

CREATIVE ART JOURNALING: ART AND WRITING TO INCREASE WELLBEING

Creative Journaling combines writing with art making to help us relax, refocus and deepen the exploration and insight that can be gained from the journaling process. Art journaling can be used to reflect on what's going on in your life and uncover new layers of inspiration for the New Year.

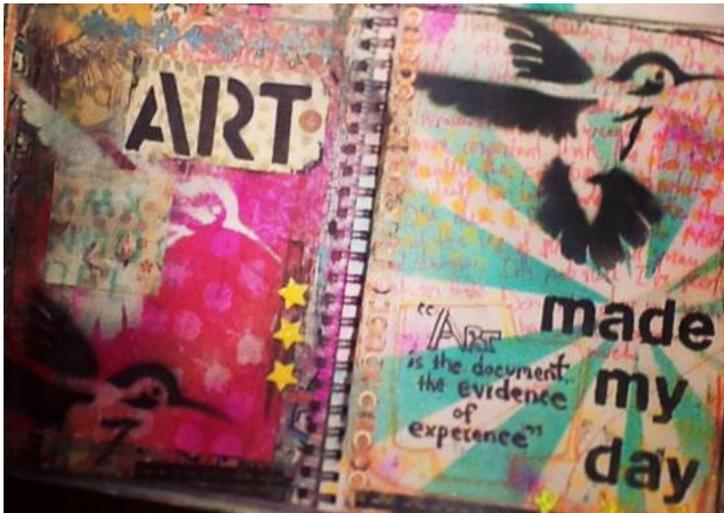
"An art journal is a space for questions that may have no answers, a place for thoughts that may otherwise not have a home, a safe container for emotions so that they do not have to be loose in the world" -Kelley Brown

"My journal is a storehouse, a treasury for everything in my daily life: the stories I hear, the people I meet, the quotations I like, and even the subtle signs and symbols I encounter that speak to me indirectly."--Dorothy Seyler

"Keeping a journal will change your life in ways that you'd never imagine." -Oprah Winfrey

Benefits of Journaling

Journaling is a very effective strategy for expressing and managing our stress. Research has shown that people who engage in expressive writing report feeling happier and less negative than before writing. It also helps people who have struggled with loss or trauma to recover faster. Journaling improves physical wellbeing: strengthens the immune system as it reduces stress. Writing about intense emotions helps us process them, gives us perspective, insight and self-understanding, and helps clarify our everyday thoughts and feelings. Journaling solves problems more effectively as writing engages different parts of the brain (the right brain which houses creativity and intuition) which allow us to approach problem solving with fresh eyes.



HOW TOs:

Buy a Journal: This seems like the obvious first step. However, what kind of a journal you purchase is important. You can choose from the most beautiful blank books you can find, to a more functional notebook, to your computer, to an old unwanted book you can alter. If you go with the blank book option, you can decide between lined or blank pages, heavy or sketch paper, in a variety of sizes. Use your book to reflect your creativity, or go with functionality first. It's all up to you and your tastes.

Set Aside Time: One of the most difficult aspects of journaling is not the journaling itself, but finding time to write. It's important to make time for yourself – even ten or twenty minutes. Many people prefer to write in the morning as a way to start their day, or

before bed, as a way to reflect upon and process the day's events. However, if your lunch break or some other time is the only window you have, take the time whenever you can get it!

Write About Thoughts and Feelings: As you write, don't just vent negative emotions or catalog events; write about your feelings, but also your thoughts surrounding emotional events. (Research shows much greater benefits from journaling when participants write about emotional issues from a mental and emotional framework.) Relive events emotionally, and try to construct solutions and 'find the lesson'. Using both aspects of yourself helps you process the event and find solutions to problems.

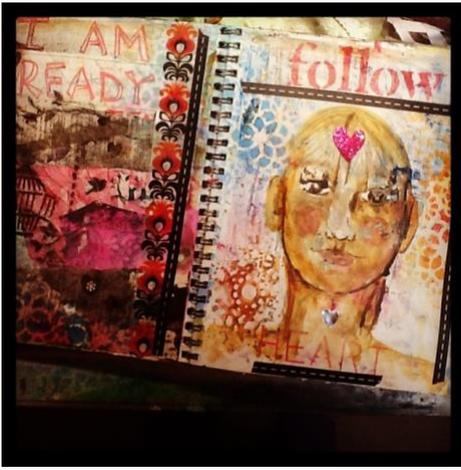
Keep Your Journal Private: If you're worried that someone else may read your journal, you're much more likely to self-censor, and you won't achieve the same benefits from writing. To prevent the worry and maximize journaling effectiveness, you can either get a book that locks or keep your book in a locked or very hidden place. If using a computer, you can password-protect your journal so you'll feel safe when you write.

Tips:

- Try to write each day.
- Writing for 20 minutes or so is ideal, but if you only have 5 minutes, write for 5.
- If you skip a day or 3, just keep writing when you can.
- Don't worry about neatness or even grammar. Just getting your thoughts and feelings on paper is more important than perfection.
- Try not to self-censor; let go of 'shoulds', and just write what comes. You may also want to try a gratitude journal, a coincidence journal, or a goal-setting journal.

Begin Writing (or Art-ing): Don't think about what to say; or what to draw, just begin, and the words and images should come. If really need some help getting started, here are some topics to begin the process:

- Your dreams
- Your possible purpose in life
- Your childhood memories and surrounding feelings
- Where you'd like to be in two years
- The best and worst days of your life
- If you could have three wishes...
- What was important to you five years ago/what's important to you now
- What are you grateful for?
- Make lists
- Use a thought-provoking title for your page.
- Use poems, quotes, lyrics.
- Look at your artwork and write down words that come to mind. Write a poem using those words.
- Favorite song/poem
- Your day, your week, your year...
- A secret wish
- A question you ask yourself and all of the possible answers
- Letter to yourself, from your future self
- Bucket list
- A word (open the dictionary and pick one at random)
- Your ideal place to live or work. Describe the feel of the floor beneath your feet, the smell in the air, all those sensory details that can make the place come alive.
- Lists of things for which you are grateful and draw or collages images of those things
- List what gives you hope and draw or collages images of those things
- Who are you—list all of the things that make up your identity
- Important person (people) in your life
- Family/friends
- Favorite symbol(s)
- Something you are proud of
- Masks you wear
- Turn a feeling – love, joy, beauty, anger or fatigue – into a character. Write a detailed description and dialog with this character
- Use stencils
- Make stencils
- Use words as if they were images, write really big or really small, repeat
- Use different fonts, cursive, block, lower case, upper case
- Use and repeat simple geometric shapes, make variations
- Doodle or make scribbles and find a design in the scribble
- Choose a symbol for your strengths
- Choose a symbol for the strengths of the people you love
- Choose a symbol for the strengths of people who challenge you
- Draw your ideal self
- Anything else your mind or heart can ponder



“Thoughts are created in the act of writing. It is a myth that you must have something to say in order to write. Reality: You often need to write in order to have anything to say. Thought comes with writing, and writing may never come if it is postponed until we are satisfied that we have something to say. The assertion of write first, see what you had to say later applies to all manifestations of written language, to letters, as well as to diaries and journals.” -Frank Smith

James W. Pennebaker, a professor at The University of Texas at Austin and author of several books including *Writing to Heal: A Guided Journal for Recovering from Trauma and Emotional Upheaval*, has spent 20 years encouraging people to spend 15 to 20 minutes a day for a few consecutive days writing down their deepest feelings. Pennebaker helped pioneer the study of individuals using expressive writing as a method of healing. He and colleagues found that short-term focused writing can benefit all types of people, from those dealing with a terminal illness to victims of violent crime to first-year college students. In *Writing to Heal*, Pennebaker says, “People who engage in expressive writing report feeling happier and less negative than before writing. Similarly, reports of depressive symptoms, rumination, and general anxiety tend to drop in the weeks and months after writing about emotional upheavals.”

Additional Resources

- Adams, Kathleen (1998). *The Way of the Journal : A Journal Therapy Workbook for Healing*. Sidron Press.
- Baldwin, Christina (1992). *One to One : Self-Understanding Through Journal Writing*. Evans Publisher
- Cappachione, Lucia (1980). *The Creative Journal: The Art of Finding Yourself*. Ohio Press University
- DeSalvo, Louise A. (2000). *Writing As a Way of Healing : How Telling Our Stories Transforms Our Lives*. Beacon Press.
- Fox, John (1997). *Poetic Medicine : The Healing Art of Poem-Making*. Tarcher Press
- Goldberg, Natalie and Guest, Judith (1986). *Writing Down the Bones : Freeing the Writer Within*. Shambhala Press.
- http://www.appleseeds.org/100_journaling.htm
- <http://journalingprompts.com/#>
- <http://psychcentral.com/lib/the-health-benefits-of-journaling/000721>
- Jacobs, Beth (2005). *Writing for Emotional Balance*, New Harbinger Publishers.
- Pennebaker, J.W. (2004). *Writing to Heal: A Guided Journal for Recovering from Trauma and Emotional Upheaval*. Denver, CO: Center for Journal Therapy.

NOW AVAILABLE!

Positive Art Therapy Theory and Practice: Integrating Positive Psychology with Art Therapy

We hope you'll find this manual both entertaining and practical-an invaluable tool for anyone looking to apply the most current theory and research on positive psychology and art therapy to their practice, or their life! For faculty who might want to adopt this book as a text, we added thoughtful discussion questions, a robust glossary, and useful lists of strengths and values. The book also includes a comprehensive list of all our favorite positive art therapy directives (more than 80!)

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