Journaling for the Early Childhood Educator: Personal Writing for Well-being by Carolyn Koesters

How do we use writing?
- Expression
- Communication
- Health benefits
- Documentation
- Goal-setting
- Brainstorming
- What else?

There are no rules to journaling, so you can’t do it wrong.
1. Beware of... redpenophobia!
2. Handwriting/typing- just the act of releasing it triggers some health benefits.
3. You may have to try several times!
4. Take some time to review what you write from time to time.
5. Your privacy is important!
6. Focus on your process, and what you can control.

Freewriting:
The point is just to keep your pen moving, no matter what.

- Set a time limit or a page limit.
- It doesn’t matter what you write,
  as long as you are writing for the whole time.
- Stuck? Try “I don’t know what to write” until something comes to you.
- It may help to start with a prompt such as “I remember...”
- Important: Add a reflection sentence at the end.

Journal of the American Medicine Association:
According to studies conducted by Joshua Smyth, Ph.D. conducted at North Dakota State University, (2002) writing stories about distressing events and the emotions they trigger has proven physical benefits: Reduced symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis and asthma. 47% of patients with asthma and rheumatoid arthritis improved after writing about the most traumatic event in their lives.

- Sentence stems:
  - I am...
  - Here’s what I know...
  - I want to remember...
  - Once upon a time...
  - I am not in control of:
  - I am in control of:
  - One thing I can do right now...
  - I’m proud because...
  - Next time I want to:

- Techniques:
  - 3 feeling words before/after
  - Mindmap
  - Poemdrop
  - Timeline
  - Make a list
  - Unsent letter
  - Gratitude
What can gratitude do for you: 26 studies and counting!

- Attention to the present: specificity
- Thnx4.org: register for an online gratitude prompt and journal, and a gratitude profile.

**Evidence That It Works:**
- Participants who kept a gratitude journal weekly for 10 weeks or daily for two weeks experienced more gratitude, positive moods, optimism about the future, and better sleep.

“Writing is like breathing. I believe that. I believe we all come into life as writers. We are born with a gift for language and it comes to us within months as we begin to name our world. We all have a sense of ownership, a sense of satisfaction as we name the objects that we find. Words give us power.” –Julia Cameron

**Questions?**

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**Resources:**
- **Adams, Kay.** (999) *Writing as therapy.* Counseling & Human Development. Denver: Love Publishing.
- **Carroll, Ryder** [www.bulletjournal.com](http://www.bulletjournal.com)
- **Pennebaker, Dr. James.** *Opening Up: The Healing Power of Expressing Emotions.* 1997.
- **Pennebaker, Dr. James.** *Writing to Heal: A Guided Journal for Recovering from Trauma and Emotional Upheaval.* 2004.

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