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Life Lessons_{INC.}
A JOURNALING WE GO

This Positive Psychology exercise will guide you through the practice of journaling through the holidays over 41 days from Thanksgiving to New Year's Day, so that you may explore your thoughts and feelings surrounding the holiday season.

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What is positive Psychology? “Positive psychology is the scientific study of optimal human functioning. It aims to discover and promote the factors that allow individuals and communities to thrive.” (Seligman, 2002) The late Dr. Christopher Peterson (also one of the founding fathers of positive psychology) described positive psychology in this way: “Positive psychology is about helping people move ‘North of Neutral’. Peterson was also famous for saying, “I can describe positive psychology in 3 words: Other People Matter.” Simply Put: Positive psychology is about building what’s right, not just fixing what’s wrong.

You are receiving a total of 42 journaling prompts. Please note that you determine the pace of writing. Write when it feels right for you and feel free to skip prompts. If you wish to skip a prompt, leave the journal pages empty and return to them in your own time.

Start your journaling journey on Wednesday, November 22, 2023. This exercise ends on January 1, 2024, but feel free to continue journaling daily.

Before you begin writing, take a few moments to relax and pay attention to your breath. Breathe in slowly through your nose and hold for 3-5 seconds. Now, gently exhale through your mouth and hold again for 3-5 seconds. With each inhale and exhale, notice the air as it flows in and out of your lungs. Notice your chest as it gently expands and contracts.

As you write in your journal, remember to:

- Create a comfortable, safe space for your journaling where you are unlikely to be disturbed by others. Turn off your phone.
- Do not censor yourself. Be honest - you are writing only for yourself. No one else will have access to your journal unless you want them to.
- Be kind to yourself. If you begin to feel overwhelmed, take a break and resume writing when you feel ready to do so.
- There is no wrong way to journal; you can write however it feels right to you. For example, you might prefer to write in complete sentences, short paragraphs, or a continuous flow of thoughts.

Journal writing empowers you to express your difficult feelings safely and privately. It allows you to come to terms with the holidays at your own pace and in your way. Your journal is always there to receive your thoughts and feelings. In addition, it gives you the chance to express yourself and reduce stress.

Remember, you do not need to worry about spelling, grammar, or even writing full sentences. This journal is for you; you can write however feels right to you.

Enjoy your journaling and most of all practice self-care and hug yourself daily.

Hugs, Love, and Happy Holidays,

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November 21, 2023 - **Keep calm.** This time of the year can be stressful for many people due to a myriad of holiday activities. Studies have shown that journaling can help reduce stress levels thereby decreasing its impact on your overall health. Grab a pen and paper and write about your stressors. Release the stress and do not allow it to wreak havoc on your mind, body, and spirit.

November 22, 2023 – **Express gratitude.** If there’s a particular person who has been kind or influential in your life, don’t wait to express your appreciation. Call, text, or if possible, visit them. Write in your journal what makes you grateful for the person you choose. Write how expressing gratitude benefits you.

November 23, 2023 – **Practice gratitude.** The holidays can create a consumerism mentality making people feel pressured to spend a lot of money on gifts many times going into debt to do so. Journaling can remind you to focus and express gratitude for what you do have and not fret over the latest new gadget the commercials scream you must buy. Create a gratitude list highlighting the things, people, and experiences money cannot buy like a baby's smile or the season's first snowfall.

November 24, 2023 – **Wisdom Letter** - today you will write a wisdom letter to allow you to share the knowledge and insights gained from your experiences. You will help yourself find hope, inspiration, and new ways of looking at challenging life events. This is your journal, and you never have to share this letter with anyone. Come back from time to time to read your wisdom letter to remind yourself how wise you are.

November 25, 2023 – **Developing strategies for coping. Schedule quiet time.**

Choose some time to allow yourself to do nothing and simply be quiet. Shut down your computer, take off your headphones, and turn off your phone. Just hang out with yourself. You may go for a walk or just stay at home (if you do leave the house, try to visit a relatively quiet place). Use your journal to record how this exercise benefited you.

November 26, 2023 – **Allowing your loved ones to help you** - Your friends and family can run errands, task you to appointments, prepare meals, and help you with household chores. This can give those who care about you a way to help during a difficult time. Write a list of the help you need and assign a loved one to the task. Don't be afraid to ask for help.

November 27, 2023 –**Your best possible self.** – Set a timer or stopwatch for 10 minutes. During this time, think about your best possible future self and write it down below. Imagine your life the way you always imagined it would be. Imagine that you have performed to the best of your abilities and achieved all the things you wanted to in life. Capture the results of this exercise in your journal.

November 29, 2023 –**Nurturing social relationships**. Feeling included and experiencing a sense of belonging. You may not think of “nurturing relationships” as a skill that can be developed through participation in groups, but it can! Humans experience nurturing relationships when they form a connection with another individual or individuals. In that relationship, all individuals mutually benefit, each providing care and attention for the other. What nurturing relationships do you have? Write the person who feeds your soul a thank you note in your journal. Don’t have nurturing relationships? Write a note in your journal to the person you would like to develop a strong bond with.

December 3, 2023 – **Acknowledge your efforts.** In today’s journal entry, you will remember and list three positive things that you accomplished today. No write how you will celebrate. Now celebrate.

December 4, 2023 – **Things I can and cannot control.**

I can control:

- My thoughts
- My happiness
- Who I choose to spend time with
- My interests
- My actions
- The effort I put into things.

I cannot control...

- Other people's thoughts
- Other people's opinions
- Other people's actions
- The weather
- The problems and issues in the world
- Other people's emotions

Now it is time to come up with your ideas. Think of a stressful situation in your life right now. Briefly describe the situation. Now, let it go.

December 6, 2023 – **Saying no takes courage – Steven R. Covey**. Embrace the power of no when you are stretched thin. Although a firm “NO” is most fitting at specific times, in other times and situations, a polite “no” is more appropriate. Whether it is refusing an invitation from a friend, declining to take on extra work, or not wanting to participate in a specific activity, the skill to reject someone’s request politely is an important aspect of positive communication. Is there someone you would like to say no to? Practice saying no to someone in your journal to be prepared to say no politely in person.

December 8, 2023 - **Positivity** - The practice of being or tendency to be optimistic in attitude. What makes you feel optimistic?

December 11, 2023 - **Meaning** - A sense of meaning and purpose can be derived from belonging to and serving something bigger than the self. Various societal institutions enable a sense of meaning, such as family, religion, science, politics, work organizations, justice, the community, and social causes, among others. What gives you meaning?

December 12, 2023 - **Achievements** and **accomplishments**, are what we create for ourselves through attempting, engaging, and trying something, anything apart from what we already know. What is something new you would like to achieve?

December 13, 2023 - **Vitality** - Vitality is a positive feeling of aliveness and energy that is at the heart of well-being. It comes from the Latin word Vitalis meaning “of or belonging to life. What makes you feel vital and alive?

December 14, 2023 – **Hope** – Hope is the belief that your future will be better than the present and that you can make it happen. It involves both optimism and a can-do attitude. This definition of hope is based on “Hope Theory,” a positive psychology concept developed by American psychologist Charles Snyder. What does having hope mean to you and how can you cultivate it at this time?

December 15, 2023 – **The H-word** – What is your biggest fear surrounding your journey? Why? Release your fear in today's journal entry.

December 16, 2023 – **Comfort and solace** - List things that bring you comfort and solace during the holidays.

December 17, 2023 - **Comfort and solace** -List things that bring you comfort and solace because of your diagnosis.

December 19, 2023 - **Word Sketches** - Become a Word artist. Carry your journal with you to create word pictures of what you observe. Jot down scraps of conversation. Describe the sights and sounds, the tastes, the smells, the way things are.

December 20, 2023 - **Hobbies** - A sampling of possible answers: Music: playing guitar, hammered dulcimer, and home recording of music. ...I love fishing! ...
Cooking healthy, swimming, cycling, being outside, and always setting tangible goals. What hobbies would you like to pursue?

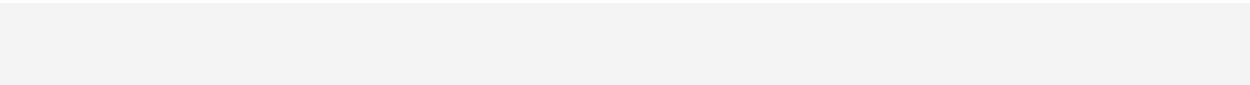
December 21, 2023. **Maintain a healthy lifestyle** - A healthy lifestyle can improve your energy level. Choose a healthy diet. Get enough rest. These tips will help you manage the stress and fatigue of the holidays and its impact on you. In your journal write an action plan to support your goals to maintain a healthy lifestyle. This next week it is imperative that you make your self-care #1 priority. How will do keep you the main thing?

December 22, 2023 - **Savoring life's joys**. Take a picture of something of beauty you encounter and write a short text description of what you found to be beautiful about it. This is a great way to stop and take a good look at the things we admire and appreciate.

December 25, 2023 - **Play the role of journalist.** Write a headline capturing the character of each person with whom you interacted today. Have fun with this: make your headlines ironic, silly, and full of exaggeration.

December 26, 2023 - Develop a new year mindset. I know many people wait until the new year to begin identifying goals and intentions. But why wait? Use the last days of December to create your intentions and plans for the new year. Be descriptive and include what you want to do, have, experience, and feel.

December 27, 2023 – **Today is YOU day.** In your journal pages, express the benefits you would receive from celebrating you. What action steps you will take to make you the star of your YOU day?



December 28, 2023 – **Counting your blessings** – Yes, it’s time to celebrate, you have made it through the holidays once again. The good, the bad and the ugly. Reflect on the events of the last few days and journal your thoughts on what went well. Writing the good will make the not-so-good memories seem smaller.



December 29, 2023 - **5 Golden Rings** - Draw 5 golden rings in your journal, and inside the rings write words affirming the value you place on yourself. Examples: beautiful, compassionate, kind, fabulous, loving. After writing these words, say them out loud five times. Now, give yourself a big hug and have a great day.

January 1, 2024 – **Let us Play! Plays or Short Stories** – If you get on a roll, write a short story or even a play. You can make it fictional or biographical. Have fun with it or use it as a tool for purging and growing. Today is the first day of 2024 and it’s a great day to play. Happy New Year.

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Martin Seligman, Founder of Positive Psychology

