



How to Use Journaling in Treatment with Justice-Involved Clients

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Definition of Journaling

“It's simply writing down your thoughts and feelings to understand them more clearly. And if you struggle with stress, depression, or anxiety, keeping a journal can be a great idea. It can help you gain control of your emotions and improve your mental health.”

Journaling for Emotional Wellness - Health Encyclopedia



Research on Journaling

Dimitroff, L. J., Sliwoski, L., O'Brien, S., & Nichols, L. W. (2017). **Change your life through journaling—The benefits of journaling for registered nurses.** Journal of Nursing Education and Practice, 7(2), 90-98.

Sixty-six (66) nurses looked at effect of journaling on degree of compassion satisfaction CO, (the degree of satisfaction from helping another person, burnout (BO), and trauma/compassion fatigue (TCF) present in registered nurses (Rns). Another objective of this study was to gain knowledge about participants' experiences with journaling.

They found that all groups improved after taking the course. Participants noted: the following:

“journaling allowed me to unleash my inner most feelings”,

“journaling helped me to articulate and understand my feelings concretely”,

“journaling helped me make more reasonable decisions.”



Research on Journaling

Feinblum, D., Gonzalez, R., & Clyne, M. (2016). **Journaling: A Caring Initiative.** International Journal for Human Caring, 20(1).

Journals were offered to mothers separated from their newborns in a 9-bed neonatal intensive care unit. Questionnaires were given to the mothers when their newborns were discharged.

They found that “journaling provides opportunities for the expression of feelings, self-healing while building and strengthening caring connections thereby facilitating attachments”



Research on Journaling

Hwang, B., Choi, H., Kim, S., Kim, S., Ko, H., & Kim, J. (2018). **Facilitating student learning with critical reflective journaling in psychiatric mental health nursing clinical education: A qualitative study.** *Nurse education today*, 69, 159-164.

This study had 59 nurses journaling about the following issues: *boundaries of therapeutic relationships, responses to patient symptoms, and own attitudes and biases toward mental illness.*

The subjects reported that critical reflective journaling **provided them opportunities for self-reflection which led to increased motivation for full engagement in the clinical practicum and increased understanding of patients' perspectives**



Research on Journaling

Cook, J. M., Simiola, V., McCarthy, E., Ellis, A., & Stirman, S. W. (2018). **Use of reflective journaling to understand decision making regarding two evidence-based psychotherapies for PTSD: Practice implications.** Practice Innovations, 3(3), 153.

24 Graduate Students were surveyed

They found that “**reflective journaling appears to be a promising way for trainers and treatment developers to gather important information about the clinical application and decision-making process for front-line providers**”



Research on Journaling

Woodbridge, L., & Rust O'Beirne, B. (2017). **Counseling students' perceptions of journaling as a tool for developing reflective thinking.** Journal of Counselor Preparation and Supervision, 9(2), 12.

Participants indicated that **journaling led to greater self-awareness and provided opportunities to practice the reflective thinking they will need in their counseling careers.**

“The findings are useful to counselor educators who may be considering implementing or modifying journal or other reflective thinking assignments in their courses.”



Research on Journaling

Haertl, K. L., & Ero-Phillips, A. M. (2019). The healing properties of writing for persons with mental health conditions. *Arts & Health*, 11(1), 15-25.

Interviews were conducted with 12 people diagnosed with a mental health conditions.

“Results demonstrated the importance of writing in perspective taking, enhanced understanding of the self and others, the spiritual nature of writing, and the promotion of health and healing.”

“There is power in written expression and the personal sharing of one’s story. Writing shows promise not only as a therapeutic tool during intervention, but as an ongoing avocational activity with many personal and health benefits.”



Research on Journaling

Williams, G. B., Gerardi, M. B., Gill, S. L., Soucy, M. D., & Taliaferro, D. H. (2009). Reflective journaling: Innovative strategy for self-awareness for graduate nursing students. *International Journal of Human Caring*, 13(3), 36-43.

16 graduate students enrolled in an RN program used journals to discuss becoming aware of their own feelings and biases in relationship to patients with mental illness. The students wrote about their feelings of discomfort in relationship to being fully present and preconceived notions when working with individuals in a psychiatric setting.

“Through the process of structured reflective journaling, the students were also able to share what they learned in the course and, more importantly, what they learned about themselves in relationship to caring for persons with mental illness.”

“Personal growth occurred over time with students obtaining a clearer meaning of their role as practitioners in a psychiatric setting as the semester progressed.”



Journaling for Students

Wedgeworth, M. L., Carter, S. C., & Ford, C. D. (2017). Clinical faculty preceptors and mental health reflections: Learning through journaling. *The Journal for Nurse Practitioners*, 13(6), 411- 417.

“Guided clinical journaling allows students to reflect and retain their clinical experiences and become an active participant in the learning process. ”



Journaling for Adolescents

Utley, A., & Garza, Y. (2011). The therapeutic use of journaling with adolescents. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health*, 6(1), 29-41.

“The proposed technique has been used with positive results with adolescents in a clinical setting. Additionally, we provide suggestions for expanding the concept of journaling to expressive artwork.”



Journaling Clubs

Owen, S., Whewey, J., and Anderson, M, (2001), Nurse Education Today, The use of a journal club and clinical seminars on a 4-year undergraduate, pre-registration mental- health nursing degree, 21(4) 297-303.

This article **indicates the usefulness of using a journal club** and clinical seminars as a learning strategy for mental-health nursing students. They also highlight benefits of using a journal club and clinical seminars.



What is Journaling

Journaling is a term used in many ways.

It *is not* the same as keeping a diary or necessarily a daily practice.

It is best used as a tool to allow the negative thoughts to transition from your mind to the page.



What is Journaling

It is best used in the moment of distress, only when you can't let go of thoughts.

It is best written, not typed in notes on the phone.

The actual act of writing, the kinetic energy is also a factor in ridding ruminative thoughts. It allows the flow of thoughts from your mind through your arm to the page.

It allows the mind-body connection.



What is Journaling

Think of your journal as your trusted friend.

Someone you can tell anything to, with no judgment.



What is Journaling is Not

Gratitude journals, assigned tasks do not have the same benefits of a free-flowing journal.

Not a regimented daily task.

Not an assignment.

Not an outline.



How to Introduce Journaling to Clients

Do they struggle with ruminating thoughts?

Would they like to try to rid themselves of the thoughts.



Outcomes

Letting go of thoughts

Comfort/Release of Negative Emotions

Solutions

Sharing insights



Over the Years

Sometimes it is helpful to look back and see what you have endured.

Can put things in perspective.

You can be proud of your ability to navigate difficult time.

Recognize life has its ups and downs.





@Gobsmackedcomic

"Whenever I move forward in life
I suddenly take a turn."

Remember

“Ordinary men think of things as blessings and curses, warriors think of things as challenges.”

Chris Germer, Ph.D.

Be a warrior...

Everything in life can be viewed as an opportunity to learn.



Be kind to yourself

Journaling is a way to take care of yourself.

It is always there for you, even in the middle of the night.

It allows you to take care of yourself.

It allows you to collect your thoughts and make mindful decisions.



For Your Eyes Only

It is best to journal as if no one else was going to read it. Then you don't edit yourself, you just let the words flow.



How it is done

Just write.....

Shut the journal and *don't read it..*

Reading what you wrote only brings it back again.



Treat Yourself

Buy a nice notebook

Keep it handy

Embrace the feeling after you journal

Nurture yourself after journaling.



Considerations

Private place to put journal.

Don't have to make it a daily practice, only when you need it.

The concern that it may be too triggering.



Challenges

Prisons, residential programs and inpatient facilities may not offer the privacy of keeping a journal.

They may be able to write it out, to discharge it from their mind and then rip it up.

The same is true for a subpoena, this is not to be kept as part of the client's chart or if the client wants you to have it, you can keep it in a separate place from your clinical notes.



Challenges

Clients with low IQ, DD or challenges with writing can dictate it into the phone, but that does not have the same kinetic effect.

The whole point is to discharge the unwanted thoughts.



Challenges

The same is true for a subpoena, this is not to be kept as part of the client's chart or if the client wants you to have it, you can keep it in a separate place from your clinical notes.



Namaste

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