

# *JOURNALING FOR EATING DISORDER RECOVERY*

**BY ELEANOR LOSEBY**

**(\*YOU WILL NEED A PEN AND  
PAPER FOR THIS TALK)**

# *A BIT ABOUT ME*

- My name is Eleanor Loseby, I am a freelance artist and published children's book illustrator from the UK
- I suffered from an eating disorder for 10 years



# *MY EATING DISORDER STORY*



# MY RECOVERY



"EVERY TIME  
YOU EAT IS AN  
OPPORTUNITY TO  
NOURISH YOUR BODY."  
Unknown

# *INTRODUCTION*

In recent years journaling, or the act of mindful writing, has become popular again and for good reason. It is proven to be a highly effective strategy for relieving stress while also increasing working memory capacity, which may reflect improved cognitive processing.

The creation of the bullet journal in the late 1990s sparked a love for the century-old tradition with pretty title pages and organised habit trackers. The internet quickly became home to page layout ideas and journaling inspiration selling the ideal of a perfectly organised beautiful life.

# WHAT IS JOURNALING?

## journal verb

journalled; journaling; journals

### Definition of *journal* (Entry 2 of 2)

*transitive + intransitive*

: to keep a personal journal : to enter or record daily thoughts, experiences, etc., in a journal

// As a kid, I *journalled* about everything from boys to bad haircuts.

— *Redbook*

// The principal at the school says since students began *journaling* last year, poor behavior reports have dropped 40 percent.

— Stephanie Stahl

// The students engaged in several process discussions to reflect on their service-learning projects, and they *journalled* their reactions.

— *Roeper Review*

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/journal>



# *THERE IS NO RIGHT OR WRONG WAY TO JOURNAL.*

- I spent hours on elaborate page spreads that I never used and got frustrated when my spelling mistakes wrecked the overall perfect aesthetic I spent so long creating. My first few journals still sit in my cupboard, half-finished and pretty useless. I realise now that by putting so much pressure on myself to create a “Pinterest worthy” spread I had completely missed out on the benefits of freewriting.

- ITS OKAY TO BE MESSY.

That's right, you heard me. Make spelling mistakes, scribble, have a messy emotional rant. Your journal is for you and only you. It's your safe space to work through all the stressful times and thank the universe for everything that's good.

For your journal to be truly effective you have to let go of your need to be perfect; you need to be raw and open, you can't do that if you are stressing about how pretty the page is.

# ***JOURNALING FOR MENTAL HEALTH BENEFITS***

- It improves cognitive functioning
- Clarify your thoughts and feelings
- Allows you to let go of stresses or traumatic thoughts (like putting it in a box in your brain)
- Journaling about traumatic events helps one process them by fully exploring and releasing the emotions involved
- Allows you to track symptoms day-to-day including triggers
- Allows you to see your own progress over time
- It can counteract the negative side effects of stress



# *WHAT KIND OF EXERCISE SHOULD I DO ?*

- There is no one written exercise that will be perfect for everyone, instead go with whatever feels right to you on the day.
- What you choose will be dependent on your mood, what you want to achieve and your time available to you.

Here are a few ideas:

# *STRESSED?*

- Bullet Journal or Planning Journal
- Lists
- Brain Dump
- Write everything that is worrying you right now and then destroy the page
- Stress analysis journaling. (What is stressing you? How do you usually deal with stress? Are these methods helping? What could you do differently?)

# *FINDING LIFE HARD?*



## **Gratitude Journal**

Bear with me with this one. I know it sounds cheesy but if there is one sure way to lift my mood, it's listing everything that you have to smile about. Trust me it really works!

Start small and write 3 little things each day that you are thankful for and watch your mindset shift to gratitude. If you are having a really rough day why stop there – write down as many moments and things as you can and remember all the things you have to be grateful for.



## **Brain Dump**

I probably use this method of journaling the most, probably just because of its simplicity. Brain Dumping does what it says on the tin - you just write - let your heart pour out on the page and don't hold back!

This kind of journaling is amazing in a crisis or when you are struggling to work through something. Your brain seems to find words that you didn't know you could say, walls are

# *TRACKING RECOVERY?*

- You can use trackers to understand patterns, triggers and your progress. This might be in the form of a food diary, panic attack tracker or fear food challenge sheet. They are usually in the form of a grid and show multiple entries on one page.
- This kind of journaling can be really helpful for clinicians to help inform treatment plans.

*I am currently developing a range of trackers and resources for patients to use in recovery*

# My Fear Food Challenges



Use this space to address and fight your food fears. We have been programmed by diet culture to believe that certain foods are "good" or "bad" when this is not the case. All foods have a place in a healthy balanced diet.

The only way to break through this type of fear is to fight it head on, in other words, you must eat it to prove to yourself that it can't hurt you and it never could. No one food has the ability to change you or your body.

**this is NOT true!**

Food	Why is it scary?	Find the positive	try it!
EXAMPLE: Full fat ice-cream	I think it has too many calories, "unhealthy" "too much sugar" "fattening"	Ice cream is yummy, has protein from dairy, calcium for bone and hair health, vitamins A, D and B12	✓ ✓ ✓



No food can hurt you as much as your eating disorder will...

Food	Why is it scary?	Find the positive	try it!

Day: Sunday Date: 15<sup>th</sup> December

Time	Food & Drink	Where / With Who	Hunger Level	Mood & State of Mind	Triggers	Comments	Today's Summary
6.15	Almond, Banana & <del>strawberry</del> berry smoothie bowl with oats & a few pumpkin seeds	Home with family	2	Happy!	stress from work.	was really craving a smoothie bowl today I had a bowl shot in it too to give my tummy some fc.	Anything of importance or any expected triggers tomorrow. Strategies needed?
10.45	Advent calendar choc 1x mini kids apple fruit roll ups 12 (low)	Home with Will	2	Stressed	u-11		
12.45	Sweet potato salad with chickpea, veggies, a <del>flax</del> tsp <del>flax</del> flax almonds & dressing	Home with Will	3				
4pm	Caramels alpro pot	Home with family	3				Exercise
6.45	coconut curry with leftover chickpeas, tempah veg & udon noodles (lowfat)	11-11				Needed to make something quick so I could carry on working. Made enough for leftovers!	<del>Walking</del> Walking Bit of Yoga.
8.30	choc brownie icecream	11-11	<del>4</del> 5	tired but okay!	fear food!	To be honest this still made my days calories about 2000. I expected to find this alot harder	

\*binge

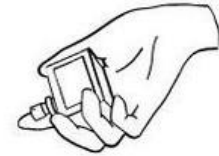
Dressing 1tsp olive oil  
1tsp apple cider vinegar  
1tsp agave

A treat is okay too

than I did. It was really yummy. the traffic light system saw the lolly had 40% of my daily saturates in which scared me a little but then I thought about it and realised the rest of my day is pretty low in saturates. Its in moderation

# HAVE A GO...

- For 5 minutes write down a list of things or moments that you are grateful for. This can be as big or little as you like – the most important thing is that you try and find as many things as possible that make you happy and thankful.
- This can be an amazing daily practice and gives you something to look back on when you are feeling low.



If you aren't grateful for  
what you **already have**,  
what makes you think you would  
be happy with more?

- Roy T. Bennett



# WHAT ABOUT THIS?

- Think of a recent event that you have found difficult or stressful.
- Set aside 5 minutes to write freely about your emotional experience. Take three deep grounding breaths before starting the exercise.
- Allow yourself to write anything that comes up, don't filter your words, this is for you – and it will stay confidential. You never have to show anyone, you have full freedom to say whatever is on your mind.



# *WHEN SHOULD YOU JOURNAL?*

- Whenever works for you. There are a lot of people that will try and tell you when is “right” and “wrong” to journal but really the most important thing is – does it help you in that moment?
- Before the pandemic I traveled on the bus most days and taking my journal was a way for me to cope with whatever happened that day.
- The best time to journal is whenever allows you to journal regularly or relieves stress in that moment.
- It might help to use a trigger (like after breakfast, before dinner on the bus etc.)



You can visit the website at:  
[www.dawnrecovery.co.uk](http://www.dawnrecovery.co.uk)

- .Dawn is an illustrated workbook, journal and online support network for people in eating disorder recovery. By combining workbook exercises, expert therapeutic advice and the support of a safe online community I hope to address the gap in some current treatment plans while allowing a space for people to work through difficult emotions. In essence, this is the workbook I wish had existed in the depths of my illness. The book holds space for one year worth of healing but doesn't use specific dates so it can be reprinted and used for years to come. By breaking down the year into manageable monthly sections, ".Dawn" allows its audience to stay in the present and tackle challenges on a day to day basis without becoming overwhelmed.

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# *SUMMERY*

My favourite thing about journaling is how it unlocks your mind. As someone who has suffered from severe mental health problems for most of my life I often found that I didn't have the words to express how I was feeling. Writing changed this.

There is no right or wrong way to journal.

Journaling for 5 minutes daily can have a profound effect on a persons mental state and give them insight into their own thinking. This unlocking of the mind can be a turning point in someone's recovery.

***ANY  
QUESTIONS?***

***THANK YOU  
FOR LISTENING***