

# **EXPLORING JOURNALING**

Cathy Danilec, MPS-AT, CCC

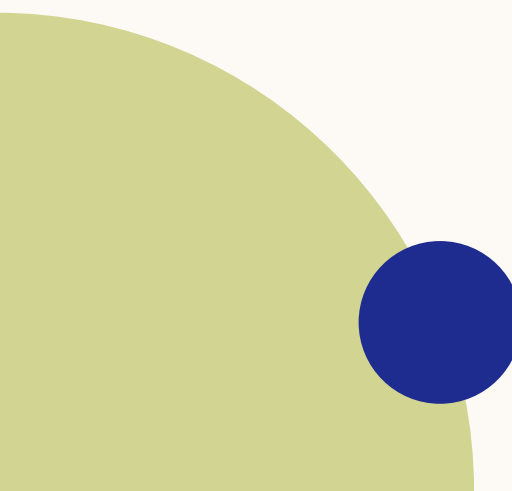
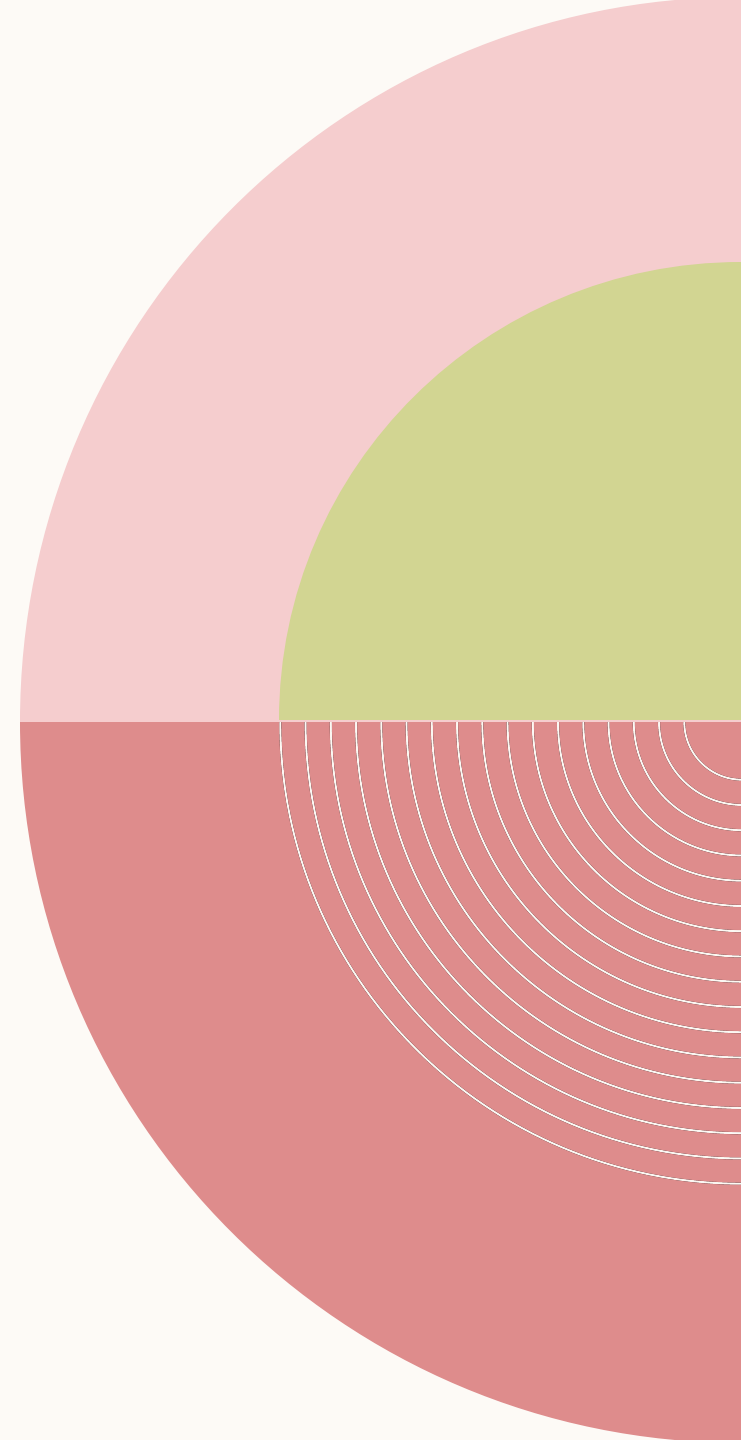
# AGENDA

## What and Why

- What is Journaling
- Benefits
- Why Does it Work?

## How

- Getting Started
- Exercises
- Prompts

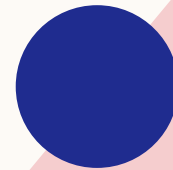




**WHAT  
&  
WHY**

# WHAT IS JOURNALING

- Record of thoughts, feelings, and experiences
- Form of self expression
- No rules
- No judgements






# **BENEFITS OF JOURNALING**

- Manage stress
- Improve mood
- Cope with anxiety and depression
- Clarify thoughts and feelings
- Improve self awareness
- Gain new insights or perspectives
- Generate a sense of psychological well-being

# WHY DOES IT WORK?

- Catharsis
- Creating a narrative
- Emotional inhibition and confronting experiences
- Exposure

Baikie, K. A., & Wilhelm, K. (2005). Emotional and physical health benefits of expressive writing. *Advances in psychiatric treatment*, 11(5), 338-346.



BE YOUR OWN SCIENTIST. WHAT WORKS FOR A GROUP OF PEOPLE IN AN EXPERIMENT MAY OR MAY NOT WORK FOR YOU. TRY DIFFERENT TECHNIQUES. KEEP NOTES ABOUT WHAT MAKES YOU FEEL BETTER OR WORSE. MONITOR YOUR BEHAVIOR WHILE YOU ARE EXPERIMENTING WITH WRITING BY TRACKING YOUR SLEEP, DRINKING, WEIGHT, EXERCISE, AND THE QUALITY OF YOUR RELATIONSHIPS AND DAILY MOOD. ADAPT YOUR WRITING TO YOUR CONTEXT, YOUR NEEDS, AND TO WHAT WORKS FOR YOU.

Pennebaker, J. W., & Smyth, J. M. (2016). *Opening up by writing it down: How expressive writing improves health and eases emotional pain*. Guilford Publications.



**HOW**

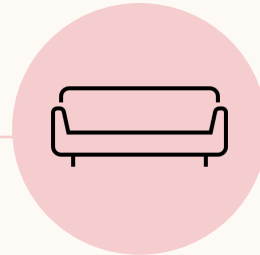


# GETTING STARTED



## MATERIALS

- Notebook
- Pen/Pencil
- Art materials



## ENVIRONMENT

- Safe
- Confidential
- Comfort



## MINDSET

- Nonjudgmental
- Curiosity
- Acceptance



# **FREEWRTING**

Find a quiet time and place to practice writing. Write whatever comes into your mind for 10-20 minutes. Try to write the entire time without stopping. Try not to judge and don't worry about style or grammar – instead allow the writing to flow freely. The important thing is to keep writing continuously for the entire session.

# **EXPRESSIVE WRITING**

## **OPTION 1**

Find a quiet time and place for this writing exercise. Write for 20-30 minutes, focusing on your deepest emotions and thoughts about a stressful or upsetting experience in your life. Whatever you choose to write about, it is critical that you really let go and explore your deepest emotions and thoughts. Write continuously and don't worry about spelling, grammar, or style.

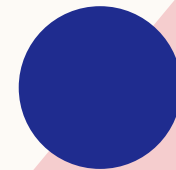


## **EXPRESSIVE WRITING OPTION 2**

Find a quiet time and place for this writing exercise. Write about your deepest emotions and thoughts about the most upsetting experience in your life. Really let go and explore your feelings and thoughts about it. In your writing, you might tie this experience to your childhood, your relationship with your parents, people you have loved or love now, or even your career. How is this experience related to who you would like to become, who you have been in the past, or who you are now?

# MINDFUL WRITING

Find a quiet time and place for this writing exercise. Write what you notice internally, externally, or a combination of both. Notice how your body feels to sit in your space. Notice the sensation of moving your pencil across your notebook. Notice if your thoughts wander. Notice any sights, smells, sounds, tastes, or elements of touch during your writing. Try not to judge your experience - do not worry about spelling or grammar - allow your writing to flow naturally.





# **WRITING FOR PROBLEM SOLVING**

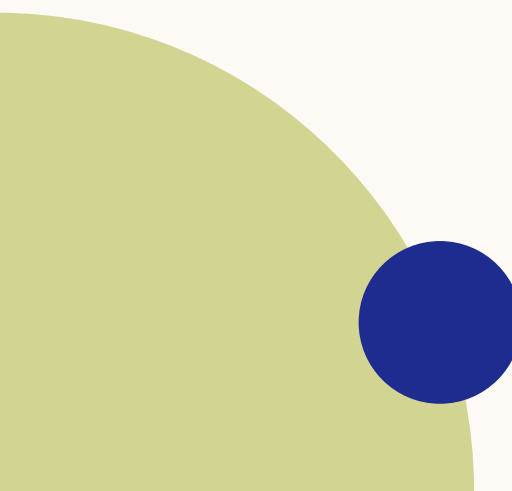
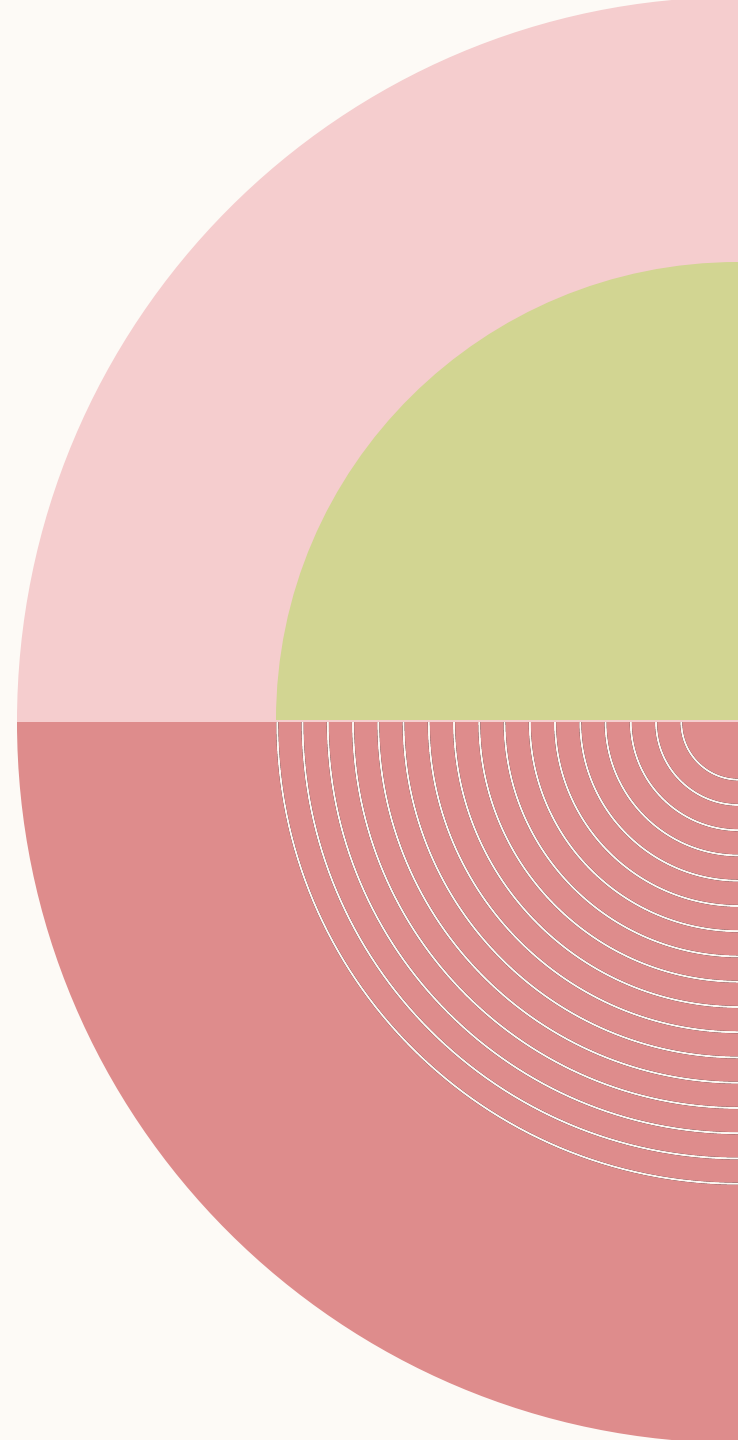
For this exercise, write down a problem you are facing. Write freely without regard to spelling or grammar for about 10 minutes. Review your writing and identify the key impediments or barriers – now write about these, again for about 10 minutes. Finally, reread both sets of writing – and write a final time, again for 10 minutes, synthesizing your thoughts and insights about the problem, barriers to overcoming it, and identify potential solutions or ways to solve the problem.

# THOUGHT LOG

Take a moment to attend to what is happening. Notice the situation – where you are, who is present, and what happened before the emotional change. Label the emotion and rate the intensity. Notice any sensation in the body. Notice the mental experience. Ask the question: What are the thoughts that are going through my mind? Be specific. Thoughts may take the form of sentences or mental images. Record what happened afterwards - how did you cope? Do not judge or criticize what you notice. The important thing is to accurately capture what happened.

# POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

Image yourself in the future, after everything has gone as well as it possibly could. You have worked hard and succeeded at accomplishing all your life goals. Think of this as the realization of your life dreams, and of your own best potentials. In all of these cases you are identifying the best possible way that things might turn out in your life, in order to help guide your decisions now. You may not have thought about yourself in this way before, but research suggests that doing so can have a strong positive effect on your mood and life satisfaction.







# PAT ALLEN

## OPEN STUDIO PROCESS

### SET AN INTENTION

- Intention leads the art making process
- Set an intention in writing

### ART MAKING

- Simple materials
- Follow the mark making
- Continue until a sense of completion

### WITNESS

- Sit with the art
- Reflect on the intention



# **THANK YOU**

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# REFERENCES

Baikie, K. A., & Wilhelm, K. (2005). Emotional and physical health benefits of expressive writing. *Advances in psychiatric treatment*, 11(5), 338-346.

Kennon M. Sheldon & Sonja Lyubomirsky (2006) How to increase and sustain positive emotion: The effects of expressing gratitude and visualizing best possible selves, *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 1:2, 73-82, DOI: 10.1080/17439760500510676

Pennebaker, J. W., & Chung, C. K. (2011). Expressive writing: Connections to physical and mental health.

Pennebaker, J. W., & Smyth, J. M. (2016). *Opening up by writing it down: How expressive writing improves health and eases emotional pain*. Guilford Publications.

<https://www.patballen.com/pages/process.html>