

The Comeback Queen's Guide to Journaling 101



What is journaling? Simply stated, journaling is the practice of capturing your thoughts, experiences, and observations about your life and your world on paper.

Journaling has no rules. The key is to just write and let your thoughts go where they will.

What's the purpose of journaling? What are the benefits?

- Journaling can help you think through problems or challenges.
- Journaling can help you manage change.
- Journaling can help you settle disputes or resolve conflicts.
- Journaling can help you look at your life with an outsider's view.
- Journaling can help you cope with your emotions, giving you a safe space to vent.
- Journaling can help you unleash your creativity.

- Journaling can help you understand the connections between thoughts, feelings and actions.
- Journaling can help you reduce stress.
- Journaling can help you live a healthier, happier life.

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Here's what you need to get started:

What: Paper and pens/pencils. Use a notebook, loose-leaf paper, stationary, or buy a journal. Use any pen/pencil that feels good in your hand. Try colored pens or pencils or use a variety of pens/pencils.

When: You can journal anytime that works for you: mornings, evenings, weekdays, weekends, daily, weekly, monthly. You can write at a specific time every day, write when you have time, or when you have something you want to work out.

How: Write long hand. There is something visceral and emotional in the act of writing. The connection between brain and hand is an amazing learning tool. Don't worry – handwriting and spelling don't count, and no one else is going to read what you wrote.

Rules: There are no rules in journaling. Write where and when the mood strikes you. Use whatever helps you express yourself: words, pictures, photographs, doodles, poems, articles, quotes, drawings – anything that helps you to sort through your thoughts and feelings. “Turning feelings into words can help us process and overcome adversity” (Sandberg & Grant 62).

Writing prompts: If you need inspiration to begin writing, google “journal prompts” and a variety of suggestions will be at your fingertips; from one-word prompts to top 10 lists to questions and quotes. Prompts are everywhere. Some journals include daily prompts, too.

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The key to journaling is to start...Commit now to your next steps.

1. Day/date I will start: _____
2. Time I will start: _____
3. Location I will use: _____
4. Paper and pen I will use: _____

Here are some ideas to work with your emotions:

- If you are sad, share your sorrow and let the tears flow.
- If you are frustrated or confused, write out the problem and brainstorm possible solutions.
- If you are happy, capture that joy and show your gratitude.
- If you are scared, disclose what is frightening you, draw a picture of your boogeyman or gremlin and then take the gremlin's power away.
- If you are mad, vent by writing a letter to the person who has wronged you. Just don't mail the letter. Instead, burn it. Writing a letter and burning the angry or regretful words has curative power. Questions to consider:

What's true? What evidence do you have for that conclusion?

What if it's not true? What conclusion does that support?

How does that change your reaction and your behavior?

Gratitude journal: I recommend creating a gratitude journal and starting each day by recording what you are grateful for. For example, I begin each day being grateful for my cat purring softly by my side. Yes, even the smallest things count. In fact, the small things are sometimes the most important. For you, that first cup of coffee or a hug from your spouse or child might be the most important.

You can also use your gratitude journal throughout your day and find moments to be grateful for. For example, pay attention to the times during the day when you say, "thank you," hold a door open, or offer help to someone else. "True happiness is not found at parties or on a quiet beach. Through lenses filtered by pain, we learn to treasure great moments. We learn gratitude for the ordinary" (Greyber). Just tuning into the small ways that we show gratitude toward others will increase our own happiness.

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Finally, you can use your gratitude journal at the end of the day to reinforce what’s going right. Here are a set of questions to consider:

1. What went well today?
2. What lessons can I learn?
3. What small step did I take today to move forward?

When you are in the midst of a setback or major life challenge and every day seems to be filled with never ending disappointment and misery, read your gratitude journal.

Share memories – Honor your loved one by sharing his or her memory at appropriate times and locations. Write down memories as they come to you. Add them to your journal and/or share them with loved ones.

- a. Keep a Journal– Use your journal to express your hopes for the future, to rekindle your faith, and connection to God. Writing allows you to get in the flow with your thoughts and feelings.

Need help and support to make your comeback? Contact me at marsha@comebackqueen.life to schedule a complimentary 30-minute consultation. To learn even more, visit comebackqueen.life and pick up a copy of my book, *Surviving and Thriving Despite the Drama*.

— Marsha

