



The Benefits of Journaling

By Nancy Rummel, ACC

Journal writing is a powerful technique we emphasize at ILS as a way to identify our true thoughts and beliefs. It's a way to reflect on and record what's going on with our life.

When we learn to tell our own stories in writing, we tend to see our life more clearly. The stories help us discover insights into our feelings and how we might change the way we think in order to feel and act better. Oftentimes, journaling allows us to verbalize what we didn't even know we were thinking.

For example, I recently sat down to write about something that was driving me crazy. Every day I had too many things to do, and there never seemed to be any time for fun – just plain old fun. I started to write about “poor me” and how every day of my life was chock full of obligations. After a paragraph of this, I started to chuckle. It occurred to me pretty quickly that I was doing it to myself! I simply needed to schedule more fun and write shorter “to do” lists.

Another therapeutic form of writing is the memoir which captures key experiences in a life. As a person who loves to write, I am passionate about helping people write their memoir. The most recent was my husband who wrote his story last year as a gift to our children. What courage it took for him to put on paper some mistakes he made on his journey and lessons he learned as a result. The process transformed the way he thinks about himself and his life.

At first it can be a struggle to find time to write, wonder what to write, and decide whether to write longhand or type. When we realize the true benefit of laying down our thoughts, it is much easier. Eventually it creates space in our life by helping us let go of things weighing on our mind.

When we honestly share our experiences and say “this is who I am as a result,” then others gain a much deeper understanding of us. The challenge is getting started and not getting bogged down in finding the perfect words. A good way to start is to write a list of life questions and then just answer them as if you are interviewing yourself. Select the experiences that really shaped you.

The goal of writing our thoughts and experiences in either a journal or a longer memoir is to grow and reach a deeper understanding of ourselves. We awaken the mystery of our life and discover what's really on our mind. Start putting pen to paper every day to understand more about who you really are, what you feel, and how much your life matters. This deeper understanding will help you live a more fulfilling life.