



Guided Journaling Series

Journaling Anger

www.writingforselfreflection.com



Introduction



◆ Reclaiming Leadership of Your Life

Before you do anything else, thank yourself for downloading this chapter of the Guided Journaling Series. You've taken a small step toward big changes in how you show up for your life.

In this series you'll find journaling prompts that will allow you to write a coherent story about your thoughts, your emotional well being and how these two come together to determine the choices/decisions you make and the actions you take.

With every sentence you write, you learn to self-reflect on the stories you've been telling yourself about who you are and what is important to you. Essentially, you acknowledge and validate the significant role you play in determining the quality of your life style.

Once you realize you have power over your thoughts about and emotional responses to the vicissitudes of life, you have reclaimed leadership in your life.

Carolyn van Es Jones

Mission & Vision



The mission at Writing for Self Reflection is simple: to inspire people like you to care about what you're thinking and how you're feeling.

Every blog post, worksheet, workshop, course and coaching program has at its foundation a vision of a world empowered by a deep understanding of the relationship between thoughts, feelings, actions and the quality of life.

Just a little bit about me



My name is Carolyn...

and without knowing it, I began journaling for mental health 25 years ago when I wrote this short, poignant poem:

Sometimes I despair
but do I dare
care?

Sometimes I want to shout
but what comes out?
Doubt.

Sometimes I smile
while all the while
rile.

Most times I want to cry
but when I try
dry.

I was a young woman who had experienced a lot of tragedies during her childhood through events outside of her control. I was raised by a single mother who was diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia. Most of the time she barely made ends meet, but by the grace of God we survived...some of us. My brother Cory, ten years older than me, was stabbed to death when he was 20. My beloved sister Dawn, two years older, died from aplastic anemia just after she'd turned 15. My mother never recovered. My sister Felicia, four years older, and I didn't either. We never really grieved nor talked about what happened. We just went on. Add to our silence the fact of being poor black women in America at a time when it wasn't okay to be so, then it's no wonder I would be diagnosed with PTSD (post traumatic stress disorder) due to chronic stress. What got me through the healing process was writing for self-reflection. In addition to my memoir "black and (A)broad: traveling beyond the limitations of identity", I must have written thousands of pages in my journaling notebook.

As I felt my body grow lighter from the weight of unhealed, unexpressed emotion being lifted from my shoulders, so to did my psyche grow calmer and stiller. After many years working in academia, I left to raise my three young children.

Since qualifying as a Certified Professional Life coach in 2014, I've been developing a coaching model that combined core energy transformation with my passion for writing and journaling. It culminates in Writing for Self Reflection. It is my sincere wish that you reap as much benefit from this Journaling Mental Health Series as I have from creating it.

Journaling Anger Worksheets

What to Expect

These worksheets are for anyone who is struggling to make a decision about his/her career. Journaling these sheets in their entirety connects you to how you feel about your current work situation as well as your beliefs about your power to make a change. Finally you'll have fun creating a Self-Reflection Resume, which will give you insights into yourself that no traditional resume can.

Journaling Tips:



Create a Safe Space

Your journaling notebook is a sanctuary, the place you go to for comfort, advice, healing and well being. It's the one place where you can be completely honest with yourself because no one else has access to it. It is for your eyes only. It is not intended to be shared.



No Judgement Allowed

The only way for you to feel safe in your journaling is to practice being gentle with yourself. You are your worst critic. You are hardest on yourself. You now have an opportunity to write a different story in which you are your most spirited cheerleader... your most trusted confidant...your wisest guide. Even when tough thoughts and feelings appear in your journaling notebook, be good to yourself.



Stream of Consciousness Writing

Unless otherwise stated, all of the writing exercises in this series are stream of consciousness, which means you set a timer, pick up your pen and keep it moving for the suggested amount of minutes. A journaling prompt is provided. Don't worry about grammar, spelling, punctuation. Do not stop writing to analyze, criticize or philosophize on what shows up in your journaling notebook.

Journaling Anger

"It is common for people to repress their anger, aggression and inner hostility; they view it as unpleasant, undignified, and even as a moral failure or spiritual setback." -Dr. David R. Hawkins, *Letting Go: The Pathway of Surrender*

Introduction

The purpose of this exercise is to work proactively with anger, not avoid feeling it. It is a first step towards acknowledging the suppressed and repressed anger most of us harbor not only in our psyches but also in our bodies. It is not expected that you attempt to do this exercise in the middle of an angry outburst. Like those old run-away trains, once it's built momentum, it's pretty difficult to stop it. Sometimes you just have to let it run its course. Pick a time when you're feeling calm and in a general good mood.

Anger is powerful energy, deriving its strength from the fear it elicits in ourselves or others. For example, when you berate yourself for making a mistake, in order to prevent the harsh, self-directed anger, you push yourself hard to not make the same mistake twice. Or if you're a parent it's likely you've said the following on more than one occasion: Why do I have to get mad before you do what I ask you to do? Some high-school-age children are motivated more by the threat of a bad grade than by a desire to learn.

Anger manifests negatively when there is little to no awareness of it. Like a sugar rush, it yields short-term results by helping to complete tasks you may not necessarily want to engage in in the first place. Perfectly acceptable when you're conscious of it. Problems arise when it's your standard MO (modus operandis). Who doesn't feel depleted after an angry outburst (think guilt and/or remorse)? And just like sugar, the more you rely on anger to achieve results, the more you need it. Anger can indeed mimic an addiction.**

The goal isn't to eliminate anger... as if we could... as if we would want to. In and of itself anger is not a bad thing. In fact, anger can be called upon consciously and positively, as a catalyst to jumpstart or even force change - think of political/social movements or how parents motivate young children to avoid dangerous situations.

The point is that there are always multiple ways to respond to any situation, each one garnering a specific outcome. The more anger you clear out, the more space you create to choose rationalization, compassion, opportunity, empathy and unconditional love.

Journaling Anger

"We want to be the authoritative person in our own lives: in charge, able. to make decisions that affect us. There is no true responsibility without awareness." Gabor Maté , "When the Body Says No: Exploring the Stress-Disease Connection"

Step 1: Becoming Aware of Anger

You may be surprised to know that the anger we suppress can be more physically and mentally damaging than the anger we express. This includes anger that we deny (I'm fine) or downplay (It's not that I'm mad. I'm just upset). or suppress for fear of being dismissed (from work or a team) or otherwise rejected.

Anger comes in a variety of disguises and in varying intensities including but not limited to:

frustration
irritation
sarcasm
indignation
exasperation
defensiveness
passive-aggression
annoyance

First, identify which form of anger resonates with you most. You'll know by the reaction you felt while reading the list of names above. Write that down in your journaling notebook.

In the first exercise you're going to free write about your triggers. "Free writing" means allowing whatever comes up inside to find its way into your journaling notebook. Don't stop to analyze, judge or ruminate about what comes up. Right now, you're learning to recognize what triggers anger in you. Triggers can be people, situations, past events, body parts, the weather. Don't worry about the details here, just name the thing and move on to the next one.

Set your timer for 3 minutes. It is important to try to stick to the three-minute maximum so that you do not stay stuck in anger. The idea is to let it surface so that it may be acknowledged, validated and eventually let go.

Grab a pen and your journaling notebook. Ready? Go.

The top 5 things that _____ me are:

Journaling Anger

"One of the key skills for anger control (is) monitoring feelings - becoming aware of (the) body's sensations, such as flushing or muscle tensing, as (you are) getting angry, and to take those feelings as a cue to stop and consider what to do next..." -Daniel Goleman, "Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ"

Step 2: Recognizing the Feelings Associated with Anger

Perhaps even more important than identifying anger is learning to recognize the physical sensations that accompany it. When we lash out at others, it's because we can't bear the feeling that gnaws at the pit of the belly, spreads out through the chest and creeps up into the head where it feels like it's going to explode. Hitting, yelling and door slamming give immediate yet temporary relief from that intense, physical discomfort that anger causes.

In his pioneering book on emotional intelligence Daniel Goleman affirms that the goal of emotional (re)learning is the ability to bear the feelings associated with unpleasant situations or even the memory of them. Consistent journaling about what triggers anger and how anger feels physically is a firm step in that direction because we have the time and distance to consider the various options available to us for expressing how we feel in a constructive way.

Using the prompts below, you're going to write for 3 minutes straight. Don't stop to analyze, judge or criticize your responses. Just keep writing what comes up until your alarm goes off. It is important to try to stick to the three-minute maximum so that you do not stay stuck in anger. The idea is to let it surface so that it may be acknowledged, validated and eventually let go.

Grab a pen and your journaling notebook. Ready? Go.

As I was writing about triggers, I felt _____ in _____
(part of) my body.

I didn't realize it before, but now I see _____

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Step 3: Identifying Reactions to Anger

One of the main deterrents to acknowledging anger is the messages we've been taught about who we are if we express or even feel anger. Little girls are typically comforted when they cry, but when they're angry they're given a time out. Little boys who cry are told to stop, but their angry outbursts are more likely to be tolerated. Adults who show anger are too emotional or out of control. They're labeled "bitches" or "assholes" and run the risk of "being out of control".

Likewise, how you react at someone else's angry outbursts can say a lot about what you've been taught about anger. When someone is mad at you do immediately become defensive and launch an attack of your own? Do you try to placate them regardless of what's happening with you? Do you walk away without engaging? Do you shrink back in fear? Understanding how you view someone else's anger can provide profound insights into your own belief systems.

Rather than think in terms of a right or wrong way to deal with anger - yours or another's, it is more helpful to think in terms of constructive ways of experiencing, expressing or managing anger. The prompts below will guide you towards uncovering what you believe feeling and/or expressing anger says about you.

You're going to write for 3 minutes straight. Don't stop to analyze, judge or criticize your responses. Just keep writing what comes up until your alarm goes off. It is important to try to stick to the three-minute maximum so that you do not stay stuck in anger. The idea is to let it surface so that it may be acknowledged, validated and eventually let go.

Grab a pen and your journaling notebook. Set your timer for three minutes.

Ready? Go.

Choose one of the forms of anger from Step 1 that resonated with you.

I believe that feeling _____ makes me _____

and I believe that because _____

Journaling Anger

"We all have many thought patterns that produce good, positive experiences, and these we enjoy. It's the negative thought patterns that produce comfortable, unrewarding experiences with which we're concerned." Louise L. Hay, "Heal Your Body: The Mental Causes for Physical Illness and the Metaphysical Way to Overcome Them"

Step 4: Uncovering Patterns of Angriiness

Feeling anger is natural. How else do you know when you're not getting your needs met?

Expressing anger in a constructive way is a crucial skill we must cultivate, which we do by writing about it within the pages of your journaling notebook - to which only you have access. In this safe space you can let your anger rip! For a few minutes you give yourself permission to write anything about anybody in any way that you see fit with but one caveat: you must focus on what you're feeling as you write without beating up on yourself for feeling the way that you feel.

In "Heal Your Body" The late Louise L. Hay, goddess of affirmations, posits that angry thought patterns cause the most disease in the body. "Anger turns into things that boil, burn and infect the body. Resentment long held festers and eats away at the self and ultimately can lead to tumors and cancer." You're the only one who can do anything about how you deal with the anger you feel.

We all know that the first step to changing a habit that doesn't serve us is to acknowledge it. The following exercise will help you uncover your habitual reactions to anger.

For each prompt you're going to write for 5 minutes straight. Don't stop to analyze, judge or criticize your responses. Just keep writing what comes up until your alarm goes off. It is important to try to stick to the five-minute maximum so that you do not stay stuck in anger. The idea is to let it surface so that it may be acknowledged, validated and eventually let go.

Grab a pen and your journaling notebook. Set your timer for five minutes.

Ready? Go.

Working with the form of anger that you chose in the last step, respond to these prompts

The first time I remember ever feeling _____ was when _____. What happened was _____

(continued on next page)

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Step 4: Uncovering Patterns of Angriiness. con't

When I was older I experienced _____ again. What happened was _____

The last time I experienced _____ was when. What happened was _____

Journaling Anger

"The point of power is in the present moment...right here and right now in our minds." Louise L. Hay, "Heal Your Body: The Mental Causes for Physical Illness and the Metaphysical Way to Overcome Them"

Step 6: Towards Reframing Angry Feelings

The secret to writing for self-reflection is to write through all the heavy stuff that's crowding your conscious thoughts. Holding on to the heavy stuff (anger, guilt, anxiety, hopelessness, helplessness) is what's cutting you off from your "gut feeling", and trusting your intuition is the key to creating a life that you are satisfied with living.

No one can tell you what satisfies you just as no one but you can define what a "good life" is. Caring enough about yourself to show interest in your own life is the *raison d'être* of self-reflection. The process is not glamorous, is not sexy and it surely isn't easy. Nor is anyone going to tell you how well you self-reflect. Motivation must be intrinsic, and in order to sustain that motivation, you need to practice the art of reframing your emotional experiences. Journaling is one of the best tools available for practicing seeing past and present situations through different eyes.

Choose one of situations you wrote about in Step 5 for this set of prompts. For each prompt you're going to write for 5 minutes straight. Don't stop to analyze, judge or criticize your responses. Just keep writing what comes up until your alarm goes off. It is important to try to stick to the five-minute maximum so that you do not stay stuck in anger. The idea is to let it surface so that it may be acknowledged, validated and eventually let go.

Grab a pen and your journaling notebook. Set your timer for five minutes.

Ready? Go.

I used to believe that feeling _____ meant _____

Now I realize _____

Repeat for the other two situations.



Congratulations!

You've just taken your first step toward reclaiming leadership in your life. You've shown yourself that Writing for Self Reflection can benefit the professional aspect of your life. Keep journaling! If you haven't already done so, follow [this link](#) to more journaling prompts for all aspects of your mental health. See you there!