A Mind-First Wellness™ Tool

How to Establish a Daily Journal Practice

Why Journaling Is Beneficial

Lowers Stress and Improves Immune Function

Taking time to write about experiences, thoughts, and feelings is associated with decreased stress, improvements in symptoms of depression and anxiety, and increased overall wellbeing.[1]

Helps You Become More Aware of Your Emotions

Journaling facilitates emotional awareness and the processing of emotions and reactions.[2] In other words, it helps you develop a healthy awareness of emotions and reactions, which helps us process them so that we can address them in a healthy way. In contrast, avoidance of emotions (pushing emotions and reactions away; ignoring emotions) is linked to being more anxious and distressed.[3]

Helps You Shift Your Behavior

Journaling can also promote positive change in behavior—even tendencies like procrastinating. One study that examined the impact of writing on behavior change showed that students who wrote about their tendency to procrastinate were able to better understand their behavior and make changes to it.[4]

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[1] Baikie & Wilhelm, 2005; Guo 2022
[2] Maslej et al., 2020
[3] Kashdan et al., 2006
[4] Hensely & Munn, 2020

3 Journaling Tips to Get Started

1. Choose a Time & Make It a Habit

- **Morning:** We recommend journaling in the morning as a way to start your day with awareness and intentionality. It also allows you to set a wellbeing goal for your day. For example, you might commit to attending a group fitness class and then are able to adjust your day's schedule to make your goal happen.

- **Night:** You can also end your day with a journaling practice. This can help you process information from the day and set goals and intentions for the next day.

- **Be realistic** about how much time you can devote to daily journaling. Set small, attainable goals you can make a habit. For example, start with trying to journal for five minutes a day.

2. Set Yourself Up for Success

- **Create a comfortable and consistent environment.** Set up a space with limited distraction.

- **Let go of perfectionistic tendencies.** Don't worry about correct spelling, grammar, etc. Journaling is for you, not anyone else.

3. Choose a Format that Works for You

- **Use a prompt.** If you're not sure where to start, prompts can help. Sample prompts include:
    - What has challenged me lately?
    - What have I been struggling with? (Alternative: What thoughts do I keep coming back to?)
    - What have I learned from recent events and/or life experiences?
    - How am I feeling right now?

- **Make a list.** This can be helpful if it feels too overwhelming to write in long paragraphs. Try listing:
    - Five things I'm worried about
    - Five things I know about myself

- **Be flexible.** You can switch it up. Instead of writing, try drawing or mapping your thoughts.