

# Journal Writing: A Journey of Self Discovery



## Idea, Personality, and Emotional Exploration, Examining Life Roles, and Goal Planning

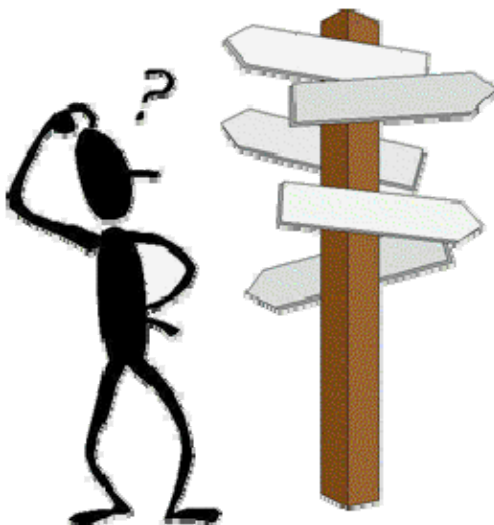
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### How would *you* answer these questions?

- What sort of creative ideas do you think about?
  - What do you believe?
  - What do you value?
  - How would you describe your personality?
- Why do you *feel* the way you feel?
  - Who do you admire most and why?
  - What are your interests and talents?
  - What sort of career do you think you'd like to do?
  - Have you made any goals? What are they?

WHO  
ARE  
YOU  
?

### How Can You Begin to Explore the Answers to These Questions?



**Personal Journaling** is a way for you to explore these types of questions and develop better self understanding.

## “Blog, Diary, Journal . . . what’s the difference?”



**Blogs** are online scrapbook pages which include:

- daily blog entries about a person’s interests, comments & opinions
- favorite pictures, images & music
- links to favorite sites or friends’ pages
- info that can be kept private or shared with friends through URLs or links

When shared, a blog is a personal advertisement of how a person *wants* to be viewed by others.

**Diaries and journals contain very personal and private information which is usually not shared with others**

**Diaries** track daily experiences and record feelings and reactions to those experiences.

**Journals** offer the same opportunities for emotional exploration as diaries, except that journal writing usually has a:

- **purpose** (specific theme/subject) and a
- **goal** (better self-understanding)

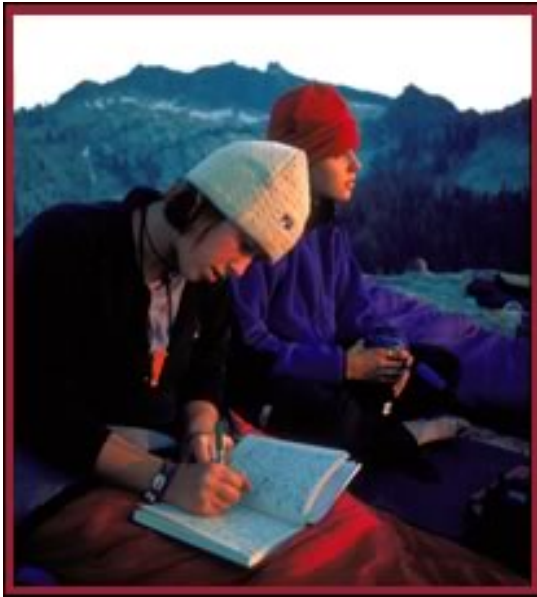


**Right now you might be thinking, “So, I can figure it all out in my head . . . I don’t need to write in a journal!”**

**Journaling lets you see your inner growth over time:**

- **Read old journal entries to see whether or not your thinking has made progress.**
- **Take time to reflect and decide which actions you need to take in order to meet your goals.**

## “Why is that sort of thinking important?”



- **Teens face higher levels of anxiety and depression when they don't explore important questions about personality, emotions, ideas, values, beliefs, life roles, and goals.**
- **Some forms of depression may be linked to negative thinking habits. Explore your thinking habits through journal writing.**

**See Sources list on last page for more information about anxiety and depression.**

## “What are some of the different types of journals?”

<b>Idea Journals</b>	Capture inspirational and creative thoughts (ex. song lyrics, poetry, and any other form of personal writing).
<b>Personal Journals</b>	Explore your personality, <i>how</i> you feel, the roles you play every day, who your role models are, and career choices.
<b>Goal Planning Journals</b>	Set short-term, mid-term, and long-term goals based on your values, beliefs, and real interests.
<b>Problem-Solving Journals</b>	Explore alternatives by looking at problems from different points of view and identifying sources for more information.
<b>Art Journals</b>	Use creativity through different art mediums to <i>show</i> your feelings or ideas. You can add personal writing, or not!
<b>History Journals</b>	Chronicle your life, or your family history, through writing, photographs, and mementos.
<b>Nature Journals</b>	Chronicle outdoor experiences (ex. hiking, camping, fishing) and capture nature's inspirations in your writing.
<b>Spiritual Journals</b>	Explore your values, beliefs, and your faith. What are some of the larger questions you have about life?

**... but these are just a few. You can make a journal for any topic you want!**

## **Begin . . . at the beginning! (Of course!)**

- Begin with an “all purpose” journal to discover what topics interest you.
- If your writing leans heavily toward a topic, it’s time to start a journal devoted to that topic.

## **“Notebook? Computer? I don’t know where to begin with journal writing!”**

- Choose a funky notebook—several funky notebooks.
- Blank, bound books can be found in most office supply stores or stores that sell stationery supplies. Bookstores sell them too.
- Find a favorite pen.

## **See Source list for journal notebooks and supplies.**

- Computer word documents can include:
  - Word Art
  - Templates for journal pages or booklets
  - Create your own template
  - Diagram Gallery to visually show relationships or processes for plans
  - Insert Clip Art
  - Insert Pictures
- You can bind loose pages together in book form at a local office supply store.



**Now, get started . . .  
Here are a few prompts to begin your journal writing:**

## **Idea Explorations**

- **What do you value?** (See values chart in “Goal Planning” prompt)
- What are **10 things you love to do and why** do you like doing those things?
- **Describe a time when you were deeply inspired** (ex. by what you read, saw, or felt).

- **Start collecting favorite quotes.** For every quote you add, write briefly about why you like that quote.

“The privilege of a lifetime is being who you are.”  
 ~~Joseph Campbell

## Define Your Personality

- **How would you describe yourself?**
  - Think about how you approach life (risk-taker, planner, etc.).
  - What are you curious or passionate about?
  - How do you communicate (talkative, speak quietly, etc.)?
  - What is your own social nature (competitive, people person, loner, etc.)?
- **Complete this statement: “I believe . . .”**
- Think of a controversial social issue. **What is your opinion, and why do you feel that way?**

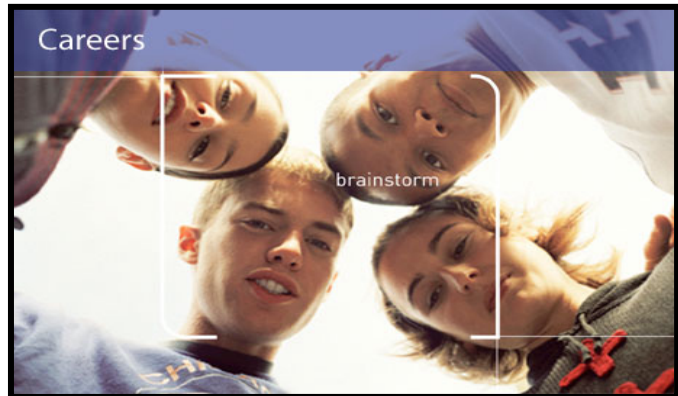
## Identify & Try to Understand Your Emotions

- Begin writing "I feel \_\_\_\_\_." **Why** do you feel that way? If that feeling is negative, what can you do to help yourself feel more positive? If you feel positive, what did you do to feel that positive way?
- **What do you fear and why?**
- **What do you desire most and why?**
- If you are struggling in a relationship with a parent, friend, boyfriend, or girlfriend, **ask yourself:**
  - Am I treating this person based on my values and beliefs?
  - If not, what do I need to do to get back on track?
  - Am I closing this person out? Why?
  - Is this person closing me out? Why? What can I do to improve this relationship?



## Role Playing through Journaling

- Think of someone who has been a **positive influence in your life**. What are the **qualities that this person has** that you think you would like to develop?
- **List your talents, interests and strengths**. Are any of these skills used in careers? Google “careers and (your skill, interest, or talent).” Record your search information in your journal.



- **Picture yourself 15 years from now**. Who do you think will be the most important people in your life, and what will you be doing?

## Goal Planning through Journal Writing

- Where to start? **Write about your values and beliefs and set goals** that don't compromise them. Here are *some* values to consider:

believe in yourself	forgiveness	freedom
courage	humility	awareness of doing wrong
excellence	happiness	sportsmanship
fairness	honesty	patriotism
love	faith	thinking
understanding	respect	learning

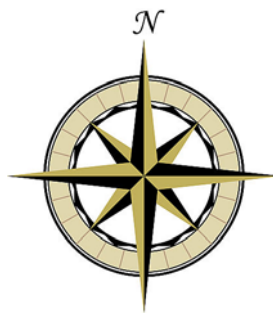
- Some goals are *good*, but which ones are *best*? Look at your goals and **circle the ones that are high priorities**. Write about how you can plan your week to meet your responsibilities and still work toward your high-priority goals.

### ... More on Goal Planning ...

- If you have a career in mind, find out **3 of the most important skills** you will need **to succeed in your career**. Do you need to improve your
  - organizational skills
  - writing skills
  - speaking skills, and/or
  - problem-solving skills?

**Set a goal for the skill(s)** you need to further develop and make a plan.

- **Just Do It! Describe an experience where you just stepped out in determination and confidence.** After thinking about this, what is one step you can take now toward one of your goals?



**Promise yourself to explore your self concept, self-esteem, and identity through journal writing and you'll be on your way to self understanding.**

**Enjoy the journey!**

## Sources for More Information

### Books:

**The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens** by Sean Covey

A book written for teens about making decisions and life plans.

**Creative Journal Writing for Teens**

by Lucia Capacchione, Ph.D., A.R.T., R.E.A.T.

Tips and writing prompts for creating art journals.

**A Book of Your Own: Keeping a Diary or Journal**

by Carla Stevens

Discusses how to keep diaries or journals and provides instructions, examples, and excerpts from famous journals.

**Write Where You Are : How to Use Writing to Make Sense of Your Life : A Guide for Teens**

by Caryn Mirriam-Goldberg

Writing advice and exercises to empower teen writers.

**Totally Private & Personal: Journaling Ideas for Girls and Young Women**

by Jessica Wilber

A collection of journaling ideas, writing tips, and self-help information by a young author.



### Websites:

<http://www.safeyouth.org/scripts/teens/depression.asp>

and

<http://depression.about.com/library/hotlines>

Search for information about teen depression, stress, and anxiety

[http://www.musckids.com/health\\_library/adolescent/reldev.htm](http://www.musckids.com/health_library/adolescent/reldev.htm)

Exploring self-esteem, identity, and independence

<http://eqi.org/summary.htm>

10 Top Suggestions for Developing Emotional Intelligence

<http://www.aisling.net/journaling/journalingarts.htm>

Art journal writing prompts and ideas.

This journal-writing guide was prepared by Lynda Briesemeister and reviewed by Toni R. Tollerud, Ph.D., LCPC, NCC, NCSC, ACS, Professor of Counseling, Department of Counseling, Adult and Higher Education at Northern Illinois University.