

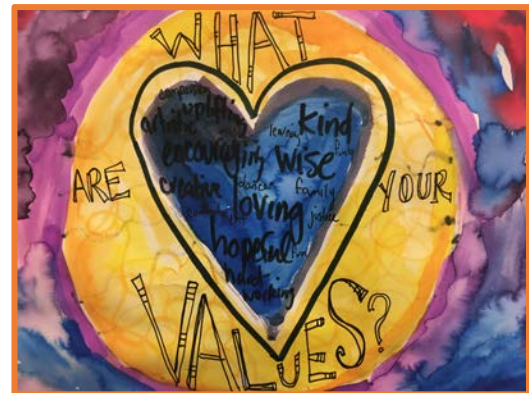


Creative Art Journaling:
Art and Writing to Increase Wellbeing
Creative Wellbeing Workshops, LLC

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 future.

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—it strengthens the immune system as it reduces stress.



Writing about intense emotions helps us process them, gives us perspective, insight, self-understanding, and helps clarify our everyday thoughts and feelings. Because writing engages different parts of the brain (the right brain which houses creativity and intuition), it allows us to approach problem solving with fresh eyes.

“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

HOW TOs:

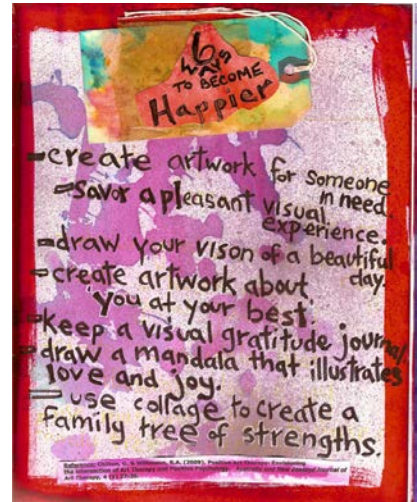
Buy a Journal: This seems like the obvious first step. However, what kind of a journal you purchase is important. You can choose from the most beautiful blank books you can find, to a more functional notebook, to your computer, to an old unwanted book you can alter. If you go with the blank book option, 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: 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 then try to construct solutions and 'find the lesson'.

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.



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

Writing to Heal: James W. Pennebaker, author of *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 writing down their deepest feelings. He 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.

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.”



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:

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.

Writing prompts

- “Spill” writing: write continuously in a stream of consciousness for 15 minutes without stopping. If you get stuck, try writing, “I feel stuck.” Keep repeating until the stuck place loosens up and the next thing comes.
- Use poems, quotes, lyrics; make a list.
- 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)
- Write in detail about your ideal place to live or work. Describe the feel of the floor beneath your feet, the smell in the air, sensory details **tin**
- List what gives you hope
- Who are you?—list all of the things that make up your identity
- Important person (people) in your life
- Something you are proud of
- Masks you wear
- Turn a feeling - love, joy, beauty, anger into a character and write a detailed description and dialog with this character
- Anything else your mind or heart can ponder

Art responses:

- Experiment with different materials
- Use color washes
- Gesso or tempera paint-allow to mostly dry then scratch words into it, then go over with paint or marker
- Wax crayons and watercolors on top
- Use ephemera scraps from your day/week
- Collage from magazines
- Collage from stray ripped up art work

- Use fabrics that feel fit with words on your pages
- Blow ink from a straw or hold up journal and let drips flow down the page
- Create a page using only your favorite color /least favorite color
- 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

Image and writing

- Divide paper into 2“ squares and write in the squares different words--could be strengths, emotions, colors, or any theme that you like. Copy and cut into squares so that you have a deck of cards. Pick from the deck randomly, paste the card into your journal and respond visually or with words.
- Write a letter about something bothering you, rip it up and glue the pieces into a piece of art.
- Draw or collages about things for which you are grateful
- List all of the things you love and draw or collages images of those things
- Choose a symbol for the strengths of people who challenge you
- Draw your ideal





From Lisa Sonoran Bean

The creative sketchbook is where we learn to listen.

What does my body need? What does my heart long for? Who are my people? Where is my tribe? What do I want to do next? What would nourish me most?

The creative sketchbook is where we learn to observe.

The creative sketchbook shows us how to observe the world within and around us. What makes us happy? Delights? Drains our energy? Inspires? What would we rather avoid?

Keeping a creative sketchbook is where we find our flow.

What feels easy? What resources do I have? What are my gifts? Where is my zone of genius? How can I leverage my energy, rather than push upstream? Keeping a creative sketchbook is where we find alignment. Where we connect and keep re-connecting with our higher purpose.

Keeping a creative sketchbook is how we keep the channel open

Additional Resources

- Creative Journey Studio Lisa Sonoran Bean
- The Way of the Journal: A Journal Therapy Workbook for Healing. Kathleen Adamas
- One to One: Self-Understanding Through Journal Writing. Christina Baldwin
- The Creative Journal: The Art of Finding Yourself. Lucia Cappachione
- Writing as a Way of Healing: How Telling Our Stories Transforms Our Lives. Louise DeSalvo,
- Poetic Medicine: The Healing Art of Poem-Making. John Fox
- Writing Down the Bones: Freeing the Writer Within. Natalie Goldberg & Judith Guest
- http://www.appleseeds.org/100_journaling.htm
- <http://journalingprompts.com/#>
- <http://psychcentral.com/lib/the-health-benefits-of-journaling/000721>
- Writing for Emotional Balance. Beth Jacobs
- Writing to Heal: A Guided Journal for Recovering from Trauma and Emotional Upheaval. James Pennebaker
- Positive Art Therapy Theory and Practice: Integrating Positive Psychology and Art Therapy. Rebecca Wilkinson & Gioia Chilton
- True Vision Authentic Art Journaling by LK Ludwig
- Journal Spilling Mixed Media Techniques for Free Expression. Diana Trout
- Making and Keeping Creative Journals. Suzanne Tourtillott
- Art Journaling. Somerset Studio