



Journaling – Some basic guidance notes

Journaling is a very powerful way of exploring our processes. Its more than keeping a diary, it involves:

- An opportunity to process ones thoughts and feelings in depth;
- An opportunity to reflect on situations, examine strategies and styles and consider what worked and alternatives;
- An opportunity to discharge feelings symbolically whilst allowing our understanding to flow;
- An opportunity to develop a time series of reflections through which one can monitor and evaluate one's personal, professional, spiritual or other forms of growth.

A personal journal works extremely well during periods of coaching, therapy or other growth work and often allows the individual to process elements of insights drawn from the session itself.

There are a few simple rules to make journaling more effective. So try bearing in mind the following:-

1. Buy a loose leaf project book or similar, rather than use a diary. Diaries limit the amount you can write to the date of entry in question. If you overrun, you're writing on tomorrow's paper! Project books or loose leaf arrangements allows you to use as many pages as you wish for a particular entry. It allows an opportunity for you to

draw diagrams or illustrations or order you information in some form of creative way. It can even allow things to be added such as pictures, tickets or other visual memorabilia that can be stuck in almost like an old fashioned "scrap book";

2. There is absolutely nothing wrong with using electronic means, computer, tablet, smart phone, etc. For many however, feeling a pen in their hand and the kinaesthetic (feeling based) link between thoughts, feelings and movement is a very authentic experience and allows their reflection to "flow". If you use electronic means a lot, switching it for a pen may give a more fulfilling experience other than typing or dictating something;

3. Journal regularly. It is no good living weeks and weeks between journals. You are an ongoing process and this needs to be collected;

4. Watch the time commitment. We tend to recommend people journal for between ten and twenty five minutes a day. Less than ten means you can rush it and short change the process or not have enough time to reflect on feelings, more than twenty five, needs to be an exception as we have sometimes experienced people writing for hours on end in a way that is unsustainable subsequently. Journaling needs to be a

regular process behaviour, rather than anti-social behaviour that makes you withdraw from the world!;

5. Keep your journal safe. Make sure people understand what you are doing if they have access to it and make sure you can trust them not to view it or otherwise lock it away somewhere safe. Your journal needs to be a safe place for you to explore your thoughts and feelings without any question, critique or “what’s that you said about me?” from others in your work group or household. Take responsibility for the security of this repository of your most precious thoughts and make sure that it is not accessed by those you would not wish to have access to it or may just not trust them enough not to take a “peek”;

6. Never leave your journal lying around to be discovered as an alternative to saying something to someone else directly. We have known of people bullied in the workplace or partners, leaving journals around in the hope that somehow these will be picked up and magically issues understood by the reader. This is rarely the experience as your interpretation of reality, is not everyone else’s. if you need to take up an issue with someone do so directly;

7. Be as creative as you like. Outside of these sensible guidelines, there are very few rules and the journal should be an opportunity both to be a journal of events and a canvass upon which your creative self can flow. Have fun, try something difference, have a stab at poetry or prose, draw pictures, do whatever it is that you need to do to express and examine yourself.

So that’s it, a few simple rules to get you started. We know the power of journaling. We value the historical work of diarists and many people, keep a diary as a matter of course for them to automatically process and review their lives. It is a powerful means so to do and is valuable at any point in one’s life, particularly points of key change where the subtleties of change, sometimes rush by against the speed involved in change processes.