

*By Mari L. McCarthy*

# Overcome Life's Stresses and Strains with Journaling Power



[CreateWriteNow.com](http://CreateWriteNow.com)

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## Intro

Everyone's life is a work in progress. As we grow older, gain knowledge and experience, engage in relationships – good and bad – and deal with a wide range of emotional events we are, consciously and unconsciously, shaping who we are. Inevitably, there are things about ourselves that we like and dislike.

For many of us, life can hold some unexpected twists that can have a severe emotional effect – illness, soured relationships, career setbacks, trauma, the death of someone close. Some of these events can result in anxiety, depression, and other psychological stumbling blocks that can prevent us from leading the full, satisfying, happy lives we all want. How we handle those stumbling blocks is key to our future happiness and well-being.

This eBook will examine ways in which individuals seek to address the stresses and strains of life, offer some solutions, and discuss the benefits of therapeutic journaling. Its purpose is to help people discover a deceptively simple but effective way to manage the challenges that can have a negative impact on their wellbeing and enable them take better control of their lives.

# Chapter 1: Taking Stock of Where You Are

We've all heard the term "mid-life crisis." It's often used as an excuse for questionable behavior or as the butt of professional comedians' jokes. But a mid-life crisis is no laughing matter for many folks.

For some, entering middle age means dealing with troublesome teens, spousal disputes, and aging parents, all of which can have negative effects on our mental state and emotional well-being. For others, reaching retirement age holds psychological pitfalls – the end of a career that provided identity, satisfaction, and a reliable income; empty-nest syndrome; anxiety about the future; and an unsettling change in responsibilities and relationships.

Regardless of the stage in life that may be triggering negative effects and causing individuals to reevaluate their lives and relationships, most people want to find positive ways to address the challenges they face. The majority, however, do nothing and just accept what they might see as "their fate." So they stumble along, trapped in a cycle of despair, complaining about their situation. They begin to believe that there's nothing they can really do, that there are no options, no tools available to help them get off that treadmill of misery.

The idea that they have any choice in the matter is foreign to them. For many, this kind of mental self-prison is the only life they've known and they've come to accept it as an unalterable status quo. Compounding the problem is the sad truth that misery loves company. Miserable individuals, whether they realize it or not, tend to seek out other miserable individuals to help each other remain miserable. Together, they become a self-sustaining support group of misery.

Without positive change, individuals suffering with this kind of incapacity face a variety of bleak outcomes. Some experience serious health issues that exacerbate the problem. Others struggle with financial issues and relationship problems, including divorce. In the worst cases, an early death from illness or suicide can be the result.

In reality, most people can and need to take control of their lives to affect positive change. They need to accept responsibility for themselves and their own wellbeing and begin to make new choices to break the negative cycle. In this age of the internet, many look online for self-help books and check out social media channels for like-minded people with whom they can share thoughts, advice, and self-help solutions. Some talk with clergy, physicians, family members, and friends. All are curious about figuring out how they can improve their outlook on life, but they often need better, more informed guidance to help steer them toward a successful outcome.

## Turning Toward the Light: Small Steps Can Yield Big Results

If what you've read so far sounds like you, have courage. There is hope everywhere. Making time for yourself is the first step. If toxic people – or even well-intentioned individuals – are monopolizing your time, start by putting a stop to that. Put yourself first. Prioritizing time for yourself will not only help minimize the chaos in your life, it'll make you more efficient at the things you do, all of which can contribute to peace-of-mind and an improved outlook.

Friends and family are a good place to start frank discussions about how you can eliminate the bad and emphasize the good in your life. That, of course, requires those individuals to be a positive source of companionship and encouragement. If they're a source of negativity, look elsewhere.

These kinds of small steps can go a long way toward improving your situation. Saying "no" to toxic situations, carving out more time to focus on yourself and your needs, and receiving encouragement and support from positive people can have a remarkable impact on your situation. Reaching out is crucial.

That outreach may include doctors, depending on your condition and need. Physicians, of course, are a great resource for addressing everything from a simple "I don't feel well," to full-blown acute medical issues. Unfortunately, though, general physicians can have trouble with the physical manifestations of mental conditions such as stress and depression. As a result, they may treat everything with a prescription, which may not be the best course of action. If the underlying problem doesn't reveal itself in medical tests, they may not know how to effectively treat you. For example, if the physical problem originates from stress, the real issue is how to manage that stress, and not simply treat the physical ailment topically. Conversely, illness can induce stress. And so while getting treatment for that illness from a physician is clearly a great way to start, it doesn't necessarily help with the resulting stress. That still needs to be addressed to create overall wellness.

Many conditions and situations spawn a cottage industry of do-it-yourself programs. Take weight-loss, for instance. There are innumerable diet programs and strategies out there, almost too many to count. If you've been struggling with weight-loss, which course-of-action is right for you? And when you find one that you think will work, it's important to remember that the solution you've chosen is just a tool. To make it work requires resolve, personal commitment, and a fundamental lifestyle change. In truth, many individuals simply have trouble following through in the long term on things such as diet and fitness programs. The solution may make perfect sense and will most likely work, but it involves taking action and committing to it.

## Chapter 2: Writing Your Way to Wellness

Fortunately, there is a way to begin your journey to happiness and peace-of-mind, and it's as simple as paper and pencil. Called Journaling For The Health Of It™ or therapeutic journaling, this technique uses writing to help individuals focus on their thoughts and inner self to encourage awareness and improve overall mental health. Therapeutic journaling helps us get into how we think, feel, and behave. It helps us understand the origins of our “crazy thoughts” and previously unexplainable behavior (“why did I do THAT?”).

Let's be clear – this is not “keeping a diary.” It's not writing a tell-all book. It's the therapeutic use of writing exercises to help individuals get into their inner selves and understand the mental and emotional baggage they carry around. Therapeutic journaling can help you confront the limits that you have been unconsciously putting on yourself and break the chains of misery that keep you from the life and happiness that you – that we all – deserve.

This is not feel-good psycho-babble. There is scientific evidence that supports the benefits of therapeutic journaling. The physical act of writing works the analytical and rational left side of your brain. That, in turn, frees up the right side of your brain – the creative, intuitive, and emotional side – to better understand why you do what you do. To intuitively grasp how your relationships work, or don't. Therapeutic journaling is a tool for turning your brain loose.

### Tackling Your Troubles, One Topic at a Time

Often it can seem like our lives are running us and we're not running our lives. We're too busy reacting to the stresses and strains of daily life without really connecting with who we really are. Therapeutic journaling provides the opportunity to examine the issues that are troubling you and tease them apart by writing about them. It works by helping you develop the practice of quiet self-awareness, of taking the time away from others to breathe and reflect on the issues that are causing you stress. Keeping a therapy journal enables you to separate yourself mentally from bad situations; to go internal and spend time with yourself to safely examine what's happening, regain your own identity and chart a course away from whatever's troubling you.

For example, let's say you're having trouble at work getting along with your co-workers because you're pre-occupied with troubles at home. Journaling may help you become aware that you're bringing your home life behavior to work because, as the caregiver of the family, you're getting overwhelmed by your personal responsibilities. As a result, your home troubles are now becoming work troubles. Therapeutic journaling can help facilitate solutions to unhealthy family dynamics. It can assist in establishing a clear solution through documenting the thoughts and feelings that are the source of the stress. Journaling provides a safe place to examine your behavior. It enables you to better understand your personal persona and your business persona and how to separate them to avoid unnecessary conflicts.

Perhaps you find yourself in a rut caused by people who are toxic, dragging you down mentally with their relentless negativity. Therapeutic journaling enables you to mentally

get away from these toxic individuals and quietly reflect on the ways they are negatively influencing you and causing stress. By understanding the root of the problem, you're in a better position to effectively deal with it and eliminate the toxicity in your life.

### Just Take a Little Time to Write

One of the most attractive attributes of therapeutic journaling is that it's free. All it takes is pencil or pen and paper and a little time to write. You don't have to spend a dime on the solution or the space you need to explore your problems and challenges. Therapeutic journaling is a simple, effective approach to empowering yourself and engendering positive change.

Part of what makes journal therapy so powerful is that it is a solo effort – what goes down on paper comes out of your head. There's no one there to tell you what to write or how. Just putting words on paper will open up new avenues of thought, new ways to handle whatever situations you find yourself in. Journaling can reveal options you previously may not have thought even existed.

Therapeutic journaling is not so much about what you write, but that you simply are writing. Writing forces you to quiet your mind, funnel your thoughts, and organize things. No matter what you write – disjointed words, stream-of-consciousness thoughts, complete sentences or paragraphs – you're keeping a record of your current mental state and your progress. Individuals who journal for some period of time are often amazed at how far they've come and how much progress they've made when they look back at their previous entries.

You cannot change your past, but journaling will help you explore it and find a way to a better future through positive change and personal growth.

## Chapter 3: Harnessing the Power of Journaling For The Health Of It™

As mentioned earlier, therapeutic journaling is not the same as keeping a diary. It is an effective self-help tool for tackling mental health issues such as depression, relationship problems, and any other daily life situation that is causing you stress and contributing to an unhealthy psychological state.

Therapeutic journaling has been used to treat a variety of conditions, including:

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Obsessive-compulsive behavior
- Grief and loss
- Chronic illness issues
- Substance abuse
- Eating disorders
- Relationship problems
- Family discord
- Low self-esteem

It is, first and foremost, a process. It is not like writing an article, crafting a speech, or penning letter. It is a spontaneous, free-form exercise meant to open your mind, free your thoughts, and help you examine situations and explore options for dealing with them effectively. You can work in linear thoughts or plunk down random words, phrases, and emotional responses. Whatever works best for you and helps you break whatever mental or emotional logjam is holding you back.

You can think of therapeutic journaling in many different ways to help you get started and stay with it. It can be:

- Your head talking to your heart
- Your current self giving advice to your younger self
- Your rational self talking to your emotional self
- Whatever works to create an internal dialog, or simply get your thoughts down on paper

The trick is to avoid making excuses for not journaling. Common excuses include “I don’t have the time”...“it won’t work for me”...“looking too closely at things will open old wounds”...“I might not like what I’ll learn.” None of these hold water – the benefits of therapeutic journaling significantly outweigh any excuse you might come up with.

Once you get started, your journal will become a non-judgmental, empathetic friend -- openly accepting all your thoughts, concerns, anxieties, and worries and ready to gently help you work through issues to reach solutions.

# What is CreateWriteNow?

CreateWriteNow is the home of Journaling For The Health Of It™

Founder and Chief Empowerment Officer Mari L. McCarthy is an award-winning, international best-selling self-help author and therapeutic journaling mentor. Mari's first-hand experience with therapeutic journaling has helped her recover from multiple sclerosis and led her to establish CreateWriteNow where she shows health conscious people how to heal the issues in their tissues and create the happy, healthy life THEY want to live.

What sets CreateWriteNow apart from other therapeutic journaling practices is its focus on the individual, not the mechanics of writing. Gaining a deeper understanding of clients, who they are, the challenges they're facing, and where they'd like to be with their lives enables Mari to be highly effective in helping them reach their goals.

CreateWriteNow offers one-on-one Journaling For The Health Of It™ mentoring sessions and over 20 life-changing journaling power courses to help clients address specific issues and challenges like self-esteem, health and grief.