



Workbook & Curriculum created by Nicolle NattrassCAC II

Available for- Webinars, Onsite workshops, Group Teleconference and e-course as well.

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Creative Journaling for your Recovery

Sample lesson & worksheet

No matter what recovery program you are in, what length of recovery you have or what creative or journaling experiences you may have- we all begin right now.

This is the journey of discovering who we are –where we are at- right now in recovery. No writing experience required. The course lessons & workbook will be delivered to your inbox each week. Easy to use & fit into your schedule. If you wish, you can print them off and keep in a file or folder.

SESSION ONE/WEEK ONE– Upon Discovering

*(Each Session contains~ Theme, Hand-outs from workbook, Journal Writing Assignment, Inspirational Quote and/or Definition, weekly Creativity & Action challenges as well as **ONE optional, 30 minute session via Zoom meeting** with myself as journaling coach at any time during the 4 week course)*

The focus of this session is to help you gain a basic understanding of creative journaling and begin to sense its value: the impact on self-care and as a preventative relapse tool.

In this session you will have the opportunity to:

- Receive a Staying in your Window letter & agreement.
- Learn how important keeping a journal is in early recovery.
- Read about the benefits of journaling to your mental, physical, emotional and spiritual health.
- Explore the value of developing a self-care routine in your recovery. What is self-care?
- Start your own journal & learn/walk through using your first writing prompt.
- Receive the following **via email for Session 1 /Week 1:**

Your Creative Journal Part 1& 2, Staying in Your Window, Fill Your Bucket, How Writing Affects Your brain, Health Benefits, Journal as Preventative Relapse Tool, What if Hand-out



GRATITUDE

We hear this word so much.

Gratitude.

If it resonates better for you, substitute the word “appreciate” and “thankful” in its’ place.

How do we tune into appreciation?

Thankfulness?

Gratitude?

Take time.

Slow Down. Tune in to you.

Let go of any need to compare with others. Slow down to notice what is around you.

Breathe.

Take a mini inventory of the moment.

When we take this time, we will walk, we will talk and feel differently in the world.

Grab your journal, take a breath and begin now...

(List the first that come into your mind)

I am thankful for...

In this moment, I appreciate...

I am grateful for...

What does Gratitude in Action mean to you?

What has Recovery given to you?

How do you show gratitude?

Researchers from Berkeley identified how gratitude might actually work on our minds and bodies. They provided four insights from their research suggesting what causes the psychological benefits of gratitude.

- Gratitude unshackles us from toxic emotions
- Gratitude helps even if you don't share it
- Gratitude's benefits take time & practice. You might not feel it right away.
- Gratitude has lasting effects on the brain





[Recovery Perspective: A journey to myself](#)

by Marie C. (Renascent, Munro Centre Toronto ON)

As I sit down to write this article, on the table in front of me lie my journals from this past year.

They are different colors and sizes, some given to me as gifts, some bought in a dollar store and one from a professional office supply store. No matter what the cost, they are precious to me, as are the two people who suggested to me many years ago: “Nicolle, why don’t you start a journal?”

One of those people was my sponsor, Leslie. I was having a great deal of difficulty with prayer and surrender, and it was Leslie who said if I was having a hard time, to open up my journal and just try talking to my Higher Power. I was 22 years old when I got sober and I remember saying, “But I don’t even really know my Higher Power yet!”

Leslie also asked me if I would be willing to use my journal to write down affirmations and a gratitude list. I think I said I would be, but I know in my heart that I had no faith whatsoever in affirmations or journal writing at that time. But I listened and I was willing. The first affirmation Leslie suggested I write in my journal was “I am a sober woman of dignity and worth”.

Soon I began to get up in the morning, pray and write, focusing on simple affirmations and simple statements of what I was grateful for. At first it felt empty and foreign. My sponsor suggested that maybe that was because I was for the first time developing a real and honest relationship with myself.

Journaling was difficult for me because it took time, commitment and nurturing energy, all things that I found difficult to give to myself but desperately needed. It was through the practice of keeping a journal that I began my journey to a better and lasting relationship with a Higher Power and with myself.

Another important person in my life who suggested that I keep a journal was my counselor at that time. Being newly sober, I sometimes felt overwhelmed by the feelings that were emerging. I needed to learn how to identify and cope with my feelings. He encouraged me to start writing down thoughts and feelings, so that I might increase my awareness and ability to cope.

I found this frightening. It was a new freedom that I wasn't too sure how to deal with, but he helped me to move through my fears. If I was having difficulty or fear, or if I was stuck and unable to face my feelings, especially the negative ones, he suggested that I grab some scissors and a magazine and find a picture or color that helped to capture the essence of my feeling.

This really opened me up. I was also relieved to discover that journal writing wasn't about my writing having to be "perfect", "neat" or "intellectual". I was given permission to make my journal my own. He suggested that I cut out images, use stickers, design my own cover, or doodle with markers. The next thing you know, I was having fun! What a miracle! Having fun while working on myself!

He also recommended a book called "*The Artist's Way*" by Julia Cameron that explores many suggestions to open up one's creative expression, including the practice of what she calls "Morning Pages". I know that I needed help to create a more positive daily life in sobriety, of which journaling was a big part. I began to trust and to listen to myself a bit more, I felt more balanced and I began to trust that there were possibilities for fun, joy and happiness in a sober life.

Today for me, 14 and half years sober (one day at a time), journaling is an essential tool that I rely on, a quiet, intimate time devoted to my recovery and my Higher Power. In times of emotional stress, it grounds me so that I can stop and practice the slogans "Easy Does It" and "Keep It Simple". It helps me to sort out my busy mind and to identify fears, resentments and changes that I might need help with. It helps me to work the Steps with my sponsor.

It also helps me to identify positive goals and dreams for my sobriety. Often times, I go back and re-read my journal and look for when I am saying the same thing over and over. This can be an indication to me that I need help in this area.

For me, writing is a regular, daily practice just as prayer is. Both have a positive effect on my emotional sobriety, physical wellness, serenity and resilience to follow my path and at times, do the hard things.

It's Thanksgiving today as I write this and I have so much to be grateful for. How thankful I am to have been given the opportunity to share a little bit of my recovery with you. It seems fitting somehow that in this moment, I lack the "right" words to describe the depth of gratitude and the sense of wonder and awe I feel for the power of this program.

Maybe a color would best describe the feeling: a bright, warm yellow and gold color that cuts mysteriously through every dark nook and cranny, and amazingly beams strong brilliant light and warmth everywhere.

Happy Journaling!