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Transformational Journaling

A self-awareness tool for coaches and clients

By Lynda Monk, MSW, RSW, CPCC



Do you recommend journal writing to your coaching clients? Do you journal as a coach? Journaling is one of the most powerful tools I know of for personal growth, self-discovery, self-care and transformation. I have experienced more “aha moments” and new insights from my more than 30 years of journaling practice than from any other inner growth tool I have used in my life and work so far.

Self-reflection through expressive writing is an empowering practice that can help us cultivate both personal and professional development. Journal writing, when used in this way, can be an enriching, contemplative and reflective practice

We can achieve greater coaching mastery through transformational journaling, perhaps in part because it supports us in “coaching from presence,” which, according to *choice* colum-

Benefits of Transformational Journaling

Some of the benefits you and your clients can gain from transformational journaling include:

- Deepening the learning and forward the action
- Gaining perspective and greater clarity
- Tapping into inner ways of knowing
- Decreasing stress and overwhelm
- Defining and achieving goal
- Noticing and clearing limiting beliefs
- Accessing inner strength and resilience
- Improving emotional, physical, psychological and spiritual health
- Deepening professional mastery as a coach

nist Janet Harvey, MCC, involves taking time to be still, attentive and reflective on practice. Journaling is one of many reflective practices that can support us to nurture what Harvey calls the “artful pause that generates professional mastery.”

As human beings, we possess a personal power and wisdom that often goes untapped. In part, our role as coaches is to help others, and ourselves, to discover this power and potential within. To awaken our full potential, we must listen to our intuition and instincts, and notice our resistance, too – about our own lives, our own ways of knowing, and our own stories.

Transformational journal writing is a way for coaches and clients alike to access the narrative and stories that shape who we are and who we are becoming, while also helping us to make meaning of our life experiences. Journaling is a contemplative practice that can remind us that we are enough and that our potential is limitless.

According to Kate Thompson, author of *Therapeutic Journal Writing: An Introduction for Professionals*: “Therapeutic journal writing involves a conscious intent and deliberate attempt to write in ways that will produce change, healing and growth. It is a reflective (thinking about, pondering, exploring) and reflexive (integrating and using the awareness gained from reflecting) practice which can help with greater understanding of the self and the world and the self-in-the world.”

Not all personal writing leads to growth and change. In fact, some journaling can leave people feeling stuck, emotionally wounded, frustrated and/or like they are going in circles. For example, if there is a persistent negative focus

in the writing, a constant dwelling on the past, reflection without insight, or if the writing is too controlled or censored, these and other things can limit the transformational benefits of journal writing

Here are four tips that can enrich your own reflective journaling practice as a coach and also help with guiding your clients in using journaling as a tool for growth and change:

1. Relax Before Writing

Creative self-expression and learning can be fostered and supported by taking a few moments to relax before going to the page. According to neuroscience, a relaxed state generates alpha brainwaves, which are associated with greater creativity. Take a few deep breaths, meditate, listen to a soothing guided visualization or calming music, or experience some other relaxing practice before writing.

2. Write True

You are always the expert of your own experience. Share the most honest truth and the essence of who you are when writing in your journal. Allow your authentic voice to be expressed. Write about both your thoughts and feelings. Write beyond the events of your day and go into the deeper meaning of your experiences. Write from your senses including what you see, hear, taste, touch, notice and more. Let language offer you new insights and self-knowledge. Give yourself permission to write from the heart. And remember: whatever you write is right.

3. Be Curious

As coaches, we know curiosity is a cornerstone to all learning, self-discovery and personal growth. Asking questions while journaling is one way to invite deeper awareness so new insights, ideas and inspiration can emerge. Powerful questions can serve as journaling prompts and offer a way into the writing. Write about what you know and what you don't know. Allow your journal writing to take you into ex-

Transformational Journaling Prompts

Ask yourself:

- How might you use journaling in your own life as a coach and in your transformational work with clients?
- What's possible with your creative self-expression leading the way?
- What story do you want to live?

pansive and open places. Christina Baldwin, author of *Life's Companion: Journal Writing as a Spiritual Quest*, writes: "There is a Spanish proverb which says, there is no road; we make the road as we walk. I would say the same thing about journal writing: we make the path as we write."

4. Write About What You Want Versus What You Don't Want

If you want more joy in your life, write about what brings you joy. If you want more balance in your life, write about what balance feels like in your body, your mind, your spirit. Engage the Law of Attraction through journaling. According to Law of Attraction expert Michael Losier, we attract whatever we give our attention, energy and focus to, whether negative or positive. The words and thoughts expressed in our journals create vibrations that lead to results in all areas of our lives. Look for patterns in your journal, re-read your writing and ask yourself, what do you notice about what you wrote? What are you attracting and manifesting through your journaling?

Transformational journaling is a way of coming home to the self. We don't always know why everything happens

or why certain struggles or triumphs appear in our lives, but as coaches we know that everything is part of a greater whole. There's value in looking at every situation in life as an opportunity for deeper healing, greater awareness and increased compassion for ourselves and others. Transformational journaling is one tool that can help coaches and our

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clients live more awakened, healthy and conscious lives.

Journaling is like meditating with a pen in your hand. This reflective practice can help us grow as change agents and leaders as we drop the pebble of increased self-awareness into the pool of our lives.

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