

## **The Benefits of Journaling**

*By Murphy Vestute, April 2001*

The modern term today for keeping a diary is journaling. Journaling is keeping a written record of your thoughts and feelings, your plans and life events. It is an affordable method of self-help!

Journaling, also known as personal writing, will improve your emotional health as well as your physical health. Research has shown that people who journal have increased T-cell production, a drop in physician visits, less sick days and improved physical health in general. Journaling reduces stress, lowers blood pressure, promotes healing, builds self-confidence and self-knowledge, and enhances personal growth, intuition and creativity while capturing your life story.

Journaling is a good way to record your questions for the doctor prior to an office visit along with his or her responses. It also helps to keep track of medical information such as appointments, treatments and changes in medication, and their results.

Journaling is simple and easy. Anyone can do it! And, you can do it anywhere! It works every time it is used. There are no special tools to utilize. Any notebook or paper will suffice, although there are a multitude of fancy binders and journal booklets available to purchase. It requires no special skills – you write whatever you feel however you want to write it. There are no tests! No one will be checking your spelling, grammar, penmanship or word choice. It is a therapeutic way to sort out what's going on when you don't understand things or cannot readily recognize your own emotions. It is private!

You can write reflectively by being an observer of life and writing about the things that are going on around you. You can write cathartically by writing about your own feelings and putting your fears, worries, pain, anger and grief down in your own words; or, all your hopes and joys. The journal is a safe place. You do not have to be afraid of being criticized or judged for what you write.

In your journal, you can write letters to people or places expressing yourself and how you feel about a situation without fear of social consequences. There is no right or wrong way to keep a journal!

Today, gratitude journals are very popular. Each day, write down five things for which you are grateful. (*Keep in mind that it takes at least 30 days to develop a habit.*) If you continue to write in your gratitude journal, you may begin to see that you are finding the “silver lining” in life that you never noticed before. ***Gratitude changes attitude!***

Journaling can help you solve problems. It empowers, balances and harmonizes the inner self by allowing for the emotional release needed for physical well-being. It clarifies thoughts, feelings and behaviors, and enhances self-expression. Remember: Journaling is an investment in yourself!