Journals for Healing

Seven Guidelines for Journaling
1. Keep your hand moving
2. “Lose control”
3. Don’t worry about spelling or grammar
4. Don’t think
5. It’s okay to write “junk”
6. Go for the jugular—push for emotion
7. Be specific, more detail, the better

Styles of Journaling
1. Timed writing (stream of consciousness writing)—set a timer for 5–10 minutes and write for that time. When the timer goes off, stop, even if you are in mid-sentence.
2. Dialogue—dialogue with people, emotions, your body, different parts of the self. Use the dialogue to question, to answer, and to carry on conversation.
3. Unsent letters—for example—Dear... ... What I’ve been most afraid to tell you... ... I want you to know how I feel about ... ... You rotten so and so, I want ...
4. List—make lists of items in sentences or partial sentences on items such as the following: “what am I afraid of,” and “what am I angry about.”
5. Mind-mapping—take an anchor word, such as “fear” and write all the words that come into your mind. Write them close to or far away on the page from the anchor. Write them upside down, sideways, beside, above, below—wherever they seem to fit at the time. Then take two or three minutes right away to write about your impressions of the words you have written, what it means that you have placed them where you have placed them, what the pattern shows you about yourself, and so on.

Getting started
Some springboards for journaling:
1. What do you wish you’d written about at a much younger age?
2. I used to assume...
3. What stops me from living life in the present?
4. What is life asking of me?
5. I remember...
6. I don’t remember...
7. I want to be a person who...
8. Today I feel (5, 15, 55?) years old.
9. I am standing on the edge facing...

Some ideas for list-making:
1. One hundred things I am grateful for.
2. One hundred ways I could nurture myself.
3. One hundred ways I beat myself up.
4. One hundred things I am good at.
5. One hundred things I have done mourned.
6. One hundred things I never want to do.
7. One hundred things I want to do.
8. One hundred things I believe in.

**Two final ideas:**

1. Talk with your therapist about how to handle sensitive material in your journal.
2. Thoreau said, “It takes two people to tell the truth. One to say it, one to hear it.”

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