

The OCD Healing Journey:  
Writing & Reflecting

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Plan for Today's Activity

- Overview information about journaling
- What, Why, How
- Experiential exercises




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Word on "OCD Healing"

- Another tool in your toolbox




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### Studying Writing

- Dr. Ira Progoff began the “intensive Journal Method” in 1960s
- Has been studied for centuries but 1st systematic experimental study by Pennebaker & Beal in 1986
- Since then, hundreds of randomly controlled trials looking at the effect of expressive writing on physical, emotional & behavioral health outcomes
- Many focused on trauma and PTSD; one of the newest being used for PTSD is WET (Written Exposure Therapy) by Sloan & Marx
- Well known as potentially beneficial for all issues and all people!

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### Incredible Findings

Physical Health	Psychological Health	Behavioral Health
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fewer stress-related visits to the doctor</li> <li>• Fewer days in hospital</li> <li>• Improved immune system functioning</li> <li>• Reduced blood pressure</li> <li>• Improved lung function</li> <li>• Improved liver function</li> <li>• Overall well-being</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved mood &amp; gratitude</li> <li>• Feeling of greater psychological well-being</li> <li>• Reduced anxiety &amp; depressive symptoms</li> <li>• Fewer post-traumatic intrusion &amp; avoidance symptoms</li> <li>• Improved working memory</li> <li>• Increased resilience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced absenteeism from work</li> <li>• Higher students' grade point average</li> <li>• Quicker re-employment after job loss</li> <li>• Improved sporting performance</li> <li>• Altered social &amp; linguistic behavior</li> </ul>

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### Top 8 Reasons to Write

- ✓ Releasing and externalizing of thoughts & feelings
- ✓ Developing more coherent narrative & context
- ✓ Reorganizing thoughts/memories/feelings
- ✓ Prioritizing problems, fears, concerns, decisions
- ✓ Creating more adaptive internal schemas
- ✓ Practicing self-talk, behavioral rehearsal & responses to challenges
- ✓ Extinguishing negative emotional responses
- ✓ Increases mindfulness, self-soothing, self-management

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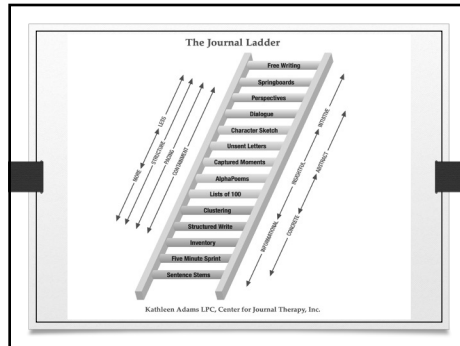
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Additional Notes

- Diary vs. Journal
- Handwriting vs. Typing
- Do it differently sometimes
- Stop Rule: If feeling overwhelmed, OK to stop or pause
- Shredder Rule: If don't want the writing, discard it
- Allow silence and space as needed

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“Wounded Writer” Compassion

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- Writing ridicule/shame/hurt in past
- LDs (such as Dyslexia or Dysgraphia)
- Writing OCD or Just right/Perfectionism OCD which affects writing
- Journal betrayals/privacy invasions in past



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The Beauty of Imperfection



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Today’s Experiential Writing Exercises

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- Writing is only for you
- Some sharing time if interested; ok to focus on the experience of writing more than the content
- Encouraged to write as openly and honestly as possible
- Works best to write quickly and continuously without regard to spelling or grammar; run-on sentences are welcome!
- If finish before time up, keep writing: expand on what has already written or repeat
- No wrong or right – just write
- Each exercise about 5-10 minutes each

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Something Meaningful or Beautiful

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➤ Because review and documentation helps!



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Non-Dominant Hand Writing\*

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➤ Because OCD/Anxiety often criticizes!

- Switch pen to non-dominant hand & write:
  - I am writing with my non-dominant hand.
- Next sentence with non-dominant hand:
  - I feel \_\_\_\_\_ while trying to write with my non-dominant hand.
- Answer this question with non-dominant hand:
  - If you were told you needed to write with your non-dominant hand for the rest of your life, what would you do?



(\*Originally published: Laura Hill, PhD, Eating Disorder Manual 2012)

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Body Wisdom

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➤ Because getting out of the head is valuable!



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Mindfulness Rocks

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➤ Because random creativity creates freedom!



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OCD Character Sketch

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➤ Because externalizing and separating out OCD helps!

- Write a description of OCD as a character in a book/ play:
  - Visual, personality, character descriptions (appearance, wardrobe, personality, qualities, quirks, wants, needs, motivations, etc.)
  - Core values, usual messages
  - Things it has taught you, things you want to tell it
  - OCD's attitude/feelings about being at the OCD conference



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OCD Acrostic (“Acronym Poetry”)

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➤ Because flexibility and fun is important!

- OCD
- ERP
- SUDs
- CBT
- ACT
- Others...

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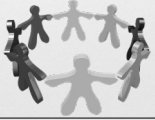
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### Support Team

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➤ Because getting support is key!

- Protectors
- Nurturers
- Wise Figures
- Superpower Self



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### Letter to self

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➤ Because reinforcement & practice is key!

- What is something you have noticed or learned and would like to have as a reminder to yourself in the future?
- Once done, seal it into an envelope, write your address on it and give to me. I will mail back to you in several months.

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\* Kay Adams

### Write On with CARES\*

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- **C**onfidentiality. You're welcome to share your own experience with anyone you choose – or not
- **A**cceptance. Take what comes. Part of the journal journey is going off in directions you never thought you would. Accept your writes, your patterns, and yourself.
- **R**espect. Respect and trust the process of writing; what feels like it isn't going anywhere may well connect up some pages from now. Respect your own limits; don't force yourself to write about a topic that doesn't feel safe or interesting.
- **E**xperimentation. Stretch yourself to go beyond your comfort zone and experiment with new writing techniques and topics. Try on new approaches and seek new outcomes.
- **S**upport. Give yourself the structure and support that serves your writing process. Please stay positive and supportive of yourself in this process.

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Thank you for coming & writing!

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Writing Books/Workbooks

- Adams, Kathleen (1998). *The Way of the Journal: A Journal Therapy Workbook for Healing*. Silver Press.
- Bullock, Christina (1992). *One to One: Self-Understanding Through Journal Writing*. Evans Publisher.
- DeSola, Louise A. (2005). *Writing the Way of Healing: A New Telling Our Story*. Trueman Our Lane. Beacon Press.
- Fox, John (1997). *Post-Modern: The Healing Art of Photo-Making*. Tarcher Press.
- Goldberg, Natalie and Guest, Judith (1986). *Writing Down the Bones: Freeing the Writer Within*. Shambhala Press.
- Jacobs, Beth (2005). *Writing for Emotional Balance*. New Harbinger Publishers.
- Pined, Maura (2003). *Crash Your Own Color: A Journal for Creating, Healing, and Living*. Teacher's Pet Press.
- Pineschaker, James W. (1997). *Opening Up: The Healing Power of Expressing Emotion*. NY: Guilford Press.
- Pineschaker, J.W. & Smyth, J.M. (2016). *Opening Up by Writing it Down*. NY: Guilford Press.
- Pineschaker, J.W. & Evans, J.P. (2016). *Expressive Writing: What it is, How to Use it, and Why it Works*. WA: JPHL Books.
- Pineschaker, J.W. (2016). *Writing to Heal: A Guided Journal for Recovering from Trauma and Emotional Upheaval*. Denver, CO: Center for Journal Therapy.
- Page, L. (1973). *A journal workshop: The basic text and guide for using the Intensive Journal*. New York, NY: Doubleday House Library.
- Raince, Yvonne (1979). *The New Diary: A Year to Live a Journal for Self-Confidence and Expanded Creativity*. Teacher's Pet Press.

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On Line Resources



International Association of Journal Writing:  
[www.iajw.org](http://www.iajw.org)

The Center for Journal Therapy (Kathleen Adams):  
[www.journaltherapy.com](http://www.journaltherapy.com)

Intensive Journal (Ira Progoff):  
[www.intensivejournal.org](http://www.intensivejournal.org)

64 Journal Prompts for Self-Discovery:  
[Psychcentral.com](http://Psychcentral.com)

63 Journal Prompts for Anxiety & Tips for Getting Started  
[choosingtherapy.com](http://choosingtherapy.com)

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
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**Resources**



Bullis, K.A. & Wilhelm, K. (2005). Emotional and physical health benefits of expressive writing. *Advances in Psychiatric Treatment*, 11, 338-346.

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Borkin, Susan (2014). *The healing power of writing: A therapist's guide to using journaling with clients*. W.W. Norton: New York.

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Pennachaker, J.W. & Chang, C.K. (2011). Expressive writing: Connections to physical and mental health. *Oxford Handbook of Health Psychology*, 417-437.

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