

DR. NEIL - MD
Mastering Stress Series

THE *Write* WAY TO
MANAGE
YOUR STRESS

Writing Tools & Inspirational
Stories for Hope, Healing &
Personal Growth



Rewrite
the Story of
Your Life!

Neil F. Neimark, M.D.
Board Certified Family Physician

The Write Way to Manage Your Stress

F i r s t E d i t i o n

*Writing Tools & Inspirational Stories
for Hope, Healing & Personal Growth*

NEIL F. NEIMARK, M.D.

R . E . P . T e c h n o l o g i e s P u b l i s h e r s

The Write Way to Manage Your Stress:
Writing Tools & Inspirational Stories for Hope, Healing & Personal Growth
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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to my loving parents:

. . . to the blessed memory of my beloved father, Harry Neimark, who—by the sheer strength of his example—taught me the value of honesty, the rewards of hard work, the power of optimism and the healing grace of a loving family.

. . . and to the living honor of my beloved mother, Sippy Neimark, who—by her gentle example—continues to teach me the healing power of unconditional love, the willingness to grow, the grace of forgiveness, and the inestimable sacredness of family.

DISCLAIMER

This book should not be substituted for the advice and treatment of a physician, psychologist or therapist, but rather should be used in addition to traditional medical and psychological therapies. The author and publisher disclaim responsibility for any adverse effects resulting from the information contained herein.

Caution: If you are working on major fears, family of origin, rape/incest or other exceptionally highly charged issues, do not do these journaling exercises without the help of a therapist or doctor

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION ONE:

Journaling as a Tool for Healing

A PERSONAL STORY	13
JOURNALING AND HEALTH	25
HEALTH AND HEALING	29
JOURNALING AND THE MINDBODYSPIRIT CONNECTION	37
HOW TO USE THIS HANDBOOK	63
A WORD OF CAUTION	65

SECTION TWO:

<i>Journaling Methods for Processing Difficult Emotions</i>	69
THE LOVE LETTER TECHNIQUE	71
TAKING THE ONE SEAT	93
GUIDED FEELING JOURNALING	101
THE POWER OF YOUR OTHER HAND	109
<i>Journaling Methods for Overcoming Negative Thoughts and Limiting Beliefs</i>	115
AFFIRMATION JOURNALING	117
EMETT JOURNALING METHOD	123
LOVE YOURSELF HEAL YOUR LIFE JOURNALING	135
COGNITIVE THERAPY JOURNALING	145
<i>Journaling Methods for Self-Discovery</i>	159
GRATITUDE JOURNALING	161
SENTENCE STEM JOURNALING	169
SELF-PARENTING JOURNALING	179
EMBRACING OUR SELVES: VOICE DIALOGUE JOURNALING	191
AWARENESS JOURNALING	207
PRAYER JOURNALING	213
WRITING AN ETHICAL WILL	233
CONCLUSION	245
MORE ABOUT THE AUTHOR	247

PREFACE

I make many references to God in this book. Conceptualizations of God vary from religion to religion, but I refer to God not only as the creator and sustainer of the universe, but also as the highest and noblest traits we are capable of: love, compassion, joy, mercy, justice, honesty, kindness, good deeds, grace, beauty, peace and mutual respect for the sacredness of life. If you are not sure where you stand in relationship to God, then you may substitute any one of the above attributes in place of the word God. Most everyone believes in love, beauty, peace and joy. I consider these all to be “nicknames” for God.

I also tell many stories in this book. Though I have chosen stories from many different religions, I have drawn heavily upon stories that come from my Jewish heritage, only because I am most familiar with these stories. In order to make the stories more readable and more universal, I have substituted the word “Master” for rabbi, priest, mentor, father, etc. At the end of each story, I credit—when known—the actual name of the Master who the story refers to, as well as the source of the story. In the sense that I use the word, Master means “teacher” and nothing more. In no way do I mean to imply that one Master is holier, more important or more powerful than any other Master. They are all teachers. Additionally, we are all students and teachers at various points in our lives.

I believe that the many religions are like different bridges leading to spirituality. As such, religion connects us to both a *higher power* (for me that is God; for you it may be love, beauty, truth, nature, a sense of community, etc.) and a *higher purpose* (that we are not here by accident, but that there is a meaning and a purpose for our lives, that we are a part of something bigger than ourselves, beyond our full comprehension). Though all religions have different rules and rituals prescribing how to achieve a spiritual connection, I leave it up to you to find those rituals and religious practices which most help you reach a stronger sense of spirituality.

It is unfortunate that so many people have been subjected to the worst kind of guilt, shame and fear in the name of religion, but I am acutely aware that this is so. For this reason—out of sensitivity to those who either do not believe in God or have found formal religion to be in some way abusive—I want to say that I believe that true spirituality leads to the fruit of greater love, kindness and compassion. If you are suffering shame, guilt or excessive fear in your religious practices, I suggest you speak to a counselor or impartial religious authority to help you better understand where you stand in relationship to God, religion and spirituality. A sense of spirituality is essential to all forms of healing and a necessary prerequisite for inner peace. If you struggle with the stringency of certain religious rituals and authority figures, I urge you not to discard your search for spirituality; don’t throw out the baby with the bath water.

That being said, I wish you the very best in your personal journey towards health and healing.

Neil Neimark

Irvine, California - January 2015

A PERSONAL STORY

The day will come when, after harnessing space, the winds, the tides, and gravitation, we shall harness for God the energies of love. And on that day, for the second time in the history of the world, we shall have discovered fire.

PIERRE TEILHARD DE CHARDIN

I have devoted my life to caring for the health of others. As a family doctor, I help many patients with physical problems that actually stem from difficulties in their emotional, psychological and spiritual lives. One would be hard-pressed to find a psychologist, a medical doctor and a clergyperson sharing the same office, but in order to really help patients, we—as family doctors—must become all three. When it comes to health, the distinction between physical, psychological and spiritual is often blurred.

I first became interested in the mind/body connection when I became physically ill during my internship in family practice. As an intern, I remember being overwhelmed by the rigors of the work schedule: being up all night every third evening, working over 100 hour weeks, and never having time to sit down uninterrupted for a meal or a moment of rest. In addition to the hectic schedule, I felt homesick, having left behind very dear family and

friends in Ohio to begin a new life as an intern in Baltimore, Maryland. Though I made new friends and acquaintances, I missed my old friends and family—the ones who really knew me, understood me and made me laugh. The busier my schedule became, the more I missed the support, friendship and love of those people who were such a vital part of my past life. I felt isolated, alone and overworked.

One morning, in my third month of internship, after a particularly busy night of call (having had little to no sleep), I woke up in the hospital with a curiously deep feeling of sadness. I was exhausted. I felt alone. I looked at the time on my beeper and thought of the day ahead and began to cry. Tears fell uncontrollably. I tried to get up and go to work but I could not get myself out of bed. I could not “get myself” to do anything.

After several minutes alone in that hospital's small, empty on-call room, I managed to phone my residency director to let him know I could not make it into work that day. I tried to be strong, telling him I just didn't feel well, but I could not hold back my tears. I apologized for feeling so overwhelmed. I tried to convince him—and myself—that I would be okay but I wasn't doing a very good job. My director heard my distress and reassuringly asked me to come in to his office so that he could talk with me.

I walked to the clinic from the hospital, feeling embarrassed that other residents and interns would see me “cracking up” and “losing it.” I felt there was something really wrong with me. I felt terrible that I was unable to work. I felt guilty and somehow weak. I had experienced sadness and aloneness before, but this time, I just could not talk myself out of it. I could not “just be positive.” I could not self-motivate. I could not “pick myself up by the bootstraps.” I felt helpless and knew I needed help.

I made it to the director's office, where we talked for a while. After performing a physical examination, he informed me that a virus might be causing my exhaustion and my depression. We ran some blood tests, and eventually the results showed that I did indeed have a bad case of infectious mononucleosis. He reassured me this was the reason I was feeling so bad, physically and emotionally.

I did not feel reassured. In fact, I knew quite intuitively, that it was the other way around. I was unhappy I was homesick. I felt alone and isolated. I knew my physical illness was a symptom of my emotional emptiness. I knew in my heart that it was my unhappiness that predisposed me to become ill, not the other way around.

I was advised to go back to my apartment and take a week off to rest. I did so, but I didn't get any better. I got more rest, but I also felt more alone. I became more ill and developed a hemolytic anemia, inflammatory hepatitis and jaundice. I had to be hospitalized.

While in the hospital, I remember for the first time feeling cared for and nurtured, especially before bedtime, when the nurses would give me a soft-powder back rub for a few minutes. Their touch was healing. I know now that I was starving for connection, starving to be touched both physically and emotionally by people who cared about me.

After one week in the hospital, I was well enough to be discharged, but it took me six more weeks to physically recover from the mono. During this time, I left my apartment on the residency campus and went to live with my dear friends, Rabbi Mitch and Sheri Wohlberg and their two children. There, I felt connected emotionally, connected to people and things that were meaningful

and important in my life. I no longer felt alone. I no longer felt isolated. I took time to play guitar again (a long-held love of mine). I took time to reevaluate my life.

I was discouraged and disillusioned with my medical training. There seemed to be no humanity, no place for the human connection. I could not understand how we were supposed to convey caring and compassion for patients when the residency schedule required us to ignore our own physical and mental health under the guise of learning to become “good” doctors, capable of grueling hours and abusive demands. To me it was a form of fraternity hazing, at best. I could not trust the system that preached to patients the benefits of staying balanced physically and emotionally, yet brutalized its very own practitioners with inhumane call schedules, sleep deprivation, and endless hours of busywork. I was beset by the hypocrisy. Did it make us better physicians to deny for ourselves the very health advice we were encouraged to give patients?

I struggled deeply with the possibility of leaving medicine forever. I feared that the cold, scientific world of medicine—with its hectic pace and brutal on-call schedule—might not be the path for me. I went into medicine because I longed to make a difference in people’s lives. I loved science and was fascinated with the human body. But I also loved people and was fascinated with the human soul and the spiritual side of life. I dreamed of being the kind of doctor who offered patients not only the power of medical science, but also the power of caring, compassion and love.

After deep thought, contemplation and soul-searching consultation with family and friends, I decided to return to work and finish my internship. I promised myself that after finishing the

year, I would take a break from medicine for a while, and simply enjoy life. Emotionally, I was determined not to let myself ever feel so isolated and alone again. I made a concerted effort to stay in close touch with friends and family as well as try to have as much fun as possible during the remainder of a grueling year

I completed my year of internship and took a two year break from formal training to work in a small walk-in clinic on the shores of Cohasset, Massachusetts. There, I took time to enjoy my life: learned how to ski, started a regular exercise program and re-evaluated my life's goals and dreams. My time away from the rigors of formal training renewed the strength of my commitment to become a doctor and practice the kind of medicine I believed in—a practice blending the best of medical science with genuine care and compassion for the whole person.

Why did I become physically ill and depressed that year?

In looking back, I now see so many contributing factors. Certainly, the inordinate stresses of the job were partly responsible. Under excessive physical and emotional stress—given enough time—anyone can become ill. In addition to the demands of the job, I felt alone and homesick. I missed a strong connection to people who knew and loved me. I felt isolated. Extensive research now shows the vital importance of love and social support in maintaining health and well-being.

Perhaps most important of all—and underlying much of my personal experience of stress and isolation—was the cherished belief I held that “if I just think positive, everything will be okay”

Though hardly anyone can debate the importance of positive thinking, I deeply misunderstood the concept. I believed that positive thinking meant not acknowledging or admitting any negative thoughts or feelings. For me, admitting I felt negative, afraid or in need of help meant that I was complaining, weak or not good enough—all qualities I found distasteful and dared not admit. And so, I chose to be positive at the expense of experiencing, acknowledging and expressing my honest feelings of negativity, fear and helplessness. I pretended to be happy, strong and in charge, when, inside, I was sad, scared and out of control.

Because I believed that it was negative to express my anger, my insecurity, my fear and my disappointment, I failed to reveal my true self and my true feelings. In that failure, I isolated myself. How could others really know what I felt when I was afraid to express my true feelings? How could I let others into my life when I did not allow myself to become vulnerable? I tried to be happy and positive on the outside because I felt ashamed that people would not like me or want to be with me if I was negative, weak, vulnerable or afraid. I was homesick because I did not truly know how to reveal myself to others and allow them into my heart. My fear of looking bad kept me from feeling good.

The pain of my limiting beliefs is what propelled me on a journey of self-discovery, seeking new understandings and new beliefs about my life. I now know that it is our vulnerability—our honest expression of who we are, what we feel and believe—that is the very foundation of all intimacy, healing and relationship. Sometimes we can be surrounded by love but fail to let it in, leaving ourselves alone and afraid. Feeling homesick is not measured by our distance from home, but rather by our distance from the heart. We must all come to recognize the beliefs we hold which

empower fear to close the door to our hearts, preventing others from loving, caring and connecting with us.

The power of honest self-expression

What I have clearly learned in life is that mature positive thinking comes from our willingness to openly face our long-held fears, negative beliefs and judgmental attitudes. Without this acknowledgment, without this ownership, negativity is simply denied and pushed underground—sprouting up later as illness or dis-ease. There is a humorous Woody Allen quote, which roughly paraphrased goes: “I never allow myself to get angry I just keep it inside and grow a tumor instead.” This quip is not far from the truth, as we will explore together later in this book.

The new field of mind/body medicine (psycho-neuroimmunology) now provides the scientific evidence showing us how isolation and aloneness are at the heart of so much unnecessary illness and suffering. As regards our psychological attitudes, a most fascinating finding is that simple positive thinking will not necessarily keep us well, nor will negative thinking necessarily make us ill. Rather, it is honest self-expression that results in the greatest healing. Studies show that the honest expression of emotion, whether it be negative (like fear, anger, resentment and jealousy) or positive (like happiness, peacefulness, joy and laughter) results in an increase in the number and activity of natural killer cells. These cells are an important component of our immune system, offering a first line of defense by destroying viruses and tumor cells. (Margaret Kemeny, Ph.D., in *Healing and The Mind* by Bill Moyers, pp. 195-211.)

There is danger to our body in repressing anger and resentment in the guise of being positive. There is also danger to our body in the inappropriate dumping or over-expression of anger, resentment and hostility. But there is a middle ground of honest self-expression, where we are neither dumping nor repressing, neither dwelling nor denying. Honest self-expression allows us to realize our blessings even as we acknowledge the fear, pain, sadness and loss inherent in a full and vital life.

Honest self-expression is an acquired skill and can be learned by even the most cynical, fearful and hostile among us. But it is also a skill that requires tremendous courage. Honest self-expression represents a true voyage of discovery and exemplifies what Joseph Campbell calls “the hero’s journey.” Honest self-expression demands the ability to see ourselves—as we are—without apology and without pretense. It also demands the ability to see ourselves as we may be—in all our glorious potential—without apology and without pretense.

Marcel Proust, the renowned writer, once said, “The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes.” This is the voyage of honest self-expression—to be able to see ourselves with new eyes, eyes that refuse to deny the truth of our frailties and humanness, and eyes that refuse to deny the innocence, strength, courage and love that lie within each one of us.

Honest self-expression is the skill I lacked during my internship, a skill that might have given me the opportunity to stay well. My belief in positive thinking—though well intentioned—prevented me from expressing my discontent and disappointment in a way that I could feel positive and connected to people, as well as to my own ideals. My belief prevented me from being real, honest

and emotionally available for love, commitment and community. My belief kept me feeling isolated and alone.

I have spent the last twenty years trying to better understand how the appropriate and honest expression of emotion helps us live healthier, happier and more joyous lives. It is in my pursuit of this balanced place of honest self-expression that I have written this book. I am firmly convinced that by discovering, acknowledging and eliminating negative beliefs—and choosing and cultivating new, positive and empowering beliefs in their place—we can heal our isolation, minimize illness and achieve a greater sense of emotional happiness, mental calm and spiritual well-being.

At the same time, we need to understand that negative beliefs are not “bad.” Both positive and negative beliefs can heal us. Positive beliefs engender hope and possibility which engage and activate our healing system. Negative beliefs heal us in the feedback they provide. Suffering the consequences of our negative or disempowering beliefs is what leads us to grow and change. Sometimes, when I am in pain and struggling with an issue in my life, I confide in my dear friend and mentor, Rick Nyberg, who often says, tongue-in-cheek, “May God grant you more suffering.” Then he smiles and tells me not to take myself so seriously, knowing that our suffering often empowers us to give up our limiting beliefs, allowing us to find greater love, honesty and compassion in our lives.

We're all wounded healers

The soulful poet and author Robert Bly speaks eloquently in his book *Iron John* of a scene where a young boy dips his wounded

finger into a stream in order to soothe its aching. When the boy pulls his finger from the stream, the tip turns to gold. The symbolism suggests that “our gold is where our wound is”—that our deepest treasure, our deepest gift comes from the place where we are most wounded. This has certainly been true in my life.

I tell my story now, not to bemoan my ignorance or wish that I might have done things differently, but rather to share my own story of woundedness as the gift that it has been in my life. Without my own suffering, I may never have achieved the level of sensitivity and awareness I now have of how emotional and spiritual issues affect our physical health. I might never have learned how to become more honest in expressing who I really am and what I really feel, in a way that empowers and develops me rather than endangers and destroys me.

We must all tell our stories of woundedness, not from a place of regret, but from a place of compassion, which is a measure of our ability to understand the lack of understanding. When we share our pain, we increase our treasure, we increase our gold. We join each other in a common humanity and honesty that allows us to address our fears, frustrations and hurts. In this way we are all at last empowered to help make the world a more loving and beautiful place in which to live, a garden of peace—a dwelling of joy—for God’s very presence.



Passing by a man who was born blind from birth, the students asked their Master, “Master, was it this man or his parents who sinned?” The Master replied, “It was not this man who sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be made visible in him.”

We are all blinded—wounded—in some way; whether by ignorance, anger, hurt, shame or desire. As we go through life, we begin to realize that in our blindedness we may inadvertently—or mistakenly—cause pain to ourselves or others. But the pain of our blindedness—of our woundedness—is not a punishment for anything we have done wrong. It is an opportunity to be more loving, more compassionate, more God-like in our character and behavior. We must not blame ourselves or others for our blind spots. We must, instead, use them to learn how to see. All healing involves making the invisible, visible. In so doing, we realize that our blindness is temporary, and with effort, determination and grace, we can—one day—open our eyes and see that which we could not previously see. This is how we become more loving and more compassionate.

(The above story adapted from *The Ladder of the Beatitudes* by Jim Forest, Orbis Books, Maryknoll NY, 1999, p. 5; the Master in the above story is Jesus.)



Let's move on to discuss how journaling can become a vehicle for honest self-expression—allowing us to move towards greater health and healing in our lives.

JOURNALING AND HEALTH

*What lies behind us, and what lies before
us, are small matters compared to what lies
within us.*

R. WALDO EMERSON

As I recovered from my illness during that year of internship, I deeply understood how emotional pain, physical strain and spiritual distress can precipitate illness in the body. With this understanding, I committed myself to seeking out ways to help others avoid suffering the same fate as I did that year.

In my search for practical ways to process emotional stress before it creates physical illness, I came across the technique of journaling. I quickly discovered that journaling provided me a way of expressing my feelings and releasing my stress so that I was strengthened by the experience, rather than depleted by it. Journaling became my emotional exercise, a form of psychological work-out. Within a short time, I found myself feeling stronger; not with bigger biceps, but with better boundaries; not with more muscle, but with more love, compassion and forgiveness. Journaling gave me the ability to handle life's inevi-

table stresses with greater equanimity and a clearer sense of who I was and what I wanted. Journaling kept me emotionally and spiritually fit, and the only equipment necessary was a pen and a piece of paper.

Since that time, I have devoted my life to helping others see the connection between their physical, psychological and spiritual health. I have come to realize that not only is there a connection, but, in fact, optimal physical health can only occur in the larger context of our emotional, mental and spiritual health.

As a family physician with a busy practice, I continue to be amazed at the number of physical problems that develop as a result of difficulties in our emotional and/or spiritual life. Every day patients come to my office with health problems stemming from exuberant stresses, the inability to set boundaries, unresolved feelings and spiritual emptiness. These stresses create a burden too heavy for the physical body to carry—and so it breaks down—resulting in physical illness and emotional pain, ranging from recurrent colds to chemical depression.

We all have different thresholds for stress. Our body is made up of many different systems—musculoskeletal, respiratory, gastrointestinal, cardiovascular, nervous, immune and more—each linked, one to the other, like a chain. When there is too much stress on our system—whether emotional stress, physical stress or spiritual stress—it is like an overpowering force pulling on both ends of the chain. Something has to give, something has to break. We all have a weak link, a weak system, which breaks under stress.

For some of us, it is a break in the immune system—causing recurrent colds, allergic reactions, susceptibility to infection, exacerbation of autoimmune disease or even an increased

...journaling provided me a way of expressing my emotion and releasing my stress so that I was strengthened by the experience, rather than depleted by it.

...optimal physical health can only occur in the larger context of our emotional, mental and spiritual

*My barn having
burned to the ground
I can now see the
moon.*

JAPANESE FOLK

risk for certain cancers. For others, it is a break in the nervous system—causing anxiety, chemical depression, migraine headaches, twitching eyelids or insomnia. A break in the cardiovascular system may lead to palpitations, shortness of breath, or even precipitate congestive heart failure or a heart attack. A break in the musculoskeletal system may lead to recurrent back aches, sciatica, tendinitis or muscle weakness. A break in the gastrointestinal system may lead to worsening of irritable bowel syndrome, bloating, maldigestion, constipation or diarrhea.

Many times, we are unaware that our emotional and spiritual stresses are connected to our physical health. I developed this book so that my patients could learn simple ways to process their physical, emotional and spiritual stress before it creates illness and in a way which leads to greater health, healing and balance. But for those already suffering from illness, this handbook provides a way to find the greatest healing possible by using illness as a springboard for understanding how our heart, mind and soul are deeply intertwined in the workings of our physical body. This book introduces a variety of self-help journaling techniques with which you can begin your own unique healing process. This healing process will lead you into an examination of your emotional pain and spiritual stress so that you may find ways out of your pain and begin to heal your hurts, forgive your inadequacies and rekindle the love and essential worthiness that lie within you.



The Master taught: “When a sleeping prince is dreaming that he is a beggar and cries out in anguish at his poverty and hunger,

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and spiritual stress
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and begin to heal our
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essential worthiness
that lie within each
one of us.*

...in some way, we all intuitively crave—and deserve—to be whole, to be healed.

you do not say to him, ‘Beggar, wake up!’ You say ‘Prince, wake up! You have fallen asleep and dreamt you were a beggar!’”

We are all princes and princesses who have—in some way—fallen asleep and forgotten the royalty of our soul. We are made in the image of the Divine creator and, as such, our very essence is love and our very birthright is worthiness. We must only awaken to it in order to heal.

(This story adapted from *Journey to Self-Realization* by Paramahansa Yogananda, Self-Realization Publishers, 1998; the Master in this story is Paramahansa Yogananda.)



A part of our awakening to our essential worthiness is the acceptance that—in this world—we are all wounded in some way—whether by genetics, family circumstance, illness or misfortune. Likewise, in some way, we all intuitively crave—and deserve—to be whole, to be healed. Awakening from the dream means that we feel our emptiness, the voids in our life, our “not-enough” places, and seek to fill them with meaning, worthiness and a measure of fullness. This is the healing process: the drive to mend our broken places and become whole again. In seeking to become whole, you will inevitably embark on a journey that leads you into your own sense of utter uniqueness, into your own adventure of self-discovery.

In the next chapter, we’ll define and discuss what we mean when we speak of health, healing and the healing process.

Chapter 2

HEALTH AND HEALING

*Of one thing I am certain, the body is not
the measure of healing—peace is the
measure.*

GEORGE MELTON

*... while perfect
physical health is
unattainable, healing
(on an emotional and
spiritual level) is
always available to
us.*

Both health and healing derive from the root word, “whole,” to be one. Most of us think of health as some thing we achieve when we find a cure for some particular disease or illness. But health is more than the absence of disease. When we move beyond disease and cure, we move into the *healing process*, which is about our physical health *and* our emotional, mental and spiritual health. In this sense, healing becomes anything that moves us towards a greater sense of wholeness, acceptance (of self and others) and inner peace. Gerald Jampolsky M.D., psychiatrist and author of *Love Is Letting Go of Fear*, defines health as “inner peace,” which comes from an inner sense of unity and wholeness. While perfect physical health is unattainable, healing (on an emotional and spiritual level) is always available to us. Let’s look at the different types of healing.

Healing the body

Imagine for a moment the picture of a physical cut to the skin. When we cut ourselves, we first notice the pain which brings our attention to the cut. In this attention, we clean the wound and bring the edges together. In this coming together the healing process begins. The healing itself is a mystery . Bernie Siegel, M.D., Yale surgeon and author of *Love, Medicine and Miracles*, says, “as a surgeon, I cut into the body and I rely on it to heal. I don’t have to yell into the wound and tell it how to heal.” The body, in its infinite wisdom, knows how to heal. We rely on the body to heal. All we need to do is be willing to bring the edges together, to close the gap, to transcend the isolation. In fact, anything that helps us transcend isolation begins the healing process and moves us toward greater health, wholeness and inner peace.

Healing the mind

When we speak of the mind, we speak of the world of the unseen: the world of thought, feeling, attitude, belief and imagination. The field of mindbodyspirit medicine teaches us that the unseen energies of thought, feeling, attitude, belief and imagination manifest in our physical body stirring the very fabric of our physiology and biochemistry. Let’s look, for example, at how the healing process occurs at the level of the mind, specifically emotional healing.

Remember that healing is anything that helps us to transcend our isolation (from self or others), anything that helps us

to close the emotional gap we may be feeling. Perhaps we feel angry or resentful toward someone for some wrong they have done us. Closing the gap emotionally means removing the hurtful and painful feelings that keep the emotional gap open. We do this by communicating honestly with that person, finding a place of forgiveness or setting appropriate boundaries so that we won't be hurt again. When we do this, we activate the healing process and move towards emotional healing. Or perhaps we feel guilty or angry at ourselves for some insensitive or unintentional hurt we inflicted upon someone else. By taking steps to transcend our self-imposed isolation (perhaps by making amends for the hurt we caused or by finding a place of self-forgiveness and self-acceptance) we begin the emotional healing process.

. . . anything that helps us transcend isolation (from self or others) begins the healing process and moves us towards greater health, wholeness and inner peace.

The field of mindbodyspirit medicine teaches us that the unseen energies of thought, feeling, attitude, belief and imagination manifest in our physical body, stirring the very fabric of our physiology and biochemistry.

Healing the spirit

Healing also occurs on a spiritual level. What would that be? Anything that helps us to close the gap between who we are and who we aspire to be in terms of *higher purpose* in life brings about spiritual healing. Anything that closes the gap between our sense of inner aloneness and a sense of connection to something greater than ourselves—a *higher power*—brings about spiritual healing. As we transcend our essential aloneness by developing a relationship to something greater than ourselves (God, a higher power, a higher purpose, a sense of meaning in life, a sense of community) we begin our spiritual healing.

John Bradshaw, author of *Healing The Shame That Binds Us*, says that the very basis of our spirituality is the permission to be human, to know that we will make mistakes, that we have limitations. Being human means coming to terms with our im-

perfections and limitations. In so doing, we are reminded that there is something greater than ourselves.

When we allow ourselves to be imperfect, to be human, we transcend the isolation that comes from believing we must be superhuman in order to be loved. Coming to terms with our limitations is closing the gap between what we believe we must do in order to be worthy and the natural inheritance of worthiness that is ours by virtue of our humanity, by virtue of our divinity, as children of God, made in his image.

Health is a mystery

If we look at just the physical level, health is a mystery. Certain children are born with life threatening disease, cancer or AIDS. Certain people contract fatal disorders and die. We never really know what level of physical health is available to us. Genetics and environmental threats can affect our physical health unexpectedly, without fairness or warning. Norman Cousins, author and humanitarian, says "Not every illness can be overcome . . . but there is always a margin within which life can be lived with meaning and even with a certain measure of joy, despite illness."

This is most profoundly demonstrated in the groundbreaking work of Elizabeth Kubler-Ross M.D., on death and dying. What she discovered is that a tremendous amount of healing occurs in and around the time of death. On some level, illness awakens us to our unfinished business and helps us move closer to our own wholeness.

. . . the very basis of our spirituality is the permission to be human, to know that we will make mistakes, that we have limitations.

Healing is always available

Beyond a physical cure, healing is always available to us. In any moment we can activate our healing system by making those choices that help us transcend isolation (from self and others), affirm life and move towards a greater sense of acceptance (of self and others), wholeness and inner peace. Healing is a decision and a direction, so that even on our deathbeds, we can decide to move in the healing direction—to invite healing in.



The first day the young student met his new Master, the Master inquired of him, “Young man, where can God be found?” The student responded confidently, “Why God is everywhere, of course.” “No,” responded the Master, “I will ask you again: Where can God be found?” This time the young student thought for a moment and then replied with certainty, “God can be found in the glory of the universe. His majesty is everywhere.” “No, young student” replied the Master, “I will ask you once again: Where can God be found?” Exasperated, the student replied, “If none of my answers satisfy you, then you tell me: Where can God be found?” “Listen to me carefully,” replied the Master, “God can be found where he is invited, only where he is invited.”

Just as God can only be found where we invite him in, so too, healing can only be found where we invite it in. Healing is a sense of inner peace, wholeness, and acceptance (of self and others) that can only be found where we invite it in. Healing implies more than a physical cure, it is also a longing for peace—peace of mind, heart and soul.

(This story is adapted from *Living Each Day* by Rabbi Abraham Twerski, Mesorah Publications, Ltd Copyright 1992, p. ?; the student is Rabbi Mendel and the Master is Rabbi Bunim.)



Not every illness can be overcome . . . but there is always a margin within which life can be lived with meaning and even with a certain measure of joy, despite illness.

NORMAN COUSINS

On some level, illness awakens us to our unfinished business and helps us move closer to our own wholeness.

In each moment, we must find a sense of connection to something greater than ourselves, transcend our isolation and rediscover a greater sense of meaning and purpose in life.

Healing is a process, not a destination

Richard Moss, M.D., author of *How Shall We Live?* says, “Healing is not for the sick alone but for all humankind . . . in the end, healing must be a ceaseless process of relationship and rediscovery, moment by moment.” In each moment, we must choose those beliefs and attitudes that move us in the direction of acceptance, wholeness and inner peace. In each moment, we must rediscover our inner sense of esteem, our inherent worthiness and our natural ability to be happy. In each moment, we must find a sense of connection to something greater than ourselves, transcend our isolation and rediscover a greater sense of meaning and purpose in life. Only in this way can we generate the most possible in terms of physical health and develop the sense of inner peace, acceptance and healing we all so richly crave and deserve.

A story about healing

Rachel Naomi Remen, M.D., physician, healer and author of *Kitchen Table Wisdom: Stories That Heal*, tells a wonderful story about an acorn. For one moment, imagine an acorn trying to make sense of itself, trying to understand itself, by describing itself. It might say, “I’m about one inch long, flat on one side, pointed on the other, brown in color, hard to the touch, etc. etc?”. But this description fails to capture the true essence of the acorn. “It’s important to realize,” Dr. Remen says, “that an acorn cannot make sense of itself without knowing about the oak tree and without knowing that deep inside of itself, there is a mechanism waiting to

unfold which knows exactly how to become that fullness of expression” of the oak tree. She says, “there is an impulse, a yearning in each one of us, towards our own wholeness,” our own fullness of expression. It is this impulse, this yearning towards our own wholeness that leads us into the healing process.

Let’s now move on to discuss what journaling is and how it helps us to heal, by understanding the mindbodyspirit connection.

. . . an acorn cannot make sense of itself without knowing about the oak tree and without knowing that deep inside of itself, there is a mechanism waiting to unfold which knows exactly how to become that fullness of expression of the oak tree.

JOURNALING AND THE MIND BODY SPIRIT CONNECTION

Journal writing is a voyage to the interior.

CHRISTINA BALDWIN

Journaling is, quite simply, the process of putting words to our thoughts and feelings, and placing these words on the written page. Writing the words on paper (or typing them on the word processor) is vital because it moves the energy out of our body—from the unseen world of thought, feeling, attitude, belief and imagination—to the seen world of physical form. All healing and creative growth helps make the unseen, ~~seen~~ the invisible, visible.



A great Master instructed his disciples on the five ways that the human soul resembles God: 1) The soul fills the entire person, just as God fills the entire universe, 2) The soul is invisible just as is God, 3) The soul nurtures the body, just as God nurtures the universe, 4) The soul is pure just as is God and 5) The soul is concealed within the body, just as God is concealed in the universe.

The goal of all healing and spiritual growth, whether through journaling, meditation, study or prayer, is to help make the invisible, visible. In order to truly understand our body, our emotions and our physical health, we must begin to understand the energies of our soul—our spiritual body—which is concealed within our physical body. Journaling helps reveal the invisible energies that drive so much of our behavior and so dramatically influence our state of physical health. (This information adapted from *Living Each Day* by Rabbi Abraham Twerski, Mesorah Publications, Ltd Copyright 1992, p.326. The Master in this story represents the collective wisdom of the Talmudic sages and scholars found in *Berachos 10a*.)



Journaling is one of many paths to healing

There are many paths to healing. Journaling is one. Journaling gives us a set of tools with which we can explore our deepest beliefs, values, thoughts and feelings. In so doing, we gain a new level of awareness and understanding that can help us transcend our isolation, transform our fear and heal our sense of unworthiness.

For healing to occur, we must find meaning in our pain. Journaling helps us discover the meaning in our pain and the purpose in our suffering—leading us to love, compassion and a recognition of our essential sacredness.



The Master was visiting an eight year old boy who had just undergone open heart surgery. The doctors needed to take the child to a treatment room to help clear his lungs of excess secretions.

Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, ambition inspired, and success achieved

HELEN KELLER.

For healing to occur, we must find meaning in our pain.

As they wheeled the young boy to the treatment room, the doctors advised the boy's father to remain outside, as the treatment can be uncomfortable.

As they entered the treatment room, the Master could see the father peeking through the crack in the doorway, worried about his son. The young child, afraid, cried out "Daddy, Daddy, don't let them do this to me."

At that moment, the Master understood in his heart, the deeper meaning of this event. He said, "Like the child, we are unable to understand that the process which causes us suffering is essential to our lives and health. Our Father has not abandoned us. He watches and shares in our pain, but He knows what we do not know. He knows how and why this suffering is going to make us better."

When we are unable to understand the painful things that happen to us or to those we love, it helps to remember the Master's words. Remember that God watches over us and waits just outside the door—like the young boy's father—waiting to embrace and comfort us.

Though it is certainly a leap of faith to believe that the painful circumstances we go through always help us to become healthier, stronger or more loving, we can all look back on adversities we have faced, and see how we have grown because of them. Looking for the meaning in our suffering is not just an act of faith, it is a self-fulfilling prophecy.

(This story was adapted from *Living Each Day* by Rabbi Abraham J. Twerski, M.D. , Copyright 1991 by Mesorah Publications, Ltd. p. 136; the Master in this story is Rabbi Abraham Twerski, M.D., psychiatrist and author.)



How does journaling help us?

*Character cannot be
developed in ease
and quiet. Only
through experience of
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can the soul be
strengthened,
ambition inspired,
and success achieved.*

HELEN KELLER

Journaling provides a way for us to enter into our pain and suffering and find the deeper meaning within it. Sometimes our pain seems senseless and tragic and we can only learn to become stronger from it. Sometimes our pain is a message that we need to wake up and reevaluate our values, choices, relationships, attitudes and beliefs. Journaling is a way that each one of us can find our own unique answers to life's difficult questions.

As we grow, we all come to realize that we have no immunity from pain and loss. Sometimes, things just don't work out. Situations don't go our way. People don't respond the way we would like them to. We contract illness. We lose people we love. Journaling helps to keep us from becoming bitter and resentful by allowing us to process our difficult feelings and come to know the truth of who we are and where we are going. Journaling helps us find the strength to love well in the very midst of our difficulties and keeps us from going numb in response to our pain and suffering.

Journaling is a tool that helps us grow strong by leading us into our fears, hurts and unresolved pain in order that we may emerge with greater strength, awareness and hope. Journaling helps us make peace with the often hidden and conflicting parts of ourselves, thereby transcending our isolation and initiating the healing process. Journaling transforms us, helping us find within ourselves that spark of divinity that turns our wounded and painful parts into opportunities for beauty growth and love.

***Journaling reveals the love
and strength within us***

Love has been likened to the rains—which give life—and

*Journaling
strengthens us, and
allows us to
consciously go into
our fears, hurts and
unresolved pain and
come out with greater
strength, awareness
and hope.*

the waters, which soothe our thirst for connection and meaning. Love is fluid, and like the fluid waters, takes many shapes. Strength is the container that gives shape to our love. Love without strength is like being surrounded by rain but having no water to drink. Strength without love is empty rigid and dry.

Journaling leads us to our strength. Journaling leads us to our love. In this life, our love requires a container to hold it, to capture its elevating qualities, to give it shape and form and boundaries. We build a strong container—our strength of character—by defining our boundaries, our limits, and our humanness. Journaling helps us define our boundaries and build for ourselves the strength of character capable of holding the love that is available to us.

***Journaling helps us create a
more beautiful world***

Developing greater love, awareness, understanding and illumination of spirit is the job we have, in partnership with God, in creating a more beautiful world in which to live. This cannot be done with positive thinking alone. Journaling helps us weed out our negative thoughts and cultivate positive ones in their place, enabling us to more actively participate in good and kind deeds, treat others with respect and love, and live our personal and professional lives with integrity and honesty. This is the work of love.



One day, the Master was riding as a passenger in a coach when the driver passed by a beautiful orchard. Being hungry, the driver pulled off to the side of the road and said, “Master, I’ll go

A human being is part of a whole, called by us the Universe, a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings, as something separated from the rest—a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circles of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.

ALBERT EINSTEIN

get us some fruit from these orchards. You yell if you see anyone coming” The driver jumped off the wagon and ventured forth into the orchards. Just as he was about to pick some fruit, he heard the Master yelling, “Come back, come back, someone is watching us.” Hearing the Master’s warning call, the driver darted back into the coach and quickly drove off. As he frantically drove away, the driver looked behind and saw no one there. He turned to the Master and said, “Why did you yell? There’s no one following us. There was no one watching.” The Master, gazing up to the heavens above, quietly said, “Someone’s watching. Someone’s always watching.” (This story is adapted from Joseph Telushkin’s *The Book of Jewish Values*, p. 10; the Master is the famous Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov.)

We can all learn from this story the art of living a life of personal and professional integrity. If we are to be true partners with God in helping to create a more beautiful world in which to live, we must hold ourselves accountable for our actions. This means being honest and truthful in all our actions. Journaling helps us to examine our behaviors, discover our motivating attitudes and beliefs and make the necessary adjustments to our thinking and character development that helps us to create a more honest and loving world to live in.



Journaling helps build character

We have a responsibility to break through the barriers of our own self-delusion and come to see the truth of who we are. Journaling helps us in this task by giving us the tools to uncover our true character and the inconsistencies and incongruities of our motivating beliefs in life. Journaling then helps us to build the strength of character and resolve needed to address the compli-

cated and difficult issues facing our world, our humanity and our personal ethics. In so doing, we develop the clarityvision and strength to defend the values we cherish.



A young student once came to the Master with a list of his many needs. After a deep and thorough examination of the list, the Master said to his student, “It seems you have given a great deal of thought to all that you need. Have you given equal thought to why you are needed?”

How are we needed? How do we matter to the world? How do we make a difference? What is our purpose for being alive? The answers to these questions help us define our spirituality, which is our sense of connection and belonging to something greater than ourselves. Because true and vibrant physical health is only possible in the larger context of our spiritual health, we must give deep and thoughtful consideration to our pupose in life, how we are needed and how we matter to the world. Each one of us has a unique and special purpose in life, a special mission for which we are uniquely suited in helping to make the world a kinder, more loving and more just world in which to live. But, we must discover that purpose and then dedicate ourselves to it. .

(Above story adapted from *Living Each Day* by Rabbi Abraham J. Twerski, M.D., Mesorah Publications, Ltd Copyright 1992, p. 169; the Master is Rabbi Shneur Zalman).



Journaling leads to forgiveness

Journaling helps us heal by encouraging us to take responsi-

We don't receive wisdom; we must discover it for ourselves after a journey that no one can take us or spare us.

MARCEL PROUST

bility for the harm we have caused others and by helping us find the compassion we need to forgive those who have harmed us. Journaling helps us heal by finding the compassion we need to forgive ourselves. In uncovering our purpose for being and our own unique unrepeatable path in this life, journaling helps us find strength and solid ground in a world filled with too much deception, delusion, denial and ignorance.

The healing power of journaling

In terms of our physical and psychological health, journaling helps us in four main ways. It helps us:

- 1) to be true to ourselves—true to what we believe, value and cherish. This quality is called “*congruency*.”
- 2) process difficult emotions. This is called “*emotional disclosure*.”
- 3) find appropriate ways to honestly express to others who we are, what we feel and what we want. This is called “*honest self-expression*.”
- 4) overcome negative thoughts and limiting beliefs. This is called “*cognitive restructuring*.”

Let's look at each one in more detail.

1) The healing power of congruency

Journaling heals us by helping us to discover not only who we are, what we believe and what we value but also by helping us to live a life in alignment with these values—a life filled with

Somehow, in the true and honest expression of who we are, healing begins.

our own unique sense of purpose, love and giving. In their powerful book *Remarkable Recovery*, authors Marc Ian Barash and Caryle Hirshberg examine the many characteristics of patients who experienced spontaneous remissions from cancer or who lived well beyond the expectations of doctors and experts, given the gravity of their disease. In all cases, the one most compelling quality of those graced by these miraculous healings was something the authors call “congruence”—which is a way to be “deeply true to themselves, manifesting a set of behaviors growing from the roots of their being.”

Somehow, in the true expression of who we are, healing begins. Shakespeare said it most succinctly “To thine own self, be true.” Journaling helps us be true to ourselves. This truthfulness, this honesty allows us to say ‘no’ without feeling guilty, relieving us of the tremendous burden that arises from our inability to say ‘no.’ This honesty also allows us to say ‘yes’ to what we truly want and deeply desire, drawing on the essential energy of our soul—our life force.

In giving us the strength to say ‘yes’ and the strength to say ‘no,’ journaling protects us from unnecessary suffering and engages the regenerative powers of our healing system. Lawrence LeShan, psychotherapist and author of *Cancer As A Turning Point* says, “a person who is singing their own song in life, creating it in ways that fit their personality structure, may well stimulate the body’s self-healing abilities.”

John Bradshaw, author of *Healing The Shame That Binds Us*, says that in order to heal our shame, we must develop the capacity to “feel loved for the very one that we are.” This is the

in order to heal our shame, we must develop the capacity to “feel loved for the very one that we are.”

The greatest happiness of life is the conviction that we are loved — loved for ourselves, or rather, loved in spite of ourselves.

VICTOR HUGO

Putting words to our thoughts and feelings, and writing those words on the page, changes our biochemistry and heals us, physically, emotionally and spiritually.

essence of healing: to accept ourselves for the “very one that we are.” All pain, isolation, fear and aloneness stem from our inability to love ourselves or our inability to feel worthy of the love, attention and affection of others. In helping us to discover our own essential uniqueness, journaling reveals our essential worthiness. No book can reveal our path for healing, no student, no expert, no authority. Only we can discover it.

2) The healing power of emotional disclosure

James Pennebaker, Professor of Psychology at Southern Methodist University and author of *Opening Up: The Healing Power of Confiding in Others* is a pioneer in the area of medical research on the healing power of journaling. His findings reveal that writing about traumatic experiences for as little as fifteen minutes a day for four days can reduce physician visits for illness, improve serum immune function and enhance work performance. (*Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*; 1988; 56; 239-245).

When asked why journaling improves our health, Pennebaker replied that disclosure “helps us find meaning in complicated life circumstances . . . writing helps to reconstruct painful thoughts and images into a story or narrative. Once we can give an upsetting event some degree of structure with a clear beginning, middle and an end we are better able to move past it?”

Pennebaker further elaborates on the healing power of emotional disclosure through what he calls “inhibition theory.” The central assumption of this theory is that the inhibition of thoughts, feelings and behaviors is an active process requiring physiological

work. When we repeatedly repress and inhibit our thoughts and feelings, this creates a cumulative stress on the body resulting in increased vulnerability to stress-related diseases. The corollary of this theory is that the emotional disclosure of traumatic experiences reduces the likelihood of negative health outcomes.

Along with fellow researchers Petrie, Booth and Thomas, Dr. Pennebaker designed a clinical study (Petrie, KJ, RJ Booth, JW Pennebaker, MG Thomas: *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 1995, Vol.63, No.5, 787-792) in which 40 medical students who had no antibodies to hepatitis B were randomly assigned to one of two groups: 1) a group that would write about traumatic events in an emotionally disclosing manner, i.e. in a way that disclosed their painful and difficult feelings about the event and 2) a control group that would write about impersonal, unemotional control topics. Each group wrote for approximately 20 minutes on 4 consecutive days. The day after completing the writing exercises, all 40 medical students were given their first hepatitis B immunization, with booster injections at 1 and 4 months after the writing. The results showed that participants in the emotional disclosure group showed significantly higher antibody levels against hepatitis B at the 4 and 6 month follow-up than the control group. The authors propose that emotional inhibition may diminish the ability of the immune system to respond effectively to the challenge of immunization. This supports the inhibition theory which says that the inhibition of thoughts, feelings and behaviors requires physiological work that may create a cumulative stress on the body resulting in poorer immunity and increased vulnerability to stress-related diseases.

Another study from North Dakota State University by Joshua Smyth, Ph.D., (*JAMA* April 14, 1999; Vol.281, No.14, 1304-1309)

... writing about traumatic experiences for as little as fifteen minutes a day for four days can reduce physician visits for illness, improve serum immune function and enhance work performance.

... all our thoughts and feelings are chemical. Every thought we have, every feeling we experience, every attitude we hold translates itself into a complex pattern of chemical release and nerve cell firing.

looked at 107 patients with asthma or rheumatoid arthritis in order to determine whether journaling about stressful life experiences affected their disease status. Patients were assigned to write either about the most stressful event of their lives (the treatment group) or about emotionally neutral topics (the control group). Results showed that four months after treatment, asthma patients in the treatment group showed a 20% improvement in lung function, whereas patients in the control group showed no improvement. Rheumatoid arthritis patients in the treatment group showed a 28% reduction in disease severity whereas control group patients showed no change.



There was once a Master who advocated the benefits of both learning and wisdom. “How does one achieve learning?” asked one of his disciples. “Learning,” the Master replied, “is achieved by reading books or listening to lectures.” “How then does one achieve wisdom?” asked the disciple. “Wisdom,” replied the Master “is achieved by reading the book that is you.” “And that is no easy task,” the Master added, “for every minute brings a new edition of the book!” (Adapted from *One Minute Wisdom* by Anthony de Mello, Copyright 1985, Image, Doubleday, p. 177)

Journaling, in its very essence, is writing the “book that is you.” Finding and recording our own unique way—our own unique path for healing—becomes the words that make up the chapters of our lives. Wisdom, however, is achieved only by reading the “book that is you.” This requires that we learn from our recorded experience, refine our character and study our mistakes as lessons for growth. This is the process that leads to healing. Recording our experience is no more than a diary. Journaling demands that we learn from our recorded experience. This is the heart of healing: that learning from our mistakes leads us to change not only our

Hope, faith, love, the will to live, playfulness, purpose and determination are powerful biochemical prescriptions.

NORMAN COUSINS

character but also our conduct.



3) The healing power of honest self-expression

We already learned about the healing power of congruency which means discovering who we are, what we believe and the values we cherish, and then attempting to live a life congruent with these ideals. This is referred to in pop-psychology as “walking your talk.” In the pursuit of our higher ideals and goals in life, we will meet up against obstacles, challenges and difficulties, which may create difficult and painful feelings. Becoming aware of these feelings and learning to express and admit them to ourselves is called emotional disclosure.

Once we are aware of our true feelings, we must ponder them and process them through our rational mind. By using the power of our mind—the intellectual gifts of reason and thoughtful discernment—we must determine the best course of action and decide what we want to “do” with our feelings. Sometimes we may choose to “let them go.” Sometimes, we may choose to “sit with them” for a while. Sometimes we may choose to express them. When we take our “processed” feelings—raw feelings that have been reshaped by the powers of reason and discernment—and express them to others, this is called “honest self-expression.” Honest self-expression realizes that we are more than our raw feelings, we are more than our raw thoughts. We can’t just go around blurting out our every thought and feeling as it arises. We have the God-given ability—and responsibility—to merge the intellectual power of our thoughts, values and beliefs with the emo-

*... strength ... love
and ... hope create
powerful biochemical
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physical health,
emotional and
spiritual well being.*

tional power of our feelings to choose a course of action that serves our higher values and our spiritual beliefs in the sacredness of life, while respecting the dignity and values of others.

Honest self-expression requires that we express not only our good feelings but also our bad feelings. Because we survive in relationship to others and the world around us, expressing our feelings is vital to our health and well-being. As I discussed in my personal story in the introduction, the honest self-expression of who we are is a vital pathway for healing. In a discussion with Bill Moyers in his book *Healing and the Mind*, Dr. Margaret Kemeny reveals that it is the honest expression of emotion, whether it be negative (like fear, anger, resentment and jealousy) or positive (like happiness, peacefulness, joy and laughter) that results in an increase in the number and activity of natural killer cells (a vital part of our immune system that fights off viruses and certain cancer cells.)

This means that simple “positive thinking” does not keep us well, nor does “negative thinking” necessarily make us ill. Though the long term health benefits of positive thinking are well documented, a simplistic notion of positive thinking is potentially harmful if it results in the suppression of our “negative” feelings, hurts, disappointments and frustrations in life. It is only in the honest expression of our full range of emotions that we can begin to find the “positive” aspects of life’s painful situations or experiences. You will learn much more about this powerful principle when you actually do the journaling exercises in section two.

4) The healing power of cognitive restructuring

In order to understand the healing power of cognitive restructuring, we must first understand the basic principles of mindbodyspirit medicine and neurobiology. This begins with a discussion of neurosignatures.

What are neurosignatures?

Every image, event or emotion we experience is associated with a distinct and complex pattern of nerve cell firing and chemical release, called a neurosignature.

Every image, event or emotion carries a unique neurosignature.

There are neurosignatures for every life event. When we experience a beautiful sunset, we trigger patterns of brain cell firing and chemical release, which lead to an experience of bodily calm and emotional beauty. When we experience a sprained and twisted ankle, we are really experiencing the neurosignature messages of pain, swelling and disability created by that sprain.

Because we all have unique and distinct neurosignatures based on our own unique experiences and life histories, the same event will affect two different people very differently. The same exact sunset will evoke different and distinct neurosignatures in different people. We all have distinct neurosignatures for illness, love, strength, headaches, laughing, singing and for each and every experience.

Where do neurosignatures come from?

Neurosignatures come from four possible sources:

1) Experiences we have in our external, physical world. These are also called “bottom-up” events because they originate in our external world and move up into our senses and *up* to our brains where neurosignature messages are created, encoded and stored in our memories. These new neurosignatures simultaneously send new neurochemicals out into our bodies, exerting a physical, emotional and biochemical effect.

For example, when we see a sunset, the activation of our visual centers causes a pattern of nerve cell firing and chemical release. This neurosignature becomes the encoded experience of that sunset i.e., our body and brain store the memory of that event as a neurosignature.

2) Experiences we have from our internal world of thought and imagination. These are called “top-down” events because they originate in our internal world of thought and imagination (“top” referring to our head i.e. events originating in our heads/brains) and then trigger patterns of nerve cell firing and chemical release which go *down* into our physical bodies and exert a physical, biochemical effect.

For example, when we imagine a new home we want to live in (one created in our imagination to our own specifications), we create a new neurosignature that corresponds to the visual image of that new home along with the pleasant emotions associated with that image.

3) Past events, images or experiences which have been previously recorded in our memory. In this case, neurosignature

messages, which already exist, (like the image of our new home) are called upon by reviving or evoking a previously stored memory. When we evoke a neurosignature in this way all the accompanying nerve cell impulses and chemical effects of the initial neurosignature are recreated. For example, when we are fed up with our existing home, we can change our physiology completely by just imagining the new home we want to live in, and all the pleasant emotions associated with that neurosignature are recreated. This is another form of a top-down event, because it originates in our head (top) and moves down into our body. Soothing past memories can be called upon to evoke peaceful effects in our bodies. Herbert Benson, M.D. in *Timeless Healing*, calls this “remembered wellness”, and it is one simple technique we can use to bring a greater sense of physical health and biochemical calm into our bodies.

4) Pre-installed, hard wired and genetically carried neurosignatures like our fight or flight response, bodily reflexes, natural phobias and the relaxation response. These neurosignatures are part of our genetic code and help us to survive. When evoked, these neurosignatures carry their biochemical message out into our bodies and dramatically affect our emotions, physiology and biochemistry.

Neurosignatures are like prescriptions for our body

Creating new neurosignatures is like writing powerful new prescriptions for our body. One way to understand neurosignatures is to think of them as biochemical prescriptions. When we trig-

ger positive healing neurosignatures we experience the beneficial and corresponding biochemical prescription associated with that positive experience. Likewise, we can experience negative or bad prescriptions when we are overcome with negative emotions, despair, depression, chronic frustration, helplessness and negativity.

Even though some neurosignatures are hard-wired or preinstalled into our genetic code (like our primitive fight or flight response, natural phobias, reflexes, etc.) we have the ability to create new neurosignatures all the time. Neurosignatures are created from our external world when we incorporate new experiences, images and emotions into our lives. These experiences come from our physical body and our external environment. Remember the first time you “fell in love?” The external experience of “falling in love” created a powerful internal neurosignature, which is stored in your brain and body. To a certain degree, the mere thought of your lover can trigger the same sense of “falling in love” all over again.

Neurosignatures can also be created from within our minds. Our imagination and our dreams create neurosignatures that can have an impact on our bodies that is as powerful as if it had actually happened in our external experience. Neurosignatures can also be created from our memory of events that we have already experienced.

Our brains are malleable and constantly changing, moment to moment.

Because neurosignatures are created not only from our ex-

ternal reality but also from our inner world of thought and imagination, we have the ability to change our neurosignatures through the power of our thoughts, imagination, attitudes and beliefs. Scientists refer to our capacity for changing brain function and activity as “plasticity.” Recent research has shown that our brains are malleable and constantly changing. We are constantly remaking and redesigning our neurosignatures and thus our life experience. Since each neurosignature carries biochemical and immunological messages that effect our body structure and cellular makeup, by reshaping our neurosignatures, we can—to a degree—remake our physical, emotional, immunological and biochemical health.

One of the most exciting experiments in brain plasticity comes from Drs. Avi Karni and Leslie Underleider of the National Institute of Mental Health (*Lancet* 345; 1995; p. 395). In this study participants were asked to practice a “finger tapping exercise” for 10 minutes every day. In this exercise, participants would tap their thumb to their index finger, then to their middle finger, then to their ring finger, and finally to their little finger. Functional MRIs were taken to measure the brain activity while this finger tapping exercise was performed. Initial MRIs were taken while the participants performed the finger tapping exercise (which they were to practice 10 minutes a day) *and* while they performed a “reverse finger tapping exercise” (where the thumb first taps the little finger, then the ring finger, then the middle finger and finally the index finger) which they were not to practice. After 4 weeks, the functional MRI showed an expanded hub of brain activity in the motor cortex for the rehearsed finger tapping exercise. Performance of the reversed (unrehearsed) finger tapping exercise showed no similar expansion. This revealed that like-minded nerve cells recruited other nerve cells, enlarging and changing the neu-

ral connections in the brain. This expanded hub of activity represents the mind's capacity for change and growth through repetition, effort and focus.

We can use the power of our mind to change our health

Neurosignatures become even more fascinating when we realize that in most circumstances, the human mind has great difficulty distinguishing between events that actually occur and those that are vividly imagined. In fact, researchers have shown that the same parts of the brain are activated whether people actually experience something or vividly imagine it. DrStephen Kosslyn, Professor of Psychology at Harvard, and his colleagues performed P.E.T. scans (Positron Emission Tomography) on patients to visualize blood flow changes to different parts of the brain. First, patients were instructed to look at a special grid, and PET scans revealed hotbeds of brain activity. This phase measured "bottom-up" activity. Then the grid was removed and patients were asked to imagine the grid from memory. The same hotbeds of brain activity were revealed. This phase measured "top-down" activity. (Kosslyn, S., N.V. Alpert, W.L. Thompson, V. Maljkovic, S.B. Weise, D.F. Chabris, S.E. Hamilton, S.L. Rauch and F.S. Buonanno. "Visual Mental Imagery Activates Topographically Organized Visual Cortex: PET Investigations." *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience* 5 (1993): 263-87)

What this means is that vividly imagining a beautiful sunset activates the same area of the brain as actually seeing a beautiful sunset. Listening to our favorite music triggers the same area of

our brain as does imagining the music in our mind. Imagining the touch of a warm cotton shirt hot from the drier activates the same area of our brain as actually feeling the warm touch on our skin.

This finding explains how we can use the power of our mind (imagination, belief and attitude) to change our neurosignatures, thereby altering our biochemical, hormonal and immunological health. The variety of techniques by which we can use our mind to heal our body is growing constantly. They range from simple relaxation, to visualization, to complex psychological and physical therapies. This is where the healing power of journaling comes in.

Journaling and neurosignatures

When we repetitively journal, we can—due to the plasticity of our brains—remake and redesign our neurosignatures; thereby changing our biochemistry and activating our healing system towards the generation of greater physical and emotional health. Neurosignatures demonstrate that all of our thoughts and feelings are chemical. This means that every thought we have, every feeling we experience, every attitude we hold translates itself into a complex pattern of chemical release and nerve cell firing. When we journal about traumatic life events and reconstruct the painful thoughts and images associated with these events, we are—in fact—changing the very essence of our biochemistry. We are—in fact—changing the very structure and pattern of our brain cell activity.

When we restructure or reframe a traumatic life event and give it a beginning, middle and end, we create new understand-

ings and new beliefs that free us from feeling at the mercy of that event. In essence, through journaling, we create new neurosignatures that bring not only emotional healing, but also new patterns of chemical release that can positively influence our very biochemistry and immunity.

Cognitive restructuring and journaling

This is what cognitive restructuring means: the ability to create new meanings and new understandings about our life stories that result in new and powerful neurosignatures that can activate our internal healing system and liberate us from the sense of helplessness and hopelessness that often precede serious illness. When we journal about traumatic life events and reconstruct the painful thoughts and images associated with these events, we are, in fact, changing the very essence of our biochemistry. We are, in fact, changing the very structure and pattern of brain cell activity. In the words of Norman Cousins, “Hope, faith, love, the will to live, playfulness, purpose and determination are powerful biochemical prescriptions.”

Journaling only works when you actually write the words on the page

I love to tell a story which I first read in one of Stephen Levine’s wonderful books on healing. This is the story of the intellectual who thought he could learn everything by reading. He read a book on astronomy and became an astronomer. He read a book on biology and became a biologist. He read a book on swim-

ming and he drowned! Just as looking at a set of weights will not strengthen our biceps, reading about journaling will not build our emotional strength or increase our capacity to love. We must actually journal—put the words to the page—in order to develop the strength and love necessary for healing. Putting words to our thoughts and feelings, and writing these words on the page, changes our biochemistry and heals us, physically emotionally and spiritually.



A group of disciples were once discussing the usefulness of reading. Some thought it was a waste of time, others thought it was highly beneficial. To settle their dispute, they approached their Master who said, “Have you ever read one of those texts in which the notes scrawled in the margin by a reader prove to be as illuminating as the text itself?” The disciples all nodded in agreement. “Life is one such text,” said the Master. (Adapted from *One Minute Wisdom* by Anthony de Mello, Copyright 1985, Image, Doubleday, p. 170)

Let this *Handbook of Journaling* reveal your life to you. Scrawl in the margins. Write down your thoughts. Put you life in these pages. Do the exercises. This is the depth of participation you will need to truly illuminate your life and lead to the healing you desire.



In ending this chapter, it is of interest to note that the research shows that much of the healing derived from journaling comes about from writing for only twenty minutes on three to four consecutive days. We can only imagine the benefits of consistent journaling involving a deeper disclosure of our fear, hurt, resentment, shame and anger. By utilizing the journaling methods

we are about to describe, we can begin to triumph over negative beliefs and find a greater source of strength, love and hope within. This strength, this love and this hope create powerful biochemical messengers for reducing stress and improving our physical health, emotional calm and spiritual well being.



“Only the curious will learn and only the resolute overcome the obstacles to learning. The quest quotient has always excited me more than the intelligence quotient.”

EUGENE S. WILSON

The Master loved to tell the story about a very rich man who was about to die. As he neared the end of his days, this rich man called all his children to his bedside to reveal to them that he had hidden 20,000 rubles (in ten bags of 2000 rubles each) at the foot of a certain mountain not far from his home. So that his lifelong labors would not be in vain, he gave his children the exact location of the money and beseeched them to retrieve the money after his death and divide it among themselves.

When the father died, his children rushed to the designated spot and began digging for the treasure. They searched for hours and hours but found nothing. They continued their search, however, knowing that the treasure was certainly buried where their father had told them.

After great effort and toil, they succeeded in finding nine of the ten bags of money. Despite this sizeable acquisition, the children refused to give up their search for the tenth bag, knowing it must be buried nearby. This determination—this resolute attitude—is the “quest quotient” that empowers all of us as we work towards the achievement of something truly great.

Our physical health, emotional peace and spiritual well-being represent forms of buried treasure available to each and every

one of us, if we will only expend the necessary and diligent effort required to acquire them. Don't leave the greatest treasure of all—your physical, emotional and spiritual health—buried deep in the earth. The quest to become all that we are capable of becoming helps to make our personal world—and the world around us—a healthier, more beautiful and more prosperous world in which to live. You know where the treasure lies. Journaling is your shovel with which to dig for your buried treasure and acquire the health, healing and peace of mind that is yours for the taking. I promise you the treasure is there.

(This story adapted from *Mishlei: Proverbs*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd., Volume 1, 1998, p. 59; the Master is the Choffetz Chaim.)



Now let's read on to learn how to use this book to help you uncover the buried treasure of health, happiness and peace of mind that lies waiting for you through the power of journaling.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

*Difficulties are meant to rouse, not
discourage. The human spirit is to grow
strong by conflict.*

WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING

What I have provided for you in this manual is an abbreviated version of my very favorite forms of journaling. I have used these methods time and again in my life in order to find greater clarity and love in times of confusion and pain. For those of you who would like to explore the finer details of these forms of journaling and therapy I have included references to the complete works.

In this manual, I have attempted to be brief and concise, so that you can begin using these methods as quickly as possible. It is my hope these methods will help you discover the love and strength that lie within you, and in so doing, you will bring that clarity back to the world, as an example to others who are lost and afraid.

As you begin your journey of self-discovery you will find that no one method works all the time. Having several different methods of journaling available is like having different tools for

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making your garden beautiful. Sometimes you need a rake to clear away the fallen leaves. Other times you need a shovel to till the earth and prepare the soil. You will have to explore the various tools available and discover for yourself which ones work best in your unique situation.



“Master,” the students asked, “why must we work so hard to prepare ourselves for enlightenment?” “The difficulties you will face in life,” replied the Master “are like the rains that fall down upon the earth. If you have—through your personal efforts and hard work—tilled the soil and planted the seeds, then the rains will bring forth the fruit of your efforts. If you have been lazy and failed to prepare the earth, the rains will only make mud in your life.”

(This story adapted from Rabbi Abraham J. Twerski, M.D. *Living Each Week*, Copyright ?? by ??Mesorah Publications, Ltd. p. ???)



So, get a pen, a piece of paper and let's begin to till the soil and plant the seeds of a bettermore fruitful life. There are many many journaling styles and techniques and I do not mean to imply that those I describe here are better than other forms you may be familiar with. These are simply the ones that have worked best for me in my own journey The important thing is to use whatever form of journaling works for you, and in so doing, to become a more loving, aware and compassionate human being.

Before we get started, let's read this one note of caution in the next chapter.

A WORD OF CAUTION

In everyone's life, at some time, our inner fire goes out. It is then burst into flame by an encounter with another human being. We should all be thankful for those people who rekindle the inner spirit.

ALBERT SCHWEITZER

One major drawback to journaling is that we may get lost in our own narrow world of feelings and conclusions. When dealing with difficult issues, it is vitally important that we take the insights and awareness we derive from journaling and check them out with a support group, a therapist, a mentor, a close friend, rabbi, priest or pastor

***Be sure to "reality check"
your journaling insights***

We must reality check these new understandings, because it is all too easy to get lost in our own limited perceptions and beliefs about our world and our relationships. Once we are stuck in an emotional rut, we may miss the best path to healing and misguidedly choose a path that appears to lead us in the right

We all need the help of friends and loved ones to pull us out of the rut, to give us perspective on our problems, to help us find greater meaning in our struggles, greater hope in our dark hours.

direction, but which, in fact, takes us off course, leading us further from our true destination: psychological health and peace of mind. We all need the help of friends and loved ones to pull us out of the rut, to give us perspective on our problems, to help us find greater meaning in our struggles, greater hope in our dark hours.



A very righteous Master was once granted the privilege of visiting both Paradise and Purgatory. As he arrived in Purgatory, he heard terrifying screams and the cries of tormented beings. As he approached the screaming, he saw that the people were all sitting at a beautifully adorned table with the finest foods and delicacies one could ever imagine. Wanting to understand why they were screaming, he approached even closer, and it was then that he noticed only one problem. All the people had elbows that were inverted, so that as they flexed their elbows, their hands moved away from their faces rather than towards them. No matter how hard they tried, they could not bring the food to their mouths.

The Master then moved on to Paradise. As he approached, he heard the roar of heartfelt laughter and the voices of joyous celebration. To his amazement, as he approached these voices, he noted the same beautifully adorned table with the finest foods and delicacies. Thinking there must be something different, he approached the people and found that they too had inverted elbows, and were unable to bring the food to their own mouths. As he stayed to observe, he then noticed the one difference between Purgatory and Paradise. In paradise, all the people sitting at the table brought the food to his or her neighbor's mouth.

(The above story is adapted from *The Kabbalah of Money*, Rabbi Nilton Bonder, Shambhala, Copyright 1996, pp.8-9.)

We all need one another. None of us can make it alone in this world. Journaling and self-exploration are vital to health and healing,

but we must, if we are to truly find paradise, accept advice, insight and wisdom from our friends, loved ones, counselors and communities. We all need to feed one another, to nurture one another, to love one another. This is where true healing resides.



Our healing must occur in relationship

The simple truth is that, for most of us, our sense of woundedness comes out of relationship. Sometimes it comes from what author Judith Viorst calls “necessary losses”: losing friends and family to age or illness, losing beloved teachers as we graduate to the next level or losing our children as they grow up into adulthood. Other times, our woundedness comes from difficult parents, incompetent caregivers, cultural persecution, prejudiced neighbors or well-intentioned but insensitive friends or co-workers. As such, most of our healing must occur in relationship. Scientific studies compellingly point out the health benefits incurred from strong and varied social support systems, whether these support systems take the form of a group of friends, a bible study group, a mens group, a womens group, a twelve-step group, a close family, or close ties at work. There is tremendous healing power in relationship and journaling is most effective when it is combined with sharing our journaling insights and discoveries with trusted friends and counselors.

There is tremendous healing power in relationship and journaling is most effective when it is combined with sharing our journaling insights and discoveries with trusted friends and counselors.



Once upon a time, a little boy was trying to move a large rock. Push as he may, he could not budge the rock. His father—looking

on—said to him, “Son, are you using all your strength.” “Yes, Daddy,” replied the little boy, “I’m using every bit of strength I have and it just won’t budge.” “Are you sure son? Are you sure you’re really using all your strength?” inquired the father. “Yes, Daddy. I’m sure” replied the boy. With these words, the father lovingly stood by his son, knelt down and said, “Son, you’re not using all your strength until you ask Daddy to help you.” Together, they easily moved the rock.

Together, we can all accomplish great things. But we need one another. Part of our individual strength comes from asking for help when we need it. This means not only asking our real father, as in this story, but also our spiritual father. When we call on God to help us, we can increase our strength of resolve, determination and effort necessary to move the big rocks in our lives.

(This story adapted from *Take Me to the Cross Devotional: A 45-Day Adventure with God* by Al Denson, Copyright 1997, Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. Wheaton, Illinois, p. 59)



The time has come to get started. Turn the page to begin your journey, and as you do, may God illuminate your path and bless you with love, strength and peace.

SECTION TWO

The Handbook of Journaling



Journaling Methods for Processing Difficult Emotions

THE LOVE LETTER TECHNIQUE

*Love is an act of endless forgiveness, a
tender look which becomes a habit.*

PETER USTINOV

This method of journaling is based on the insightful and heart-felt work of its two innovators, Barbara DeAngelis, Ph.D. and John Gray Ph.D. It is built upon the concept of an “emotional map,” which says that our emotions are like an iceberg, where the very top, floating portion of the iceberg represents our anger. Underneath the anger is our sadness or hurt. Under the hurt and sadness lies our fear. Underneath the fear, lies a level called responsibility (or accountability/self-responsibility). And the deepest layer beneath the surface of the water is love, wants, needs and desires.

This technique recognizes that we often use the surface emotions of anger, sadness and hurt as a cover-up for our fear. Only in confronting our fears can we begin taking responsibility for our emotional choices in life. Once we take ownership of our fear, we can learn ways to release it, confront it and work with it, without allowing our fear to overwhelm us. In letting go of our

fear we can begin to feel the love inside of us and better express our true needs, wants and desires.



By expressing our emotions at every level of the iceberg, we reach what is called “The Complete Truth,” which says that we are more than our anger, more than our sadness, more than our fear. All these emotions and the desire to love and be loved (that underlies them all) comprise the complete truth of who we are.

... we are more than our anger, more than our sadness, more than our fear.



The Master once noticed one of his rebellious disciples eating food on a holy fast day. The Master said to the disciple, “Surely, you must have forgotten this was a fast day and that’s why you’re eating!” “No,” replied the disciple, “I did not forget this is a fast day.” “Then surely,” said the Master, “your doctor must have told you that you can not fast because of health problems.” “No,” replied the disciple, “I am perfectly healthy.” The Master then lifted his eye skyward and said, “Dear God, look how precious your children are. I have given this man ample excuses to explain away his behavior, but he refuses to deviate from the truth, even when it incriminates him.”

Paying attention to our hurts, fears, insecurities, unfulfilled wishes, expectations, wants and desires is vital and necessary for healing our emotional pain.

In order to truly heal, we must all refuse to deviate from the truth, even when it incriminates us. The truth of our feelings, wants and desires holds the critical information that we may need in order to heal. In fact, no real healing is possible without our truthfulness. Telling the “complete truth” is what writing love letters is all about. In being honest with ourselves about our feelings and fears—especially the uncomfortable feelings—we can begin the healing process.

(The above story is adapted from Rabbi Abraham J. Twerski, M.D. *Living Each Day*, Copyright 1992 by Mesorah Publications, Ltd. p. 12; the Master in this story is Rabbi Levi Yitzchok of Berdichev.)



When our anger, sadness and hurt lead us into conflict and opposition in our relationships (personal/intimate and business), this shows up as emotional tension. This emotional tension is a cover-up for our deeper feelings and fears. In releasing, exposing and exploring our deepest fears, responsibilities and vulnerabilities, we open ourselves up to the love (or the inability to feel love and acceptance) that underlies our external conflicts. By fully expressing our emotions at each level of the iceberg, we break through our emotional tension—chipping away at the iceberg—thereby avoiding the disastrous “Titanics” in our lives. Paying attention to our hurts, fears, insecurities, unfulfilled wishes, expectations, wants and desires is vital and necessary for healing our emotional pain.



The Master came upon a pond and stopped to look at his reflection in the still water. “Is this reflection me?” the Master

inquired of his disciples. “No,” replied his disciples, “that is only an image of you reflected in the water.” “Then how does the water hold my image?” inquired the Master. “It holds you with a skin like a mirror,” replied one disciple. “And where,” said the Master, “do we touch, this pond and I?” At which point, the disciples reached into the water and splashed the Master in the face!

Our hurts, fears and insecurities are but a reflection of our consciousness. By paying attention to them, we can become aware of the deeper source—in consciousness—of our painful feelings. In this awareness, we learn that we are not our feelings but our feelings are a reflection of us. The love letter technique helps us to pay attention to our feelings, to look at our image reflected in the waters of our feelings, and to be splashed and cleansed by the waters, so that they awaken us to our true and deeper thoughts and desires which can help heal us. This whole process helps us to make visible the invisible. Our feelings help make visible the attitudes, beliefs and sense of spirituality that constitutes our true essence. Our feelings provide invaluable feedback so that we can—through *attention* to our feelings—change our true image, our true character, so that the reflection staring back at us from the waters is one that is pleasing to our soul.

In *Soul Food: Stories to Nourish the Spirit and the Heart*, authors Jack Kornfield and Christina Feldman say that our attention is the vehicle that “connects us with the changing rhythms of our own thoughts, feelings, and yearnings. Learning to listen inwardly without judgment or resistance is to begin to understand ourselves—it is the source of wisdom.”

(This story was adapted from a story by Thomas Wiloch found in *Soul Food: Stories to Nourish the Spirit and the Heart* by Jack Kornfield and Christina Feldman, 1996, HarperSanFrancisco, p.81; the Master in this story is Lord Shantih.)



The love letter technique is simple: write a normal style “Dear So and So” letter, making sure to address each level of the emo-

It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye.

ANTOINE DE SAINT-EXUPERY

tional map (iceberg). These letters are intended to help us process our own feelings, giving us the clarity and courage we need to begin healing our relationship with ourselves and with others. These letters are *not* to be sent to anyone, unless both persons ~~involved~~ are familiar with the technique and have agreed beforehand to work things out in this way

***The love letter format
follows this basic structure***

Dear _____,

Paragraph 1 (Anger)

I am so angry:
I hate it when you:
It makes me so angry:
I am furious that:
It really pisses me off:

Paragraph 2 (Sadness/Hurt)

It hurts me (that/when):
I am so sad that:
It grieves me to:
It makes me sad:

Paragraph 3 (Fear)

I am afraid that:
It scares me (to see/when):
I am so scared that:

*Anger is love turned
inside out.*

BARBARA DEANGELIS

*Fear is a question:
What are you afraid
of, and why? Just as
the seed of health is in
illness, because
illness contains
information, your
fears are a treasure
house of self-
knowledge if you
explore them.*

MARILYN FERGUSON

*One word frees us of
all the weight and
pain of life: that word
is love.*

SOPHOCLES

It frightens me:

Paragraph 4 (Responsibility)

I am sorry that:

Please forgive me for:

I never meant to:

It was never my intention:

I apologize for all the times I:

Paragraph 5 (Love/Wants/Needs)

I love how you:

I love when you:

I am so grateful to you for:

I want/need to:

I want/need you to:

What I really want is:

What I really would like is to:

Love,

Journaler

Here's a sample love letter written by Mary

Mary is having trouble expressing her need to spend more time with her husband Jim. She is beginning to feel resentful, angry and hopeless about their relationship. Due to her increasing insomnia and heart palpitations, she schedules a visit with her physician, who after a thorough examination and testing, advises her that many of her symptoms are stress-related. She does not

*Those who sow in
tears shall reap in joy.*
PSALMS 126:5

want to use any addicting drugs like Xanax or Valium, so her doctor suggests she journal through some of her emotional conflicts, in hopes that she may cool down her stressed out, overheated nervous system. She agrees to try

***Here's Mary's love letter
to her husband Jim***

Dear Jim,

*I am so **angry** that you just run up to your computer every time we have an evening to spend together. It really pisses me off that you don't want to spend more time with me and that I have to fight for your attention. I want to scream so you'll wake up and see how much you're missing, but no, you want to go on the Internet and get lost in your own little world.*

(Tip: Don't edit your feelings. This is the time to "let 'em have it." You're really just expressing your own internal anger. It would be inappropriate to blurt this out or dump it on your partner in this raw form. Remember, you need to break through your own anger to get to the deeper levels of the iceberg. This anger may have nothing to do with your partner or business associate or whomever.)

*'Tis the most tender
part of love, each
other to forgive.*

JOHN SHEFFIELD

*It makes me **sad** to think that you would rather be*

Though it is critical to be fluent at expressing our hurt and anger, we must always understand the deeper levels from which these emotions arise.

*off with your computer than sharing time with me. It hurts me to think that I'm not attractive enough or interesting enough for you. I feel sad that we don't have the same fun times together that we used to. It **hurts** me to think that we used to want to spend all our time together and now I miss that.*

(Tip: Many times women are more comfortable expressing hurt and sadness, while men are more at home expressing anger. In both cases, these feelings are the surface emotions of the iceberg and oftentimes serve only as a cover-up for our deeper fears (perhaps for safety or emotional survival or even physical survival), resentments and unfulfilled needs. Though it is critical to be fluent at expressing our hurt and anger, we must always understand the deeper levels from which these emotions arise. None of these emotions are “good” or “bad,” they are simply emotions. The challenge is learning how to express our anger and hurt in ways that are respectful of others while honoring our deeper unfulfilled need for love and acceptance. Dumping our anger and sadness on others in an attempt to manipulate them into doing what we want never leads to a win/win situation where we can take care of ourselves and simultaneously give others the opportunity to honor their needs and wants.)

*I'm **afraid** that you are losing interest in me. It*

scares me to think that our relationship may be in trouble and I don't know how to get you back. I'm afraid that if we don't spend more time together we're going to drift further and further apart. I'm scared that you aren't in love with me anymore. Maybe I'm not pretty enough anymore. Maybe I'm not good enough for you.

(Tip: This is the most important step to get to. We must uncover our fears and insecurities. Without an awareness of our fears and where they come from, the secondary anger or sadness they generate will often be inappropriately expressed or inappropriately unexpressed. Fears are normal, healthy and real. We do not want to eliminate fear, we want to recognize it and listen to it. Fear is a friend when it alerts us to situations in which our physical, emotional or spiritual survival is actually at risk. Often, however, fear is irrational, and is not tied to any real threat. This is where we must learn to moderate our fear and “take it on,” so to speak, not allowing it to cause us to react in harmful or inappropriate ways.)

*I'm **sorry** that I haven't been as attentive to you lately either. Please forgive me for getting so lost in my own needs that I forgot to listen to what you needed to be happy. I never meant to take you away from the things that you love. I just want to find the place where we can be more loving and open with one another. I want us to share our lives fully with each other.*

Without an awareness of our fears and where they come from, the secondary anger or sadness they generate will often be inappropriately expressed or inappropriately unexpressed.

Many times we reflexly think the problem is outside of ourselves. It's what "they did to me," "how they treated me," etc. When we really look into our heart, we usually find our share of responsibility for the situation.

(Tip: This level allows us to take responsibility for our own part in the situation. Many times we reflexly think the problem is outside of us. It's what "they did to me," "how they treated me," etc. When we really look into our heart, we usually find our share of responsibility for the situation. Claiming our part, accepting our shortcomings, and taking responsibility for our own mistakes is an absolutely crucial factor in the healing equation.)

*I **love** you so much and I know how scared I am that we are losing each other. I **want** us to spend more time together doing things that help us build the kind of family and relationship I know we both want. I am crazy about you and you are so important to me. I never want to lose you. I never want to take you for granted.*

(Tip: It is important to get to the actual wants, needs and desires. Unfulfilled or thwarted needs often lead to resentment, anger and hurt. We may not even be aware of our own deeper needs (usually to feel loved, accepted and appreciated for the very one that we are) and we may unconsciously spill these needs or expectations onto our spouses, lovers, business partners or friends. You can see how important it is to become more aware of our inner life, our deeper needs, and be able to express them clearly and consciously in

We may not even be aware of our own deeper needs (usually to feel loved, accepted and appreciated for the very ones that we are) and we may unconsciously spill these needs or expectations onto our spouses, lovers,

our relationships at home and at work. In this way, we can be sure that our emotional reactions are tied to an awareness of our deeper needs. We can ask for what we want clearly, without placing unrealistic expectations upon our relationships. This is part of our journey into higher consciousness. This is the way we create greater love, fulfillment and inner peace.)

General tips:

Try to give equal time to each section and don't get stuck on only one level (like anger or hurt). Move through all the levels of the emotional map in each love letter. At first, limit your time to three to five minutes in each section. Leave yourself time to complete the whole love letter in one sitting. It is important to break through to the love. You can always go back and write additional letters for all the unresolved issues.

There are many ways to write the letters. To really understand a situation, you may want to write the letter you think your partner would write to you. You may be amazed at how much better you understand their point of view. For example, after Mary's letter to Jim, she may want to write a letter from Jim to herself. She would be "guessing" what Jim would say to her, but it would help her understand her partner better.

In deeper emotional issues, you may want to write letters to your own inner child (that part of us that represents the playful, irresponsible, fun loving, scared part of us that lives inside our "adult" exterior). You may want to write a letter to your adult from your inner child. You may want to write a letter from one of

your parents to the other parent, or from you to one of your parents. You may want to write a letter to God, or write a letter from God to you. The list is endless. Remember, the whole purpose is to expand our awareness of our true needs and wants and to become more loving, more awake, and more aware, so that we may approach life from a place of consciousness and choice, rather than reaction and fear.

***Write a love letter to your
physical illness or disability***

We can write a love letter for processing emotional pain associated with physical illness or disability. By addressing our body (or our symptoms) as the “significant other” in a relationship, we begin healing a vitally important and often overlooked relationship—the one we have with our body.

In this case, the patient Nathan has been diagnosed with cancer, and he is addressing his body to help him process some of the deep and painful emotions he has had to face in coming to terms with his diagnosis. The process works similarly for any patient who has to come to terms with any difficult medical condition or disease process such as arthritis, irritable bowel disease, chronic fatigue, infertility, heart disease, lupus, Parkinson’s disease, migraine headaches and more.

Dear Body,

I am so angry at you for failing me. I have always treated you well, and I can't believe you would fail me,

By addressing our body (or our symptoms) as the “significant other” in a relationship, we begin healing a vitally important and often overlooked relationship—the one with our body.

Love letters are one of the best tools I know for finding greater clarity, courage, awareness and healing in our lives.

that you would betray me. I eat well and exercise regularly and who are you to turn on me and disable me with this horrible cancer? I hate you for taking away my hope and the certainty of my future. I am so furious that you would deny me the opportunity to be with my family and see my children grow and watch my dreams come true. I hate what you have done to me.

It saddens me to think that I will miss out on so much. I am brokenhearted that my children may not have me around to offer them the support and love they need. How could you do this to me? I am so furious.

(Tip: Notice that you may be in the section on hurt when new anger comes up. Simply return to the anger section and get the anger out even more.)

I am so sad to think my wife will have to take care of our children alone, without my help. I will miss her so much. I am so afraid that I will come to be a burden on my family, that I will bring them down. It scares me to see my family so worried about me. I am so afraid that I won't make it through this alive, that my chemotherapy won't work. I am so scared that I have let down my wife and my kids.

I am sorry that I didn't always eat the best foods and get the most exercise I could have. Perhaps I could have taken better care of my emotions and been nicer to you and not pushed you so hard and stressed you out so much. I never meant to put such a difficult burden on

you by working so hard and stressing so much about everything.

I am trying to be strong but I need your help. Please be strong with me. Please help the chemotherapy fight off these cancer cells that are plaguing us both. I need you to work with me. I need your help. I need your love. I want to be here to grow and love my children and adore my wife. Please watch over me and let's work together to heal this cancer.

Love,

Nathan

Notice the deep awareness and emotional release that come from writing love letters. Try writing a letter addressed to: 1) Dear Overweight Body 2) Dear Recurrent Colds 3) Dear Fatigued Body 4) Dear Migraine Headache or 5) Dear Stomach Aches. When you complete your letter, try reading it out loud. Or record it into a tape recorder and listen as it is played back. Love letters are one of the best tools I know for finding greater clarity, courage, awareness and healing in the midst of difficulties and challenges.

For even more benefit, write a "response letter" and a "connection letter"

In his book *How to Get What You Want and Want What You Have*, John Gray adds a wonderful addition to his love letter technique. After writing your initial letter, write a "response let-

ter.” This is a letter written *back to you from* the person you just wrote to in your original love letter. In the response letter, write everything you would like to hear from that person that would make you feel understood, loved and cared for. Write down the ideal response, even if it seems selfish or unrealistic. The whole idea is to get in touch with the deeper wishes, desires and wants underlying our feelings of anger, hurt, sadness or fear. This ultimately leads us to the powerful healing place of forgiveness—of others and of ourselves.



A student asked his Master to teach him about forgiveness. The Master directed the student to watch a certain innkeeper at the time of the upcoming new year. The student promptly checked into the inn and observed the innkeeper for several days. As the new year approached, the student saw the innkeeper pull out two ledger books from his desk. From the first book, he started reading out loud all the things he had done which he felt badly about, including times he acted unkindly, lost his temper, responded impatiently or acted selfishly. Then the innkeeper pulled out the second ledger and began reading out loud a long list of all the bad things that had happened to him over the past year. At this point, the innkeeper turned his vision to the heavens above and said, “Dear God, it is true that I have done many terrible things this year. But many terrible things have also happened to me. We are now beginning a new year. Why don’t we clean the slate and call it even! I will forgive you and you forgive me.”

Forgiveness is wiping the slate clean even when we cannot understand all the bad things that have happened to us. Forgiveness frees us to “give as before” and helps us to let go of grudges, resentments and disappointments that keep us from loving fully.

(This story adapted from *Living Each Day* by Rabbi Abraham J. Twerski, M.D., Copyright 1992 by Mesorah Publications, Ltd.p.

342; the Master is Rabbi Elimelech of Lizensk.)



The response letter has five major categories and within each category, you can use the suggested sentence stems to express your deeper feelings. The categories are:

Paragraph 1 (Apology)

Please accept my apology for:

I'm sorry:

I apologize that:

I never meant to:

Paragraph 2 (Forgiveness)

Please forgive me:

Can you forgive me for:

Please pardon my:

Paragraph 3 (Understanding)

I've come to realize:

I now understand:

Paragraph 4 (Promises)

I want you to:

I promise to:

Paragraph 5 (Love)

I love you:

I care for you so much and:

You mean the world to me and:

Here's an example of a response letter

After Mary's original letter to her husband Jim, she writes a response letter from Jim back to herself. It might go like this:

Dear Mary,

*I am so **sorry** that you have felt ignored by me. I never meant for you to feel that way. I know I sometimes get preoccupied with my work and the computer, but I am genuinely sorry that I have ignored you in the process. Please accept my apology.*

*Please **forgive** me for ignoring you and leaving you to feel so unimportant in my life. You mean so much to me, I never want you to feel that way. Forgive me for my selfishness.*

*I **understand** now how important it is for us to spend quality time together. I've come to realize that nothing can replace the time we have together. I don't want to wake up one day and realize I have missed out on what's most important. I now understand that I can find other times to do my work that won't take away from the limited time we have together.*

*I **want** to have the special relationship we dreamed of and I want you to know how very important you are to me.*

*I **love** and care for you deeply and want us to grow closer and closer together. You mean the world to me and I am so grateful that I better understand how*

important and sacred our time together is.

I love you so much,

Jim

After writing your response letter, take time to write a “*connection letter*.” This is a letter written back to the original person you wrote to, expressing how good and grateful you feel when you receive the love and understanding you really want from that person. The connection letter helps us experience what it feels like to get what we want, to feel supported, nurtured and loved. The connection letter connects us to the spiritual core of love and essential worthiness that lies within each one of us. This fills us with the internal strength to love ourselves and feel worthy of love even when people and external circumstances fail to give us the love and attention we want and deserve.

The connection letter uses the following sentence stems to help you get in touch with your feelings of being supported, loved and cared for.

I am so grateful that:

Thank you for:

I now understand that:

I love when you:

I am beginning to understand:

I forgive you:

It fills my heart to hear ____: (to know:/to see:/to feel:)

***Here's an example of Mary's
connection letter back to Jim***

This letter gives Mary a chance to internally experience the good feelings and inner strength that come from realizing her own sense of inner worthiness. By supporting herself in these “imaginary” conversations with Jim, Mary gets to experience her own inner sense of lovability and worthiness. Her connection letter might go like this.

Dear Jim,

Thank you so much for your understanding and love. I am so grateful that you understand how important our time together is and how much we can build and grow if we take the time to nurture our relationship. You are the most important person in the world to me. I am beginning to understand how deeply you love me and that makes me feel good. I know how hard you are working to take care of us. I just don't want to sacrifice the most important thing we have together—the love and closeness we feel for one another. I forgive you for ignoring me. I realize you never meant for me to feel that way. I am grateful for the love we have and it fills my heart to know how much you love me and care for us. Thank you for being so understanding.

Forever yours,

Mary

*For one human being
to love another; that
is perhaps the most
difficult of all our
tasks, the ultimate,
the last test and
proof, the work for
which all other work
is but preparation.*

RAINER MARIA RILKE

Remember that the whole purpose of writing a love letter is to get beyond our fears, hurts and anger to the love—and need to be loved—that lies within our painful emotions. Though we may achieve some level of inner peace by writing these letters, it is critical—when appropriate—that we take our insights to our partners, friends and significant others in order to share our deeper feelings in dialogue and conversation. The goal is not to feel good but to be loving.



The Master spoke frequently of the importance of action. He would tell his disciples, “All the virtuous thoughts in the world do not produce a single virtuous act, a single gesture of help, a single dollar for charity. A fusion of thought and action is vital.”

We must combine thought with action and—in so doing—take our new insights out into the world of our family, workplace and community in order to help make the world a kinder and more loving place in which to live. This is the essence of writing a love letter. It helps us process our raw emotions of anger, sadness, hurt and fear and find within these emotions, the strength and courage to love ourselves and others more deeply.

(The above story adapted from the writings of Rabbi Menachem Schneerson found in *Toward a Meaningful Life: The Wisdom of the Rebbe Menachem Mendel Schneerson*, edited by Simon Jacobson, New York: William Morrow & Company, 1995, p. xii.)



For more information and a complete description of this technique, see: *How To Make Love All The Time*, by Barbara DeAngelis Ph.D. and *What You Feel You Can Heal* by John

Gray, Ph.D. These two authors are powerfully insightful, loving and inspiring in the area of love, relationship and emotional healing. I cannot recommend their work highly enough.

TAKING THE ONE SEAT

*To acquire knowledge, one must study; but
to acquire wisdom, one must observe.*

MARILYN VOS SAVANT

In the midst of the commotion that often characterizes our inner life and the unpredictable changes that often characterize our outer life, “taking the one seat” is about discovering the immutable essence of who we are. “Taking the one seat” enables us to find a place of compassion and openness where we simply observe the passing of all things in our life—joy, sorrow, winning, losing, fear, love, tragedy and triumph. “Taking the one seat” is about finding the place in our heart where there is allowance for all things—recognizing that behind all fear and change, we remain the sacred, everlasting observer and witness of all events.

In his powerful book *A Path With Heart*, the soulful and compassionate Jack Kornfield describes what happens to us when we “take the one seat.” He says: “As we take the one seat we discover our capacity to be unafraid and awake in the midst of all life . . . to discover that we are unshakable. We discover

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*We discover that we
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to encompass it all.*

JACK KORNFIELD

that we can face life fully with all its suffering and joy, that our heart is great enough to encompass it all.”

Jack goes on to tell of his teacher Achaan Chah, who describes the process of “taking the one seat.” Chah says “Just go into the room and put one chair in the center. Take the one seat in the center of the room, open the doors and windows, and see who comes to visit. You will witness all kinds of scenes and actors, all kinds of temptations and stories, everything imaginable. Your only job is to stay in your seat. You will see it all arise and pass, and out of this, wisdom and understanding will come.”

Though the concept of “taking the one seat” refers to meditation practice, it is easily adapted to journaling, which when done with awareness and attention, is really a form of active meditation. So often in life, we try to be courageous and push down our fear and insecurity. We overcompensate for our shortcomings, pretending that everything is okay, when in fact we are scared out of our wits. It is the fear we suppress and refuse to face that most endangers us. Virginia Satir, the great family therapist, said that suppressing our fears is like locking away ferocious dogs in the basement of our house—the hungrier they become, the more they scare us, and the more likely they are to hurt us. Eventually, all our energy goes into making sure they stay locked up and cannot harm us, leaving little energy for enjoyment, growth and generativity.

Many times our fears are only limiting beliefs we have about ourselves. Because of this, we are better off feeding our fears—bringing them up into the kitchen—rather than locking them away, hungry in the basement. In the light of day we can face our fears, doubts, demons and insecurities. We can domesti-

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cate them, transforming our fearful dogs into watchdogs that protect us.

 ***Please “take the one seat” and let’s begin***

Imagine yourself on a chair in the middle of an empty room, surrounded by four white walls. Sit down and openly allow your thoughts to come in, especially your most negative thoughts, deep seated fears and debilitating doubts. These thoughts may attack you, envelop you and chip away at your deepest insecurities. You believe them to be true, they feel real.

Allow them to surface. Notice them rise and fall like waves on the ocean. Fear may arise, followed by feelings of strength or security. Joy may arise, followed by feelings of grief and loss. Remember that “taking the one seat” means that you can not move, run or escape from your fears. You must listen to them, heed them, and notice them. You must respect your fears but you need not obey them. Let them out of the basement, but remember that beyond all fear lies the immutable, indestructible and sacred essence of who we are—witnessing it all.

As your feelings arise, write down each thought or fear and feel what it is like just to feel the fear doubt or insecurity. Deeper fears or insecurities may surface. Watch as they rise. Stay in the one seat. Feel the fear. Our fears are only thoughts and energies within us. They cannot harm us without our permission. Recognize them as a part of who we are, remembering always that we are more than our fear, more than our doubt, more than our insecurity. Sadness or tears may come up. Write down the feelings of sadness, write down the tears. Write down

You do not need to leave your room. Remain sitting at your table and listen. Do not even listen, simply wait. Do not even wait, be quiet, still and solitary. The world will freely offer itself to you to be unmasked, it has no choice, it will roll in ecstasy at your feet.

FRANZ KAFKA

. . . beyond all fear lies the immutable, indestructible and sacred essence of who we are—witnessing it all.

*. . . we are more than
our fear, more than
our doubt, more than
our insecurity.*

the feelings. Speak them out loud. Get the dogs out of the basement. When you feel the fears and doubts are too overwhelming and you must get up from the chair: stop, reflect and choose a “loving/healing statement” from the list at the end of this chapter. Find the strength to go on. Use these statements to call on your higher, love-based consciousness to allay your fears and insecurities, to remind you of your strength, to remind you that you deserve to love and be loved.

One powerful Buddhist technique for finding equanimity and calm in the midst of unbounded fear involves repeating the simple phrase “Ah, this too.” When you notice the fear, the hurt or the pain, just say “Ah, this too”—knowing these emotions will pass. Another permutation is “This too shall pass,” or “This too, this too.” These phrases encourage our openness to whatever is—trusting our everlasting, unchanging essence will emerge, filled with even greater love, strength and courage than before.

*Difficulties
strengthen the mind,
as labor does the
body.*

SENECA



Finding equanimity in the midst of our fear requires tremendous faith: faith in something greater than ourselves, faith in the safety of the universe, faith that there is a reason and a purpose to our difficulties, that there is meaning in our suffering.

A great Master was once traveling late at night with his donkey, rooster and lamp. He arrived at a local inn in a small town, only to be told there was no room available. The Master took the news well and decided to make shelter in a nearby woods. As he was setting up camp, a lion came by and ate his donkey. The Master wasn't in the least bit distressed and said to himself, “Maybe it is better this way.” A short time later, his rooster was attacked by a panther and a strong wind blew out his lamp. Again, the Master—

not in the least bit distressed—said to himself, “Maybe it is better this way.” The following morning, he left camp and returned to the village, only to find that the whole village had been ransacked and destroyed by evening bandits. All the villagers had been killed. The Master realized that if his donkey and rooster hadn’t been attacked, and if the wind had not extinguished the light from his lamp, the bandits may have discovered his whereabouts and killed him as well.

Sometimes things happen for reasons that we cannot fully comprehend. Learning to trust the universe requires a faith in something greater than ourselves. This attitude of “Maybe it is better this way” stems from that faith, and allows us to let go of some of our unnecessary anxieties, fears and worries. Discernment, of course, is always necessary, in that we must differentiate between letting go of things that are truly beyond our control, while still taking responsibility for that which we can do to honor, love and protect ourselves.

(The above story adapted from ?? Rabbi Nilton Bonder, *The Kabbalah of Money*. The Master is the famous Rabbi Akiva.)



When you become afraid or overwhelmed, imagine these statements below are being spoken to you by God, a wise priest, rabbi, pastor, therapist, parent, mentor, guardian angel or higher power.

Loving/Healing Statements

- ◆ Your strength is greater than your fear
- ◆ You can find freedom and joy in the midst of all things.
- ◆ Do not give up. You will find the courage to persevere.
- ◆ Hold on to your determination.
- ◆ Perfect love casteth out all fear

- ◆ You have a right to awaken and find the joy you seek.
- ◆ You are more than your fear
- ◆ You are more than your sadness.
- ◆ You are more than your loss.
- ◆ You deserve to be loved for the very one that you are.
- ◆ Still your mind and find your center of strength and joy
- ◆ Do not be tempted by failure, you will achieve the success you desire.
- ◆ Wisdom and understanding are available to you when you invite them in.
- ◆ You deserve to love and be loved.
- ◆ Your fears and doubts will rise and fall. Stay centered.
- ◆ Clarity, understanding and love will come your way
- ◆ Stay true to your heart. Guidance and strength surround you.
- ◆ Look deeply inside yourself. The answers are waiting for you.
- ◆ Your commitment and determination are transforming your fear into freedom.
- ◆ Stay with it. Your true strength lies where your pain is.
- ◆ You are willing to grow
- ◆ You are courageous to have taken the one seat. Relax and trust your heart.
- ◆ God will protect you through your fears.
- ◆ Guardian angels surround and protect you from harm.
- ◆ You are powerful and deserve to have your dreams come true.
- ◆ All things are possible through God, who strengthens you.
- ◆ Be patient, you will grow and open in your own time.

- ◆ You are awakening to all parts of yourself. Do not be afraid.
- ◆ You have the courage to find your truth.
- ◆ You know all you need to know
- ◆ Sit with your pain. Do not be afraid. Your pain will lead you to peace.
- ◆ The Lord is your shepherd, you shall not lack.

***Add Your Own Loving/
Healing Statements***

For further information, please read the complete and soulful work of Jack Kornfield in his book entitled, *A Path With Heart: A Guide Through The Perils And Promises Of Spiritual Life*.

GUIDED FEELING JOURNALING

When we are no longer able to change our situation, we are challenged to change ourselves.

VIKTOR FRANKL

Guided feeling journaling is best described by the work of Ken Keyes, Jr. in his famous book, *Handbook to Higher Consciousness*. This type of journaling is based on the premise that our internal feelings of calmness, awareness, and inner peace are just that, internal. Though circumstances in the outer world may not always meet our expectations or demands, we can always maintain some level of control over our internal experience. As such, when the world does not meet our expectations, we can learn to: 1) ask for what we want, 2) accept what the world gives us (the way things are) and 3) work on the difference.

Working on the difference does not mean coercing the external world to agree with us and give us what we want. Rather it means earnestly, respectfully and even vigorously working to achieve the things we want—through dialogue, conversation and communication—all the while respecting the right of others to

Though circumstances in the outer world may not always meet our expectations or demands, we can always maintain some level of control over our internal experience.

The harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly; it is dearness only that gives everything its value. I love the man that can smile in trouble, that can gather strength from distress and grow brave by reflection. 'Tis the business of little minds to shrink; but he whose heart is firm, and whose conscience approves his conduct, will pursue his principles unto death.

THOMAS PAINE

say “no” or to see things differently than we might like. As such, life is not simply trying once for what we want and then saying “Oh, I guess God just doesn’t want me to have it.” That’s passivity, lack of initiative and drive. We must work on achieving our goals with our utmost ability, but when things still seem out of reach, then we must surrender to the way things are and accept them. Working on the difference may mean trying again days, months or years later. Working on the difference may mean learning to accept and find strength in the things we are denied in life, whether it has to do with our physical, emotional, relationship, financial, community or spiritual lives. Oftentimes, the true measure of our strength lies in coming to terms with what we cannot achieve in life.

Here’s how it works. The next time you experience conflict, emotional upset or physical symptoms, ask yourself:

- ◆ What am I feeling now?
- ◆ What event(s) led me to feel this way?
- ◆ How do I wish things had gone?
- ◆ If things had gone the way I wanted them to, what would I be feeling now?
- ◆ Is there a way I can (internally) feel that way now even though (externally) things didn’t turn out the way I hoped they would?



Here’s an example

What am I feeling now?

Oftentimes, the true measure of our strength lies in coming to terms with what we cannot achieve in life.

I'm feeling angry and upset and unappreciated.

What event(s) led me to feel this way?

My wife got angry at me because I scolded our son too quickly without taking his circumstances into account.

How do I wish things had gone? (This identifies your “fantasy,” or what Ken Keyes calls your “addictive demand.”)

My fantasy is that my wife would have been totally supportive of me and how I handled the situation, and that she would think I am the greatest husband and father on the planet!

If things had gone the way I wanted them to—i.e., if I got my fantasy—what would I be feeling now?

In control, loved and appreciated for the generous person that I am.

Is there a way I can feel that way now—i.e., in control, loved and appreciated for being a generous person—even though things didn't turn out the way I hoped they would?

Yes. I can let go of my anger somewhat and realize that though I cannot control my wife's response to me, I can still control my response to the situation. By not letting myself take it all too personally, I can still appreciate myself for the kind and loving person I am and realize that I may have reacted too quickly. I will give myself time to cool down and think things over more

clearly later.

At this point we realize that what we really want from getting our fantasy met are the good, internal feelings that come with it. In this case, the sense of being a loving, generous father who is appreciated for his efforts and hard work. This is what Ken Keyes calls our “positive intention.” Our positive intention is the way we feel inside when our addictive demands or fantasies are met. We must realize that these internal feelings are always available to us, because they are part of our internal consciousness. Too often we let outside people or events determine how we feel about ourselves inside. There’s a wonderful saying that goes, “What you think of me is none of my business.”

Of course we all want to be loved and accepted by others, but we need to remember that others have their own stuff they’re dealing with, and they may not be able to appreciate and accept us for reasons that have nothing to do with our own inherent worthiness. Part of living an adult life means relying on our internal values, setting our limits from a loving aware place in consciousness, and then not allowing situations in the outside world to compromise our sense of who we are and what we value.

When the outside world refuses to meet our demands and expectations, we can always find—within ourselves—the positive feelings that accompany righteous and loving internal values. We need not let other people and situations lead us into self-criticism and shame. We need only be accountable to what we hold to be true, loving and good in the eyes of God and our own conscience—under the one proviso that we respect the rights,

Too often we let outside people or events determine how we feel about ourselves inside.

...we need to remember that others have their own stuff they’re dealing with, and they may not be able to appreciate and accept us for reasons that have nothing to do with our own inherent worthiness.

dignity and property of others.

By strengthening our internal feelings of worthiness, we can avoid negative self-talk and use the energy that would have gone into self-criticism and blame to resolve the conflict and “work on the difference.”

By learning to love ourselves as we are, recognizing our shortcomings and flaws, we can stop beating ourselves or others up. In acknowledging our shortcomings, we can seek a higher nobler and richer life by moving towards greater honesty loving-kindness and forgiveness, even as we recognize the places we fall short of these ideals. This is the work required for true emotional and spiritual growth.



The Master, in speaking about the importance of personal growth, said to his students, “Growth is so vital to every one of God’s creations, that every blade of grass has an angel standing over it, encouraging it ‘Grow! Grow!’” The Master continued, “If God assigned angels to encourage even a simple blade of grass to grow, imagine how much more, we as human beings, made in the image of God, are encouraged to grow.”

Working on our emotional and spiritual growth is a sacred endeavor that helps each one of us in our task of bringing heaven a little closer to earth. In finding the courage and faith necessary for growth, we come to realize that we are greater than our loss, bigger than our mistakes and taller than our shortcomings.” (Adapted from Nilton Bonder, *The Kaballah of Money*, Copyright 1996, Shambhala, p. 42)



. . . to be strong on the inside when things are not going well on the outside. This is the strength that leads to wisdom, resiliency and inner confidence.

. . . we can seek a higher, nobler and richer life by moving towards greater honesty, loving-kindness and forgiveness, even as we recognize the places we fall short of these ideals.

We must develop inner strength

In pursuing true emotional and spiritual growth, part of the mental process we must go through involves counteracting irrational beliefs and fears about what it means when others disapprove of us, or when things don't go our way. This is what David Burns, M.D., author of *The New Mood Therapy*, calls a "mental tune-up". (See the chapter on Cognitive Therapy Journaling.) This mental tune-up allows us to see the limiting nature of our internal beliefs and attitudes. We are all human and—to some degree—want the acceptance, approval and good-grace of others. But we must also come to our own sense of self-acceptance, self-approval and self-validation. This allows us to be strong on the inside when things are not going well on the outside. This is the strength that leads to wisdom, resiliency and inner confidence.

Referring back to the example above, let's look at some of the enriching beliefs we can choose:

1. I can feel in control even when my wife is upset with me.
2. I can feel loved and appreciated even when my wife gets short with me.
3. I can feel generous and kind even when others think I'm not.
4. Just because I got short with my son doesn't mean I'm a bad father or unloving.
5. Even when I overreact, I can forgive myself and feel the loving, generous me.
6. I can appreciate myself, even when others hold bad opinions about me.

7. Just because my wife thinks I was short with our son doesn't mean I was. We can address our differences with respect and kindness, and I need not devalue myself or her.

Try out guided feeling journaling whenever you are experiencing emotional or physical distress and internal conflict. It is very powerful.

For more information, read any of the healing and loving works of Ken Keyes, Jr. including *Handbook to Higher Consciousness*, *Gathering Power Through Insight and Love*, *A Conscious Person's Guide to Relationships*, and more. All © by Living Love Publications.

THE POWER OF YOUR OTHER HAND

When we were children, we used to think that when we were grown-up we would no longer be vulnerable. But to grow up is to accept vulnerability... To be alive is to be vulnerable.

MADELEINE L'ENGLE

This technique is based upon the fascinating and creative work of Lucia Cappachione, Ph.D., and is built upon the discovery that when we write with our non-dominant hand (our non-writing hand), we access the feelings and energies of our “inner child” archetype. The inner child archetype was developed by Carl Jung and teaches us that within each one of us “adults” we still carry the naive, child-like, playful, vulnerable, creative, spoiled, scared and fun-loving qualities of the “child.” The child has both good qualities and “not so good” qualities. The good qualities of the inner child are spontaneity, playfulness, alertness, energy and joyful expression. The “not so good” qualities are irrational fear, vulnerability, spoiledness, temper tantrums, selfishness, teasing others and self-absorption.

In addition to our “inner child” we also have an “inner adult.” This is the voice of the “parent” within each one of us—the voice that gives us our sense of right, wrong, should and shouldn't. The

... within each one of us “adults” we still carry the naive, child-like, playful vulnerable, creative, spoiled, scared and fun-loving qualities of the “child.”

inner adult has “good” qualities such as the ability to delay gratification, adherence to values and principles, rational thinking and fairness. The inner adult also has “not so good” qualities such as being critical, perfectionistic, fearful, overprotective and judgmental (of self and others).

When we have a healthy balance between our childlike qualities and our responsible adult, life is lived from a place of choice, growth and self-actualization.

The goal in this form of journaling is to create a healthy relationship between our inner child and our inner adult. We want and need our adult to be in charge. The adult is able to assume accountability for its actions and able to discern between rational and irrational reactions to people and events. However, if we are “all adult” with no child, we run the risk of losing our creative, playful and spontaneous energies. We are seeking the balance between these opposites. The child alone is incapable of running the show.” Life would become chaotic if the child were to take charge. A healthy balance between our inner adult and inner child allows us to function responsibly in life—without losing our spontaneity and playfulness.

When we have a healthy balance between our childlike qualities and our responsible adult, life is lived from a place of choice, growth and self-actualization.



The Master, in speaking to a group of children, asked, “If all the good people in the world are red, and all the bad people in the world are green, what color would you be?” One child pondered for a while, raised her hand and said, “Master, I would be streaky!”

We are all streaky. We all have good and bad qualities within us. Similarly, we all have the good and bad aspects of the inner child and the inner adult within us. We must find the healthy balance between these characteristics, one that allows our streakiness to paint a beautiful picture of our lives.”

(This story adapted from a story by Anthony de Mello in *Song of the Bird*, p. 129, retold in *The Spirituality of Imperfection: Storytelling and the Journey to Wholeness* by Ernest Kurtz and Katherine Ketcham, Bantam Books, 1992, p. 56.)



Here's an example of a basic journaling entry with your inner child

Imagine you've been working hard and you're starting to resent how difficult things are. You just haven't had any time for fun and you're feeling increasingly stressed—experiencing insomnia, poor concentration and low grade depression—all symptoms of a deprived inner child! Your life is out of balance and your responsible adult is winning, while your inner child is feeling neglected and starting to have a temper tantrum. A conversation with your inner child may be helpful.

Inner Child: (writing with your non-dominant hand):

I'm sick and tired of
HAVING TO STAY HOME
every NIGHT WHILE YOU WORK.
I never get TO PLAY ANY
MORE.

Adult: *I'm sorry, honey. I know I've had a lot of work to do lately. We just have so many bills to pay.*

Inner Child:

Yes, BUT I'm tired of being
IGNORED WHILE YOU DO ALL
YOUR ADULT STUFF.

Adult: You're right. I have been ignoring you. I'd like
to go out and play too. How about this? I'll spend the next
2 hours working on the bills and then I promise we'll do
something fun together—maybe watch some TV or go bi-
cycle riding, okay?

Inner Child:

O.K. THAT SOUNDS GOOD
TO ME. HOW ABOUT IN ONE
HOUR?

Adult: Let's make it an hour and a half. A deal?

Inner Child:

A DEAL! (★)

This may seem silly at first, but you'll begin to notice a sense
of lightness and playfulness emerge when you converse with your
inner child. That's your inner child awakening. Like a real child
within us, the inner child needs our attention and time. Conversing
with—and including—the inner child in your “adult” plans and
responsibilities is often all they need to feel loved and safe again.

... like a real child
within us—the inner
child needs our
attention and time.

... you'll begin to
notice a sense of
lightness and
playfulness emerging
out of these
conversations. That's
your inner child
coming alive.

Though the inner child wants very much to please us—without proper time and attention—the inner child begins to act out and disrupt our life. Whenever you feel resentful, depressed, lonely disconnected from others or unenthusiastic about life, your inner child is involved. A good talk with your inner child may help the two of you reestablish a more balanced, healthier relationship, bringing greater vitality, joyfulness, and spontaneity into your life.

Imbalance not only results from a neglected inner child but also from an overbearing inner adult. Whenever you feel excessively critical (of others or yourself), or like you're just not good enough, you may be dealing with an overbearing "inner adult." This is a good time to examine all the "shoulds" in your life, which are the perfectionist, critical demands of the parental voices that we all still carry inside ourselves. Confronting and challenging these "shoulds" will help you etch out a healthier relationship with the parents that still live inside your head. These parental voices reside in your consciousness and may or may not bear similarities to your actual parents.

It is axiomatic in therapy that—as functional adults—it is not our parents that sleep in their beds, but rather the parents that live in our heads, that diminish our full capacity for a joyful life. We must address these internalized parental voices. It is not our task to change our parents, but rather the parental voices that live in our heads.

Imbalance can also result from an overactive inner child and an underresponsible inner adult. This leads to the perennial problem of the child who never grows up.



SECTION TWO

The Handbook of Journaling



Journaling Methods for Overcoming Negative Thoughts and Limiting Beliefs

AFFIRMATION JOURNALING

Everything we shut our eyes to, everything we run away from, everything we deny, denigrate, or despise, serves to defeat us in the end. What seems nasty, painful, evil, can become a source of beauty, joy, and strength, if faced with an open mind. Every moment is a golden one for him who has the vision to recognize it as such.

HENRY MILLER

The basic premise of affirmation journaling is that great things are possible when we discover and change our core beliefs so that they are aligned with our deeper goals and aspirations. As we clear away our negative beliefs and choose new enriching beliefs in their place, we begin to affirm a level of health, healing and prosperity that would be otherwise impossible to attain.

The format is simple. State your affirmation in a short, positive statement as if it has already happened. As negative responses arise, notice them and write them down. Then *stop, take a deep breath and reflect* on your automatic negative response and choose a clear positive counter response.

In affirmation journaling, it is vital to let whatever negativity arises come up. Don't try to be positive. Don't try to suppress your negativity. This method works *because* you fully express the negative, get it out into the open and begin to dispel

. . . let whatever negativity arises come up. Don't try to be positive. This method works because you fully express the negative. . .

its power.

Example 1:

Affirmation: *I am financially successful and will not be denied prosperity.*

Automatic Negative Belief: *You're a loser and you'll never be wealthy. You don't have what it takes.*

Chosen New Enriching Belief: *That's right. In the past I haven't had what it takes, but things are different now. I am growing and changing and learning all the time. I deserve financial prosperity and I am going for it.*

Example 2:

Affirmation: *I am losing weight easily and quickly.*

Automatic Negative Belief: *You'll gain it all back, you're just a failure. Don't get excited.*

Chosen New Enriching Belief: *I have failed in the past, but I've learned from those failures. This time I'm determined to succeed.*

Take time to stop, breathe and reflect on each negative belief. Then **choose** a new enriching belief for each and every negative belief that arises.

Notice that automatic negative responses are *extremely powerful* and arise spontaneously, far more easily than our positive, enriching beliefs. Don't worry or feel defeated. Continue to write down the same affirmation, each time writing down every automatic negative belief that comes up. Take time to stop, breathe and reflect on each negative belief. Then **choose**

a new enriching belief for each and every negative belief that arises. It may take pages and pages to break through core negative beliefs, but if you persevere and continue to bring them into awareness, the dark force of these negative beliefs will begin to dissipate in the light of your newly chosen empowering beliefs.



A student once approached the Master inquiring, “They say you are a genius. Is that true?” “You might say so,” the Master replied. “And what makes you a genius,” inquired the student. “The ability to recognize” replied the Master. “Recognize what?” asked the student. “To recognize the butterfly in a caterpillar; the eagle in an egg; the saint in a selfish human being,” replied the Master.

We all become “masters” when we acquire “the ability to recognize”—to recognize in our difficulties the seeds of growth, in our selfishness, the seeds of saintliness and in our negativity the seeds of worthiness.

(Above story adapted from Anthony de Mello’s *One Minute Wisdom*.)



Here’s an example of a more extended affirmation session that takes the form of a dialogue between our automatic negative beliefs and our chosen positive beliefs.

Affirmation: *I am a successful songwriter and my songs are being played on the radio—where many people find healing and inspiration from them.*

Negativity: *Your songs will never be heard on the radio. There are so many writers so much better than you.*

Positive Belief: *That's just fear speaking. My songs are as good as anyone else's out there.*

Negativity: *You're joking right. You never had any formal training. Those guys are gifted musicians.*

Positive Belief: *I am gifted as well. I have a great talent for writing meaningful words and beautiful melodies.*

Negativity: *In your own mind maybe, but really! Who's going to want to listen to your music?*

Positive Belief: *I have played my songs for many people and they love them and find them beautiful and inspiring. That's who's going to listen to my music. I just haven't had the chance to have millions of people hear them yet.*

Negativity: *They say they like them because they're your friends. They're just being nice.*

Positive Belief: *That's not true. Many people who love my songs don't really know me and are not my friends. They still love my songs.*

Negativity: *Whatever! Keep dreaming, Mr. Positive Thinker, but you're just fooling yourself.*

Positive Belief: *Jealousy will get you nowhere, Mr. Negativity. You're just afraid that I will be successful and you will lose your power over me. I'm not going to let you do that. I don't really think you're all that tough. Besides, it's easy for you to sit there and criticize me, but what have you done lately that's meaningful and soulful?*

Negativity: *Whatever, whatever. Just believe*

what you want. But I'll get you in the end. You don't really have the guts to put yourself out there and be a success.

Positive Belief: *I admit I've been scared before but I feel more confident now. I deserve to have my dreams come true and I'm not going to let you stop me anymore.*

Negativity: *Okay. If you say so, go make a fool of yourself and give it a go.*

Positive Belief: *Why do you always have to be so sarcastic? I'm going to reach for my dreams and you should support me instead of put me down.*

Negativity: *Hey, I'm negativity. What do you expect? But if you really want to go for this, I'll back down for a little while. Just be careful out there. People can be cruel and hurt you when you go after your dreams.*

Positive Belief: *Thanks. I know you want to protect me and I don't want to be hurt either. I know there will be a lot of rejection, but my dreams are too important to me. I'm willing to risk some rejection and failure in order to make my dreams come true. I believe in the songs I write, that they are important and healing and help people to love and grow and that is very important to me.*

Negativity: *Okay, kiddo. I'll back off and do my best to support you.*

Positive Belief: *Thanks. I appreciate your support. Let's go get them!*

We are going to experience pain and loss in life. It is inevitable. The key is to continue reaching for our positive dreams and deeper desires—all the while acknowledging and releasing the hurt, loss, fear and pain that accompany a life fully lived.

When we have these longer dialogues between our negative beliefs and our positive beliefs, we often discover that our negativity is a misguided attempt to protect ourselves from hurt, loss, shame, embarrassment, difficulty or pain. We are going to experience pain and loss in life. It is inevitable. The key is to continue reaching for our positive dreams and deeper desires—all the while acknowledging and releasing the hurt, loss, fear and pain that accompany a life fully lived. We do this best by dialoguing with our fear and negativity—making these energies our allies rather than our enemies.

Persevere! Bring the darkness of your deeply held negative beliefs and attitudes out into the light, where they can be seen, challenged and redirected toward a more positive, healing outcome.

All the darkness in the world cannot put out the light of a single candle.

UNKNOWN AUTHOR

EMETT JOURNALING METHOD

God gave burdens, also shoulders.

YIDDISH PROVERB

EMETT, in Hebrew, means truth. This method of journaling was developed by the innovative Miriam Adahan in her soulful book *EMETT: A Step-by-Step Guide to Emotional Maturity Established Through Torah*. EMETT is based upon the age-old principles of the Jewish Torah, which is basically, the first five books of the Old Testament. It is a methodology that integrates spiritual principles into handling the problems of everyday living. Based upon the biblical, karmic principle of “you reap what you sow” EMETT teaches us that if we think loving and elevated thoughts and perform loving and elevated deeds, we will eventually reap loving and elevated results in our life.

By applying uplifting religious principles to everyday problems, we seek to elevate our responses to life’s difficulties. In disciplining our minds to choose the attitudes and responses that increase our belief in goodness, God, love, faith and trust,

By disciplining our minds to choose those attitudes and responses which increase our belief in goodness, God, love, faith and trust, we overcome our conditioned negative responses to life's difficulties. We become more aware of the resources we have within us.

we can overcome our conditioned negative responses to life's difficulties. As we become more aware of the resources we have within us, we begin to face our losses, hurts, disappointments and setbacks with dignity and love, becoming stronger from them, rather than overwhelmed by them. We begin to trust in the extreme resiliency and kindness of the human spirit.



Once upon a time, a benevolent king wished to bestow a gift upon each of his three most loyal subjects. When asked what they wished for, the first replied "I would like a brand new home with fine furnishings and a beautiful view." The second replied, "I would like a royal carriage so that I may travel in style throughout the kingdom." When the king asked his third loyal subject what he would like, he thoughtfully replied, "My wish is to be able to speak to the king three times a day."

When it comes to our spiritual growth, we all want to "win the lottery" with instant enlightenment. We pray that we will be granted our grand wish and that our life will finally be filled with the peace and tranquility we deserve. But in the spiritual realm, our greatest opportunity for growth is to be given an audience with the king three times a day, which represents our daily exposure to the wisdom and knowledge of those spiritual masters who can best guide us and help us on our path.

EMETT journaling gives us the opportunity to meet with the king three times a day—to incorporate age-old wisdom and spiritual truths into our mornings, afternoons and evenings. There is no quick fix to spiritual growth. Don't waste your one precious gift looking for instant enlightenment, rather seek the wisdom of those wiser and more enlightened than yourself, and in due time, you will receive all treasures as a result of your patience and daily discipline.

(The above story is adapted from Rabbi Nilton Bonder, *The Kaballah of Money*, Copyright 1996, Shamballah, p. 106)?



***Three concepts are central
to the EMETT method***

First, emotions are expressed but not overly glorified. Emotions are merely signals—feedback about how you are feeling. Many people get stuck on expressing their feelings as the ultimate goal, on “emoting” and “getting it out of their system.” This is rarely helpful and usually falls into the category of “dumping” or “narcissism.”

Second, focus on your success in dealing with life's frustrations. Because internal change is difficult, slow and requires persistence, every small victory over negativity is a cause for celebration.

Third, look at every event and difficulty as an opportunity for growth, refinement and inner awareness.

The goal of EMETT journaling is to achieve a greater sense of inner strength, awareness and love in the way we treat ourselves and others. When we react—or overreact—to the criticism, abuse, negativity or hurtfulness of others, we relinquish our ability to make healing choices. It is important to be able to say “no” to the negativity, anger, inappropriateness and disrespectful behavior that others try to impose upon us. But we need to do it in a way that preserves our dignity and worthiness, while still ad-

Emotions are merely signals—feedback about how we are feeling. Many people get stuck on expressing their feelings as the ultimate goal. . .

. . . look at every event and difficulty as an opportunity for growth, refinement and inner awareness.

. . . every small victory over negativity is a cause for celebration.

. . . every difficult situation serves as either an opportunity for self-refinement or an opportunity to further our negativity, resentment or reactive hurtfulness. The choice is ours.

dressing the problem.

When we allow others to manipulate us with their anger, guilt or hurtful actions, we enslave ourselves. True freedom lies in overcoming our automatic reactions to life's difficult encounters—allowing us to discover who we are and what we truly value. In the process, we become more loving and caring people. Remember that every difficult situation serves as either an opportunity for self-refinement or an opportunity to further our negativity, resentment or reactive hurtfulness. The choice is ours.



Once upon a time, there was a disciple who was forever complaining about all sorts of things. All the other disciples began complaining of his complaining. And so the stage was set for a vicious cycle of complaint upon complaint. In order to solve the situation, the Master called his disciples together and said, "If it is peace you want, seek to change yourself, not other people. It is easier to protect your feet with slippers than to carpet the whole of the earth."

So often in life, we find ourselves overwhelmed with annoying situations and difficult people. No matter how hard we try, those situations and people that most annoy us, have no regard for our deep desire that they change. To add insult to injury, it seems they have the deepest disregard for what we need from them in order to make our lives more pleasant. When this happens, it is well to remember the Master's words: "If it is peace you want, seek to change yourself, not other people."

(This story adapted from Anthony de Mello's *One Minute Wisdom*, Copyright 1985, Image, Doubleday, p.38.)



Who is strong? He who is in control of his impulses.

THE ETHICS OF THE
FATHERS (TALMUD)

***Here are some Torah principles that form
the foundation for Emett journaling***

1. “. . . freedom of choice is given . . .”
2. “Serve God with joy . . .”
3. “Whatever the Almighty does He does for the good”
4. “Love thy neighbor as thyself”
5. “Judge all men charitably.”
6. “. . . what does God require of you but to act justly to love compassionately and to walk humbly with your God.”
7. “Do His will as if it were thy will . . .”
8. “No man bruises a finger down below without it being decreed first in heaven.”

Here is the EMETT process

1. Briefly describe the *event* or situation that upset you.
2. Briefly describe your *thought processes*, including:
 - a) insecure thoughts: i.e., what is my worst fear?
 - b) condemnation of self or others: i.e., I’m a failure, he’s an idiot, etc.
 - c) unfulfilled demand: what do I want that I ’m not getting?
 - d) active harmful impulses: I wanted to yell, hit him, kick the door, etc.
 - e) passive harmful impulses: sulking, procrastinating,

... whenever you are faced with difficult life events, ask yourself: "What mitzvah (good deed) can I perform in the midst of this pain?"

overeating, denying

f) upsetting physical sensations: palpitations, tight muscles, headache

g) upsetting emotions: frustration, unloved, bitter, vengeful, etc.

3. Briefly describe the **tools** you used to increase your inner strength or competency in handling a situation. This involves two kinds of strengths:

i) **Strength of positive actions or good deeds** (e.g., took a walk; shut my mouth and listened; counted to ten; took deep breaths). In Hebrew, the word "*mitzvah*" denotes a good or righteous deed. So, whenever you are faced with a difficult life event, ask yourself: "What *mitzvah* (good deed) can I perform in the midst of this pain?" For example, instead of yelling back at a loved one who just dumped on you, you can quietly walk away take a deep breath, or avoid automatically reacting by closing your mouth and remaining silent.

Note: These are actual deeds. They involve physical movement or the restraint of physical movement. For example: you walk away, you don't open your mouth and blurt something stupid out, you don't throw things, you take a walk, you respond by communicating in a peaceful tone of voice. This is the **doing** part of healing. It involves interaction with the world around you.



A spiritual Master once taught his students that everytime we help someone, we create a new angel of “Help.” With each new good deed we perform, we create a new angel corresponding to that deed. For every kind deed, we create an angel of kindness. For every charitable act, we create an angel of charity. With each new deed, we create a new force for goodness and kindness. These newly created angels not only help those we reach out to assist, they also circle back to watch over us and protect us. In this way, every good deed we perform returns back to bless us as well.

(This information was adapted from Rabbi Nilton Bonder, *The Kaballah of Money*, Copyright 1996, Shamballah, p. 150; The Master is The Keretzer Rebbe)



ii) **Strength of character or thoughts**(for example: This is a learning experience; He didn't mean to hurt me; This must be happening to strengthen me; This is a trivial upset, it's distressing but not dangerous; Time heals all wounds; “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not lack;” I can function with discomfort; I have the courage to admit my mistakes; All things shall pass; This is temporary; Maybe it is better this way; God is here with me.)

In Hebrew, the word “*middah*” means a desirable character trait. So, whenever you are faced with difficult life events, ask yourself: “What particular *middah* (desirable character trait) can I strengthen at this very moment?”

For example: I can use this situation to develop greater patience. I can resolve to stay calm in the face of other people's anger. I can strengthen my respect for others and for myself by

... whenever you are faced with difficult life events, ask yourself: “What particular middah (desirable character trait) can I strengthen at this very moment?”

not reacting or overreacting.

Desirable character traits include: patience, respect, acceptance, gentleness, cheerfulness, humility, perseverance, self-discipline, truthfulness, kindness, forgiveness, fairness and more.

Note: These are internal actions. They involve no physical interaction with the world around you. This is about your inner world, strengthening your character in order to become the person you want to be.



A Master once entertained a visitor who said he was a seeker of Truth. “If what you seek is Truth,” said the Master, “there is one thing you must have above all else.” “I know,” said the visitor, “an overwhelming passion for it.” “No,” replied the Master. “Then what is it?” queried the visitor. “An unremitting readiness to admit you may be wrong,” replied the Master.

Humility is the foundation of all positive character traits and spiritual growth. Without humility, refinement of our character is difficult, if not impossible. True humility recognizes our immense value in the eyes of God, allowing us to recognize that value in others. True humility recognizes we may be wrong, at the same time it recognizes our inherent sacredness. Only pride breeds infallibility. Only weakness admits no mistakes. True strength is born from humility and recognizes our wrongdoing, even as it recognizes our worthiness in God’s eyes.

(The above story adapted from *One Minute Wisdom* by Anthony deMello)



Every small victory over old negative reactions and habits helps us acquire the strength and wisdom of God’s love for us.

4. ***Celebrate your growth and success.*** Every small victory over old negative reactions and habits elevates us to a higher level of functioning. Record your successes by asking yourself:

- a) What negative habit or reaction did I break?
- b) How did my change in thought and attitude lead to less reactivity and greater love? (We can change our attitude by: avoiding quick reactive conclusions about people or situations; avoiding unrealistic expectations of self and others; avoiding excessive emotionalism or “awfulizing;” taking responsibility for our part in events, etc.)
- c) What positive character traits did I strengthen? e.g., gentleness, acceptance, compassion, courage, humility, respectfulness, self-discipline, honesty, love, decisiveness, cheerfulness, resolve to act differently in the future, etc.

Here's an example of EMETT journaling

1. ***Event:*** My daughter was in a bad mood and refused to clean up her room before going out tonight.

2. ***Thought Processes:***

My insecure thoughts: She'll never learn to be responsible.

Condemnation: I'm a bad parent. I should set better limits.

Unfulfilled demand: I want her to pull her weight and

be responsible. She's spoiled.

Active harmful impulse: I wanted to yell and kick and scream at her.

Passive harmful impulse: I got angry at myself for not enforcing enough rules.

Upsetting physical sensation: tight muscles, headache.

Upsetting emotions: frustration, anger, screw-you attitude.

3. **Tools for strength:** 1) The **mitzvah** (good deed) I performed was I kept my cool by not yelling and resolved to set limits with her when we're both in a better frame of mind. In the meantime, no more privileges for her till things change. And 2) The **middah** (character trait) I strengthened was my resolve to stay clear on my limits and not react inappropriately to her inappropriateness. I strengthened my patience and my acceptance of things I could not change in the moment.

4. **Celebrate Growth:** I am not happy about the way things turned out, but I am happy that I did not add fuel to the fire by overreacting. I made it very clear to her that privileges will stop until she starts taking care of her responsibilities. I did it without yelling, kicking or making a scene. I am proud that I broke my automatic tendency to overreact, start yelling and calling her names and things I will regret.



The Master, instructing his disciples on the importance of

good deeds, said, “You must live your life feeling as if your good deeds and your bad deeds are in perfect balance. In this way, you will truly understand that your very next deed may tip the scale either way.”

This teaching helps us to realize that our each and every deed is critical. If we choose to cheat, lie or be unkind, the scale tips us away from goodness. No matter how many times we may have hurt others, been selfish or unkind, with the very next deed, we can tip the scale in our favor.

The Master then “raised the stakes” by telling his students, “You must also live your life as if the whole world is poised in perfect balance between good deeds and bad deeds. In this way, your very next deed may tip the world one way or another, toward goodness and kindness or away from it. The very state of the world may depend upon your very next deed, no matter how small or insignificant it may seem in your eyes.”

This mental exercise helps us to choose the most loving thing to do. When we are faced with difficult choices, we must remember that our very next deed—the very next choice we make—may tip the balance of goodness in the world. In this way, we may choose the kindest, most loving, most honest thing to do.

(This information adapted from *The Book of Jewish Values: A Day-by-Day Guide to Ethical Living* by Rabbi Joseph Telushkin, Copyright 2000, Bell Tower, p. 376; the Master is the 12th century philosopher and physician Maimonides.)



For further information see the book *EMETT: A Step-by-Step Guide to Emotional Maturity Established Through Torah* by Miriam Adahan © 1987 by Feldheim Publishers and Miriam Adahan.

LOVE YOURSELF HEAL YOUR LIFE JOURNALING

*Human beings, by changing the inner
attitudes of their minds, can change the
outer aspects of their lives.*

WILLIAM JAMES

Based on Louise Hay's heart-warming book *Love Yourself, Heal Your Life Workbook*, this type of journaling champions our ability to change through a willingness to forgive and release old negative thought patterns. Louise believes that change is simple, but not always easy. If we want to change our lives, we must be the ones who change. Other people and situations will change because we change first—change our consciousness, change our awareness, change the way we love.

Change begins with loving ourselves the way we are. The Gestalt therapist Fritz Perls used to say, "Nothing changes until it becomes what it is." This means that until we acknowledge who we are—our strengths and our limitations—no lasting change is possible. By recognizing our limitations and shortcomings—not as a critical parent or boss—but as a loving nurturing friend, we can begin the process of overcoming them, healing them or working around them. In so doing, we become

*If we want to change
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Each new choice we make is like planting a seed in our mental gardens.

the very best person we are capable of becoming. Growth demands the recognition and acceptance of who we are even as we anticipate the kind of loving, nurturing and successful person we want to become. Each new choice we make is like planting a seed in our mental gardens. It takes time for that seed to grow, but if we do the planting., we will enjoy the fruit of our efforts.



There was a construction worker who sat down to eat lunch with his co-workers, every day at noontime. One day, as he opened his lunch box and examined the contents, he let out a big sigh, exclaiming, “Oh, no! Not peanut butter and jelly again.” Overhearing his exasperation, one of his friends turned to him and said, “If you don’t like peanut butter and jelly, why don’t you ask your wife to pack you something different.” The man looked at his friend and said, “You don’t understand. I’m not married. I make my own sandwiches!”

And so it goes. We all make our own sandwiches in life. If we don’t like what is happening in our lives, it’s very likely that in some way, we hold some measure of responsibility for our results. Even when we cannot control the things that happen to us, we can always control our reaction to them. Though life sometimes hands us or denies us certain ingredients, we are still in charge of what we do with what we are given or denied. We really do make our own sandwiches in life. Bon appetite!

(The above story adapted from the works of Fritz Perls, Gestalt therapist.)



We can always choose a different belief

The goal of this type of journaling is to reveal our hidden, unconscious and limiting beliefs so that we may replace them with positive, affirming and enriching beliefs. What we choose to believe can enrich our lives. Our beliefs are only thoughts we hold about ourselves and our thoughts can be changed. Limiting beliefs work at the level of the subconscious mind, which accepts whatever beliefs we feed it. It was Henry Ford who once said: “If we believe we can, we can. If we believe we can’t, we can’t.” We all have unlimited choices about what we think or believe.

As children, we learned about ourselves and about life from the beliefs and reactions of the adults around us. We learned which parts of ourselves were acceptable and which parts were unacceptable. These places inside of us—where we have been rejected for the very one that we are—become the vulnerable parts of ourselves, the wounded parts. They become our core shame, which is the feeling we don’t measure up.

As adults, we tend to recreate, in our personal relationships and lives, the same issues we had with our parents. They are the rules, shoulds, should nots, values, and fears we learned from our parents—that reveal themselves in our limiting beliefs, self-critical thoughts and self-destructive behaviors. Such self-flagellation arises from a distortion of our healthy guilt, which says we’re human and can make mistakes. This distortion of guilt morphs into unhealthy or toxic shame which says we don’t measure up, we’re not good enough, or we didn’t try hard enough. We all suffer from this woundedness, this feeling of not measuring up.

No matter how long we have held onto a negative belief or

We all have unlimited choices about what we want to think or believe.

No matter how long we have held onto a negative belief or limiting thought, we can always make the choice, in any given moment, to choose a different belief.

limiting thought, we can always make the choice, in any given moment, to choose a different belief. This is hard work, because our automatic feelings of resentment (towards self and others), criticism (towards self and others), guilt and fear keep us locked in our own prison in consciousness. Since all change begins in consciousness—in thought—we may not be able to change our past, but we can always change our attitude toward the past. We can always change our understanding about what happened to us. In this sense, we can “rewrite” our personal history.



A travelling Master once spent the night at a shoemaker’s home. As he was preparing to go to bed late in the night, he noticed a light flickering in the next room. He walked into the room and saw the shoemaker still hard at work by candlelight. The Master said to the shoemaker, “It’s so late at night. Why are you still working? The candle is almost out.” The shoemaker smiled and looked up at the Master and said, “As long as the candle is burning, it is still possible to mend.”

The Master went home the next day, but over the next several weeks, the words of the shoemaker kept reverberating in his head, “As long as the candle is burning, it is still possible to mend.” He thought to himself “As long as the candle is burning, it is still possible to mend—to reconcile our mistakes, reconnect to our purpose in life, re-establish communication with long lost friends, make peace in our families and give time and money to help those less fortunate than us.”

All these things are possible for all of us. As long as the candle is burning—as long as we have energy and life, we can mend our past mistakes and plant the seeds for a better future. We can grow and learn and begin to heal our lives and by extension, heal our

families, our communities and our world, as long as the candle is burning.

(The above story is adapted from *The Book of Jewish Values: A Day-by-Day Guide to Ethical Living* by Rabbi Joseph Telushkin, Copyright 2000, Bell Tower, p. 39. The Master is the great rabbinic sage Rabbi Israel Salanter.)



We need to stop blaming ourselves and others

Self-approval and self-acceptance in the present moment are key to elevating our consciousness and creating greater love and healing in our lives. Many of the painful things that happened to us were done by people who were doing the best they could given the knowledge, understanding and awareness they possessed at the time. Healing is not about blaming anyone—ourselves, our parents, our friends or our bosses. It is about catching ourselves being critical and judgmental, and changing these automatic patterns, which arise from our fear and hurt. When we stop blaming ourselves and others, there is only forgiveness, which is imperative for healing. This does not mean we continue to condone harmful or hurtful behavior. We may have to separate from those who continue to treat us badly, criticize us and hurt us. But in consciousness, we can forgive them for their ignorance and lack of understanding.

Healing is not about blaming anyone. . .

. . . we need to believe that we deserve good, kind and loving people in our lives.

Affirmations help us plant new empowering beliefs

Affirmations are statements we make that are either positive or negative. Some people think affirmations represent a denial of the present. In fact, they may be considered a hope for the future. Affirmations should be made in the present tense like “I am” or “I have.” Because the subconscious mind is like a fertile garden, if we plant the affirmation seed in the future (“I will have” or “I want”) then we won’t get the fruit until the future. If we plant the seed in the present, we have an opportunity to reap the fruit more quickly. Furthermore, we need to believe that we deserve good, kind and loving people in our lives.

As we begin the process of making affirmations, we must believe in our own power to change.

These are what Louise Hay calls “Power Points” and they empower us to change

- ◆ We are responsible for our experiences in life.
- ◆ Our thoughts create our future.
- ◆ We all have limiting beliefs and patterns of resentment, criticism, guilt and self-hatred.
- ◆ Limiting beliefs are only thoughts and thoughts can be changed.
- ◆ We need to be willing to forgive ourselves and others and release the past.
- ◆ In any given moment, we can always make choices that are self-approving and self-accepting.
- ◆ Our power to change always happens in the present moment, i.e., this choice, this response, this action, etc.

*... illness is often a
wake up call
compelling us to
reevaluate and
reassess our inner
thoughts, beliefs,
lifestyles and habits.*

Our physical body often reflects our innermost thoughts and beliefs. And though our bodies constantly speak to us, most of the time we are unaware of—or tune out—these messages. As such, illness is often a wake up call compelling us to reevaluate and reassess our inner thoughts, beliefs, lifestyles and habits. Illness becomes an opportunity to listen to our inner voice—the inner voice of our body our soul and our forgotten dreams.

Dialoguing with our body or with our illness helps us uncover the hidden patterns and silenced voices that may be contributing to our illness.

Here's a sample dialogue with our body

Body: *I'm sick of you stuffing all this food into me late at night.*

Me: *Too bad, I'm tired and lonely tonight and this Ben & Jerry's is really making me feel good.*

Body: *What about me? I can't take this much longer. I'm not hungry.*

Me: *Who asked you?*

Body: *Apparently, no one. But please listen to me. I can't go on like this forever. Eventually I'm going to get fat and lazy and sick and you're not going to be able to rely on me for energy and work and the things you like. So you better listen up.*

Me: *Really, you're right. I'm sorry. I have been taking out my frustrations on you. I'll put the ice cream away, and call a friend or take a walk. That'll make me feel a little*

Dialoguing with our body reveals unconscious patterns inside of us.

better right now.

Body: *Thanks. I really do care about us. That'll be better for both of us.*

Tip: Dialoguing with our body reveals unconscious patterns inside of us. Once revealed, we can make the requisite changes to create a better , healthier and more loving relationship with our body.

After the dialoguing, we can make affirmations as follows:

- 1) I now have a thin healthy body and eat only when I am hungry.
- 2) I now treat my body with respect and honor my internal hunger signals.

Once we have some affirmations, we can then go to the next step of uncovering our limiting beliefs regarding those affirmations.

Positive Affirmation: I now have a thin healthy body and eat only when I am hungry

Automatic Negative Belief: You're fat and lazy and you don't have the will power to stop eating mindlessly

New Chosen Enriching Belief: I have had trouble in the past, but I am now making a solid effort to eat mindfully and only when I'm hungry. I deserve to succeed at a thin and healthy body.

As we learned in the chapter on Basic Affirmation Style Journaling, we may need to rewrite the same positive affirmation twenty or thirty times, each time writing down whatever new automatic negative beliefs pop up. Each time, stop, breathe, reflect and choose a positive enriching counter belief. Do this until the negative responses no longer feel like they have power over you. They may even begin to seem funny or ludicrous.

You may have to repeat this exercise thousands of times on one single affirmation, especially if your automatic negative reactions (limiting core beliefs) are deeply engrained. Don't worry. Just keep planting new seeds of positive affirmation. Your positive affirmations will eventually chip away at your core limiting beliefs and negativity. Your garden will be beautiful. You deserve it.

If you begin to feel depleted or hopeless, return to the "Power Points" (page 138) and remember you can always change in the present moment. Love and self-acceptance is always available to you in any moment that you seek it. This is the essence of healing.

For more information read as much of Louise Hay as possible including: *Love Yourself, Heal Your Life Workbook*, © 1990 by Hay House, Inc. Santa Monica, California and *You Can Heal Your Life*, © 1988, Revised Expanded Edition by Hay House, Inc. Santa Monica, California. Also, check out the excellent website for Hay House, Inc. at:

www.hayhouse.com or visit Louise's "room" at:

www.hayhouse.com/louise

... you can always change in the present moment. Love and self-acceptance is always available to us in any moment that we seek it.

COGNITIVE THERAPY JOURNALING

If you don't control your mind, someone else will.

JOHN ALLSTON

Cognitive therapy is based on the work of Aaron T. Beck, M.D., a world authority on mood disorders. The word “cognitive” refers to how we think about things. Dr. Beck’s thesis is simple: when we feel depressed or anxious, it may be due to irrational, self-defeating patterns of thinking. When we retrain ourselves to think differently, we can reduce our physical and emotional symptoms and improve our level of well-being. This process is described as “mental tune-up.”

There are two fundamental principles in cognitive therapy:

1) the majority of our moods are created by our thoughts about a situation. Feelings are not caused by the actual situation itself. We feel the way we do—in any given moment—because of the thoughts we think, and the meaning we

... the majority of our moods are created by our thoughts about a situation, our perceptions, attitudes and beliefs.

give those thoughts.

2) when we feel stressed, anxious or depressed, our thoughts are often irrational, negative or based on distorted perceptions.



In discussing happiness, the Master taught his students that we can only be happy if our mind is focused on appreciating the gifts we presently have in our lives. “Imagine,” said the Master, “that someone deposits a fortune in your name in a Swiss bank account without telling you about it.”

“Would you be considered wealthy?” the Master queried. “Even though someplace on this planet there is a large amount of money in your name, you would derive no pleasure from it.” “Finding happiness,” said the Master “depends not so much on what occurs in our lives, as on how we come to appreciate and give meaning to what happens to us.”

Cognitive journaling helps us to discover the ways we rob ourselves of happiness that already exists in our life. It helps us to locate the Swiss bank account that already holds a fortune of emotional treasure and spiritual happiness in our name.

(The Master in this story is Rabbi Zelig Pliskin and this story is adapted from his book, *Growth Through Torah*, Copyright 1988, Benei Yaakov Publications, p. 447)



Here's the method for cognitive journaling

1. Every time you feel depressed, anxious or conflicted, write down the **emotional response** you are having, i.e., depressed,

... when we feel stressed, anxious or depressed, our thoughts are often irrational, negative or based on distorted perceptions.

angry, sad, afraid, frustrated, hopeless, etc.

2. Try to identify the corresponding **automatic negative thought** you had prior to the emotional reaction.

3. Next, identify the **irrational component**, negative distortion, or illogical part of the thought. (See the “List of Cognitive Distortions” below.)

4. Now take a deep breath, reflect and choose a **rational response** to the automatic negative thoughts. Write the rational response down. Rational responses are self-defending, self-endorsing statements that acknowledge the truth of our behavior without criticizing our personhood.

5. Lastly, **revisit the initial emotional or physical reaction** you had and see if the intensity has decreased, increased or stayed the same.

This whole process is like keeping an emotional account of our lives. It can be as important as keeping our checkbooks balanced! Maybe more so.

Here is a list of cognitive distortions

1. All-or-Nothing Thinking: thinking in black-and-white terms only. “He hates me” or “He loves me” instead of “He hates it when I forget to turn off the light at night, but I know he loves me.”

We are shaped by our thoughts; we become what we think.

BUDDHA

*Great men are they
who see that spiritual
is stronger than any
material force, that
thought rules the
world.*

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

- 2. Overgeneralization:** Your wife forgets to pick up a paper on the way home and you think “she *always* forgets things.”
- 3. Mental Filter:** Picking out a single negative detail and ignoring other aspects. My talk was no good because two people disliked it, even though five hundred people loved it.
- 4. Disqualifying the Positive:** Someone compliments the way you look and you think “I look terrible, he’s just saying that to be nice.”
- 5. Jumping to Conclusions:** (Mind Reading or The Fortune Teller Error) *If* she really loved me she *would have* called me by now.
- 6. Magnification (catastrophizing) or Minimization:** You usually get “A’s” on your tests, but this time you got a “B”. You say to yourself “I’m such a failure. I’ll *never* get into graduate school now.”
- 7. Emotional Reasoning:** I feel it, therefore it must be true.
- 8. Should Statements:** I should be smarter I should not make mistakes.
- 9. Labeling and Mislabeling:** an extreme form of overgeneralization. “I’m a loser,” “I’m a failure.”
- 10. Personalization:** claiming responsibility for negative events

you didn't cause. It's my fault he ran out of gas, I should have reminded him the tank was running low

The best way to do cognitive journaling is to take a piece of paper and draw down six columns as follows:

Situation	Emotion	Automatic Thoughts	Cognitive Distortions	Rational Responses	Outcome

Under each column write the appropriate comments:

Situation: Briefly describe the actual events associated with your uncomfortable feelings or body symptoms.

Emotions: Specify each emotion and rate the degree by 1 to 100%, i.e. if you are totally angry it would be "anger: 100%" If you're just a little bothered: "anger: 20%."

Automatic Negative Thoughts: Write the thoughts that accompany your emotional or physical symptoms.

Cognitive Distortions: Refer to the list of cognitive distortions and try to identify which ones are relevant in this situation.

If you are distressed by anything external, the pain is not due to the thing itself, but to your estimate of it; and this you have the power to revoke at any moment.

MARCUS AURELIUS

Rational Response: Write your rational response to the distorted or illogical automatic thoughts you had.

Outcome: Specify the emotions as in column 2 with the new percentages, i.e., if you were totally angry with “anger: 100%” in column 2, after the journaling, if you feel less angry, you might write “anger: 40%.”

Let's do an example:

Situation:

I am trying to lose weight and get in shape. I come home from work very tired, sit in front of the TV and eat ten cookies and I'm not even hungry.

Emotions:

Frustration: 80%; Sense of failure: 100%; Lack of willpower: 100%

Automatic Negative Thoughts (Self-Criticizing/Self-Downing):

I'm such a failure. I'll never lose weight. Who am I kidding? I have no will power. I'm a fat pig.

Cognitive Distortions:

- ◆ *“All-or-Nothing”:* I ate well all day and just blew it one time tonight yet consider myself a total failure.
- ◆ *“Overgeneralization”:* Seeing a single negative

event as a never-ending pattern of defeat, i.e. I'll never lose weight.

◆ "Catastrophizing:" Exaggerating the importance of one goof-up.

◆ "Labeling:" Attaching a negative label to myself (i.e., "I'm a fat pig.") instead of describing my error (i.e., "I ate a bunch of cookies when I wasn't hungry.").

Rational Response (Self-Defending/Self-Endorsing):

I screwed up tonight by eating ten cookies, but I've been incredibly successful at eating well all day until now. I have lost weight before and kept it off, and I can do it again. I have will power in many areas of my life. I just blew it tonight. Actually I'm not that fat. I just want to be fifteen pounds lighter.

Outcome:

Frustration: 40%; Sense of failure: 50%; Lack of willpower: 60%. I definitely feel better now, more motivated to exercise my will power and more determined to succeed again. I think I'll go running now and burn off those extra calories.

Notice, by writing down our feelings and thoughts, we do an emotional accounting, which helps us identify our distorted thinking. It is important to write down the negative thoughts. David D. Burns, M.D., author of *Feeling Good: The New Mood Therapy* says that writing down our negative thoughts allows us to "snag" them from our minds and put them onto paper

... writing down our negative thoughts allows us to "snag" them from our minds and put them onto paper where they are less harmful.

where they are less harmful. The idea is not to pat ourselves on the back, but to eliminate the kind of thinking that leads to immobilizing fear, frustration or failure.



A student once complained to his Master that he could not pray with full devotion because intrusive thoughts were always entering his mind during prayer. The Master referred the student to a fellow teacher for help.

Upon arriving at the teacher's home, the student knocked on the front door. To his great disappointment, there was no answer. He knocked and knocked and still no reply. Finally he went around to the back door and knocked there. Still, no answer. Dismayed and frustrated, he went to the side windows and knocked and knocked. Still, no answer. Concluding that the teacher was not home, the student went to the front lawn to rest and wait. Sitting there for hours, he fell asleep, only to be awakened by the voice of the teacher.

"Have you learned anything yet?" inquired the teacher. To his bewilderment, the student sat up and said "What do you mean?" "You have been knocking at my door for hours and hours," said the teacher, "and I have chosen not to answer your knocking, for I am the master of my house. The same is true of your thoughts. You are the master of your mind. No matter how much intrusive thoughts may knock and knock, if you so choose, you need not permit them to enter. You are the master of your mind."

We must all learn to counter intrusive thoughts that are based upon irrational fears and anxieties. Only we can deny them entrance. Only we are the masters of our minds. We need not entertain self-defeating, self-destructive irrational thoughts. Only we can eliminate the kind of thinking that leads to immobilizing fear, frustration or failure.

(The above story is adapted from Rabbi Abraham J. Twerski, M.D. *Living Each Day*, Copyright 1992 by Mesorah Publications,

We do need to take action and work on our character flaws and shortcomings, but we can act more effectively when we don't over-criticize and demean ourselves.

Ltd. p. 132; the first Master is the Maggid of Mezeritch; the teacher is Rabbi Wolf of Zhitomir.)



We need to cope, not mope

We are learning to “cope, not mope.” We do need to take action and work on our character flaws and shortcomings, but we can act more effectively when we don’t over-criticize and demean ourselves. The extra energy that used to go into feeling bad can now go into actually doing something to improve the situation. By learning to refute our self-critical thoughts, we get some emotional relief (from feeling like a failure, a fraud, a loser or that we didn’t do enough or try enough) and can use that extra energy to develop useful and practical strategies for coping with the problem and improving ourselves, our health and our relationships.



In discussing the importance of intention, the Master liked to tell the following story. “If two people are fighting and the intention of the battle is to show who is stronger, then when the weaker man is down, the fighting ceases and the defeated man may get up and go on his way. If however, the intention of the battle is to destroy the other person, then when the weaker man is down, the stronger one will continue to kick him and beat him and keep him down.” “This,” said the Master, “is the goal of evil.”

There are many different conceptualizations of evil. In Judaism, evil is referred to as the “Evil Inclination.” This is comparable to “Satan” or “the devil” in New Testament literature. Most of us

conceptualize evil, the devil or Satan simplistically and naively as a cruel and viscious “Darth Vader” seeking to rule the world with hatred and disdain. In fact, the concept of the “Evil Inclination”, “Satan” or the “devil” is quite enlightening when we realize that in addition to outside forces of evil, there are also internal forces of “evil” that represent elements inside of us that seek to distract us from our essential goodness, that cause us to forget our essential sacredness and worthiness.

In modern psychology, we might consider that “evil” is really the same as irrational negativity, excessive fear, insatiable shame, excessive worry or cognitive distortions arising from self-critical thinking. With great ease, these forces of negativity, shame and self-criticism immobilize us and cause us to forget our inherent strength and true worth. Cognitive journaling helps to expose these negative forces and counteract them with positive action and renewed hope.

Early in Genesis, we learn from Cain and Abel how to deal with these forces of negativity, self-criticism and hurt. Remember that God was displeased with Cain’s offering and he was pleased with Abel’s offering. Cain, feeling dejected and hurt, entered into a cycle of shame, guilt and self-criticism, which revealed itself as anger and envy. When God saw this reaction, he said to Cain, “Why are you annoyed, and why has your countenance fallen? Surely, if you improve yourself, you will be forgiven.” (Genesis 4:6,7)

Rabbi Zelig Pliskin in his book *Growth Through Torah* says, “When you can correct your mistakes and omissions it is improper to waste time suffering over what is past. What is appropriate is to try to make the necessary corrections in the future...” Furthermore, “The very fact that you feel guilty is a sign that you have high ideals and values and you can feel positive about that.” “Staying down after the fall is even worse than the fall itself.”

This is the lesson of cognitive therapy: take the hurt, shame and anger we feel, and do not suffer over it, rather make the necessary corrections in thought, word and deed to reconcile our errors and improve our character. God did not intend for us to become immobilized in guilt or shame, but to recognize them as

... our feelings do not determine our worth, they only reflect our state of comfort or discomfort.

signals to help us grow in love, kindness and character. Do not let the forces of negativity keep you down after the fall.



We must use our pain to grow

We need to realize that our feelings do not determine our worth, they only reflect our state of comfort or discomfort. Likewise, our thoughts do not determine our sense of worth. Growth is an ongoing process. We are all imperfect and flawed. Berating ourselves (or others) with excessive criticism, blame, guilt or shame is not the way to become more loving, conscious and elevated human beings. Rather, we need to use our discomfort, pain, genuine sadness and loss to motivate us to act from a place of greater love and integrity not to put ourselves or others down.



There was once a Master who was travelling by train back to his home town to give a lecture on the importance of speaking kindly about others. While sitting on the train, the Master began a conversation with the man next to him. “Where are you headed?” inquired the Master. “I’m going to see a great Master speak at a conference tonight on kindness. He is the greatest sage and saint in the world.”

Realizing that the man was unaware of his identity and also moved by his own sense of humility, the Master humbly responded, “Sometimes, people say exaggerated things you know. He’s a fine teacher I’m sure, but not a sage and certainly no saint.”

Enraged by these insults, the man stood up and slapped the Master across the cheek, exclaiming, “How dare you speak so insolently of the great Master.” And he walked away.

Later that evening, during the middle of the Master's lecture, the man from the train walked into the conference hall, and turned pale white, when he saw that the man he had slapped on the train was indeed the great Master himself. After the Master finished speaking, the man approached him with great apology, asking for his forgiveness.

The Master responded, "Please, it is okay. You have nothing to apologize for. After all, you were defending my honor." He then said to the man, "But I have learned something very important from all this." "I have taught all my life that one should not speak badly about other people. I learned today, that this includes speaking badly of oneself."

We all need to nurture ourselves and others with kind words. When we criticize and put ourselves down, we dishonor our sacredness in the same way we dishonor others when we speak ill of them. Cognitive journaling helps us be more aware of the many ways we "speak" ill of ourselves, and in so doing, gives us the opportunity to correct our self-inflicted gossip and restore our sense of honor.

(The above story is adapted from Joseph Telushkin, *The Book of Jewish Values*, Copyright 2000, Bell Tower, p. 441; the Master is Rabbi Israel Meir Kagan.)



Tip: To make things easier, you can also use a 5 column technique:

Situation	Emotion	Automatic Thoughts	Rational Responses	Outcome

Tip: To make things easier yet, use a 4 column technique:

Situation	Emotion	Automatic Thoughts	Rational Responses

Tip: Even further simplified, here's a 3 column technique:

Emotion	Automatic Thoughts	Rational Responses

Tip: To keep it really, really simple, here's a 2 column technique:

Automatic Thoughts	Rational Responses

Any of these methods are acceptable. The key is to catch the automatic self-defeating thoughts associated with our negative feelings and then provide a self-endorsing rational response. Dispelling the negativity allows us to see and think more clearly. This clarity lights our path toward greater love, acceptance, healing and self-fulfillment.

For more information read, David D. Burns, M.D. *Feeling Good: The New Mood Therapy* or any book by Aaron T. Beck, M.D. (*Love Is Never Enough*) or Albert Ellis, Ph.D. (*Rational Emotive Therapy*).

SECTION TWO

The Handbook of Journaling



Journaling Methods for Self-Discovery

GRATITUDE JOURNALING

Reflect on your present blessings, of which every man has many, not on your past misfortune, of which all men have some.

CHARLES DICKENS

Keeping a gratitude journal helps us to change our perceptions and overcome our natural inclination toward the negative in our lives. Focusing each day on what we are grateful for strengthens and empowers our “positivity” muscle.

Gratitude increases as we give it away.

Gratitude is one of those few special things in life that increases as we give it away. Most things in life are diminished as we give them away. For instance, if we have a cherry pie, and give away a quarter of it, we are left with only three quarters, less than our original whole. Gratitude, however, is different.

Gratitude is an energy of the spiritual world, similar to the flame of a candle. As we “give away” our flame by lighting

Once we accept that abundance and lack are parallel realities and that each day we choose—consciously or unconsciously—which world we will inhabit, a deep inner shift in our reality occurs. We discover the sacred in the ordinary and we realize that every day is literally a gift.

SARAH BAN BREATHNACH

other candles, the amount of light—or gratitude—we experience increases. In fact, with our single flame, we can light an unlimited number of other candles, helping to illuminate the world around us. The more we are grateful for—that is, the more we “give away” our flame—the greater the light we have with which to see the many truly wonderful miracles we have to be grateful for.



Once upon a time, two farmers—both poor—were walking along an old country road, when they passed by their beloved Master.

To the first farmer, the Master endearingly said, “Times are tough, my dear friend. How are you doing?” “Awful,” replied the farmer. “The economy is bad. I barely have food for my family. And it looks like the rains will never arrive. Life is lousy.”

Now God happened to be eavesdropping on this conversation and thought to himself, “Lousy, eh? You think your life is lousy now. I’ll show you what lousy is!”

The Master then asked the second farmer, “So, my friend, how are you doing in these difficult times?” “Great, Master! Things couldn’t be better. Every day brings new joy and blessings with my friends and family. I’m so grateful for the gift that each day brings, for I know, rain or shine, all will unfold as God, in his infinite greatness knows best.”

The man’s deep gratitude soared into the celestial spheres to resonate with the harmony of the heavenly hosts. God, hearing the farmers gracious response, smiled with delight, “Good? You think your life is good now? I’ll show you what good is!”

(This story adapted from *The Simple Abundance Journal of Gratitude* by Sarah Ban Breathnach, Copyright 1996, Warner Books, Inc.; the Master is an unnamed Rabbi.)



We express our gratitude in words and deeds.

We express our gratitude—light another’s candle—in two main ways: 1) through words and 2) through deeds. Gentle and encouraging words of thanks, praise or appreciation, touch the heart of another, igniting their flame, enlightening their life. Charitable deeds and acts of loving kindness, through the fire of their intent, also light another’s candle.

The esteemed author and Chassidic teacher Rabbi Menachem Schneerson in his book *In The Garden of the Torah* (p. 133), teaches this Talmudic passage:

“A person who gives a coin to a poor person is granted six blessings; one who gratifies him is blessed elevenfold.” (Talmud: Bava Basra 9b)

What we mean by “gratifies” is the sense of giving a person a positive feeling about him or herself—showing that we truly care about them as a fellow human being. Though giving charity to the poor is an admirable form of gratitude, expressing a deep sense of appreciation and love for another person is a form of gratitude that returns even greater blessings.

We must show gratitude through both *deeds*: giving to the poor and needy, helping the elderly cross the street, visiting the sick in the hospital; and through *words*: telling others we love them, expressing our appreciation to friends and speaking kindly towards others. We can also express our gratitude to God through both *deeds*: following his commandments, studying his word, practicing kindness and charity towards others; and through *words*: praising God through prayer and meditation for all the

“... *God’s grace may be displayed as much, and more so, in the things He denies us, as in what He grants us.*”

RABBI JOSEPH H. HERTZ

*... you are only
wealthy if you have
mastered the ability
to appreciate what
you have.*

RABBI ZELIG PLISKIN

goodness he bestows upon us.

In the Old Testament, there is a ritual called the “offering of the first fruits.” (Deuteronomy 26:1-11) This ritual was instituted to show our gratitude for the good that God has granted us—not only material good, but his love and care. At the first harvest, people would gather a portion of their fruits to take as an offering to the holy temple, making a long and arduous trip to express their thanks to God. This ritual symbolizes that gratitude is expressed not only through words of praise and thanks, but also through deeds. What would our lives be like if we instilled this kind of gratitude into our daily routine?

In commenting on this ritual, Rabbi Schneerson says, “Every aspect of our lives can become an offering of first fruits—an expression of thanks to God for His goodness.” He further says that “...feelings of gratitude are enhanced by our prayerful, conscious meditation on the manifold blessings we enjoy”



Once upon a time, a great Master was given the opportunity to visit God in the heavenly spheres above. When he arrived, he was shown a large room filled with great treasures and jewels. “What is this for?” inquired the Master. “This,” replied God, “is one of my heavenly storehouses of Divine Reward. This particular one is for those who study my word in the bible.” The Master was then taken to another room, filled with even more treasures than the one before. “Who is this one for?” asked the Master. “This one,” said God, “is for those who perform acts of loving-kindness.” Then, the Master was taken to an enormous room, overflowing with the most magnificent treasures he had ever seen. With a great sense of wonder, he inquired, “Dear God, who is this immense storehouse of Divine Reward for.” “This room,” God lovingly replied, “is for

those who lack merit. It is free for all those who ask.”

In commenting upon this story, the sages explain that those who base their claim to Divine Reward on their merits alone unnecessarily limit their entitlement. In truth, all our good deeds and kindnesses are insignificant in comparison to the undeserved favors God bestows upon us each and every day. When we come to God with our entreaties for undeserved gifts, we draw upon the largest storehouse of all. It is not limited by our own merits, but is dispensed according to God’s beneficent will. Gratitude costs us nothing, but enriches us beyond measure.

(This story adapted from *Pirke Avot: The Wisdom of Our Fathers*, Copyright ?, Mesorah Publications, Ltd. p. ?; the Master is Moses.)



True wealth is gratitude.

In speaking of gratitude as an expression of the richness of our life, the Sages of the Talmud say, “Who is rich? He who is happy with what he has.” (Pirke Avot 4:1)

When we consider that our appetites and needs are endless and insatiable, we realize the profound truth of equating wealth with being happy with what we have, i.e. being grateful for what we have. Our desires spring from an eternal well, as deep as the thirst for life itself. If we base our happiness on what we may one day achieve, acquire, conquer, master or tame, we will never know fulfillment in the present moment. Inner peace is only available when we realize the absurdity of waiting for the next job, the next car, the next promotion or the next relationship to be happy. True wealth is gratitude. Our ability to

Gratitude is our most direct line to God and the angels. If we take the time, no matter how crazy and troubled we feel, we can find something to be thankful for.

TERRY LYNN TAYLOR

*Just to be is a
blessing.
Just to live is
holy.*

RABBI ABRAHAM HESCHEL

appreciate all the gifts we have is essential for emotional and spiritual peace.

Make a list of all you have to be grateful for.

Keeping a gratitude journal is simple. Just start listing all the things you have to be grateful for. Here are some examples:

A hot shower in the morning, fresh water to drink, air conditioning on hot days, friends and family that love me, a good laugh, an inspiring movie, a car that gets me from here to there, a lesson learned or a great book to read.

This list is like a financial statement in the spiritual world. It is an accounting of our spiritual net worth. Amazingly enough, we can increase our spiritual riches through the mere act of appreciating what we have. If you could, by placing your appreciation on a twenty dollar bill, cause it to multiply into two twenty dollar bills, would you do it? Of course you would! In the spiritual world, such wealth is possible. By focusing our appreciation on what we already have, our wealth multiplies.

Here are some questions to help you focus on what you have to be grateful for.

In addition to simply listing those things you have to be grateful for, when you are facing difficult times and emotional setbacks, try answering the following questions to help you focus

on all the wonderful things you have to be grateful for. As you focus on what you already have, watch your spiritual wealth multiply.

- ◆ What can I learn from this?
- ◆ How can I grow from this?
- ◆ What is the blessing in this?
- ◆ What can I take from this that empowers me?
- ◆ What is the opportunity for me in this?
- ◆ What possibilities does this open up for me?
- ◆ What is the most loving thing to do in this situation?
- ◆ What am I grateful for?

Investing just five minutes a day writing in your gratitude journal will bring you treasures far beyond any 401K or retirement plan.

Gratitude transforms the simple into the sacred. Gratitude helps us have more even when we have less than we want. Multiply your spiritual and emotional wealth now by starting your gratitude journal.

SENTENCE STEM JOURNALING

*Follow the path of the unsafe, independent thinker.
Expose your ideas to the dangers of controversy. Speak
your mind and fear less the label of 'crackpot' than the
stigma of conformity. And on issues that seem important
to you, stand up and be counted at any cost.*

THOMAS J. WATSON

Sentence stems are incomplete sentences for which we fill in the ending. Journaling with sentence stems reveals the limiting beliefs we hold about ourselves and others. Developed by self-esteem expert, Nathaniel Branden, Ph.D., sentence stems reveal our unconscious beliefs about what it takes for us to be happy, healthy, satisfied and fulfilled.

Here's an example of sentence stem completion

I would be happy if only:

- ◆ I had more money.
- ◆ My life was simple and conflict free.
- ◆ I were skinny again.
- ◆ Everyone in my family could just get along.

*. . . sentence stem
journaling reveals
our unconscious
beliefs about what it
takes for us to be
happy, healthy,
satisfied and fulfilled.*

Accepting ourselves as we are, even as we are becoming the person we want to be, honors life as a journey, not a destination.

- ◆ My daughter cleaned up her room.
- ◆ I didn't try to please everybody all the time.

Paying attention to our answers helps us realize how we set ourselves up for failure by having unrealistic expectations about what we must “do,” “have” or “get from others” in order to “be” happy. Accepting ourselves as we are, even as we strive to become the person we want to be, honors life as a journey, not a destination.

The method is simple: continually repeat the sentence stem, each time ending the sentence with a different response. Develop a flow and don't worry about each and every answer being exactly correct or precise. Just go with the flow and start writing responses. Sentence stem completion is a powerful tool—helping us explore our inner world and reconnecting us with the disowned selves and silenced voices that live within us.



There was once a very poor man—named Isaac—who lived in a small impoverished city. One day, a very curious thing happened to him: for three nights in a row he dreamt the very same dream. In this dream, he saw himself searching under a bridge in a nearby city, looking for a hidden treasure. So vivid were these dreams, he followed his impulse and traveled to the nearby city. There—to his amazement—he found the very bridge, exact in detail, to the one he had dreamed of. The bridge, however, was guarded by the king's soldiers day and night. One of the guards noticed the poor man standing nearby and approached him saying, “Can I help you sir? What is it that you want?” The poor man then told the guard of his dream.

Sentence stem completion is a powerful tool—helping us explore our inner world and reconnecting us with the disowned selves and silenced voices that live within us.

Laughing ever so exuberantly, the guard said to the man, “My dear friend, if I believed in dreams, I would have traveled to a small city nearby here to meet a man named Isaac, because I dreamed there was a great treasure buried under his bed!”

Most amazed by this story, the poor man thanked the guard and quickly went home to find a great treasure, indeed, buried under his own bed!

This story reminds us, that though we may all dream of far off places that hold the treasures of happiness and peace, these treasures most often lie under our very own beds—inside our very own hearts. The treasure under our own beds, however, often lies hidden beneath our fears, sadness and forgotten dreams. Never forget that underneath all these, lies the true treasure we are searching for—our healing, happiness and inner peace. These treasures lie within our very reach.

(This story adapted from Rabbi Nilton Bonder, *The Kabbalah of Money*, Copyright 1996, Shambhala, p. 145; the poor man is the famous Rabbi Isaac of Cracow.)



In the next few pages, I have listed some sample categories and corresponding sentence stems that may help you when dealing with these categories of problems. Read through the sentence stems and when one catches your attention, stop and take a moment to complete the sentence stem. One stem may generate dozens of responses, awakening previously unrecognized feelings and voices within you. Pay attention to what these voices are saying, for they hold the secret to your pain, discomfort, fear and self-defeating behaviors. If you don't find the sentence stem that works for you, you can make up your own sentence stems. Once you get the hang of it, its easy. Try this: If I were good at writing

sentence stems, one of the sentence stems I would make up would be . . . ! See, it's easy.

Category 1: Building Healthy Relationships

When communicating with others or with our own bodies it is important to be clear about what we want and need. There is no place for mind-reading or wishful thinking in healthy relationships (with others, with ourselves, with our bodies or with our emotional or psychological selves). That is good for romance novels or the big screen, but in real life, we will be happier and healthier when we give up expectations that our partners or bodies know what we need or want. Here are some sample sentence stems:

- ◆ The scary thing about honestly expressing what I want is:
- ◆ The good thing about getting upset and agitated is:
- ◆ One of the things I'd like you to know about me is:
- ◆ One of the things I wish you understood about me is:
- ◆ One of the things I wish I understood about you is:
- ◆ One of the things I am aware of about you is:
- ◆ One of the things I imagine about you is:
- ◆ One of the things I know about you that you may not know I know is:
- ◆ Sometimes I feel turned on when you:
- ◆ Sometimes I feel hurt when you:
- ◆ If you could hear what I cannot say:
- ◆ I deserve to be:
- ◆ One of the things I'm afraid to tell you is:

- ◆ If I were to listen to my headaches, they would tell me:
- ◆ If my headaches could talk, they would tell me:
- ◆ If my headaches were my friend, they would be telling me:
- ◆ Smoking is my friend because it helps me:
- ◆ One of the ways I make it difficult for you to give me what I want is:
- ◆ The scary thing about telling you what I want is:
- ◆ If I were to be more straight-forward about what I want:
- ◆ As I sit here listening to you, I realize (I feel, I understand, I want):
- ◆ One of the things I need from you but don't know how to ask for is:
 - More gentleness.
 - Less arguing.
 - More time to relax.

Category 2: Dealing With Pain, Hurt, Anger and Fear

When dealing with physical or emotional pain, we must be diligent in expressing our feelings openly. If kept locked inside, hurt, anger and fear damage the body and damage the spirit. Bringing painful emotions into the open keeps them from building up inside—safeguarding us against their damaging effects. These sentence stems help us to open up and release difficult emotions that may be building up within our mind and body

- ◆ One of the things that's bothering me is:

If kept locked inside, hurt, anger and fear damage the body and damage the spirit.

- ◆ One of the things I'm afraid of is:
- ◆ One of the things I feel hurt about is:
- ◆ One of the things I feel angry about is:
- ◆ I feel upset when you:
- ◆ If I felt free to talk to you openly:
- ◆ I am becoming aware that:
- ◆ I am beginning to suspect:
- ◆ Right now, it seems obvious that:

***Here's a sample conversation
using sentence stems***

This sample conversation is one in which a patient with fibromyalgia (a chronic and sometimes disabling and painful disorder of the muscles) is having a conversation with their illness.

- ◆ **One of the things that's bothering me is:**
*Who the hell asked you to come into my life?
Where did you come from?
Why are you here? I don't want to have to
deal with you in my life.*
- ◆ **One of the things I am really angry about is:**
*You're really screwing up my life. I can't
do the things I used to do.
I've got to slow down to accommodate you.
I'm missing out on so many good things in
my life.*

◆ **If I felt free to talk to you openly:**

You would know that I'm not happy to have you in my life.

I would wish that you just went away and left me alone.

◆ **I am becoming aware that:**

I'm going to have to live with you and accept you.

We're going to have to get along better.

I'm going to need to get to know you better and learn how to keep you happy.

Note: It's important to remember that the purpose of completing these sentence stems is to become aware of your deeper thoughts, feelings, hurts and resentments. During these exercises, you may feel your emotions in raw form with unbridled intensity. It is best not to communicate these raw feelings directly to those people that you are having problems with.

Once you become aware of your underlying feelings, frustrations and fears, you can process these emotions by using any of the techniques in this book. If you start to feel emotionally overwhelmed, I highly recommend that you write a love letter to further explore your deeper feelings and desires.

Category 3: Moving Away From Sabotage

Sometimes we sabotage our relationships or our health with-

out consciously intending to. This sabotage almost always stems from limiting and conflicting beliefs, attitudes and perceptions. Completing certain sentence stems help us get in touch with these limiting and conflicting attitudes and beliefs. Once we become aware of our limiting beliefs, we can begin to choose healthier attitudes, lifestyles and beliefs that allow love and forgiveness to flourish. Here are some sample sentence stems:

- ◆ One of the things I dislike about my body is:
- ◆ One of the things I enjoy about my body is:
- ◆ One of the ways I wish my body was different is:
- ◆ One of the ways I keep my body from being healthy is:
- ◆ One of the ways I make things difficult for my body is:
- ◆ One of the things I want and don't know how to ask for is:
- ◆ One of the ways I make it difficult for people to give me what I want is:
- ◆ One of the ways I make it difficult for my body to give me what I want is:
- ◆ Being healthy means:
- ◆ If I were healthy, I would be able to:
- ◆ I would be happy if only:
- ◆ I would be satisfied with my _____ (work/marriage/family/sex life) if only:
- ◆ I feel like a failure at my _____ (work/marriage/family/sex life) because:
- ◆ I would be successful if:
- ◆ I will know I'm successful when:

El hombre propone, y Dios dispone. (Man plans, God decides.)

SPANISH PROVERB

- ◆ If I were proud of my body:
- ◆ One of the things I imagine about you is:
- ◆ One of the things I know about you that you may not know I know is:

Category 4: Moving To Acceptance, Appreciation, Growth, and Happiness

Part of the natural progression in our spiritual growth is to move from our painful, uncomfortable feelings into a place of greater acceptance, compassion and strength. This always involves a willingness to grow, a willingness to accept life on life's terms and an opening to all that we do have to be grateful for. We need not deny the truth of the pain, difficulty and fear we feel—but we need not dwell in it either. These sentence stems help us to move forward towards greater acceptance, growth and peace of mind.

- ◆ One of the things I appreciate about you is:
- ◆ At this moment, one of the things I'm most happy about is:
- ◆ One of the things I am learning to appreciate about you is:
- ◆ One of the things I am learning to appreciate about my illness is:
- ◆ One of the things I am learning to appreciate about myself is:
- ◆ One of the things I most enjoy about you is:
- ◆ One of the things I love about you is:

Part of the natural progression in our spiritual growth is to move from our painful, uncomfortable feelings into a place of greater acceptance, compassion and strength.

- ◆ One of the things I am becoming aware of about you is:
- ◆ One of the things I am learning to accept about you is:
- ◆ One of the ways I am letting myself be happy in the moment is:
- ◆ One of the things I'm willing to accept about myself is:
- ◆ One of the ways I am willing to grow is:
- ◆ If I were really willing to grow and push myself, one of the things I would do is:

Good luck with sentence stems. Give them a try They are truly powerful and revealing.

For further information, read any of the many wonderful books by the author, Nathaniel Branden, Ph.D. including: *The Power of Self-Esteem* and *Honoring The Self*.

SELF-PARENTING JOURNALING

When we were children, we used to think that when we were grown-up we would no longer be vulnerable. But to grow up is to accept vulnerability... To be alive is to be vulnerable.

MADELEINE L'ENGLE

Conversations occur automatically inside our minds all day long. For example, a student teacher going out on his first job interview might be thinking: “Oh, boy, am I scared! Don’t worry, you’ll do okay. You’re a great teacher. Yeah, but what if I get nervous and blow it? You won’t. Chill out, you’ll be okay.”

These many varied and contradictory thoughts are what make up our inner conversations—which hold the key to our feelings and our understandings about who we are, what we want and where we’re going in life. Self-parenting journaling is a brilliant method—devised by Jonathan Pollard III (in his book *Self-Parenting: The Complete Guide to Your Inner Conversations*)—to help us know ourselves better by monitoring our inner conversations.

During normal growth and development, we are biologically programmed to model the behavior of our parents. The atti-

tudes and opinions we assimilate from them become the “voice” of our Inner Parent. Like our real (or outer) parents, our Inner Parents can be positive (nurturing, encouraging, soothing and supportive) or negative (neglectful, critical, judgmental or perfectionistic).

As young children, we also form a set of our own opinions and conclusions about the world around us. These early opinions, reactions and decisions form the “voice” of our Inner Child. Our Inner Child, like our Inner Parent, can be positive (enthusiastic, energetic, wondrous, fun-loving, naturally affectionate and willing to please) or negative (rebellious, resistant, oppositional, abusive, impulsive, unwilling to learn, demanding or irrational).

***Two defining characteristics
of the Inner Child are:***

1. The Inner Child usually has a deep desire to please the Inner Parent.
2. The Inner Child is in charge of and controls the emotions for both the child and the adult.

***Here's an example of a conversation
between our Inner Parent and Inner Child***

Child: *I want to play and let's have some cake!*

Parent: *We can't right now. I have work to do.*

Child: *I don't want to work right now.*

Parent: *Too bad. If I don't work we won't have money to buy the cake you like.*

Child: *I don't care.*

As you can see, things don't always go well between the Inner Child and the Inner Parent. Positive self-parenting requires us to listen to our "inner conversations" just like we would our "outer conversations." Win/win communication and compromise between the Inner Parent and Inner Child help us resolve inner conflicts, forming the foundation of a fulfilling and happy relationship in our inner and outer worlds.

In order to live in harmony the Inner Parent needs to champion the cause of the Inner Child. When the Inner Parent makes major life decisions without consulting the Inner Child, conflicts tend to occur. We all know what this is like in the outer world. When parents make major decisions without considering the child's feelings, there is usually going to be a conflict. This does not mean the Inner Parent has to get the Inner Child permission to do everything, but the Inner Parent is best advised to at least attempt to explain to the Inner Child why certain things need to be done. In this way, they can work out a win/win compromise when there are difficult adult decisions to be made that are not very appealing to the Inner Child.

***Here are some qualities of the
ideal Inner Parent.***

The ideal Inner Parent:

Positive self-parenting requires us to listen to our "inner conversations" just like we would our "outer conversations."

The Inner Child represents our feelings and reactions to the world.

- ◆ Is loving, supportive and nurturing of the Inner child.
- ◆ Motivates, encourages and helps the Inner Child develop as a separate and distinct self.
- ◆ Guides the Inner Child through self-exploration and discovery.
- ◆ Pays attention to the physical needs of the Inner Child, particularly the basic needs of hunger, thirst, sleep, protection and love.
- ◆ Is sensitive to the emotional state of the Inner Child and teaches the Inner Child about life.

The Inner Child is a separate and distinct person from us adults. Treat your Inner Child as such. The Inner Child represents our feelings and reactions to the world. The Inner Child often wants immediate gratification of physical needs and desires. Appropriate limits need to be set with loving guidance. Setting limits with the Inner Child is a very loving act and gives the Inner Child a sense of safety and protection.

The ideal Inner Child needs to feel safe to express and expose his/her feelings, both negative and positive. Inner conflicts are often the result of the Inner Child wanting one thing and the Inner Parent wanting another. This translates into: Part of me wants “x,” part of me wants “y,” i.e., My Inner Child wants “to go play,” my Inner Parent wants “to finish cleaning the house.”

Setting limits with the Inner Child is a very loving act and gives the Inner Child a sense of safety and protection.



Leo Buscaglia, author and lecturer, was once asked to judge a contest. The purpose of the contest was to find the most caring child. The winner was a four year old child whose next door neighbor was an elderly gentleman who had recently lost his wife. Upon seeing the man cry, the little boy went into the old gentleman's yard, climbed onto his lap, and just sat there. When the little boy returned home, his mother asked him what he said to the man. The little boy simply replied, "Nothing, I just helped him cry."

Our Inner Child lives in a world of felt-thought, where feelings are primary. This innocence and openness toward feelings is a vital part of our healing that lies within the domain of our Inner Child. We so often feel we must know what to say, what advice to give, what to do. But true healing often requires only emotional presence—that we be present with others in their pain. This is the language of the heart—so vital for healing. Our adult wants to fix everything, say the exact right words, do the right thing. Our child knows what our adult does not, that it is our mere presence—the sharing of ourselves—that heals.



Here's an example of an Inner Conversation Dialogue Sheet

Inner Parent	Inner Child
	I hate this job. It's boring.
I know, but we have to work.	
	Let's play!
No, we can't right now. We have responsibilities.	
	Phooey. I don't care.
My boss will.	
	I don't like your boss

As we begin to notice the conversations between our Inner Child and our Inner Parent, we realize how difficult it is to come to agreements. Inner conflicts result from a clash between the needs of the Inner Parent and the Inner Child. Physical, emotional, mental, social and spiritual stress always accompany these inner conflicts.

Inner conflicts result from a clash between the needs of the Inner Parent and the Inner Child.

Here is Jonathan Pollard's 8 step plan to inner conflict resolution

1. Make an “Inner Conversation Dialogue Sheet.” Listen to and write down your inner conversations.
2. When you understand both sides of the conflict, aim for a win/win resolution, where the needs of both the Inner Parent and the Inner Child are met. For example, in the above scenario, the Inner Parent could agree to search for a new job that is more satisfying to the adult and the child within him, while remaining responsible in his present job. Perhaps they could agree that the Inner Parent will go looking for a more satisfying job a few hours a week. In the meantime, the Inner Child will feel better, knowing that things will eventually improve. This allows the Inner Child to feel cared for and important, at the same time, allowing the Inner Parent to be responsible and adult-like. The Inner Child can better delay having his way, knowing that soon he’ll be having a lot more fun.
3. List the specific needs of each inner self.
4. The Inner Parent and Inner Child must mutually agree upon the solution.
5. Search together for solutions. Be creative. Generate many ideas.
6. Choose the best solution that both of you agree on.
7. Put the solution into action.

. . . aim for a win/win resolution, where the needs of both the Inner Parent and the Inner Child are met.

8. Reevaluate the solution to make sure its doable and satisfying.

Remember the goal is to:

1. Recognize the voices of the Inner Parent and the Inner Child.
2. Get to know each other's needs and wants better
3. Work to change any negative self-parenting patterns into positive patterns that are nurturing, loving and supportive of each inner voice.

Here's a sample Inner Conversation Dialogue Sheet written by someone who suffers from stress related headaches.

Inner Parent	Inner Child
	My head hurts. I can't stand this place.
I don't care. We have to live here. We can't afford a place of our own.	
	But, it's horrible. We have no room for ourselves. I hate your roommates.
Yes, but what can we do? Stop bothering me. I have enough problems without you complaining all the time.	

Let's try solving this problem by applying the 8 steps to inner conflict resolution:

- 1. Make an "Inner Conversation Dialogue Sheet." Listen to and write down your inner conversations.**

We already wrote down the conversation.

- 2. When you understand both sides of the conflict, aim for a win/win resolution, where the needs of both the Inner Parent and the Inner Child are met.**

Inner Parent's Point of View: *We're forced to live here. We can't afford to move. I'm stressed enough, don't bother me.* **Inner Child's Point of View:** *It's bad for us to live here. I'm unhappy. I'm getting headaches. We have no space to breathe and no space to enjoy things together.*

- 3. List the specific needs of each inner self.**

Inner Parent's Needs: *need to be frugal, economize and delay immediate gratification due to finances.* **Inner Child's Needs:** *needs to be happy now, needs to have room to breathe, play and have time for fun with his Inner Parent.*

- 4. The Inner Parent and Inner Child must mutually agree upon the solution.**

Okay, let's search for solutions and find some we

can agree upon.

5. Search together for solutions. Be creative. Generate many ideas.

Inner Parent's Ideas: *We could go together for a walk in the park and spend some quality time away from these crowded home quarters. We could look for a better place to live. I could let my Inner Child know that I'm not happy with this crowded place either, but I need his understanding and patience. I could ask for the bigger bedroom in the house.*

Inner Child's Ideas: *I want us both to be happy and if we can't move right away, I would be happy for now if we could get out of the house for a little walk every night, or even go visit some friends now and then and play a little.*

6. Choose the best solution that both of you agree on.

The best solution they could agree upon was to take a walk at least every other night, and go spend some time with friends on the weekend in order to get out of the crowded house. They also agreed that the Inner Parent would start looking for a more spacious, fulfilling and peaceful place to live. The Inner Parent admits to his Inner Child that he knows his headaches are the result of living in this crowded environment and he doesn't really like it either, but feels financially compelled to stay.

This somehow soothes the Inner Child, allowing him to feel understood and cared for.

7. Put the solution into action.

The Inner Parent invites the Inner Child to go once a week on a new apartment search with him. The Inner Parent keeps his agreement to go out for a walk with his Inner Child every other night to "get away" from the crowded space.

8. Reevaluate the solution to make sure it's doable and satisfying.

They are having lots of fun looking at new places, and somehow, knowing that they will one day find a better place, everybody is a little happier. The Inner Parent isn't having so many headaches and the Inner Child feels understood, cared for, more energetic and happy.

Tip: We need to start writing down our inner conversations anytime we are experiencing physical symptoms, emotional symptoms or having spiritual, financial or social conflicts or crises. Our inner conversations reveal our unmet needs, disappointments, fears and unresolved hurts. Becoming more aware of the voices within us guides us towards the resolution of our conflicts and frees our energy for creative, purposeful and more loving pursuits that help us self-actualize and live life more abundantly.



A devoted disciple of the Master once asked, “Is there anything I can do to make myself more Enlightened?” The Master quickly replied, “As little as you can do to cause the sun to rise in the morning.” “Then,” the student asked, “of what use are all these spiritual exercises you demand of us?” “So that you will be awake when the sun begins to rise,” replied the Master.

Becoming aware of the voices within us is part of our awakening, part of our healing. There can be no growth, nor resolution of conflict until we awaken to the voices within us—the child and the parent.

(This story is adapted from Anthony de Mello’s *One Minute Wisdom*, Copyright 1985, Image, Doubleday, p. 11)



For more information, see Jonathan Pollard III: *SELF-PARENTING: The Complete Guide to Your Inner Conversations*, © 1987, Generic Human Studies Publishing, Malibu, CA.

EMBRACING OUR SELVES: VOICE DIALOGUE

*A family is a place where minds come in
contact with one another.*

BUDDHA

This method of journaling is based on the insightful work of Hal and Sidra Stone, Ph.D., in their book *Embracing Our Selves: The Voice Dialogue Manual*. The foundation of Voice Dialogue journaling is the understanding that we all grow up in cultures and families where certain parts of ourselves are not accepted or nurtured. We must—in the process of growing up—disown parts of who we are in order to please our parents, caretakers, communities and cultures. We must disown parts of ourselves in order to survive. For example, growing up in a culture where the natural expression of anger is not well tolerated, we may learn to repress our anger and push it down inside us, leading us to be nice and pleasing on the outside, even when we feel angry and hurt on the inside.

In this way, we begin to “over”-develop the parts of ourselves that bring us the positive strokes and appreciation we all crave from parents, teachers and communities. We call these

*We learn to be nice
and pleasing on the
outside, even when
we feel angry and
hurt on the inside.*

*We must—in the
process of growing
up—disown parts of
who we are in order
to please our parents,
caretakers,
communities and
cultures.*

selves (that bring us positive strokes and acceptance) our “primary selves.” At the same time, we begin to lose sight of—and disown—the parts of ourselves that are not accepted, nurtured or bring us disapproval and pain. We call these “under”-developed selves our “disowned selves.”

All these selves—the primary and the disowned—are equally a part of who we are and we must learn to honor all of them as an authentic part of our fullness of being. During our childhood development, our primary selves enable us to function and survive in a complex and confusing world. As we begin grow into adulthood, however, we notice that something is missing in our lives. In certain areas, we feel incomplete and have a sense of “not enough-ness.” This sense that “something is missing” is a reflection of our disowned ourselves.

As we seek to heal and become whole again, we must begin to fully appreciate the positive benefit of our “unacceptable” disowned selves, as well the benefit of our “acceptable” primary selves. We come to understand that in order to become fully alive and awake, we must, in some way, reintegrate our “unacceptable” disowned selves back into our lives.

We come to understand that in order to become fully alive and awake, we must, in some way, reintegrate our “unacceptable” disowned selves back into our lives.



“For there will never cease to be needy people in your land, which is why I command you: open your hand to the poor and needy.”

DEUTERONOMY 15:11

The bible reminds us that there will always be people who require our help, caring and assistance. In the journey of personal growth, we come to realize that, metaphorically speaking, these needy people can be considered our disowned voices—the alone and hungry within ourselves. Just as the hungry and cold are huddled on street

... we start to notice that something is missing in our lives. In certain areas, we feel incomplete and have a sense of “not enough-ness.” This sense of incompleteness and “something missing” often has to do with the disowned parts of ourselves.

corners, so are they huddled inside of us—our disowned voices—that need fed, nurtured and clothed. “Embracing our selves” journaling helps us to reach out to the homeless people within us, helping to make our inner world—and by default, our outer world—a kinder, more loving, more beautiful world in which to live.



We are more than we think we are

The Voice Dialogue method helps us awaken and reintegrate our lost or disowned parts in order to restore our wholeness. In this new fullness of expression and being, we may experience what Hal and Sidra Stone call the deep “roar of awakening”—the discovery that we are more than we think we are. In so doing, we reawaken the natural energy, aliveness and spontaneity that has been tied up in denying the many disowned parts of who we are.



The Master loved to tell the story of a prince who was exiled from the kingdom. Having no manual skills, the prince became a shepherd in the hot fields. He noticed that the other shepherds—to protect themselves from the grueling sun—built themselves small huts for shade. But the prince did not even know how to build a small hut, so he suffered in the hot midday sun.

One day, the King went out to the fields to visit his subjects. As was the custom, peasants threw petitions into the royal coach, hoping that their wish would be granted. The prince, too, threw a petition into the royal coach asking that he receive a small hut for shade from the hot sun.

When the King recognized his son’s handwriting, he wept, “My

poor son has forgotten who he is! He does not ask to be recalled to the palace. He only asks for shelter from the sun.” The Master said, “We pray for our personal needs, like the shepherd for his hut. We forget that we belong to the Divine presence, under the immediate providence of God.”

We are all Divine, created in the sacred image of God, with a soul that yearns for its noble roots. This is part of the “roar of awakening”—to realize that we are more than we think we are. We are all part of the sacred palace of God and God wants us to remember who we are. God wants us to come back to his palace and live a life filled with wholeness and sacred purpose.

(This story is adapted from Rabbi Abraham J. Twerski, *Living Each Day*, Copyright 1992, Mesorah Publications, Ltd. p. 105; the Master is the Tzaddik of Sanz.)



Our disowned selves play havoc with our lives. Repressed voices clamor for attention, often by causing us physical or emotional pain. How else are they supposed to get our attention?

We recognize our disowned selves in our dislikes and judgments of others

Our disowned selves play havoc with our lives. Repressed voices clamor for attention, often by causing us physical or emotional pain. How else are they supposed to get our attention? When we deny or suppress anger, jealousy, feelings of inadequacy or shame, it is like removing the battery from the smoke alarm because the noise is so annoying. Before we turn off the alarm, we better look for a fire. Turning off our uncomfortable voices brings us temporary relief from the noise, but this confers a false sense of security. In fact, the house may be burning down and we will not realize it in time to save it.

Our disowned selves are subpersonalities. They are energy patterns or character traits that have been punished or ig-

nored every time they emerge. As such, they are part of what Jung calls the shadow or the dark, hidden repressed sides of our personalities. The problem with repressing these disowned selves is that they lurk in the shadows waiting to express themselves at every possible inappropriate or inopportune moment.

Take, for example, the husband who refuses to acknowledge his anger at his wife for constantly being late. He smiles on the outside—but inside, he’s really upset about her emerging pattern of tardiness. Rather than express, communicate or process his anger, he pretends everything is okay because he doesn’t want to rock the boat. His wife doesn’t know he’s upset and she has no idea that being a few minutes late bothers him so much. As his anger continues to build, one day out of the blue, he explodes and inappropriately dumps all his anger on her. Or, worse yet, he explodes at her passively aggressively and just happens to “forget” their anniversary—which he knows is very important to her. One way or another, repressed anger gets acted out.

The most commonly disowned selves in our culture are sexuality and anger. These two energy patterns—or subpersonalities—are pushed underground at an early age. This helps explain road rage and the plethora of pornography on the Internet and in our society.

We often recognize our disowned selves in our dislikes and judgments about others. Frequently, the very personality traits or qualities we “can’t stand” in others are the ones that are repressed within us. The challenge is to ask, “How is my reaction to this person or situation my teacher?” “What can I learn from them about who I am, my judgments or my own repressed emotions?”

One way or another, repressed anger gets acted out.

We often recognize our disowned selves in our dislikes and judgments about others.

We need not let our disowned selves run our lives or cause us to act impulsively or inappropriately, but we do have a responsibility to pay attention to them.

What we must understand about our disowned selves is that they are a natural part of our being. Though they make us feel uncomfortable at times, they serve a purpose. If we take time to listen to what they say we benefit from their message. We need not let our disowned selves run our lives or cause us to act impulsively or inappropriately, but we do have a responsibility to pay attention to them.



A young student, extremely devoted to his spiritual growth, was feeling discouraged by the frequent criticism he received from some of his teachers. The Master, hearing the student's discouragement, said to him, "Listen to the words of your critics. They reveal what your friends may hide from you."

"Is that all," inquired the student. "No," replied the Master, "Listen to them, but do not be discouraged by what they say. No statue was ever erected to honor a critic. Statues are for the criticized."

When we listen to our critics—as well as our critical voices inside—we can learn and grow deeply, but we must not allow ourselves to become discouraged. Learn from the critical voices, but do not mistake the criticism for who you are. You are more than the criticism being dispensed, you are the one who grows and learns and elevates your character using all sources of information and feedback. Criticism is an opportunity for growth, and in recognizing it as such, you will learn to seek it out and grow from it.

(This story adapted from Anthony de Mello's *One Minute Wisdom*, Copyright 1985, Image, Doubleday, p. 172)



Healing requires that we accept and embrace our shadow energies

Because our disowned selves are an actual part of us, when we repress them, we cut off a vital part of our energy and essence. Repressing our disowned selves is like capturing parts of ourselves and holding them hostage, like prisoners of war. We become less than whole. As an example, let's take a look at "The Angry Self." The "down-side" of our Angry Self is that it can get us into big trouble if we just blurt out our anger or dump it inappropriately. The "up-side" of our Angry Self is that it can give us the energy and power to protect ourselves, our values and our boundaries.

If we suppress our Angry Self because we are uncomfortable around anger, we lose the positive side of our Angry Self. By taking our anger prisoner, when we need the energy of our anger to "go to battle" and defend the boundaries and values we cherish, we find that we do not have the strength to fight, because our anger is unavailable to us.

David Whyte, poet and author of *The Heart Aroused*, captures the essence of our relationship with the shadow life beautifully when he says "We want the fire that warms but we refuse the fire that burns. Because we will not feel our grief fully, our full joy is also held from us. " Because we will not feel our shadow fully, our full joy and lightness of being is also held from us. Healing—which is about becoming "whole" and becoming a complete person—requires that we accept and embrace our shadow. This does not mean we act out our shadow energies, but we must channel them into creative forces for goodness, kindness, love and compassion. Before we can channel

We want the fire that warms but we refuse the fire that burns. Because we will not feel our grief fully, our full joy is also held from us.

DAVID WHYTE

Healing—which is about becoming "whole" and becoming a complete person—requires that we accept and embrace our shadow.

these shadow energies, we must acknowledge their presence. True healing requires it.



A group of disciples were querying their Master about enlightenment. One of them asked, “Master, tell us what you got from enlightenment. Did you become divine?” “No,” replied the Master. “Did you become a saint,” another asked. “No,” replied the Master. “Then, what did you become?” asked an exasperated student. “Awake,” replied the Master.

Awakening, in spiritual work, is really about “seeing” what we could not previously see. Awakening is how we make the invisible, visible. We must awaken to our “whole” self—our positive side and our negative or shadow side—which often, initially, appears invisible to us. As we awaken to our many selves, we see our sadness, fear and disappointment not as something to be avoided, but as energies that are as critical to our healing as joy, optimism and hope.

(This story adapted from Anthony de Mello’s *One Minute Wisdom*, Copyright 1985, Image, Doubleday, p. 82)



***Here is The best way to journal
about these many selves***

1. Discover and identify your subpersonalities, disowned selves and repressed voices.
2. Talk to them and see what they think, what they need, what

they want. You need not become the anger, you simply need to talk with it. You need a relationship with these shadow energies. You need to acknowledge their existence or they will forever hold us hostage.

3. Recognize the beneficial purpose of these energies and selves. I liken the process to calling a meeting of the “board of directors.” You are the chairman of the board, but you need all these energies and selves (members of the board) present in order to make the difficult decisions. You have veto power, but to function well, you need to communicate with all members of the board.

In beginning the exploration of your subpersonalities, recognize that these are distinct energy patterns that affect our physical, emotional and spiritual bodies. Just as your physical body has many systems working in unison, so your emotional/spiritual body has many selves and subpersonalities comprising the whole.

Every disowned self demands energy to keep it hidden or unconscious. Just as the *U.S.S. Enterprise* can’t go into warp speed when its shields are up, if your energy is spent “protecting” the hidden identity of your disowned selves, there is not enough energy left to reach warp speed. Too many disowned subpersonalities drain the energy of the body and eventually, exhaustion and illness occur. As you guard your shamed parts and your disowned selves, you must watch over them as the “jailer.” In so doing, you yourself become imprisoned by the very ones you have imprisoned.

Too many disowned subpersonalities drain the energy of the body and eventually, exhaustion and illness occur.

Just as our physical body has many systems working in unison, so our emotional/spiritual body has many selves and subpersonalities

***Here are the steps for
voice dialogue journaling***

1. Discover and identify your subpersonalities. These are the “key players” of our disowned voices and subpersonalities:

- ◆ The Responsible/Practical Self
- ◆ The Perfectionist
- ◆ The Critical Parent
- ◆ The Victim
- ◆ The Angry Self
- ◆ The Sexual Self
- ◆ The Irresponsible Self
- ◆ The Lazy Self/Procrastinator
- ◆ The Fun Loving Self
- ◆ The Vulnerable Child
- ◆ The Fearful Self
- ◆ The Protector/Controller (Controlling Parent)
- ◆ The Impatient Self
- ◆ The Selfish/Self-Absorbed Child
- ◆ The OverAchiever (Pusher)
- ◆ The Nice Guy/People-Pleaser
- ◆ The Playful/Magical/Wonder Child
- ◆ The TopDog/BetterThanThou/Braggin’ on Myself Self
- ◆ The Overnurturing Parent
- ◆ The Higher Self/Inner Healer/Inner Guide/Wise Self
- ◆ The Warrior
- ◆ The Lover
- ◆ The Magician

◆ The King/Queen

2. Encourage each voice to speak and honor what they have to say.

3. Remain nonjudgmental and noncritical.

4. Identify the positive and helpful characteristics of each subpersonality. They may be a pain to deal with at times, but remember all parts of yourself are allies in some way

5. Remember you are the chairman of the board. These voices are all here in some way to protect and serve you. Guide them, listen to them, but remember you are in charge. You have the ultimate choice regarding your options, reactions, behaviors, attitudes and beliefs.

Here are some ideas for how to use the voice dialogue method in a mind/body situation. Whenever you feel physical symptoms, emotional anxiety or stress, ask yourself one of the following questions. Then see whose voice pops up, and begin a free-flow conversation with that voice. Other voices may enter into the conversation. Give them expression as well.

You might ask these questions to get the dialogue started:

1. Let's talk to the one that's making my shoulders tight. (See whose voice responds. Refer to the list of subpersonalities above if you are having trouble getting started.)
2. Let's talk to the one that's giving me a headache.

3. Let's talk to the one that's causing my heart to race.
4. Can I talk to the part of me that . . .
5. Who is doing this writing?

The idea is that when we feel stressed or tense, in some way, there is a conflict between what different parts of ourselves want. By dialoguing with these different voices, we discover our wholeness, our completeness. This heals us and strengthens our awareness, so that we can make appropriate decisions with discernment and free choice.

Here's another way to get started. You might sit down at a pretend meeting of the "board of directors" and say, "I've called this meeting because I am concerned about the overwhelming fatigue I've been feeling and how disabling my headaches have become."

Then go around the table and ask each board member what they think can be done about the situation. (You may want to refer to the list of "Key Players" of our subpersonalities and choose those you want present at this meeting of the board.)

Here's an example

Joe is "burnt out" at work and starting to lose his motivation. His performance is dropping and he doesn't care. He's experiencing stress related symptoms of fatigue, headaches and diarrhea. He might benefit by calling a meeting of his board of directors. Here's how it might go:

. . . when we feel stressed or tense, in some way, there is a conflict between what different parts of ourselves want.

Joe: *Okay, everybody, we need to come up with some solutions to these problems we're having. Who wants to go first?*

OverAchiever: *There's only one problem we have here and it's just that you're too lazy. Who said you have to like your work to do well at it? Just pick yourself up and work.*

Joe: *Thanks for your opinion OverAchiever. Let's see what Fun Loving has to say. I see him jumping out of his seat.*

Fun Loving Self: *I think OverAchiever is out of his mind. He's on a course of self-destruction. If anything, we need to relax a little more. Kick back. Take it easy. He's just too intense.*

Joe: *Thanks Fun Loving. You make a good point. OverAchiever can be self-destructive some times. Let's hear from someone else. Mr. Fear, go ahead.*

Fear: *I'll tell ya what guys, I'm just afraid we're going to lose everything. Things are going to get worse. We're in deep trouble. Joe's burnt out and we're all suffering. Joe, please, you better figure out what to do before we really get sick and jeopardize all that we have.*

Joe: *O.K. you guys, maybe we can figure something out.*

I am burnt out a little, but I know it's because I'm just not having any fun outside of work. I can't find anything that excites me anymore. I need your help.

OverAchiever: *Well, I'm willing to back down a little and not drive you so hard all the time. After all, you do take pretty good care of me. I won't push you so hard.*

Joe: *Thanks, that will help.*

Fear: *I can back off a little too, Joe. I know sometimes I keep you from having fun and immobilize you with all my anxieties and worries. I'll tell ya' what. Try some new things and see if you like them. I'll try not to hold you back so much.*

Joe: *Thanks for your help. I appreciate it. Okay, here's the scoop. I'm going to join that fitness club I've been thinking about. We'll go there after work and get some exercise, start feeling a little better physically, and we can enjoy a good whirlpool now and then. I feel better already just having a plan. Thanks guys.*

I've kept this particular example fairly light, with a happy ending. Not all voice dialogue sessions resolve themselves so quickly. Sometimes, it takes several sessions or weeks of meetings to work out a solution to one single aspect of an issue. The "board members" can also get pretty direct with each other sometimes even mean and nasty That's a good thing. Don't try and edit the conversations. Just let them flow Don't try and be

“nicey-nice” in what each voice has to say. Remember, a lot of these voices have been suppressed for quite a long time and they’re angry, upset and have a lot to say. Listen to them. Just remember, you have veto power at every board meeting. Do not abuse it, but use it wisely.

It’s also a good idea to have “Joe” talk directly to each of the selves rather than have them talk with each other. This empowers you (“Joe”) as the journal-writer to be a strong and capable chairman of the board—directing and leading your other selves towards a cooperative and productive effort in becoming more whole, aware and complete.

For more information and a fascinating insight into the depth of your inner world, please read the full works of Hal Stone, Ph.D. & Sidra Stone, Ph.D., © 1989 New World Library, Novato, CA *Embracing Our Selves: The Voice Dialogue Manual*. Also, visit their excellent website entitled: Voice Dialogue International - Drs Hal and Sidra Stone at: www.delos-inc.com

AWARENESS JOURNALING

*Emancipate yourself from mental slavery,
None but ourselves can free our minds.*

BOB MARLEY

The simple act of keeping a journal to monitor physical symptoms or behaviors results in improved health and healing. This is the power of awareness. Paying attention to our physical pain and to our behaviors gives us some sense of control over them, which, in turn, activates our healing system. Researcher Robert Epstein studied 2000 years of self-change techniques and reviewed the scientific research literature on self-change. He found that of all the techniques touted in the self-help aisle, three were particularly powerful in helping us change unwanted behaviors. They were: 1) monitoring our behavior 2) making commitments and 3) modifying our environment. Awareness journaling helps us monitor our behavior and modify our environment in ways that can help us to heal.

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Symptom Awareness Journaling

When we suffer from recurring symptoms such as chronic pain, headaches, irritable bowel syndrome and other stress-related medical disorders, it is important to keep a journal that documents the time and degree of our pain and discomfort. Making note of any factors that trigger the pain as well as anything that makes it better can help us define a better treatment plan along with the help of our health care professionals. Having a written account also helps us objectively monitor the progress of different forms of treatment. When we recognize certain triggers, we can modify our environment by reducing our exposure to those triggers: like no longer buying caffeinated soda, playing soothing music, or dimming bright lights.

It's important to notice that the degree of perceived pain we experience can be markedly different from the degree of disability we experience from the pain. In dealing with chronic pain, a common understanding is that "pain is in the body suffering is in the mind." This concept gives us some degree of power over our pain, so that when we cannot avoid the physical experience of pain, we can have some measure of control over how much it debilitates us.

Many people experience an 8 out of 10 in perceived pain, but function completely well (90-100%) at work. Others experience a 4 out of 10 in perceived pain, but are very disabled from it, perhaps only functioning at 20 - 30% of normal. These different thresholds for pain give us an opportunity to look at different forms of relaxation therapy, mental and physical techniques that can help us lower our degree of dysfunction from unwelcome pain.



A depressed student approached the Master for help. The Master said to the young student, “You can stand anything in life if you can see the meaning in it.” He went on to explain, “Before a great cathedral is built, much time must be spent digging the foundation. In fact, so much time is spent on the foundation that one begins to wonder if the building will ever rise. God wants to build a cathedral in your life. To do so, he must first excavate the ground. The depression you are feeling is God excavating the ground of your life in order to build a solid foundation for the great cathedral that is you.” The student, still aware of his pain and sadness, felt as if a heavy weight had been lifted from his shoulders, exclaiming, “I must let God do this in my life. It has meaning. God is trying to build a cathedral. He is at work in my life.”

All pain—physical, mental, emotional or spiritual—can be reframed when we are able to find the meaning in it. This is expressed beautifully in the colloquialism, “Pain is inevitable, suffering is optional.” When our pain is without meaning, it results in suffering. When we can find the meaning in our pain, we minimize our suffering by awakening to the realization that our pain is part of the foundation building of the great cathedral that is our life.

(This story is adapted from *Daily Vitamins for Spiritual Growth Vol.3: Day by Day with Jesus through the Church Year* by Anthony M. Coniaris, Light and Life Publishing Co., Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1996, p. 12; the Master in this story is psychiatrist and author Victor Frankl M.D.)



Here's a general format for keeping a symptom journal

Date and time of the pain	Degree of perceived pain (scale of 0 to 10 with 0 = no pain and 10 = severe pain)	Ability to function with the pain (scale as 0% = completely dysfunctional and 100% = completely functional)	Location and duration of the pain	Possible triggers: i.e. what makes the pain worse? Foods, caffeine, lights, stress, menstrual periods, etc.	What makes the pain better?

After charting your symptom journal, you can use any of the journaling techniques described in this book to open up a dialogue with your physical symptoms to better understand the emotional, psychological, spiritual, financial or lifestyle issues which may be impacting your health. Some of the better techniques for dialoguing with your symptoms include self-parenting, the voice dialogue method and the love letter technique.

Behavior Awareness Journaling

Monitoring our behaviors via journaling is simple. If, for example, we want to lose weight, the simple act of weighing ourselves daily and recording what we eat helps us lose weight. Somehow, simple awareness of our behaviors strengthens our ability to achieve the change we desire. Here is an example of a behav-

ioral awareness journal for losing weight. You can use a similar structure for any unwanted behavior you desire to change.

Date and time	Today's weight	What foods did you eat?	Degree of perceived hunger (scale of 0 to 10 with 0 = not hungry and 10 = very hungry)	Possible triggers: i.e. what made you want to eat? feeling sad of the food just looked good, etc.	Thought about how to modify your behavior, i.e. only eat when you're hungry, do 10 pushups before eating, etc.

Though it seems deceptively simple, this is a powerful method for change. Give it a try! The important thing is to develop awareness. Awareness heals us.

PRAYER JOURNALING

The moment of absolute certainty never arrives. Above all, remember that God helps those who help themselves. Act as if everything depended upon you, and pray as if everything depended upon God.

S.H. PUYER

Pray is the way in which we communicate and have a relationship with God. In Hebrew the word for prayer is “tefillah” which means “bond.” In its essential form, prayer is anything that bonds us to God. Our prayers bring us closer to God. If you are unsure of who or what God is, you may substitute the word “higher power,” “love,” “truth,” “the field of all possibilities,” “mercy,” “grace” or “beauty” in place of the word God. Prayer is the language of the spiritual world—the means whereby we communicate and bond with God, a higher power, a deeper sense of order or purpose in life.

The relationship between faith and prayer.

In his book, *Man Is Not Alone*, religious scholar and philosopher Abraham Joshua Heschel alludes to faith as “the bridge that leads to God.” If faith is the bridge that connects us to God, certainly prayer is the vehicle which transports us across that bridge. Prayer moves us closer to God.

Keeping a prayer or devotional journal is as simple as writing down the deepest wishes of your heart. For if prayer is the vehicle that connects us to God, the fuel which powers that vehicle is derived from the deepest desires of the heart — desires for meaning, connection and transcendence.

Here’s an example of a simple prayer journal entry in the form of a letter to God

Dear God,

Please bless and watch over my family during this difficult time. My son is having trouble adjusting to my illness. Please let him know that you are nearby us at all times. Guide and watch over him and comfort him with your peace. Help me to be strong. Bless and guide the doctors and nurses that are taking care of me. Help me to heal and strengthen my faith in your divine wisdom.

Joan

A more detailed form of prayer journal that I highly recommend is based on five simple steps that I have adapted from Rabbi Irwin Katsof’s wonderful book, *How To Get Your Prayers Answered* (Copyright 2000, Frederick Fell Publishers, Inc.) Follow-

ing these five steps is like having an owner's manual for the "vehicle" of prayer so that we may safely traverse the bridge of our faith and arrive safely in God's world. They are:

- 1. Pray like you expect results.**
- 2. Be shocked if you don't get what you ask for.**
- 3. Pay attention to what God is teaching you.**
- 4. Re-evaluate your request**
- 5. Put in the effort.**

Let's look at each step in some detail.

1. Pray like you expect results.

God wants us to have a relationship with him and is waiting for us to call upon him. The problem, says Rabbi Katsof, is that we don't have God's phone number or e-mail address, so we tend not to call upon him. Furthermore, if we did have his number, what would we say? Should we really take up his precious time with our problems? All the religious traditions of the world answer with a resounding "Yes!" God desires our prayers, as a father desires to know his own children and help them with their problems. Sometimes, we feel we don't want to put God out or bother him. How often have we walked into a store, looking for some particular item, when a salesperson approaches us with a friendly "May I help you?" to which we reflexly, say, "No, that's okay, thanks. I'm just looking around!" God wants to help us. He wants to assist us in finding what we need in life. But we must accept his help. Until we truly believe in a God who

God treasures every single human being as if he were the only one in the world. He waits for our prayers—listening.

RABBI M. PALTIEL

hears our pleas, we cannot truly pray. We are all God's children and worthy of his love, kindness and mercy. He wants to help us. He wants to have a relationship with us.



The Master described the following biblical verse to his students:

After the snake enticed Adam and Eve to eat the apple, God cursed the serpent saying, "And you shall eat earth all the days of your life." (Genesis 3:14) But God told Adam he must work for his food, and if he finds himself lacking, he may pray to God to provide for him.

The Master then asked his students, "What kind of curse is this? The serpent will always have food and never have to worry, but Adam must work for his food and may often be lacking. Should not the serpent's punishment be more severe than that of Adam who was enticed into his disobedience?"

When the students had no answer, the Master explained: the curse of the serpent was indeed more severe. For God was totally rejecting the serpent from ever entering into communication with Him. But Adam, when he found himself lacking for food, was given the ability to communicate with God and pray for his provisions. The true gift that God gave to Adam was the ability to pray, to communicate with God. This is a true treasure and gift given to all of us, even though we may fall short of our potential, or find ourselves lacking at times. The gift of prayer is a privilege that allows us to communicate with God and have a relationship with him. We need only open our hearts to this treasure and call upon him when we find ourselves in need.

(The above story adapted from Rabbi Zelig Pliskin, *Growth Through Torah*; the Master is Rabbi Bunim)



I once took a course in Kabbalah (mystical Judaism) in which my teacher Rabbi Menachem “Mendy” Paltiel taught that the fundamental principle of Kabbalah is that we must try to have a relationship with God. Though our finite minds can never truly understand the infinite wonder of God, we need not fully comprehend God in order to have a loving and cherished relationship with him. Rabbi Paltiel says, “If we fail to try to understand and relate to God, we are saying that his greatness ends where my mind begins.”

If you are struggling to fully comprehend what and who God is, step back a moment and accept that our finite human minds can never truly comprehend the infinite power of God. As in any relationship, we don’t have to have our partners completely figured out to their core essence, in order to have a meaningful relationship with them. The same is true of God. Don’t put off having a relationship with God until you feel you completely understand him. After all, the relationship itself is what most teaches us about ourselves and our partners. Rabbi Paltiel says, “Our understanding of God may be limited, but our relationship to God is unlimited.”



Three farmers were praying for rain during a terrible drought. One was on his knees praying fervently, “Dear God. Bless us with rain. We will be ever grateful.” The second was crying in prayer with tears in his eyes, “Dear Benevolent God. Grant us rain that we may be nourished and sustained in order to do your will.” The

“ . . . the words of prayer expressed by the mouth are merely the shell. The heart’s meditation upon these words is the inner kernel. Words of prayer are like a body, while meditation is its soul. One who prays only with his tongue while his mind wanders resembles an empty body, a husk devoid of a kernel.”

*Bachya Ben Joseph
Ibn Paquda*

third man was kneeling in concentrated devotion, “Dear God. We are grateful for all your gifts. Please grace us with rain this season, that we may feed and care for our children.”

As these three farmers were devoutly praying, a man walked by and asked, “What are you all doing?” “We are praying for rain,” replied the first farmer, “Can’t you see that?” “Yes,” replied the passerby, “but you will never get your prayers answered that way. You must pray as if you mean it. You must pray as if you expect to get your prayers answered.” “Are you crazy?” the second farmer replied defyingly, “We are praying as if we expect to get our prayers answered. Look at us, we are on our knees, in deep devotion, with tears in our eyes.” “Baloney!” replied the passerby, “You don’t really expect to get your prayers answered.” “Why do you say that? Why do you speak such nonsense?” asked the third farmer. “Because if you did expect to get your prayers answered,” said the passerby, “you would have brought your umbrella!”

(This story is adapted from Rabbi Irwin Katsof, *How To Get Your Prayers Answered*, Copyright 2000, Frederick Fell Publishers, Inc., p. 15)



2. Be shocked if you don't get what you ask for.

Since God wants what is best for us, we must be surprised when we do not get what we ask God for. After all, it's no problem for an all powerful God to give us what we want, is it? Unless, of course, what we pray for is not truly in our best interest or for our greatest benefit. In this case, God may have other plans in mind, plans which we cannot fully comprehend. My Peruvian wife Marta taught me a beautiful saying in Spanish, “El hombre propone y Dios dispone,” which roughly trans-

lates as “Man plans, God decides.” We must pray fervently for our wishes, understanding and trusting that God knows what is best for us.

We live in many worlds

In order to even begin to understand why God may not give us what *we* most want, there is a concept that comes from the tradition of Kabbalistic Judaism that is very helpful. This concept teaches us that all our activities and thoughts occur simultaneously in multiple worlds. In a simplified form, these worlds consist of:

1. **The Material World:** This is the world of physical reality—those things we can touch, see, smell, taste and hear with our five senses. This is the world of our physical body
2. **The Emotional World:** This is the world of thought, feeling, attitude and belief. This is often referred to as the world of the mind, i.e. our thoughts, imagination, fears, hurts and desires. The emotional world is part of the unseen world we live in. Many of our actions in the physical world are in fact driven by events in our emotional world.
3. **The Spiritual World:** This is the world that reflects our connection to God, our connection to something greater than ourselves. This world encompasses a sense of purpose or meaning in life. This is the world of the “soul,” that part of us that Kabbalah believes is an actual part of God, which resides—concealed—within our physical and emotional body. The soul is our

connection to God. When someone is connected to the soul world, we refer to them as being “soulful,” that is, they are able to be loving, kind and compassionate even in adverse circumstances.

4. The Transcendent World: This is a world in which most of us travel only briefly, if ever. More commonly, in moments of true inspiration, awakening or meditation, we get to glimpse into this world, as a lightning flash on a dark night briefly illuminates the surroundings. This is the world of “oneness” with God. In the transcendent world, there is no connection to something greater than ourselves, because there is no self, there is only God. We lose our self and melt into the oneness of being, the energy of what is known in physics as the unified field.

***Unanswered prayers in one world
may bring fulfillment in another.***

When our prayers are for “things” in the material world, like more money, a bigger house or a fancy car we may be absolutely certain that it is good for us. How wonderful my life will be when I get my new car with that great stereo! But what about the other worlds? Is this car truly good for us? To truly appreciate that God will only do what is in our best interest, we must take into account all of the worlds in which our life is being played out.

For example, we may say “How can more money possibly not be in my best interest?” What if you become so enamored with your new level of wealth, that you start showing off your riches in a way that emotionally alienates others that you truly care about, causing them to feel put down or hurt. In the emo-

tional world, your newfound wealth has not served you well. In the spiritual world, your money may inadvertently lead you to become distracted by your “success” and cause you to forget what is truly important and meaningful in life. In the spiritual world, all your material wealth has not served you well. In the transcendent world, your money may make you think so highly of yourself and your capabilities, that you forget that all your abundance is truly just a gift from God. Your exaggerated sense of self, by definition, keeps you from “transcending self” and so, in the transcendent world, your money has not served you well.

In answering our prayers, God must take all these worlds into account, both the visible material world and the invisible worlds of emotion, spirit and transcendence. This is complicated and we must appreciate that only God knows best. We cannot possibly know this ourselves. God will only give us what is truly for our ultimate benefit.

Another possible reason God may not answer our prayers is that he simply wants to get our attention. Perhaps we have not been appreciative of all the gifts we have, and God has decided to “cut us off” till he hears from us. As any parent of a child knows, we want to help our children in every way possible, but one important lesson is teaching them to appreciate all the good they have. Without teaching them this appreciation, we are doing them a great disservice by continuing to spoil them with whatever they want.

Rabbi Katsoff tells a wonderful story of an uncle who was financing his nephew’s college education. Every month the uncle sent his nephew a check, along with a note asking about his nephew’s progress and how he was doing. But the uncle never heard from his nephew. The nephew was always too busy to

write or call and was, quite clearly taking the uncle's kindness for granted. One day, the uncle sent the usual letter to his nephew with his usual note, but this time, he intentionally did not put the check in the envelope. Within days, the uncle received a nice letter from his nephew telling him of his progress and letting him know that he forgot to send the check!

In a similar vein, God gives us the gift of life each and every day. What treasure is greater than that? What number on a check could exceed the value of God's gift to us? God wants to hear from us. We matter to God. He wants to know how we are doing. He is invested in our well-being. Prayer is our letter to let God know how we are doing.

Unanswered prayers offer us an unparalleled opportunity to examine and reassess our purpose in life. Are we on track with God's intention for our life? Are we doing our part to help God make this world a kinder, more loving and more beautiful world in which to live?

3. Pay attention to what God is teaching you.

So, if God wants what is truly best for us and we are shocked that we did not get it, we must conclude that something is wrong. Often, we conclude that there is no God, or that God just doesn't care about us, or perhaps God is unable to help us. A more enlightened attitude moves us to consider that God may have different plans for us. When we do not get what we pray for it may not be in our best interest, as we discussed in the section on the four worlds we live in.

We must learn to use our unanswered prayers to ask ourselves these important questions: What is really in my best interest here? Why is God trying to get my attention? What do I need to know to see this situation with more loving eyes? What is the blessing in this situation? What do I need to see about this situation to know that I am still loved and cared for? These questions help move us towards healing and true faith in a benevolent and loving God.

My mentor and teacher Rick Nyberg says “It’s more important to frame the right questions than to have the right answers.” It’s not so much what we do in response to our unanswered prayers, as what we come to see or know about ourselves. So we ask ourselves, “What do I need to know to see this situation with greater love, compassion and clarity?” “What do I need to see to be more loving, compassionate and free?”

We already learned that the Hebrew word for prayer is “tefillah” which means “bond.” The active form of prayer however is “to pray” and the Hebrew word for that is “l-hitpallel,” which means “to judge or examine oneself.” This leads us to understand that praying is really the process of bonding ourselves to God by inspecting and examining our lives. This is the part of prayer that requires us to pay attention to what God may be trying to teach us, how he may be trying to get our attention.

Rabbi Abraham Twerski, M.D. says that “even the wisest teachings are of no value if they fall on unreceptive ears.” We must train our ears to be receptive to what God may be asking of us. This is part of the work of prayer—preparing ourselves to be receptive to what God may be trying to tell us. Remember that prayer is a vehicle that not only carries us to God, but prayer carries God back to us.

“Hearing God is just as important as talking to God.”

RABBI KATSOFF

4. Re-evaluate your request.

This step requires us to really use prayer as a form of self-examination. In this step, we must re-evaluate the desires of our heart. Do we really want corporate success or are we searching for a sense of security and accomplishment? Do we really want a fancy new house or are we really longing for an emotional and spiritual home?

The simplest way to re-evaluate our requests is to examine each of our prayers in the light of the four worlds we live in: the material, the emotional, the spiritual and the transcendent. For each world, we must look at the positive and negative aspects of what our request may bring.

Let's look at the drive for material success.

What positive things might material success bring us in the material world?

Comfort, food, security, fine jewelry and money to enjoy the fine things in life.

What negative things might material success bring us in the material world?

Fear of losing what we have, insatiability for more, loss of time with our family and loved ones.

What positive things might material success bring us in

the emotional world?

A sense of accomplishment, contentment, joy.

What negative things might material success bring us in the emotional world?

Inflated ego, false pride, a "holier-than-thou" attitude.

What positive things might success bring us in the spiritual world?

More time to pray, to meditate and to study God's word. More money to give to the poor and help the needy. More time to help the needy.

What negative things might material success bring us in the spiritual world?

Exaggerated sense of importance and accomplishment that leads us to believe we don't need God's help. Distraction with money in a way that leads us to forget God in our lives.

What positive things might material success bring in the transcendent world?

A newfound gratitude and realization that all goodness comes from God and that beyond our limited,

strategic self, there is only God's benevolence.

What negative things might material success bring us in the transcendent world?

The belief that we did it all ourselves and we do not need God. We are alone and only what we accomplish is important. We are privileged to use whatever means necessary we need to achieve our self-centered ends.

Re-evaluating what we need in light of the four worlds we live in helps us to examine the true intention behind our prayers, so that when our prayers are unanswered, we may re-examine what it is we truly want in a way that allows us to see what is best for us in big scheme of things, from Gods perspective.

5. Put in the effort.

There is a common saying in the recovery movement that goes “You do your best, let God do the rest.” We must all put forth the effort to improve our selves, to refine our character to adjust our wishes with the wishes of God. Remember that a vital and healthy relationship with anyone requires that we put their needs on par with—equal to—our own. Since prayer is the way we establish a relationship with God, we must make God's needs for us as important as our needs for ourselves. This is the “effort” part of prayer. It means sometimes forgoing our own needs, so that we can take care of God's needs. God needs us to be his partner in helping to create a dwelling place for him on

earth. He needs us to help make this world a kinder, more loving, more beautiful world in which to live. So when God does not answer our prayers, we need to exert the effort to make the necessary changes in ourselves, our lives, our relationships and our desires, so that we take God's needs into account.

There is a beautiful story told of Moses as he was leading the Israelites across the Red Sea. When they arrived at the sea, being pursued violently by the Egyptian army, the sea did not immediately part and make way for them. In fact, one man, Nahshon, took the first steps into the sea, not knowing what was going to happen. Praying as he walked, he entered more and more deeply into the sea, up to his neck and then the sea miraculously parted—through God's divine intervention—and all the Israelites passed safely.

God can truly work miracles in our life, but we must take the first, uncertain steps, praying all the way

Here is the basic format for prayer journaling.

1. Pray like you expect results.

Write down a prayer you have. (What do you pray for? What do you need or want in your life?)

2. Be shocked if you don't get what you ask for.

If you get what you ask for, take a moment to write down your thanks to God for his blessing. If you don't get what you ask for, write down your disappointment and shock. Be specific with why you are shocked or disappointed or don't understand why

*God's delays are not
God's denials.*

UNKNOWN

God would deny you this.

3. *Pay attention to what God is teaching you.*

Write down possible lessons God may be trying to teach you. How may God be trying to get your attention? Write down the good and bad things that this may bring you in the “Emotional World” and in the “Spiritual World” and the “Transcendent World.”

4. *Re-evaluate your request.*

Write down a modified request, a different form of your prayer. Pay attention to the essence of what you are praying for. Very often what we pray for is not what we really want. Ask yourself, what is the “invisible” part of my prayer? If your prayer is in the Material World, look to the Emotional, Spiritual and Transcendent World. Ask yourself, how will this new job help me feel more emotional or mental calm? How will this new home help me feel more connected to God in the Spiritual World? How will this new car help me feel “at one with God” in the Transcendent World? (It almost sounds ludicrous to think that a car can help us to feel “at one with God,” doesn’t it?) But ultimately, most religious traditions tell us that is what God wants of us, to reach out towards him, to move closer to him, closer to his love for us. For God, these invisible worlds are as important as the visible, material world we live in. This, in fact, is the origin of the idea that we are spiritual beings having a physical experience, not physical beings having a spiritual experience.

5. *Put in the effort.*

Write down what you are willing to do on your part of the

equation. God may need you in some way that you are not aware of. What effort might God be wanting you to put forth regarding your prayers? You must participate with God in making your prayers come true.

The Science of Faith

Before we end this chapter on prayer, let's take a moment to review the scientific aspects of prayer. Much of the research on prayer is really centered on the measurement of faith, as defined by the frequency of prayer (both formal petitionary prayers and meditative prayer) as well as the frequency of attending religious services. Faith is measured as the degree to which people answer affirmatively to the question of whether they call on God or a supreme being to help them in times of need. This is a subjective measurement, but useful for research.

Harold Koenig, M.D. in *The Healing Power of Faith*, says that faith is a deeply held or confident belief in a supreme being, which most call God. It is "seeing God as an active partner in the struggle to achieve peace and balance in life." This faith has scientifically reproducible results, including:

- ◆ Lower diastolic blood pressure in those who attend church regularly and pray or study the bible often.
- ◆ Less likelihood of becoming depressed in the face of stressful life events, and a speedier recovery when people do become depressed.
- ◆ Greater sense of well-being and life satisfaction.
- ◆ Lower levels of interleukin-6 (IL-6), which is an im-

mune measure that usually rises with unrelieved chronic stress.

- ◆ Live longer with decreased risk of cardiovascular disease and cancer.
- ◆ Three times greater likelihood of surviving after open-heart surgery for those patients who find comfort in their religious faith.
- ◆ A 35% lower risk of dying from all causes for those who attend religious services once or more a week.

It is important to realize that the scientific benefits of faith are related to the faith itself, not necessarily to what you have faith in. *What* you believe in, is less important than “*that* you believe” in something deeply. Herbert Benson, M.D. author of *Timeless Healing: the Power and Biology of Belief*, says that we are “hard-wired” for belief. Belief heals us. Belief activates our healing system. Therefore, faith, as a deeply held belief in God, heals us.

In ending this chapter on prayer, the most important thing to remember is that prayer must come from the heart.



The Master, in conducting a prayer service, delayed the beginning of the service with the following explanation, “As I just walked in to the temple today, I overheard a poor man outside saying, ‘Dear God, I don’t know how to pray. Please help me. I cannot read and I do not know how to say the prayers, as I have never been taught. Please accept my petition. I will recite the letters of your alphabet and I beseech you to put them together for me.’”

So moved was the Master by this man's heartfelt plea, he said to his disciples, "Today we will delay the beginning of services, in order that God has time to put the letters of this humble man's prayer together."

This is heartfelt prayer. As long as your prayers come from your heart, they will be heard.

(This story adapted from Joseph Telushkin, *The Book of Jewish Values*, p. ???)



WRITING AN ETHICAL WILL

The harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly; it is dearness only that gives everything its value. I love the man that can smile in trouble, that can gather strength from distress and grow brave by reflection. 'Tis the business of little minds to shrink; but he whose heart is firm, and whose conscience approves his conduct, will pursue his principles unto death.

THOMAS PAINE

It is customary—and advisable—in the anticipation of our own death, to prepare a will so that our material possessions may be distributed to family and friends, according to our wishes. This allows us, in a sense, to live on in the hearts and minds of others. Life's accumulated treasures and trophies carry our life's stories and serve as a reminder of our loving presence to those who miss us most. Our material possessions represent not only an inheritance, but also a gift of gratitude to those whom we have loved, laughed with and shared our lives with.

An ethical will is the emotional and spiritual treasure we leave behind.

If the material possessions we leave behind are treasured in the hearts of our loved ones, how much more so the emotional and spiritual treasures we leave behind. In many religious tradi-

The bequeathment of our hard-earned truths, pearls of wisdom and life lessons can bring great comfort, growth and spiritual guidance to our family and friends

tions, an ethical will delineates the distribution of our spiritual possessions. The bequeathment of our hard-earned truths, pearls of wisdom and life lessons can bring great comfort, growth and spiritual guidance to our family and friends.

Writing an ethical will helps heal us

Life passes by so quickly we can easily miss the opportunity to pass on to our children and loved ones, the values and lessons that have most enriched our lives. Writing an ethical will challenges us to consider what is most important not only in our lives, but in life itself.



The Master told the following story to his disciples. Once upon a time, there was a man who failed at every kind of job. He just could not make a living and the fates seemed to be against him. Both he and his wife were frustrated. One day, his wife excitedly told him about a place she heard of—a far-off land—where all the sands of the shore were filled with diamonds. At first, the man thought his wife had gone crazy, but he decided to investigate the situation, and he found out that there was indeed such a place. But this land was far away, and the man had no money. Determined to make it to the island, he put together a plan to borrow the money from family and friends—fully intending to pay them back in new found diamonds. Eventually, after months of saving up, the man acquired enough money to travel to the island of diamonds..

He boarded the ship and after a long hard journey of weeks, they approached the small island, where—indeed he could hardly believe his eyes—the shores were filled with diamonds. As the boat landed, the man bent down and excitedly began filling his

pockets with beautiful diamonds. He could not believe himself! Finally, his troubles were over and his life would be filled with success.

Feeling on top of the world, he checked into the finest hotel in town and went to the finest restaurant to eat. Without even looking at the menu, he ordered the most expensive meal and ate with delight. Feeling generous, he even bought drinks for everyone in the restaurant. People were smiling at him, wondering “Who is this generous stranger?” Finally, when the bill arrived, the man, without looking, took out a precious diamond and placed it on top of the bill, saying to the waitress, “Keep the change. I have many more where this came from.”

The waitress could hardly contain herself and said, “Are you nuts? What is this? This is worthless!” The man was shocked, replying, “What do you mean? This is a precious diamond. It is invaluable!” “Not here,” replied the waitress, “this is worthless. Can’t you see the shores are filled with them?” “I was wondering about that,” the man thought to himself.

Embarrassed and regretful, the man apologized profusely to the waitress, saying, “I am so sorry. I had no idea. I will make good on my bill. I just need to work it off. Please forgive me.” The man then said, “If you don’t mind me asking, what is the currency here?” The woman said, “Don’t you know? It’s chicken fat. That’s what’s valuable here. Chicken fat.” The man could hardly believe it, but the waitress was telling him the truth.

So the man—in order to pay off his debts—went out and started working to collect some chicken fat. On this island, fortunately, the man caught onto the system quickly, and soon he learned a special trade in the town, which yielded him great success! His business was thriving and he was rich in chicken fat. After several years of work, the man was ready to return home to his wife and family. He had grown so wealthy that he loaded up five or six boatfuls of chicken fat and headed back to his home town. After many weeks at sea, he approached his home and could see his wife and children waiting for him on the shore.

He waived in excitement as he approached, but he noticed

An ethical will is a road map of the soul, which we leave behind for our family and friends, so they may better find their way in a sometimes confusing, often frightening world.

everyone was holding their noses from the smell of the chicken fat. He was so excited to see his family again and share his great wealth, but his wife came up to him, visibly upset, saying, “What are you doing with all this chicken fat?” “I’m wealthy,” he said. “We can finally live in luxury. I have brought back all this chicken fat with me.” His wife replied, “Are you crazy? Have you lost your mind? This chicken fat is worthless here. You went to collect diamonds. Did you forget the currency here? Diamonds are what’s important here!”

The man felt terrible and could hardly believe it. He had—in fact—forgotten why he went away in the first place and he did get caught up acquiring great quantities of chicken fat. Then, it hit him, “Wait a minute,” he said to his wife, as he pulled a coat from his suitcase. And there, in the pocket of his coat that he wore on the first day he arrived in the island, was a magnificently beautiful diamond. With that diamond, he and his family were wealthy and his trip was indeed worthwhile.

“What is the meaning of this story?” asked the Master. “It represents the soul’s journey. The diamonds represent good deeds, and the chicken fat represents material possessions. As the soul makes its long and arduous journey to the physical body and earth, it sees the beautiful diamonds that are available to it, in the kind and good deeds it can do on earth. Everywhere we look, everywhere we go, there are diamond opportunities to be kind and do good deeds for others. But within a short while, the soul forgets its purpose and gets caught up in the material world of chicken fat.” “We must remember,” said the Master, “that the true purpose of the soul’s journey is to elevate ourselves through good deeds, kindness and charitable acts. Chicken fat is necessary to survive, but it is worthless when the soul returns to the spiritual world. Never forget that you are surrounded by diamonds in this world, which are the countless opportunities to be kind, virtuous and loving—to yourself and others.



In the discovery of what is most important to us—the diamonds in our life—we find an unexpected gift: an opportunity for healing. Healing is about becoming “whole,” overcoming our sense of isolation and moving toward a sense of connection and meaning in life. Writing an ethical will helps us retrieve the pieces of our life that have been scattered by pain, loss, anger, fear, hurt and disappointment, and place them together again—complete and whole—forming the picture of our life.

An ethical will is a road map for the soul

Writing an ethical will forces us, in reviewing our life, to name the many winding roads we have traversed. Many of these roads led us into blind alleys and frightening neighborhoods. These roads have common names: envy, hatred, laziness, jealousy, greed and narcissism. Many of the roads we traveled, however, led us into lands of great opportunity and treasure. These roads have names, too: kindness, justice, mercy, love, truth and righteousness.

An ethical will is a road map of the soul, which we leave behind for our family and friends, so they may better find their way in a sometimes confusing, often frightening world. An ethical will is a gift of kindness, not only for those we leave behind, but also for ourselves.

Writing an ethical will confronts us with our own mortality forcing us to come to terms with—and articulate—what is most important, most valuable in life. The process of writing an ethical will can serve as a wake up call, redirecting our awareness and

activities towards what is most valuable—and healing—for us. This process brings us face to face with lost opportunities and missed treasures.

Ethical wills are supremely spiritual in their intent, telling us that beyond the material world we live in lies an unseen world of values, traits and ideals, which carry treasures of equal—and even greater—value than the money and property we acquire in a lifetime. Our spiritual treasures are of the eternal world— invisible energies of creative intelligence—which help our loved ones traverse the unseen spiritual dimensions of life.

***Preparing an ethical will
teaches us about ourselves.***

In their remarkable book, *So That Your Values Live On: Ethical Wills and How to Prepare Them*, Rabbi Jack Riemer and Nathaniel Stampfer teach us that writing an ethical will is an act of courage—compelling us to come face to face with our own mortality.

***Here's an example of a
very simple ethical will.***

Dear Children,

Please be kind to one another and always remember that you are loved and cared for. I will send you my prayers from heaven and see to it that God watches over you. Please take care of each other, and remember that love is the most important thing.

Work hard to achieve your goals, but don't sacrifice your life for your work. I truly believe in the overused aphorism that "no one ever dies wishing they had spent more time at the office." Please take this to heart and remember to take time to really enjoy life with your family and friends. Savor this precious gift of life we have.

Don't worry about me. I will be fine. I miss you and will always be with you. Love,

Mom

***Ask someone you love to tell
you the five most valuable
lessons they've learned in life.***

In 1990, when my father was 77 years old, I worried that he might not be around much longer and I deeply wanted to know more about him and about what was most important to him in life. I didn't know about ethical wills then, but in a sense, what I did—through my inquiry—was help him to articulate for me his living ethical will.

The question I asked him was quite simple: "Dad, tell me the five most valuable lessons you've learned in life." He was

very happy to be asked, and within thirty minutes, I had the following responses from him:

1. Honesty. Be honest. (I then asked Dad, “Tell me what you mean by honesty.” He replied, “When you would do the right thing even if you knew no one would ever find out.”)
2. Never do something to others that you wouldn’t want them to do to you.
3. Take an idea—and go for it—take action and do the best you can. Always strive to be the best. If you’re working for someone else, do it like you were working for yourself. You can’t wait for things to happen, you’ve gotta make them happen.
4. If you’re gonna make up your mind to enjoy it— you’re gonna enjoy it. Be optimistic.
5. Never never get so angry with family that you don’t talk to each other.

With one simple question, in one thirty minute conversation, I elicited from my dad an abbreviated—but very rich—ethical will. My Dad lived eleven more years and just recently died at age 88. More than ever, I treasure that conversation I had with him. Though he blessed me with many more stories and lessons from his life, these “top five” serve as a rich treasure for me regarding the values he held and serve as an inspiration that I may aspire to.

Do yourself a favor and take some time to ask your loved ones to tell you the five most valuable lessons they’ve learned in life. You will be richer for it. You will be wiser for it. You will be

loved for it.

***An ethical will lives from
generation to generation.***

Ten years after my conversation with Dad, my brother Lenny and his wife Holly gave birth to the first grandchildren in our family, twin boys, Gabriel and Abraham. It was a joyous event. In preparation for the bris, my brother's friends put together a quilt to welcome the boys into the world. The quilt was to be hemmed together from small white squares of cloth, on which family and friends could write their own special "welcome to the world" message for the twins. I took this as an opportunity to pass on my Dad's wisdom to his brand new grandchildren, again a form of living ethical will. One day, I hope the twins will treasure this message as much as I have. Here's what it said:

Dear Boys,

Welcome to the world! I wanted to share these special words of wisdom with you. On January 10, 1990, when Grandpa Harry was 77 years old, we were all together on a family get together at Aunt Lori's in Modesto, California.

During that visit, I asked Grandpa Harry about the major lessons he had learned in his lifetime. I wrote these lessons down, and now, over 10 years later, Grandpa Harry is 87 years old, and joyously awaiting your arrival along with Grandma Sippy.

*I give you these lessons for life as a very special gift.
May these words of wisdom guide you in finding love
and fulfillment in your lives. We all lovingly await
your arrival.*

God bless you,

*Uncle Neil, Aunt Marta, Cousin Chris & Jenny
May 2000*

I then listed the five lessons that Dad gave me on page 237-238.

***Here are some more ideas
for an ethical will.***

Consider including any or all of the following:

- ◆ Your hopes and dreams.
- ◆ What's most important to you in life.
- ◆ What you dream for your children.
- ◆ The mistakes you have made in life, or any regrets you may have.
- ◆ Your favorite books, movies, plays, musicians, songs and works of art.
- ◆ The five most valuable lessons you have learned in life.
- ◆ The people who most influenced you in your life and why
- ◆ The causes which you believe most strongly in.
- ◆ Anyone you would like to ask forgiveness from.
- ◆ Who you are grateful to: for what (you are grateful) and

why (you are grateful).

- ◆ Stories of growing up or family life you would like to share.
- ◆ Any events that helped shape your life.
- ◆ Rituals or religious events that are most meaningful to you.
- ◆ Any favorite sayings, quotes or stories.
- ◆ Your favorite possessions and why they are precious to you.
- ◆ Ideals that found expression in your life.
- ◆ Any special anniversaries, birthdays, dates or events you would like remembered.

Other ideas

- ◆ It's okay to write separate ethical wills for different family members or loved ones. You may have special things you want to say to each of them.
- ◆ Give your ethical will to your family while you are still alive. Let it serve as a special moment of meaningful togetherness.
- ◆ Don't wait until you are on your deathbed to write your ethical will. You can write a new ethical will every month, year, decade, whatever. Values and beliefs change.
- ◆ Use your ethical will as a learning tool for you. You don't necessarily have to give it to anyone else initially.

One caution

Rabbi Joseph Telushkin, in discussing the ethical will, says, "The goal of an ethical will is to impart a sense of what matters to you and what you hope will matter to your children, not to leave the people you most love feeling guilty" Be careful not to hurt people, display anger or try to control them in your ethical will.

CONCLUSION

Far better it is to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs even though checkered by failure, than to rank with those poor spirits who neither enjoy nor suffer much because they live in the gray twilight that knows neither victory nor defeat.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT

Journaling requires enormous courage, the courage to believe that something truly great can emerge from the exploration of our deepest fears, insecurities and shame.

Journaling requires enormous faith, a faith that leads us to know we are more than our fear, more than our grief, more than our pain. Journaling requires enormous humility, the humility to acknowledge our frailties and come to terms with our limitations and humanness. Journaling requires enormous belief, a belief in something greater than ourselves, which reveals to us the essential sacredness, wholeness and worthiness of our being.

The journey toward healing is a process. We must remember to be patient with ourselves. We will make discoveries and have breakthroughs in our lives, only to find ourselves back in the very situation we thought we had conquered. We will forget the lessons we learned and have to relearn them. This is part of the plan. Being patient and exercising the ability to forgive our-

. . . we are more than our fear, we are more than our grief, we are more than our pain.

Consistent repetition of these journaling exercises will help you process difficult emotions before they lead to illness.

selves is part of the process of learning how to forgive others. Forgiveness leads us to love, compassion and true strength.

I truly hope this book has helped you on your journey towards healing. Consistent repetition of these journaling exercises will help you process difficult emotions before they lead to illness. Consistent journaling will help you systematically weed out negative attitudes and thoughts and, in their place, plant the healing seeds of positive and empowering attitudes, behaviors and beliefs. As the farmer toils all summer to enjoy the harvest in the fall, we must remember to wait patiently for results. The fruits of our labors may come more slowly than we would like, but these things that are growing cannot be rushed. Remember, there is joy in the planting. There is reward in the effort. There is hope in the vision.

May your path be blessed and may you find the health, healing and peace that you are looking for



“Why does the farmer toil all summer long?” the Master rhetorically asked. “It is the vision of the harvest in the fall.”

We must all hold the vision of the harvest in our hearts and minds. Jim Rohn, author and motivational speaker, calls this “the price and the promise.” If the promise is clear enough, we’re all willing to pay the price. It is the promise of fall’s harvest, which motivates us to toil all summer long.

In the realm of journaling and spiritual growth, the promise is love. The promise is healing. The promise is joy. May God bless all your efforts with the fruit of his love for you.



MORE ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Neil F. Neimark, M.D. is a Board Certified Family Practitioner in private practice in Irvine, California. He attended the Ohio State University College of Medicine where he graduated with honors in 1981 and was elected into the scholastic medical honor society, Alpha Omega Alpha.

While completing his internship, Dr Neimark became disenchanted with traditional medicine's focus on disease and cure, rather than health and healing. He realized that even with the best of medical care and technology, patients were unable to break out of the cycle of recurring illness. Frustrated with his inability to prevent illness and help patients stay healthy he began searching out the scientific basis for achieving optimal health and preventing disease.

In 1984, he attended a seminar at the Mind/Body Clinic of New England Deaconess Hospital, Harvard Medical School, where he met Herbert Benson, M.D. and Joan Borysenko, Ph.D.,

pioneers in the field of mind/body health and psychoneuroimmunology. This event redirected his life. With this newfound focus, he finished his residency and went on to complete a fellowship in academic medicine, focusing on the mindbodyspirit connection.

Dr. Neimark now serves as an assistant clinical professor in the Department of Family Practice, University of California, Irvine. He is in private practice in Irvine, where he successfully applies the principles of mindbodyspirit medicine to help his patients overcome illness and work towards optimal health and greater physical and emotional well-being. If you would like to schedule a phone consultation or an office visit with Dr. Neimark, please call (949) 451-6060.

***Sign up for Dr. Neimark's free
on-line newsletter***

Be sure to visit Dr. Neimark's website: "Dr. Neil MD" at: www.NeilMD.com for the latest developments in mindbodyspirit medicine. Dr. Neil MD is dedicated to a new approach to health and healing which honors the patient as a "whole" person, not just some "body" that is ill or diseased. The body/soul approach to medicine teaches us that vibrant health is available only when we nourish both our body and our soul.

Each one of us is blessed with unique talents and special gifts in life, with which we can help to make the world a kinder more loving and more beautiful world in which to live. The body/soul connection teaches us that we can and must unite our body and soul in the pursuit of these noble and transcendent goals.

We nourish our body by listening to its needs for rest, exercise and nutrition—all necessary and vital for our physical strength. We nourish our soul by listening to its needs for meaning and transcendence—that is, our need to rise above ourselves in order to see and respond to other's needs.

Listening to the body helps us to know what we need. Our body teaches us that we have limitations. Listening to the soul helps us to know how we are needed. Our soul teaches us that love is limitless.

When we channel our physical energy into soulful pursuits, we create a meaningful life—one filled with the sense of purpose, vitality and aliveness that characterize true health.

Don't forget to sign up for Dr. Neimark's informative blog posts at www.NeilMD.com and be sure to check out Dr. Neimark's guided imagery relaxation tapes, titled "*Contacting Your Inner Healer: A guided imagery relaxation exercise (with action plan) to help you or a loved one access your own inner wisdom in order to achieve greater health and healing,*" "*Less Stress Surgery: A guided imagery relaxation tape to help you or a loved one have a healthy and speedy recover from surgery*," and "*The Healing Power of Attitudes and Beliefs*" (cassette tape with study manual). Dr. Neimark is coauthor with William B. Salt II, M.D. of *Irritable Bowel Syndrome and the MindBodySpirit Connection* (Parkview Publishing, 2002). Dr. Neimark's newest book *The Science of Positive Thinking* is available on Amazon.com

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