

# PROCESSING LIVED EXPERIENCES THROUGH JOURNALING

Journaling, as a form of expressive writing, is one of the most widely used and highly effective tools for self growth and self help.

## Benefits of Journaling

1. Fosters a sense of gratitude, optimism, peace, and hopefulness.
2. Boost's immunity, lowers blood pressure, improves connection with others, and enhances cognitive abilities by helping process our lived experiences more fully.
3. Helps to better understand others, grow capacity for empathy, and thereby enhances the quality of our relationships.
4. Learn more about who we are, our values, beliefs, strengths, limitations, intentions, perceptions, and aspirations.
5. Can also be cathartic by silencing the demands and distractions of everyday life.

**Two categories of Journaling** – Ongoing and Specific/event focused.

Either way, the purpose and benefits are similar. Sometimes people keep more than one journal, each with a unique purpose and focus. Examples of journal types include: Daily reflection, autobiographical, gratitude, forgiveness, grief and loss, goal setting, expressive art (poetry/drawing), mindfulness, or treatment focused (such as for anxiety or depression)

## Essential rules when journaling

Write like no one else is reading! Beyond that, it is important to recognize that there is no right or wrong way to write or express ourselves. Pick up a paper and pen or your laptop and start writing about whatever comes to mind, even something small like what you had to eat today. Given that journaling is expressive, be creative! Your expressions can take the form of a poem, song, letter, or drawing. You can also use different colours to highlight things that stand out in your entries, such as themes, patterns, ideas, goals, new insights, inspirations, or affirmations.

## A few cautionary notes about journaling

- 1) **Avoid spending too much time in your head.** Try to focus on the connection between what you think, what you feel, and what you do.
- 2) **Try to stay in the present moment as much as possible,** focusing on the here and now.
- 3) **Try to steer away from blame** as it undermines the true catalysts for personal growth, which are acceptance, regard, love, and compassion, of both self and of others.

FCSS offers workshops as well as individual counselling to help you learn more.

For more information call 587-370-3728

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Visit [www.fcss.ca](http://www.fcss.ca) for more information.

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