

# Write Time

PENNING FOR YOUR THOUGHTS,  
AND IMPROVED HEALTH.

By Daliah Singer

**JOURNALING** is all grown up. Once considered a largely adolescent hobby, the rise of mindfulness and meditation—and the advent of type-A bullet journals—has renewed the practice as a beneficial habit for all ages. Therapeutic journaling, or writing about our thoughts and feelings rather than just recording our days, has been shown to reduce stress, decrease health issues and boost mood. We asked Kim Johancen of Clear View Counseling and Consulting in Centennial and Lakewood, who hosts weekly journal therapy groups, to show us how to scribe our way to a healthier, more peaceful mindset.

## **Start small. Start with gratitude.**

The best way to build a habit is to do an activity over and over, but the thought of adding journaling to the schedule can sound overwhelming. So, set a timer. Start by writing for five minutes each day. Free write—don't lift your pen off the page, even if you're writing the same thing again and again—or begin with a simple gratitude practice. Write one sentence about something you're grateful for and expand from that statement as you get more comfortable.

## **Set the mood.**

Find a space where you can limit distractions. Maybe it's a certain area of the house or even a specific chair; put on headphones if need be. To help generate a routine, pick a time of day when you'll commit to journaling. Johancen's mind is clearest in the morning, but others prefer to journal right before bed. Figure out when works best for you and stick to that time.

## **Get inspired.**

Not sure what to write about? Follow prompts. Two of Johancen's favorite guiding topics:

1. Train yourself for self-reflection by taking your "pulse" throughout the day. Ask: How am I feeling? What am I thinking about? And jot down a couple of sentences; it doesn't have to be a lot. "If I can get clear about what I'm going through at any given moment, then I can be clearer about what I need to do to get through it," Johancen says. "Without awareness, we keep going."
2. Pen a short paragraph about a challenge you're experiencing. Then follow it with another paragraph about the opportunities it affords. The exercise

exposes how easily our perspectives can change when we take a moment to step outside of ourselves. (Find hundreds of other subjects online.)

## **Consider making this a screen-free zone: Use pen and paper.**

Feeling your hand move across the page can be beneficial in and of itself, Johancen says: "Rhythm is very soothing to the nervous system."

## **It's OK to ask for help.**

"You can absolutely do this on your own," Johancen says. But check in with yourself throughout the process. If you notice that you're feeling worse or more anxious, or you're ruminating on one thing, it may be time to get a professional involved. ✨



### WOMAN OF LETTERS

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