

THE IMPACT

OF JOURNALING

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When my therapist told me that journaling, or writing her letters, in moments where I felt upset may benefit me mentally, I laughed. I began to profusely explain that her “homework” for me was pointless.

Like many, I had written in diaries as a child before but never truly saw the point of engraving writing on paper to “cleanse” the soul. I never understood how paper could potentially sew up mental wounds that have never actually been confronted and mended through the natural healing process. That is until it helped me.

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A Personal Account:

I had tried to pretend as if my set of “coping skills” had been working. I told my therapist white lies about how I had been getting better. I tried to force myself to be fine. I ignored the warning signs that my body was stressed. I hoped that that lying would somehow, eventually, become the truth. I tried to pretend that I had it all together. The fact is– I didn’t. Just because I lied to myself, didn’t mean that the harsh reality wasn’t still that– harsh.

There’s nothing wrong in admitting it. Everyone is going through something, everyone is facing internal battles that they seem to believe they are losing. The more I pretended though, the more the sadness began to win and I started losing myself in the process.





Writing My First Letter to My Therapist:

I remember sitting in class one day, during a free period, and I described how I felt through metaphors, flowery language, and authenticity because my therapist was expecting something that was me– not the persona I often tried to convey.

I wrote about things I never confessed to anyone. Not even myself. I sent the letter to my therapist and it not only gave me insight into how my behaviors are a byproduct of my childhood environment but allowed her to grasp the vulnerable side of me that I often hid.

The writing process forced me to be real. Paper cannot give input on what you have written. Paper cannot judge. Paper is just there and you are able to manipulate it by any means. I decided that I wanted my paper to be a release of the pent-up emotion I was ignoring. I aimed to dissect why I do the things that I do and figure out what was the underlying meaning of it all. Writing made the nonsense make sense.

I felt like I could say whatever without it being misinterpreted or making me ridden with stress. Everyone should get the chance to experience that. Everyone should get the chance to express their emotions in a positive way. One of the easiest ways? Writing!

Why You Should Write:

You don't have to just take my word for it. Studies have shown that “brief expressive writing episodes have led participants to report feeling happier and less negative than prior to their writing experience, and having fewer symptoms of depression and anxiety...” (Smith p. 2.) When considering how writing has been reported as decreasing feelings of depression and anxiety– aligning with my experience –it becomes clear that writing may help. It may not work for everyone, but you cannot knock something until you try it! Who knows, you might find a positive form of expression.

