

## 21-Day Checklist

Day		Exercise	Journal	Gratitude	Meditate			
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								
6								
7								
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9								
10								
11								
12								
13								
14								
15								
16								
17								
18								
19								
20								
21								

Reflection – Day 21:

### 3 Lessons Learnt

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

### 3 Things that brought you joy

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

### 3 Things to work on

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

## Why Daily Journal?

When we're suffering it can be hard to think straight. When we can't think straight it is hard to find relief from our suffering. Writing requires us to try to think straight, which in turn helps relieve our suffering.

Remember, it's better if writing doesn't become yet another anxious pressure we put on ourselves at the end of the day. Everyone has different needs, different requirements on their time, and different ways of doing creative and reflective work. Above all it should be useful and pleasurable.

## Exercises and Ideas to Help You Get Started

Despite the potential benefits of writing, it can be difficult to get started. After all, it can be a challenge to start even the most basic of good habits!

If you're wondering how you begin, here are some tips and exercises to help you start your regular writing habit:

- Start writing about where you are in your life at this moment.
- For five to ten minutes just start writing in a "stream of thought."
- Cultivate an attitude of gratitude by maintaining a daily list of things you appreciate, including **uplifting quotes**.
- Start a journal of self-portraits.
- Keep a nature diary to connect with the natural world.
- Maintain a log of successes.
- Keep a log or playlist of your favourite songs.
- If there's something you are struggling with or an event that's disturbing you, write about it in the third person.
- Develop your intuition and learn to listen to yourself

If you're still having a tough time getting started, consider trying a "mind dump." This is a quick exercise that can help you get a jump start on writing.

Researcher and writer Gillie Bolton suggests simply writing for six minutes (Pollard, 2002). Don't pay attention to grammar, spelling, style, syntax, or fixing typos – just write. Once you have "dumped," you can focus on a theme. The theme should be something concrete, like something from your childhood with personal value.

This exercise can help you ensure that your therapeutic journal entries go deeper than more superficial diary or journal entries.

More prompts, exercises, and ideas to help you get started can be found at **[journaltherapy.com](http://journaltherapy.com)**.

In "The New Diary," Tristine Rainer provides some useful tools for journaling:

Does it need to flow, or can it be truly freeform?

The new diary is a mix of:

- pictures
- prose
- illustrations
- poetry
- thoughts
- ideas
- one-liners
- feelings
- even a source of reference from other people's work.

There are four basic devices for the modern journal:

### **Catharsis**

Used as an emotional release, an entry could be as simple as 'I am so angry' through to 20 pages of emotional outpouring, and more

### **Description**

First person, or third person, it is the creative urge to reproduce reality as it is, for you.

### **Free Intuitive Writing**

Freedom of expression, random, intense, writing without thinking

### **Reflection**

Musing, self-observation, contemplation, it often follows a cathartic entry.

There are many reasons to write, all of them valuable 'after the event.' Whilst the act of writing is valuable in its own right, the greater value of the words written is a retrospective act that occurs weeks, months and years after the act itself.

The ability to review and to revisit thoughts, feelings and actions is often under used and under valued, especially in this day of electronic mayhem.

Using more than 160 characters or a Facebook feed that only reflects on a curated persona and not our true selves adds little or no value in self-growth or self-improvement.

Journaling is a here and now activity. Record the sights, sounds and smells that bring you joy. Emily Carr refers to journal entries as literary 'hundreds and thousands' – individually they amount to little or nothing – they are not worth eating; they are 'too insignificant to have been considered.' But in great handfuls they are sweet and crunchy, and make you laugh and bring great joy.

Memories and feelings not 'clumped together in great handfuls' lose their power and their perspective. Collected in your own hand, their power lies in capturing and storing them together.

More ideas:

### **The principle of opposites**

If life is giving you lemons, make lemonade. If your predominant thought pattern is doom and gloom, record those thoughts, but also record the things you are grateful for and strategies or activities that will counter the negatives.

### **Time Machine**

Describe the future, or the past, as if it were here and now

Synchronicity – or coincidence?

Predictive Dreams and the power of predictive titles

### **Repeating Themes**

Watch for word indicators, such as

- Labelling people
- First person and third person references
- Freudian slips of the pen
- Being judgemental or absolute (values violations)
- The content of your writing – same thing over and over? Stuck in a rut, or obsessing?
- Trends and patterns of personal behaviour
- Transactional analysis where social transactions indicate ego state – e.g. acting out as parent, child, victim, hero

Seven more techniques:

#### **1) LISTS**

Journaling in list form is efficient and quick – in some ways it has led to Bullet Journaling. Some ideas might include:

- Things I believe
- Things I have seen
- Be grateful for...
- To do
- To be
- To enjoy
- Lists of stepping stones or timeline events

#### **2) Portrait**

Reveal as much about the writer as they do the subject

If you include enough detail you cannot be unfair because eventually you will describe ALL aspects – but be sufficiently engaged to write exhaustively on a single subject

#### **3) Map of Consciousness**

Graphic images of the mind that can include:

- mind maps
- doodles
- images
- pictures
- sketches
- pictorial 'free intuitive writing'

#### **4) Guided imagery**

Writing or drawing as a meditation

Taps in to the creative side of the brain

Can be descriptive 'daydreams' where you are not consciously focusing on the writing task

It is important to create a safe and secure environment for you mind

Can be in the form of meditation, written dream, imagined behavioural rehearsal

### **5) Altered Point of View**

Write as an observer, about yourself (he/she)

Helicopter view – descriptive reviewer

Write as a different age, much younger or older than your current self

### **6) The Unsent Letter**

Use when it is inappropriate or unadvisable or you are unable to verbalise your feelings to a third party (violent, deceased, missing or lost)

May be kept or destroyed – the act of writing is the therapy, not the reading of the letter

Can be used as a dry-run for a difficult situation

Can be a time capsule for younger people or your own children.

### **7) Dialogues**

Write to yourself as if you were two personalities, for example one as male, one as female

Live the role

The other personality may be famous or influential people from your own past (parents, grandparents)

Ira Progoff has some additional ideas for dialoguing, including: works, the body, disease and disorder, inner wisdom, events as subjects to dialogue with, perhaps even elements or roles of your own life.

It's your imagination. Use what works, experiment. There is no right or wrong with this.



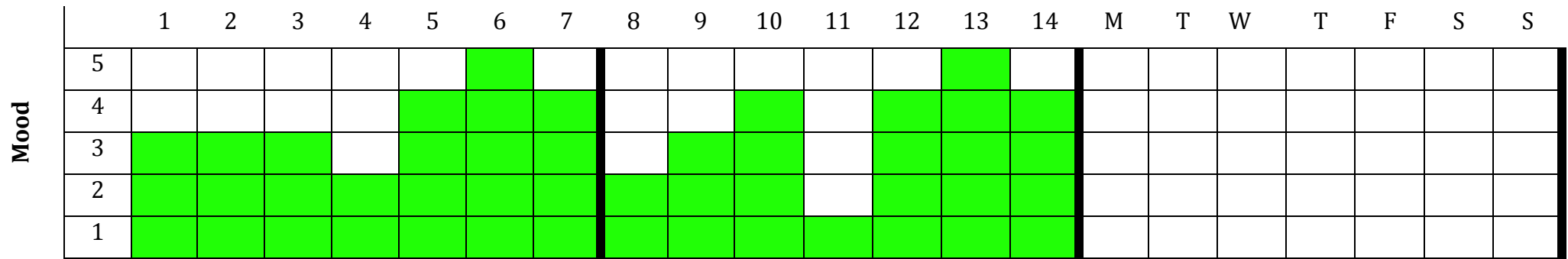








## Example



As with the example: the segments (1-5) are an arbitrary measure of how you feel your mood is generally over the course of a particular day. Each day will have its ups and downs. Looking back over the day, measure how you felt. Perhaps 20%, 40%, 60%, 80%, 100% is too clinical for you. How about descriptors such as: Lousy, OK, Average, Great and Awesome might work better for you.

As the exercise continues, watch for patterns that emerge over time. Using the example above, assuming the scale is Monday (1) to Sunday (7), what happens on Saturday (6 and 13 in the example) to move the rating from a 4 to a 5 each week?

These are your charts - consider changing the subject areas (Mood, Relaxation, Energy, Productivity) to categories that have meaning for you. You also might consider changing the day numbers to days of the week if that works better for you.