



Wellbeing Insights

Living a Better, More Vibrant Life



Journaling 101

In a culture that is fast-paced and characterized by constant stimulation, overworking and burnout, techniques and products aimed to help reduce the toll of this stress emerge daily. However, it is often the oldest and simplest tactics that yield the most success. Journaling is one such strategy. It's low cost and simple. If managing stress, finding clarity or cultivating gratitude is on your list of resolutions for 2020, journaling might be a great place for you start.

Taking time to stop and reflect on your day, your mood or any other aspects of your life can help you to relax, decompress and manage emotions. It's also a wonderful strategy to practice mindfulness and gratitude, which have been shown to enhance both mental and physical health. In addition, journaling has been shown to decrease the symptoms of asthma, arthritis and other health conditions, improve cognitive functioning, and even strengthen the immune system.

Journaling goes well beyond jotting down the day's events in a dear-diary format. There are many forms of journaling to consider if you're interested in beginning a practice of your own. Finding what works for you is the key to success. For example, if your goal is better sleep, you may use journaling before bed to help quiet your mind. Or, if your goal is to live with more intention, journaling in the mornings to set goals or affirmations for the day might be a better fit.

Here are some examples of ways you can structure your journaling experience to achieve the most benefits:

■ **Daily Logs.** With this traditional method you simply record your daily mood and energy levels. You can also track the food you eat; you may see a correlation that could point to a food intolerance or nutrient deficiency.

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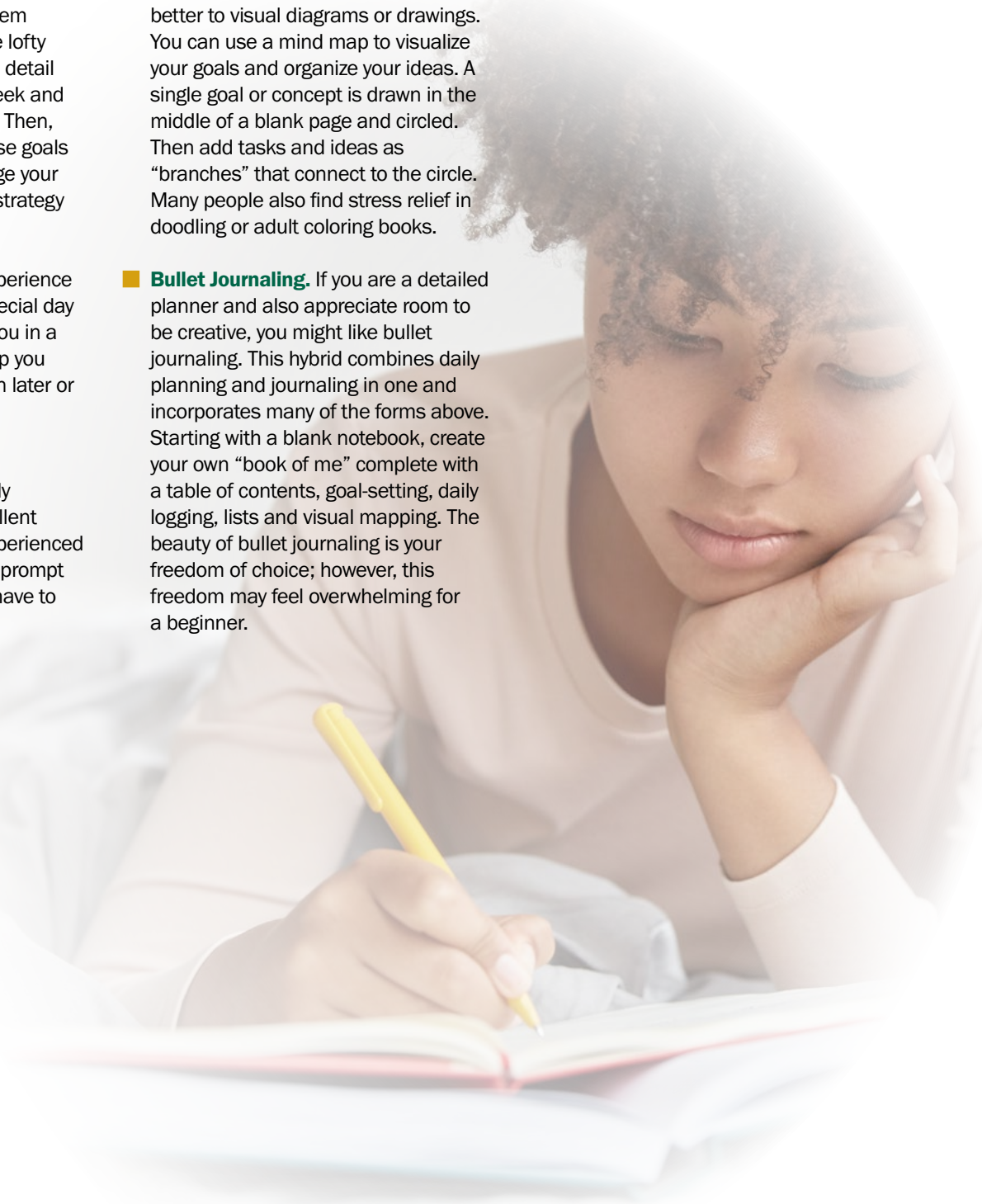


- **Gratitude Journal.** Write down three things you are thankful for or three things that went well each day. This can help you keep a positive attitude and remind you of what is truly important in your life.
- **Goal-tracking.** Studies show that you are 42% more likely to achieve your goals if you physically write them down. Set no more than three lofty goals at a time. For each one, detail what you will do today, this week and this month to make progress. Then, track your actions toward these goals daily. This will help you manage your expectations and set a clear strategy for success.
- **Storytelling.** Many people experience stress relief by recording a special day or funny event. This can put you in a positive mindset and also help you remember stories to reflect on later or pass down to relatives.
- **Guided Journaling.** Using daily journaling prompts is an excellent strategy for beginners and experienced journalers alike. Determine a prompt each day, such as “If I didn’t have to

worry about money or expectations, what would I do with my life?” or “The words I’d like to live by are...” Then set a timer for 10 to 30 minutes and answer the day’s question. A quick Google search will yield seemingly endless prompts to try.

- **Mind Mapping.** Many people respond better to visual diagrams or drawings. You can use a mind map to visualize your goals and organize your ideas. A single goal or concept is drawn in the middle of a blank page and circled. Then add tasks and ideas as “branches” that connect to the circle. Many people also find stress relief in doodling or adult coloring books.
- **Bullet Journaling.** If you are a detailed planner and also appreciate room to be creative, you might like bullet journaling. This hybrid combines daily planning and journaling in one and incorporates many of the forms above. Starting with a blank notebook, create your own “book of me” complete with a table of contents, goal-setting, daily logging, lists and visual mapping. The beauty of bullet journaling is your freedom of choice; however, this freedom may feel overwhelming for a beginner.

Whatever form you decide to use, make it fun! Try out different types and switch them up. Set aside time to be consistent with your journaling, but don’t pressure yourself to be perfect or structure it as another task that needs to be completed. For an exercise specifically targeted to help you find freedom in your journaling, check out our Mindful Minute.





On the Menu

Amazing Açaí

Over the last decade, the açaí berry emerged onto the health food scene and continues to grow in popularity. This berry has become a household name (albeit with many different pronunciations). Although it may be hard to pronounce, it's easy to see the obsession with this superfood due to its extensive list of benefits. But let's back up to understand how it came to be known around the country.

The açaí palm is a tree native to the Amazon, predominately in Brazil, Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador and Guianas. It's an essential part of the culture and food supply in this region. The açaí fruit is a round, deep purple berry with an edible pulp enveloping its seeds. The pulp is extracted from the seed and is often turned into juice, which is used in the preparation of drinks, super juices, sweets, ice cream and jellies.

A single company is credited with starting the açaí movement in the U.S. in the early 2000s. It started with an idea from two brothers who had their first açaí bowl during a trip to Brazil. As the movement took off, several false claims and scams by other companies were created to capitalize on the new hot product. While not all claims of açaí can be confirmed, several benefits have survived the scrutiny and rightfully so.

Potential benefits of açaí include:

■ **Antioxidants.** Açaí berries have three times the antioxidant content of blueberries. Antioxidants are essential to preventing or slowing damage to cells caused by free radicals – unstable molecules that the body produces as a reaction to environmental and other pressures.

■ **Cognitive Health.** The antioxidants in açaí may counteract the damaging effects of inflammation and oxidation in brain cells, which can negatively affect memory and learning. Specifically, the antioxidant anthocyanin, which is abundant in açaí berries, may lower oxidative stress and inflammation, promoting brain health.

■ **Heart Health.** More research is needed, but a study has suggested that açaí may help lower blood cholesterol levels due to the fiber levels and presence of heart-healthy fats that may increase HDL.

Keep It Fresh

Due to its short shelf life, you likely won't find fresh açaí berries at your local grocer. Instead, you will find the product in the form of a dried powder, pressed juice or frozen fruit puree. Refer to packaging for best practices on keeping it fresh.

Açaí Berry Bowl

One of the most popular ways to enjoy this berry is in an açaí bowl. It's sure to be a crowd pleaser.

Ingredients:

- 1 packet of frozen organic açaí berry pulp (opt for versions with little to no added sugar)
- 1 frozen banana or 1 cup other fruit
- 2 handfuls of organic spinach
- ½ cup coconut (or almond) milk, unsweetened
- 2 Tbsp. chia seeds (soaked for at least 20 minutes in some of the coconut milk)
- Ice to thicken, as needed
- Optional toppings: coconut, granola, seeds, nut butter, goji berries, cacao nibs, etc.

Instructions:

Add all ingredients to a high-speed blender and pulse until thick and creamy. The texture should be very thick. If too thick, add more coconut or almond milk. If too thin, add ice and blend again. Top with optional toppings and serve immediately.

Nutrition Info*

per Serving (1 bowl)	
Calories	546
Total Fat	39.9g
Carbohydrates	47.7g
	Sugar 18.7g
	Fiber 19.8g
Protein	10.4g
Sodium	71mg



*Nutrition information is a rough estimate calculated with no additional toppings. Adapted from NutritionStripped.com

Tips for Selecting a Personal Trainer

It's time for New Year's resolutions and you've decided to work on your fitness goals by enlisting the help of a personal trainer. Personal trainers can help you reach your goals by providing not only guidance and education but also accountability, which can often be the biggest hurdle when starting a new fitness plan.

Before you commit to a personal trainer, there are several things to consider and questions you will want to ask to ensure you have the best experience.

■ **Qualifications.** First and foremost, your personal trainer should have adequate certifications and insurance. Personal trainers can receive certification by passing an exam through The American Council on Exercise (ACE), the National Academy of Sports Medicine (NASM) or the National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA). A reputable trainer will also have liability insurance in case a client suffers an injury.

■ **Experience & Specialty.** An experienced trainer may cost a bit more but will be worth the investment, especially if you have a unique situation such as a medical condition or past injury. Ask potential trainers what fitness levels and techniques they specialize in.

■ **Personality & Philosophy.** Do you want a military commander or would you respond better to a cheerleader? Are they going to focus on how you look or how you feel? You will be spending a good deal of time with your trainer, so you want to make sure they fit your personality and philosophy. Ask why they became a trainer and discuss how you prefer to be coached. Consider if you might feel more comfortable with a certain gender and/or age.

■ **Scheduling & Location.** Ask your trainer about their current number of clients and open time slots. Make sure you and your trainer agree on a regular scheduled day and time that works best for you. Ensure that your trainer's location is near your work or home and that you're building in enough travel time to make your appointments on time.

■ **Avoid Fads.** There are constantly new diet fads and fitness trends. Make sure your trainer does not exclusively promote one type of diet or workout. For example, do they solely promote a keto diet or a CrossFit type of workout? These strategies may be beneficial for some but not for all, and a good personal trainer will make recommendations based on your specific needs and goals.

■ **Measuring Progress.** Ask the potential trainer how they plan to measure your progress. It's important to have a consistent process to evaluate your improvement. Make sure they are not solely focused on weight but also body measurements and energy levels.



■ **Cost.** Find out up front how much the trainer charges and the rules for cancellations. Inquire about how they are compensated. For example, do they have to meet a product quota or are they required to upsell nutrition products? Most trainers charge per session, but others may charge a flat monthly fee. Ask about available discounts. Find out if they require a contract and, if so, what the process is for cancelling the contract, if needed.

■ **Referrals.** Finally, ask your friends, family and coworkers if they have a recommendation. This can give you valuable insights on many of the considerations above before you even contact the trainer. In addition, ask the trainer if they give a discount or free session if you refer a friend.

Whatever your goals or challenges may be, a personal trainer should be your ally in achieving your best health and wellbeing. Find trainers who really love what they do, are committed to their clients and genuinely care about the people they serve.

“What the **New Year** brings to you will depend a great deal on **what you bring** to the New Year.” – Vern McLellan

Mindful Minute

Free writing is a wonderful form of journaling for anyone struggling to work through complex thoughts or emotions. (And let's be honest; who doesn't "get in their own head" from time to time?) Many people think they need a coherent idea or writing skills in order to begin journaling; however, free writing requires no exceptional skill set. It can help you understand more about yourself, release emotions, access inspiration and untangle complicated life issues. Here's how it works:

1. Sit down in a comfortable place with plenty of paper and a writing utensil.
2. Determine your approach. You can start by identifying a specific topic to write about (e.g., relationship issue, work problem, etc.) or by setting a timer (5 to 20 minutes) and writing about whatever comes to mind during that time.

3. Write using these guidelines:

■ **Remember there is no audience.**

No one will read this. In fact, you may choose to immediately tear up and throw away your writing after it's complete. This is perfectly fine; in fact, it can be therapeutic. Put to paper your raw thoughts without apology or worry of judgement. This exercise is purely for you and your eyes only.

■ **Just keep writing.**

In fact, your pencil may never leave the paper the entire time. Keep the pencil moving no matter what is coming out. Do not worry about grammar or legibility. No need to put together full sentences or offer explanation for anything. If your mind goes off in a different direction while writing, just go with it.

■ **Emphasize the 'free' piece of the free write.**

There is no right or wrong, so don't limit yourself if you set a certain amount of time and need more, or if you started with one topic and got off track. Find freedom in the exercise. If you fill an entire page repeating the same word or start drawing pictures instead of writing, it's ok.



DIY: Congestion-Fighting Elixir

This potent concoction is great for breaking up congestion in the chest and also provides a good immune boost to help get you over what ails you.

Ingredients:

- ½ cup water
- ¼ cup cider vinegar
- ¼ cup honey
- 1 tsp cayenne pepper (ground red pepper)
- 1 tsp ginger

Instructions:

Choose a bowl, jar or bottle with a lid. Dissolve cayenne and ginger in the vinegar and water. Add honey and shake well. The flavor is quite strong and you only need to take a tablespoon or two at a time. The ingredients will not dissolve perfectly so be sure to shake it up before taking each dose. You may take this several times per day as needed.

Let It Burn

Clear the Air & Your Mind with Sage

Many of us try to be more present and intentional at the start of the year. Yet, the reality is that January is just another month that follows December and continues to include bills, chores, work deadlines and family responsibilities. Even those of us hyper focused on one area of our wellbeing may be neglecting or struggling with another area. With so much on our minds and hearts, it's not surprising to feel overwhelmed at the end of any given day.

Bring more peace to your hectic life by incorporating one or more rituals that center on calming, cleansing and clarity. One such practice is burning sage. Also known as smudging, this practice is a well-established spiritual tradition of many Native American peoples that is gaining in popularity as a simple practice to enhance overall wellbeing.

Sage is an herb from the *Salvia* plant family, which includes other culinary and medicinal herbs such as, basil, mint, rosemary and lavender. Its name, from the Latin *salvere*, means "to heal." Some research points to the possibility that sage's compounds and antimicrobial properties can purify air, soothe anxiety, elevate mood levels and improve sleep, among several other benefits.

Reducing stress and keeping viruses at bay certainly makes smudging worth a try at this time of year. You can easily find sage smudging kits online or buy one from a local holistic wellbeing store. It comes in different varieties. White sage (*Salvia apiana*) is a common variety used for smudging.

Others include White prairie sage (*Artemisia ludoviciana*) and Classic garden sage (*Salvia officinalis*). Here's what you'll need:

- Sage bundle (or smudge stick)
- Abalone shell or bowl of ceramic, clay or glass to hold burning sage or capture ash
- Matches (preferred over a manufactured lighter)
- Feather or fan for wafting smoke

To burn sage, light the end of the bundle and let the smoke drift into the air. You can place the burning sage bundle in an abalone shell or, if you are trying to cleanse the air in a room, walk around the space with the burning wand. Always take safety precautions and leave a window open while smudging. Check the end closely to make sure all embers have died. Once it's completely burned out, store it in a safe, dry place out of the sun. If you find the smoke irritating in any way, you may want to modify the ritual by replacing your smudge stick with an essential oil.

Following traditional practice, it's recommended to set an intention each time you burn sage. Enjoy the calming fragrance as you take the time to care for yourself and create a space of peace and comfort.



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