

The Benefits of Journaling in Recovery

The physical health benefits of keeping a journal, otherwise known as “journaling,” might not be readily apparent, the mental health benefits are real and significant. Writing has been shown to help tame stress, relieve anxiety and depression, and strengthens one’s ability to exert control over negative emotions.

The Benefits of Journaling

One of the benefits of keeping a journal while in recovery is that it lends perspective. By getting one’s memories down on paper (or computer tablet or on audio file—there’s no hard and fast rule that your journal must be in book form), it takes those memories that have a tendency to repeat themselves in the mind and traps them, onto a page, which can be turned.

Journaling also builds perspective. After just a couple of weeks, or even a few days, a person can go back and read over all the seemingly insoluble problems he or she was struggling with at the time and realize that, hey, everything turned out more or less OK. It’s a great way to learn about the self.

Take cravings, for instance. Whether for drugs or alcohol, fatty foods or self-harm, cravings can often feel overwhelming. But when these cravings are described in words and rated, on a scale of one to 10, say, their power is reduced. The craving goes from physical to intellectual,

becoming a mere desire, one that will soon pass.

Journaling also boosts the positive effects of therapy. Many JourneyPure At The River therapists recommend it as a way of generating ideas to explore while in individual sessions, turning the client into a kind of co-therapist for him or herself. [Therapists](#) around the world have long cited journaling as an effective tool in cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), which is aimed at identifying and understanding the patterns of patients' thoughts and behaviors.

Types of Journaling

Not every journal entry has to start out, "Dear Diary" and reflect on the events of the day. There are all sorts of types of journals one can try. To name a few:

- Stream-of-consciousness journal. This is a great way to power through the dreaded "writer's block." Without any thought toward editing or self-censorship, write down your thoughts as they come. Probably ninety-nine percent of what you write will be weird or nonsensical, but you might wind up writing something that could provide real insight into your situation later. You also might give yourself a good chuckle, which is no small thing.
- Gratitude journal. Great for those who struggle with negative thinking or anger issues, a gratitude journal is a collection of all the things in life that you value. These types of journals can go a long way toward changing your outlook for the better.
- Exercise or health journal. This is a journal made up of exercise ideas and goals, along with how often or how

well you might be fulfilling those goals (or what you might be struggling with). This is a good one for those clients looking to get the most, physically, from their recovery and treatment.

- Spiritual journal. Spiritual journals are a great way to track one's inner development during this spiritually challenging time.
- Dream journal. Record your dreams, looking for certain themes and patterns over time. It could help you discover something about your own psychology—your desires, anxieties, attitudes. Or, like the stream-of-consciousness journal, it might be good for a chuckle or two.

You might have heard people complain that they don't have the time keep a journal. Fortunately, you do not have that excuse. Nor do you have anything to lose, other than some notebook pages and your unspoken fears.

(Source: journeypurebowlinggreen.com)