

THE CAREGIVER'S COMPANION

CARING FOR YOUR *MIND, BODY & SPIRIT*

JOURNALING THROUGH THE PROCESS

- Journaling is a self-care technique that can help you heal, grow and thrive.
 - Journaling helps bring order to your deepest thoughts and fears. It creates order out of chaos.
 - Journaling acts as free therapy. It helps you have a conversation with the person who knows you best: you.
 - You can go back and track your progress. Read what you've written and see how much progress you've made on your journey.
 - Some find joy in knowing their words help others, so they share their healing. But whether or not you share your work is up to you.
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A NOTE TO THE READER:

This journaling guide can be used along with The Caregiver's Companion or as a stand-alone tool. Print it out and keep it near your journal to inspire self-reflection. It's up to you whether you'd like to go through the prompts in order or based on your interests that day. If you don't like to write, consider using a prompt as a discussion starter with a trusted friend.

PART 1: THE BODY-MIND-SPIRIT CONNECTION

Make a list of 3 qualities you have that you consider weaknesses. Then, write a sentence or 2 about how you can also consider them strengths. For instance, if you think a weakness is having to manage every detail of everything, you could also consider that you have the strength of being organized and responsible. Once you determine the strength for each "weakness," write about a time when you used that strength in a positive way. If you can't think of a recent example, write down how you might use this strength positively in the future.



Write about a moment when you felt a particular emotion and how you felt it physically. Were your palms sweating? Was your heart racing or head throbbing? How did you sense your environment through sight, touch, hearing or smell? Was it dark, sunny, stuffy or breezy around you? What did you hear and smell? By expressing your emotional state through your physical experience, you can fully understand it. You can also write about your current state. What emotions are you feeling right now, and how is your body responding?



Who am I? Part 1: List 5 qualities of your personality or outlook on life that you think define you. Write just one word, a phrase, or a sentence for each—not a summary of your whole life. Don't think too much! What seems most important now? You can do this exercise every now and then to see how the list changes. Then write about each of those qualities.



Think of a real or imaginary place where you feel safe and at peace. Create that place in your mind and write a detailed description of it using all your senses—what you see in this place but also what you hear, smell, taste and touch. Then close your eyes and imagine you are in this place. See, hear, smell, taste and touch everything you wrote about.

PART 2: CHOOSING HEALTH

What role does food play in your life? Are you filling an empty space with food or drink, or using it as a friend?



Describe a recent food craving. Were you really hungry? Scan your body for its food needs. What does it feel like right now to be hungry, full or in between?



What are some positive family traditions that you would like to go back to or start for your family? Are there any unhealthy traditions that you can change or let go of altogether?



List 5 things that you're grateful for — people, positive experiences now or in the past, places and things. Then write a few sentences about each one. Describe what you are grateful for in detail, perhaps at a particular moment in time.



List 3 activities that bring you joy. Write a few sentences about each one. When did you do it recently? Did you get totally involved in it? If you have difficulty doing these activities as often as you want now, write down 1 or 2 ways you could do each of them more often.



List 2 things you often say "yes" to or said "yes" to recently. Then, list 2 things you often say "no" to or said "no" to recently. By each "yes," write whether you were taking good care of yourself when you said yes, or not. Do the same thing with each "no" answer. Think about whether you say "yes" when you don't want to, or say "no" to things you would really enjoy. Write 2 ways you might change your answers next time to take good care of yourself, or write 2 reasons you made a choice that helped you.



List 3 strengths that you value in yourself. Then list 3 strengths that you would like to have. Write 2 or 3 sentences about each strength. For the ones you already have, when did you use them recently? For the ones you would like to have, how can you develop them?

PART 3: YOUR CIRCLE OF SUPPORT

Relationships, Part 1: Think about a positive relationship in your life. Write about it. Describe what is positive about this relationship and how it nurtures you.



Who am I? Part 2: List 5 roles you think define you. For example, you might be a mom, sister, daughter or wife. Write just a one-word phrase or sentence for each one. They do not need to be in order of importance, and you do not need to list every role in your life. Just notice which ones you write down. Which ones seem most important right now? Then write a couple of sentences about how each one is part of who you are. You can write down 5 roles every now and then to see how the list changes.



Write a letter to the person you are taking care of. What is on your mind and in your heart that is hard to say in real life? Writing it down might help you actually tell the person you care for about it. Or writing might help you understand your thoughts and feelings. This can help you feel better around your loved one and be a better caregiver.



List 1 goal for today, 1 for this week, 1 for this month and 1 for this year. Then write a few sentences or a paragraph about each one. Write about the support you might need to reach those goals, ways to reach them, potential barriers and how to overcome the barriers.



Your thoughts, emotions and behaviors are all related. Write down 2 examples of thoughts, 2 of emotions and 2 of your behaviors in the past month. What effect did they have on each other? How do you think your changes in each category affect the other two? For example, if your thoughts changed, how did that affect your feelings and emotions?



Think of one thing you need right now. Write out how you can tell a specific person about that need. Then write out what you think that person's response will be.



Think of a recent conversation with your loved one. First, write out the words that were said, as much as you remember them. Then describe what was communicated by facial expressions, body language, posture and other non-verbal messages. What did you both “say” this way? Did your words and non-verbal messages match? Or were they different? Which was the true message?



Think of two recent conversations—one that went well and one that didn’t. In each one, explore the positive and negative aspects. What led to the outcome?



Think about 2 group experiences—one that helped you and one that didn’t. Write a few sentences about each one. Why was it helpful, or not? Was there a specific incident that was especially helpful in the positive group? Did something specific happen in the group that did not help you?



Relationships, Part 2: Think about a negative relationship that drains you. Write a few sentences about the reasons it makes you feel tired or discouraged. Next, answer these questions. Are these things that 1. You can accept? 2. You can work on? 3. Mean you should let this person or relationship go from your life?

PART 4: SURROUND YOURSELF WITH CARE

Write down the places you spend most of your time. In your car? At home, work or school? Compare those places to the place that makes you feel good. This is the “healing space” you thought about earlier. What are some specific things about your healing place that make you feel better?

Now, write a few notes about each of the places you spend most of your time. What can you change in those places to make them more nurturing, safe and peaceful? For example, if you spend a lot of time in the car, you might decide to add a soft seat cover or listen to podcasts while you drive. If you spend a lot of time at work, adding a green plant and some photos to your work area might make the space more pleasant.



Describe your home before and after your loved one required care, identifying the changes you made. Determine whether those changes are truly serving you both and explore what further adjustments you might make to render the home environment more nurturing, safe and peaceful.



List 3 changes in your work situation since you started being a caregiver. Then write a few sentences about how they affected you and how you handled them.



What new skills have you learned as a caregiver that you can bring into your current workplace or a new career?



Who am I? Part 3: List 5 important experiences in your life that you think define you. Write just one word, a phrase, or a sentence for each one. They do not have to be in order, and you do not need to write a summary of your whole life. Don't over think. What is important now? You can even do this exercise again from time to time to see how the list changes. Then write a few more sentences about these experiences, exploring the effect they had on who you are.



Describe your current medical care. When was the last time you got a checkup? Do you have any long-term health problems that need care? List the things you think are keeping you from getting regular checkups. For each one, write down the support you need or the changes you could make to overcome these barriers.



When your loved one is receiving care, ask yourself, "What is it about this place that bothers me? What sights, sounds, smells and touch sensations do I have control over? How could this be a better experience for me and my loved one?"



Write a letter to yourself. What advice would you give yourself if you were just starting out as a caregiver? What would you say to reassure yourself, that you did not know when you started?

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