



What Is Journaling?

Journaling is the practice of keeping a diary or journal that explores thoughts and feelings surrounding the events of one's life. Journaling, as a stress management and self-exploration tool, is not the same as simply recording the happenings in one's life, like keeping a log. To be most helpful, one must write in detail about feelings and cognitions related to stressful events, as one would discuss topics in therapy.

What Are the Benefits of Journaling?

Journaling allows people to clarify their thoughts and feelings, thereby gaining valuable self-knowledge. It is also a good problem-solving tool; oftentimes, one can hash out a problem and come up with solutions more easily on paper. Journaling about traumatic events helps one process them by fully exploring and releasing the emotions involved, and by engaging both hemispheres of the brain in the process, allowing the experience to become fully integrated in one's mind. As for the health benefits of journaling, they've been scientifically proven. Research shows the following: Journaling decreases the symptoms of asthma, arthritis, and other health conditions. It improves cognitive functioning. It strengthens the immune system, preventing a host of illnesses, and it counteracts many of the negative effects of stress.

How Does Journaling Compare to Other Stress Management Practices?

Unlike more physical stress management techniques such as yoga or exercise, journaling is a viable option for the disabled. And, although some prefer to use a computer, it requires only a pen and paper, so it is less expensive than techniques that require the aid of a class, book, teacher or therapist, like techniques such as biofeedback or yoga. It doesn't release tension from your body like progressive muscle relaxation, guided imagery and other physical and meditative techniques, however. But it is a great practice for overall stress reduction as well as self-knowledge and emotional healing.