes, food you've ate, tracking calories)
- Travel Journal (to record a trip or traveling)
- Prayer Journal (to record prayers, sermons, or devotions)
- Workout Journal (to record workouts, reps, time, weight)
- Life Journal (to record your daily life, events, to process the day)



2) Choose a style.

Once you have the reasons you want to journal, you need to figure out the style(s) of journaling that works best with you. The best style will depend on your personality and your reasons. Do you like lists? Would lists be the best thing to record what you want? Do you need structure to guide your writing or would you prefer a looser style? Here are 8 different journaling styles to help you:

- I. Free Writing – Simply sitting down and writing whatever comes into your head in whatever order
- II. Morning Pages – Setting aside a time at the beginning or the end of the day to plan or recap your day chronological
- III. Lists – A list or bullet point recording (order may vary on reasons)
- IV. Art Journaling – Using art to record if words come harder to you
- V. Unsent Letter – Using a letter format to yourself or others
- VI. Dialoguing – Writing back and forth between two clear thoughts, interview style, or debate
- VII. Perspectives – Writing one event multiple times from different viewpoints
- VIII. Essence – Lots of structure, rules to journaling and capturing very quick ideas, thoughts, events



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3) Organize the journal(s).

Once you know the reasons/why you want to journal and the style that best fits you, you need to start organizing your journal. For some, that may simply be putting your name in the journal and then beginning. For others, you might need to create a table of contents, write in page numbers, create rules for how you are going to record entries, or have different sections of the journal. Think about how you want to go back and find information in your journal or how often you plan on writing entries.

For example, you might have a weekly meeting with a mentor in which you set goals for your life. You want to record the ideas and discussion you have and the goals you both set for each week. You decide to organize a small journal by guessing that you will use three pages for entries. The first two pages you might use to capture discussion and ideas, the third page you will use to list out your weekly goals. You take the 3 pages and times them by 52 weeks in a year and get 156 pages. You then know you want to buy a 200-page journal to use just for your mentor meetings.

4) Recording entries.

The last step is recording entries. Start getting into your routine of recording entries as soon as possible. Here are some tips to recording entries:

- Push yourself to keep to your scheduled times for 3 - 4 weeks to create some sort of pattern.
- Time yourself for your first few entries to figure out how long you need/want to write. How long are you taking to write what you want, 5 minutes, 15 minutes, 45 minutes?
- Make sure to put the date somewhere on your entry.
- If you are struggling to write, take a moment and think. You might even need to walk away for a couple minutes and come back.
- Carry the book with you so you can use it when you want/need.

Lastly, don't get too mad at yourself when you forget to write an entry, don't stick to your schedule, or leave your journal at home when you travel, it happens, just do your best to either journal retroactively and move on. Journaling is a personal thing and if what you are trying to do is not working for you or meeting your needs, try something different.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me:

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