

How Keeping a Journal Helps
by Alison Waines

Keeping a Journal is one of the most useful tools I know for any kind of recovery or development. It has huge therapeutic benefit on different levels: on a 'Feeling' level, 'Understanding yourself' level and 'Now what am I going to do about it' level!

Look at the 26 benefits below and see whether starting your own personal Journal is worth a try: (see 'Keeping a Journal' for how to get started).

Keeping a Journal can help you to:

1. Feeling/Emotional Level: Expressing Yourself

- * Gain immediate release and relief, because you are getting every-day 'stuff' off your chest (like a weight being lifted from your shoulders).
- * Clear away the clutter of niggling, often half-formed thoughts.
- * Bring into the light, hidden and suppressed feelings and thoughts.
- * Get acquainted with your turbulent emotions and needs.
- * Become less frightened by your feelings, because you have labelled them and are getting to know them.
- * Get worries out of your head and onto paper where you might be able to see some choices and possible courses of action.
- * Allow yourself to experience certain feelings, owning up to them, giving yourself permission to express them.
- * Become more supportive to yourself.

2. Cognitive Level: Making Sense/Understanding Yourself

- * Understand yourself more and why you respond in particular ways.
- * Reflect on how you usually deal with stress, set-backs and problems.

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- * Get clarity about what is going on, gaining perspective and seeing how you might have got some things out of proportion.
- * Be more objective and looking at concerns more rationally.
- * Make better decisions because you can see a bigger picture.
- * Understand your own needs and what you truly want from life.
- * Gain insights into your unhelpful habits and destructive behaviour patterns.
- * Acknowledge your *helpful* habits and what works well, so you can do more of it.
- * Identify areas where you want to improve and change.
- * Get more sense of purpose and direction in your life.
- * Develop a record of strengths and resources which help you through bad times.
- * Recognise important milestones.
- * See how you are changing and moving forward.

3. Now what am I going to do about it? - Action Level: Making Changes

- * Turning stress and worry into problem-solving.
- * By taking action you may be able to change the outcome of your concerns from your worst fear into something more positive.
- * Becoming empowered, because you are actively doing something to improve your situation.
- * Building confidence in dealing with problems, trusting you can cope and think them through. This gives you confidence for facing and dealing with future problems.
- * Increased self-esteem, because you are taking responsibility and moving your position from being passive and powerless to pro-active.

For further details see: *The Self-Esteem Journal: Using a Journal to Build Self-Esteem* by Alison Waines (available from www.amazon.co.uk [£5.99] or Waterstones).