

SPIRITUAL JOURNALING

KEEPING A SPIRITUAL JOURNAL

For the weeks ahead, you'll learn to keep a spiritual journal. Whether or not you choose to continue spiritual journaling once the group sessions are done, the writing you do in the coming weeks will be rewarding in ways you are unable to fully imagine now.

- ✓ Writing is a simple yet powerful way to help process your loss and work through your grief. It helps release some of the physical, emotional and spiritual pain that grieving folks experience.
- ✓ It will help you work through many of the issues that are difficult to communicate in other ways.
- ✓ It's very personal and confidential. Nobody needs to share in your journal writing unless you specifically choose to permit it. It is simple to do spontaneously.
- ✓ It does not require making complicated plans and can be accomplished right when your feelings and needs are strongest, even at 3 a.m.

WRITE FOR YOURSELF

Even though we intellectually know that our own journal writing is for our eyes only, most of us have been conditioned differently. During school, we always wrote for others to see and usually judge, correct, and grade. At some point most of us have written a letter or two for someone else to read. Nearly all our prior writing has been to communicate with others.

FOR YOUR EYES ONLY

While this sounds like an obvious thought, it can be difficult to grant ourselves permission to write freely without editorial judgement. As you progress in your writing, you will find that you are able to overcome the mindset that you are writing for others, and will concentrate on fully serving your own need for expression.

HELPFUL HINTS

- ✓ Give yourself permission to write without perfection. God isn't looking for perfection.
- ✓ Use the pages of this book, a wide-lined school notebook, or one of those expensive designer journals. Give yourself permission to be as sloppy or as neat as you wish.
- ✓ Forget erasers. It is easier, quicker and more spontaneous to cross out words.
- ✓ There are no errors when writing for yourself, merely thoughts you wish to re-read and those you want to skip. Rather than erasing or tearing out pages in order to obliterate, try putting a big X through a page or crossing out a phrase.
- ✓ Pay attention to those thoughts you are inclined to obliterate. Quite often they are a rich source of issues you need to work through in order to complete your griefwork.

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- ✓ When staring at a blank page and unable to think of anything to say, write from your stream of consciousness.
 - Set a time limit. Start with maybe 5 to 10 minutes.
 - Write everything that comes into your mind, no matter how unconnected, scattered or inane it may seem.
 - Since we aren't judging ourselves and no one else will read it, it doesn't matter that it isn't a well composed sentence or paragraph. Capture whatever thought or image comes to mind.
 - Don't try to write a story. Merely begin to document your internal images, feelings, and internal dialogue.

Not having the pressure of composing something which makes sense, you just have to be able to write fast enough to keep up with your internal activity. If your thoughts lead to a particular issue, elaborate on it. When the allotted time has passed, you can choose to continue or allow yourself to stop for the day, and start fresh the next day.

You will surprise yourself at how quickly you have developed a new tool for making progress with your griefwork. With the mechanics of writing now a comfortable routine, you can become more focused.

In griefwork, we are frequently writing for one or more of the following reasons:

- ✓ To capture our experience or progress.
- ✓ To confront an issue.
- ✓ To vent, explore or express a feeling or emotion.
- ✓ To connect.
- ✓ To atone.
- ✓ To preserve a thought.
- ✓ To memorialize our loss.

BENEFITS OF SHARING

While few people feel they want to share everything they've written, there is often therapeutic value in sharing some of it.

Some, in their writings, have discovered parts of themselves which they want to share. You are under no obligation to share, however, should you wish to, there'll be an opportunity to share during each support session.

A TOOL FOR YOUR TOOLBOX

If writing has always been comfortable and easy, please continue to do it. If this is new to you, please ask for help and encouragement, as this is a useful tool that will serve you well even after you've done the largest portion of your griefwork.