



Using Journaling as a Tool for Your Health

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In the hustle and bustle of everyday life, we do not always treat our bodies with the care they deserve. Too often we set aside our important physical needs — as well as our mental and emotional needs — when we get busy.

We give up sleep, nutritious meals, exercise and downtime as we try to keep up with work, family and personal responsibilities. Over time, we start to think that feeling tired, sluggish and depleted is the new normal. But it does not have to be.

You have the power to take control of your health and build habits that help you thrive (not just survive). And to get started, all you need is a notebook and pen.

Research¹ shows that regular journaling offers a wide range of mental and physical health benefits, including reducing stress, building a stronger immune system and improving symptoms of conditions such as asthma and rheumatoid arthritis. Journaling helps you take an active role in your health. By writing for a few minutes a day, you can tune into your body, noting what feels good and what needs more attention.

Here are a few simple steps you can take to begin a life-changing new habit.

Step 1: Get Out of Your Head and Back Into Your Body.

Your body is not a collection of disconnected parts. You cannot treat it like a car that is always breaking down and needing to be taken into the shop. Instead of looking for a quick solution to treat a symptom you are experiencing, try to find the source of the problem. This requires you to slow down, mute the to-do list in your head, and spend a few quiet moments just being in your body.

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5-Minute Journaling Exercise

Take three deep breaths, and try to relax your body and clear your mind. Do a body scan, starting at the top of your head and working your way down to your toes.

- Which parts of your body feel healthy and strong? Which are painful or tense?
- Can you identify the reasons why you are feeling pain or stress? Do you often feel this way?
- How would you rate how your body feels overall on a scale from 1 to 10?
- What small action can you take today to improve that number, even by a fraction?

Step 2: Tie Your Health Goals to a Greater Purpose.

Take an honest look at the current state of your health. What is on the right track? What would you like to change or improve? Is there anything you are concerned about? What do you have control over and what do you not? Identify your top three health goals for the next year, and connect each to a meaningful purpose.

5-Minute Journaling Exercise

Write down your three goals, and reflect on the why for each one. Push past the easy or superficial answers (“I want to fit into my old jeans” or “I don’t want to be the least flexible person in my yoga class”).

- Why is this goal so important to you?
- How does this goal align with your values or identity?
- How will your daily life be better if you reach this goal?
- How will your life be improved a year or five years from now if you reach this goal?
- What is something you can do every day to move a little closer to this goal?

Step 3: Find Your Own Balance.

There is not a single path to a healthy life. You get to decide what it looks like for you. How do you define health and well-being? What are the essential elements you need to feel your best? What can you let go of because it is not important to you? Remember

that this is a personal journey, so your priorities may be very different from those of your loved ones or the people you follow on social media. Try to clarify what really matters to you — not what you feel you should be doing.

5-Minute Journaling Exercise

Visualize yourself in perfect health for the stage of life you are in. Think about what would contribute to a day of physical and mental equilibrium.

- What activities would you do throughout the day?
- What habits would you maintain?
- What would you eat and drink?
- How would you stay active?
- How would you make time for stillness, reflection or meditation?
- How would you make time for fun and leisure?
- How would you strengthen your relationships?

Your health is a gift, and you deserve to make it a priority in your day-to-day life. Try incorporating a few minutes of journaling into each day as a way to learn more about your body and take ownership of your health. 🌱

References:

1. F. Diane Barth. (2020, January 18.) Journaling isn’t just good for mental health. It might also help your physical health. NBC News. Retrieved from <https://www.nbcnews.com/think/opinion/journaling-isn-t-just-good-mental-health-it-might-also-ncna1114571>.



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