

# Emotional Journaling

## Mindfulness Worksheet

Date / Time:

So far today, have you brought kind awareness to your:

Thoughts?  Heart?  Body?  None

To begin this Meditation, please bring kind awareness to

- why you chose this topic
- how your belly, chest, and head each feel when you reflect on this topic
- the emotions that you can associate with these visceral feelings
- the positive or negative impact of any stories you believe in regarding this topic
- the fact that many others are feeling similarly about this topic as you
- how you might feel with increased awareness around this topic
- when you can apply increased mindfulness to this topic in your day-to-day life



[MindfulnessExercises.com/Emotional-Journaling](https://MindfulnessExercises.com/Emotional-Journaling)

### ■ PURPOSE / EFFECTS

Getting your emotions down on paper can help you to process difficult times as well as help you with sorting out general emotional problems. A journal acts as a free talk therapist..."someone" you can spill all your feelings too, no matter what, without judgment. Using a journal to self-express can relieve anxiety, help you to understand negative emotional triggers, and resolve problems in your daily life.

### ■ METHOD

#### Summary

Write down your emotions every day as entirely as possible; re-read them later for insight.

#### Long Version

1. Choose a journal. You can use a plain notebook or a fancy one. You might even want to write an anonymous blog. There are also guided journals like Writing to Heal, Writing for Emotional Balance, and Time to Write to Yourself; guided journals may be helpful if you don't know where to start and feel uncomfortably overwhelmed just using the tips below.

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2. Before you begin, remember that this journal is personal. Don't try to write masterful prose or try to analyze your feelings too much. Just spill out your emotions as fully and truthfully as possible without self-judgment. Try to write for ten or fifteen minutes straight daily. Afterwards, re-read your writing for possible insight.
3. Start by describing a recent event. Answer all the basic details of who was there, what were they doing, where and when it occurred, and why things happened as they did. Write in detail, using all five senses to describe the moment. Remember, smells and tastes are as important triggers to emotional memory as sight and hearing. Now, express your feelings about this event – how all your sensory inputs and interactions with others made you feel. This exercise helps you to become comfortable with a full-spectrum emotional journaling experience.
4. Now, instead of focusing on an exterior event, focus on an interior feeling. Using the emotional trigger linking techniques above, try to understand the “big picture” of your emotional response. If you are anxious, consider the situations in which your anxiety arises and try to identify its triggers. Express your anxiety in its fullness; do not be ashamed. Nobody will read your personal journal; you must bare your raw feelings as much as possible. You will often find thoughts rising up that you couldn't have expressed otherwise. Follow these thoughts and feelings to their root and try to understand them.
5. You may want to use the event-describing techniques above to examine experiences in your past. Take a life-changing event (whether it is positive or negative) and try to describe it in its fullness. Find all the triggers for emotional response and explore them. You may find links you didn't realize were there!
6. If relationship troubles are part of your life, use your journal as a way to express your feelings and problems without hurting your partner's feelings. You may be able to see the situation more objectively after letting off steam. It also may help you to better pinpoint the reasons behind your anger or sadness so that, when you converse with your partner, you'll be able to resolve them.
7. Notice the words that you use. Sometimes they are the key to deeper feelings within the subconscious. Highlight or underline words and feelings that seem to recur. Try to understand why these particular things are important to the unconscious mind.

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### HISTORY

Diaries and journals have existed for millennia; the Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius' famous work *Meditations* began as a journal expressing his personal philosophy and shows remarkable emotional insight. However, the method of using a diary as a method of personal emotional exploration is mostly a 20th century phenomenon, seen in the journals of figures like Carl Jung.

Later, psychologists such as James W. Pennebaker began exploring the very real benefits of emotional journaling with experiments demonstrating that journaling (especially expressing undisclosed or unexamined trauma) strengthened mental wellbeing and even improved physical health.

### CAUTIONS

Don't overthink while writing. Let your 10-15 minute writing period be stream-of-consciousness and nonstop. Later, after you've expressed all of your feelings, you can re-read what you wrote and analyze it. Do not, however, do it in the moment.

### NOTES

Many choose to write before bed as a way to process the events of the day and to release any tension that might impede sleep.

Did you have a diary when you were a teenager? The emotional turmoil of adolescence leads many young people to journal.

If you choose to see a counselor and discuss your emotional progress, the journal can often act as a helpful jumping-off point.