

Ask Your Therapist

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Journal Writing as a Healing Tool

Journal writing is a term I use very loosely. It can mean the daily discipline of writing 20 minutes in a formal, bound journal. It can also mean collecting scraps of papers that have ideas scribbled on them and assembling them in some kind of order. For many people, it's a basic notebook of thoughts, feelings, ideas, occasional "to do" lists and ideas for self improvement that sound good in the moment and then lose traction as soon as we write them down.

People have been keeping written track of their thoughts for as long as there has been paper to write them down. A journal is a way of seeing on paper what we are thinking, a place to plan the changes we want to make in our lives, a safe dumping ground for all the words we wish we had said but are glad we did not, and, over time, a map of where we have come from.

The only times I have consistently kept a daily journal were on my two trips to India and those journals are so precious to me. The details I recorded are always there to call forth the trips in ways I would have forgotten.

I once counseled a woman whose beloved husband had died and she found every one of the notes she'd ever given him, whether they said "I love you" or "Pick up milk today". She had no idea he had kept them. And then she told me that she had done the same: kept all the notes he had ever left her, and she had never told her husband this. They had just done it independently of each other. I suggested she put them together to create the story of their life and love together. She was very hesitant but agreed to try it and that began a journey of great healing for her. Each week she would tell me stories she had recalled from reading over the notes and it brought her such joy and peace. I suggested she write all these stories down in a journal, which she did, and she made copies of her journal for her children, which was wonderful for them.

I have decided to offer a free, 2 hour introductory workshop for people who would like to learn more about journal writing as a kind of self-therapy. If you would like more information about it, please contact me. I will structure the time and date of the workshop on the availability of the people who are interested. I would like to do this in mid to late February.

To read all the prior Ask Your Therapist columns go to www.krishnabai.com where you can also send Krishnabai a general question for her column.

Krishnabai, MSW is a therapist in Ashby and Wellesley Hills where she sees adults, older teens and couples. The core of her work is the discovery and

expression of the Authentic Self. She focuses on the identification, expression, and resolution of emotions, commitment to honesty and the use of remedial education and information. The Ashby Center for Counseling 978-827-1181.