Journal Prompts for Mental Health

Emotions: Checking In on How You Are Doing

These journal prompts help you check in on your mental health, name what you feel, and notice what you need. They draw on expressive writing, studied by psychologist James Pennebaker, and on positive affect journaling, which asks you to write about what is going well. Use one section a day, or work through the whole sheet once a week.

1 Name what you feel

How stressed do I feel today?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Calm *Very stressed*

Right now I feel (try to find the most exact word):

Example: Restless and a bit left out, which is more specific than just "bad"

What might be behind this feeling?

Why does this work? *Putting a feeling into words can take some of the sting out of it. In a 2007 brain imaging study led by psychologist Matthew Lieberman, people who named the emotion on a face showed less activity in the amygdala, a part of the brain that reacts to threat. In a small 2018 trial of 70 adults with health conditions and raised anxiety, those who wrote about positive experiences for 15 minutes, three days a week, had fewer anxiety and depression symptoms after one month than people who received usual care.*

**This worksheet provides information but is not a substitute for therapy. It works best with guidance from a professional.*

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2 What is weighing on me

What has been on my mind the most this week?

Which part of it can I do something about, and which part is out of my hands?

3 What I need

What does my body need right now? Think about rest, food, movement and fresh air.

Who could I talk to this week, and what would I want them to know?

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4 What is going well

Something that went well today, even a small thing:

Example: I finished the email I had been putting off

A strength I used this week, and how I used it:

5 My week at a glance

Day	Stress (0 to 10)	One word for my mood	One thing that helped
Mon	*6*	*Tense*	*A walk at lunch*

Journaling can support your mental health, but it does not replace care. If you have felt low, anxious, or not like yourself for more than two weeks, talk with a doctor or therapist. If you are in crisis or thinking about harming yourself, call or text 988 in the US, or call your local emergency number.

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