Life Source Writing™
A Reflective Journaling Practice for Social Worker Well-Being

Journal Writing as a Reflective Practice & Wellness Tool

Ground breaking authors and researchers within the field of Journal Writing for personal growth and improved health:

Marion Milner – pioneer of introspective journal writing
Ira Progoff – Journal Workshop (1970’s)
Christina Baldwin – journal writing as self-actualization (& spiritual awareness)
Tristine Rainer – diary for personal growth
Kathleen Adams – Center for Journal Therapy
James Pennebaker – health benefits of personal writing, healing trauma

About journaling…

• Journals and journal writing are ways of finding narrative, constructing story, and of depicting experience and relationships in our lives. Narrative is a way of making sense of experience.
• The word “journal” has its roots in the french word journee – day (also meant the distance traveled in a day), it was also a record of the days events (from which the term “journalism” developed)

‘Keeping a journal is a way of witnessing the work and becomes an integral part of reflective practice” (Thompson, 2011)

What is reflective practice?

“Reflective Practice invites you to rediscover your creative potential, and to find more ways to be nourished by what you do in work and in life.”

~ Marlena Field & Donna Martin, authors of Simply Being: a reflective practice guide for helping professionals
Reflective practice helps you…
- Slow down, connect with the stillness and inherent balance within
- Reduce stress, anxiety, and depression
- Have better sleep (rest & replenishment)
- Engage fully with your work while staying grounded in self-awareness

Reflective practice:
Challenges…
- Might feel difficult to maintain over time
- It can be difficult to slow down in our fast paced world

Solutions…
- Start small & give yourself credit for each step
- Find a passion in a reflective practice to help keep you coming back.

What is journaling?
- Keeping a journal is a journey into the self and with the self
- It is also a record of a life lived
- Journaling can be a creative, nourishing act
- Provides a way of knowing
- A journal can be a place for emotional catharsis, healing and renewal
- Journaling supports the self-in-relationship

“We do not write in order to be understood; we write in order to understand.”
~ Cecil Day-Lewis

Some reasons for keeping a journal…
- You can access your journal whenever you want at no cost
- Your journal will never get bored with your words
- You can map your personal and professional growth journey
- You can hear your own voice, tap into your intuition/wisdom
- You can get to know yourself deeply
- You can get better organized and able to cope
- You can practice for or debrief difficult or stressful situations
- You can put all the unbearable parts of yourself in your journal and find they are bearable after all
- You can repair the narrative of your life
- To help prevent the compassion fatigue that can result from helping high risk/high needs clients
- To foster personal resiliency and well-being
- To mitigate the effects of stress
- To remember you are enough (enhance self-confidence and self-esteem)
...because it can be fun, nourishing and life enhancing!
Introducing Life Source Writing™

Life Source Writing™ is a 5-step reflective journaling practice for self-care, self-discovery, creativity and wellness.

Step 1: Arrive fully (mindfulness)
Step 2: Relax (mind/body connection)
Step 3: WRITE (self-expression)
Step 4: Reflect (inquiry, feedback loop)
Step 5: Affirm (gratitude practice)

What makes it unique?
Life Source Writing™...
• Is a self-growth and wellness practice
• Offers a mind, body, heart, spirit approach to well-being
• Includes a feedback loop*
• Embraces an integrated approach that includes mindfulness, mind/body relaxation, expressive writing, inquiry/feedback, affirmation/gratitude

The Feedback Loop: there are 2 types of feedback statements...
1. About the content of what you’ve written
   - I notice...
   - I remember...
   - I am surprised to find that...
2. About the feelings evoked by what you have written
   - I feel...
   - I have a sensation of...
   - I am aware of...

Source: Therapeutic Journal Writing: An Introduction for Professionals by Kate Thompson

Life Source Writing™ helps to cultivate personal and professional resiliency.

A resilient helping professional is able to...

1. Balance self-care with caring for others
2. Create and maintain emotional boundaries (attach-involve-separate)
3. Deepen self-awareness through regular self-reflection
4. Process difficult emotions
5. Reduce and/or manage stress effectively
6. Stay connected to meaning and purpose
7. Cultivate optimism, inspiration, and hope
Journaling & Supervision

- Supervision has two main functions – consultation and social support
- Supervision provides a much needed time to reflect
- Journaling can be integrated into supervision
- Journaling as self-supervision

“The relationship with the self is central to self-care; journal writing is a means of developing intimacy with and knowledge of the self. It helps practitioners stay connected and grounded in their own experience and practice. Journal writing enhances self-awareness, that is, it allows for the benign self-observation and reflection which is essential to maintaining the self-in-relationship.” Kate Thompson

The 3 P’s of Starting & Sustaining a Reflective Journaling Practice

- Props – tools of the trade, pen, journal, space
- Privacy – storage, confidential, emotional safety
- Practice – write for yourself first, write often

Reflective Journal Writing Tips

- Write about feelings
- Write often
- Ensure a balanced perspective (write about the good and the bad)
- Write about what you don’t know
- Engage the mind, body, breath
- Celebrate joys and successes on the page. What we focus on grows!

Creative Journal Writing Techniques

- Free writing
- Lists
- Clusters/mind maps
- Imagery
- Unsent letters
- Dialogue writing
- Poetry (play with words, phrases)
- Perspective (in time, in point of view, etc.)

Coming Home to Your Self with Life Source Writing™

- Honouring and caring for yourself is also a way of honouring the important work that you do.
- Journaling is a self-caring act!
- Writing helps us come home within ourselves.
“In finding our own story, we assemble all the parts of ourselves.”
~ Marion Woodman

“To be kind to another I need to be kind to myself.”
~ Gail Straub

“Writing asks us to be awake and settle inside of ourselves.”
~ Natalie Goldberg, Author of Writing Down the Bones

References


