



# Journaling for Health, Creativity, and Joy

Laurie McLeod, Artist, Author, Presenter and Entrepreneur

Anne Frank. Mark Twain. Benjamin Franklin. Stevie Nicks.

What do all these remarkable people have in common? They kept a journal or diary. They wrote down what mattered to them and ultimately some of their words have come to matter to us.

Keeping a journal is a great invitation to stay in touch with oneself and offers a variety of benefits: from stress relief, to boosting creativity, from supporting self esteem to helping with weight loss. Not only does the act of writing feel good, but it also allows us to reflect on life events in a safe environment, without fear of judgment. Stress psychologists have even shown that journaling enhances immune function and can assist in the management of chronic health conditions.

Lewis Carroll. Kurt Cobain. Bob Dylan. George Eliot.

These great artists also kept journals and it is easy to understand why. Journaling has been shown to be a great way to harness your creativity. If you write in a stream of consciousness style, you may find yourself in a new place with new ideas that you never even knew you had. It can also be a tremendous cathartic release. You can say all those things to your journal that you might not want to say to the people in your life. Your journal can become a way to hear your truest thoughts and then reflect with balance before you take action.

The psychologist and philosopher William James once said “If you can change your mind, you can change your life.” Writing in a journal invites free-thinking expression that can often lead to effective problem solving. You can “change your mind” by simply hearing from yourself and thinking clearly about what you’ve heard.

Writing needn’t be a burden or a huge time commitment. If you are interested in starting a journal, consider keeping it short and simple. Even noting a few words about the day’s events can evoke insights and new understandings that will help you stay in touch with yourself and your life. Consider writing down snippets of conversations that interested you throughout your day. Write down descriptions of people you admire and why you admire them. Consider your writing to be a process of discovery both of your inner world and the world around you.

As a weight loss support system, journaling can’t be beat. There is clinical evidence that keeping a food journal enhances the weight loss process, sometimes dramatically. The great singer Carrie Underwood has gone on record stating that writing down her food choices was a pivotal act in accomplishing her weight loss goals.

Writing down not only what you eat, but also more importantly why you are eating, can help you identify the habits that are driving your food preferences and patterns. Keeping a food journal encourages you to drop mindless eating patterns. It’s a natural portion control aide, while being a private means of support. Some simple, great instructions for starting a food journal can be found [here](#).

Food journaling can inspire “eureka” moments for people – pointing out how much they eat, as well as when, why and how quickly they are ingesting their food. Everyone knows that slowing down, chewing more and really tasting the food you eat encourages one to eat less. The self-awareness created by keeping a food journal can encourage you to do all of these things.

Whether you want to lose weight, de-stress, charge up some creative thinking or simply hear from yourself, keeping a journal can be an important, supportive process in a life of true well being. Your journal is a record of who you are right now. As Stevie Nicks says “My journals tell the real story of what went on. ” Your journal is a private conversation between you and you, and in our increasingly distracting and noisy world, this could not be more important. So dive in! Chart that dream. Register that hope. List those good food choices. It’s a great way to stay connected to yourself and alive to the flow of your life.

