

Journaling for kids

Journaling, sometimes called keeping a diary, helps you understand your thoughts and feelings better. Kids (and adults too!) often get better faster if they keep a journal. Journaling can help you in many ways. It can help you

- Understand your feelings better
- solve tricky problems
- think about things in new ways
- keep track of how you're doing
- relieve stress
- feel less alone
- get control over your worries and fears
- get out your angry feelings
- feel less sad
- think of new goals for yourself
- work out problems with friends or family

There is no right or wrong way to journal. However, it will help most if you try to write something each day. It doesn't have to be a whole page, or even a paragraph. You don't have to worry about spelling or grammar or neatness. Remember, your journal is just for you!

Here are some ideas to help you get started.

First, you must pick out a journal. You can use a plain old notebook, or get something with pictures or other decorations that you like. Decorating the journal in ways that you enjoy will make it easier for you to want to write.

Set aside some time to write each day. The best times are first thing in the morning, or right before bedtime. Try to write about 10 min. each day. Don't worry if you skip a day. Just do the best you can.

When you start writing, don't think too much about what to say. Just start writing. Here are some things you might want to write about. You can write about

- what happened that day
- things that went well
- things that didn't go so well for you
- negative feelings, such as sadness, anger, worry, or loneliness
- positive feelings about good things that happened that day
- what goals you'd like to achieve
- things you are grateful for in your life
- how you handle problems that occurred that day
- what you could have done better
- dreams about your future

- ways that you can change how you think about things
- things that you are proud of
- things about yourself you would like to improve

Notice that there are both positive and negative things in the list above. It is important that you don't just write about bad things, because I can make you feel worse. Also try to write about positive things in your life.

If you're writing about your private thoughts, you'll probably want a private place to keep your journal. If you are concerned about brothers or sisters or even parents reading your journal, ask if you can find a place that you can lock your journal up. After all, if you don't have any privacy, you might not want to write about your private and personal thoughts and feelings.

However, it can be helpful to share what you write about with your parents, and your therapist. This can help you figure out solutions to problems, and also keep track of your progress.

It is important to review your journal every so often. Looking back on good days can help, especially when you are feeling low. Realizing your progress can also help motivate you to keep journaling and give you hope.

Some kids would prefer to have an online journal or use a computer to write down their thoughts and feelings. You can even use a password to keep your journal private.

If you have any questions about how to keep a journal, be sure to ask your therapist. Good luck!

Dr. Crist