

Journal a healthy outlet

"For such is the power of writing that psychiatrists commend it; counsellors recommend it to their clients to improve relationships; executives employ it to mind their business."

— Ritu Khanna, writer, speaker, facilitator

It's no coincidence that the words "journey" and "journaling" come from the same root.

Journaling is a powerful way to chronicle the journey of our lives, a source of inspiration and a stepping-stone to self-enlightenment.

Throughout history artists, scientists, philosophers and explorers have used

journals or diaries to record their feelings, thoughts, observations and discoveries. Anne Frank, Virginia Woolf, and Henry David Thoreau are just three writers known for their journals.

I began journaling about three years ago after attending a fascinating workshop by local author and facilitator, Wendy Collier of Angel Books (www.angelbooks.ca).

Collier suggested we create an "abundance book" and to start each entry with the current date and the line "Today, I am thankful for". Initially, I was resistant to the idea. It seemed like one more task in an already busy day, but I agreed to try it.

Before retiring for the evening, I would spend a few minutes capturing my thoughts on paper.

At first, the entries were simple: "It rained today," or "My son brought home a good report card." Before long though, I found myself capturing deeper thoughts and gaining personal insights and perspective through the process. Slowly, I started to look forward to my journaling and began to think of it as "downloading" the day.

The privacy and personal nature of a journal makes it the perfect vehicle for spontaneous expression.

The journal is a safe place to be yourself, to feel, to think, to observe and to dream. As long as it is kept confidential, except for selective sharing, the threat of external criticism is removed. If you want to share your journal entries with someone, then find a loved

one, a trustworthy friend or a counsellor who understands you. Avoid those who are likely to be judgmental and critical of you and your thoughts.

A journal can see you through difficult times. For instance, actor Lynn Redgrave recently published a book about her healing journey from cancer entitled simply, *Journal: A Mother and Daughter's Recovery from Breast Cancer*.

Recent studies have shown that when people journal about emotionally difficult events in their life, even for a short time, the function of their immune system notably improves.

Journaling can provide you with a veritable treasure chest of creative ideas and an account of your personal history, which could become compelling reading. I believe we all have a book inside of us, perhaps even more than one. How many of us have family histories just crying to be told? Your journal could become a novel, or even a movie, such as *Angela's Ashes* or *In America*. The possibilities are truly endless.

There are unexpected ways that journaling can enhance your life. Journaling provides me with an excellent way to set goals and track my achievements. It's also become fascinating to look back over the evolution of my thinking and self-esteem.

It's easy to start journaling.

Just sit down and start writing.

Don't worry about grammar or proper punctuation unless you so desire. If you're new to journaling, I'd suggest you start by using Collier's "Today I am thankful for" sentence stem. Believe me, each time you make an entry, you'll open another door into yourself.

The beauty of it all is that you can journal in any way you like, in any form and under any circumstances. The only limitations are those of your imagination.

Murray Fuhrer is a local self-esteem and personal empowerment speaker. For more information on self-esteem, check the Extreme Esteem website at www.extremeesteem.ca.

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