



Writing & Journaling: A Tool For Recovery

**NAMI Maryland Conference 2015
Presenter: Beth Terrence**

Introduction

- **Welcome Everyone!**
- **Introduction**
- **Writing Check In**
 - *How am I feeling right now? You can free-write in paragraph form or just make a list of all the feelings that come to mind.*
 - *Am I struggling with something, someone or a situation today?*
 - *List 3 things I am celebrating today...*

What Is Journaling?

Journaling or reflective writing is a practice that has been around for a long time.

Whether someone is a “writer” or not, really matters little when it comes to personal writing.



Journaling is simply a way to express and explore our life experiences and ourselves on a deeper level through the written word or even through art or imagery. Journaling doesn't have to be for anyone but ourselves.

And, it is an exciting time as we are now seeing scientific evidence supporting the benefit of this simple practice for our overall health and well-being.

Benefits of Journaling

Scientific research has found that the act of writing actually accesses the left brain, which is the analytical and rational part. When you begin writing, your left brain becomes engaged freeing your right brain to create, intuit and feel. So, in a sense, writing can take you out of a thinking state and into a more feeling one. This allows you to better understand and connect with yourself, others and the world around you.

Journaling has been found to help:

- Clarify your thoughts and feelings
- Know yourself better
- Reduce stress
- Be healthier
- Solve problems more effectively.
- Resolve disagreements with others
- Practice good self-care
- Access your creativity
- Release and express held memories and emotions
- Set Intentions

Writing & Journaling For Recovery

You may be saying to yourself, “But, I’m not a writer, so how can journaling work for me?”

There are many ways to explore journaling and many types of writing practices. Journaling offers an opportunity to:

- explore who you are today;**
- discover your strengths and weaknesses; and**
- begin to build a toolbox to support balance & well-being.**

Writing offers a vehicle to find your voice and explore ways you can flow more easily with life. This can offer a powerful tool for Recovery.

Writing & Journaling For Recovery

The University of Rochester Medical Center lists the following benefits on “Journaling for Mental Health”:

- Manage anxiety**
- Reduce stress**
- Cope with depression**

Journaling also helps control symptoms and improve mood by:

- Helping to prioritize problems, fears, and concerns.**
- Tracking symptoms day-to-day so that so triggers can be recognized and ways to manage them better can be learned.**
- Providing an opportunity for positive self-talk and identifying negative thoughts and behaviors.**

Ways to Explore Writing & Journaling for Recovery

- **Stream Of Consciousness** ~ Just put the pen on the paper and let whatever words come to mind flow onto the page. Stream of consciousness or Free Writing offers a way to release our thoughts and feelings as they arise.
- **List Writing** (e.g. Make a list of Feelings, Choices, Losses, Things You Enjoy, Topics for Writing, Triggers, Self-Care Tools, Favorites, etc.)
- **Gratitude Practice** – Make a list of everything you are grateful for – this can be a powerful daily practice.
- **Affirmations & Intentions** – Create your own affirmations as you become aware of patterns, feelings and beliefs you'd like to shift.
- **Prayers/Blessings** - Write prayers or blessings for yourself, family, friends, the world...
- **Meditations** – Pick a topic like peace, love, happiness and write about it.

Ways to Explore Writing & Journaling for Recovery

- **Poetry** – Explore a poem, haiku or free verse. Read a poem and write what it means to you. Pick a line that is meaningful and explore. Write your own poetry or verse.
- **Just For Today I will...** – Write what you need for today or you are committing to “just for today” in your Recovery.
- **Letter Writing** (e.g. To Self, Family, Friends, Higher Power, Past/Future)
- **Holistic Exploration** – Do a Self-Care Review for Body, Mind, Emotion & Spirit
- **Telling Your Recovery Story** - Write about your recovery story. Keep it for yourself to remind you of your healing and growth or share it with others to inspire them!
- **Daily Inventory** - At the end of your day, take some to reflect and do a daily inventory. Explore positive actions, feelings, awareness, gratitude, etc.

About Beth



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Beth Terrence, LMT, CHP, CPRS has been a practitioner and facilitator in the field of Holistic Health and Wellness for over 20 years. She provides Integrative Holistic Healing Programs for Individuals, Groups and Organizations in the MD/DC area and virtually. She is a trained CCAR (Connecticut Community for Addiction Recovery) Recovery Coach and Certified PEER Recovery Specialist in Maryland. She is also a person in long-term recovery.

Beth is passionate about bringing Holistic Resources into Mental Health & Addiction Treatment and Recovery. She works with several organizations including M-ROCC (Maryland Recovery Organization Creating Communities), The Center For Mindful Awareness, an organization bringing Mindfulness Meditation to underserved populations in the Baltimore area and Heal My Voice, an international organization that helps women and girls to heal through writing and sharing their stories.

Beth will also be launching a new blog, Holistic Recovery Pathways, on 11/1/15 that will offer information on holistic resources and wellness tools to support individuals, families and communities in long-term recovery. Learn more at <http://holisticrecoverypathways.com> or www.bethterrence.com.

References

Journaling for Mental Self-Help. <http://bit.ly/1ZEaIR1>

Journaling for Mental Health <http://bit.ly/1LupcqY>

Writing & Health. <http://homepage.psy.utexas.edu/homepage/faculty/pennebaker/home2000/WritingandHealth.html>

Telling Your Recovery Story. <http://mentalhealthrecovery.com/info-center/telling-your-recovery-story/>

Writing for recovery: a practice development project for mental health service users, carers and survivors. http://www.fons.org/Resources/Documents/Journal/Vol4No1/IPDJ_0401_05.pdf

Recommended Reading

The Artist's Way by Julia Cameron

**Journey Notes: Writing for Recovery & Spiritual Growth by
Richard Solly & Roseann Lloyd**

Writing from the Body by John Lee

Creative Journal Writing by Stephanie Dowrick

The Daily Writer by Fred White

Writing Begins with the Breath by Laraine Herring

Writing as a Sacred Path by Jill Jepson

Resource Links

Write On! The Power of Journaling in Addiction Recovery. <http://www.promisesaustin.com/blog/addiction-recovery/power-of-journaling/>

Journaling for Mental Illness Recovery. <http://www.mental-illness-resources.com/Journaling-For-Mental-Illness-Recovery.html>

Write 4 Life. <http://www.write4life.us>

Heal My Voice. <http://healmyvoice.org>

119 Prompts for Your Journal Jar. <http://daringtolivefully.com/journal-prompts>