



Worksheet:

Getting Started with Journal Prompts for Self-Reflection

Here are some of the journal prompts worth exploring. They intersect wellness, worry, and chronic illness. They won't stop feelings of pain, grief, or fear. But hopefully, they will help you gain control, insight, and self-compassion. You might do one or two a day or return to the same prompt over time to see how you react to it and how your reactions change over time. Go at your pace and seek help from friends or professional help if necessary.



Ask Yourself...

1. **Where are you feeling pain or exhaustion in your body?** Is the pain associated with a specific feeling? For example, is anxiety making it hard to sleep? Have you felt more back or neck pain in quarantine? Tap into your body and acknowledge it.
2. **Are there things that you can control** — even from within feelings of isolation that can help reduce your pain or stress levels?
3. **How does staying inside impact your physical and self-care routines?** How can those routines be adapted to your quarantine and chronic illness reality?
4. **Write a letter to your body.** What would you say to it as it experiences fear, uncertainty, and anxiety?
5. **What are the things that you can rely on to help you find stress relief?** It's often fun to write these onto a big piece of paper, colored in or designed with illustrations. List every single stress relief tool so that you can refer to this page as a toolbox.
6. **How have anxiety and fear changed your relationship with your illness?**
7. **What have you endured, survived, and conquered in your life regarding your illness?**
8. **What have those experiences taught you about survival, change, and traumatic experiences?**



9. **Imagine a safe space** that is inviting, calming, and recuperating. What does it look, feel, smell, and sound like?
10. **Write down your current emotional, physical, and mental needs.** How can you find ways to fulfill them during the day?
11. **Do you have health anxiety?** Is the coronavirus pandemic making it worse, or harder to cope? Can you explore some of the reasons why — along with some of the facts that keep you grounded? How can you prevent catastrophizing?
12. **Are you being kind to yourself** in this hard time? How can you be kinder to yourself?
13. **When you begin to worry** about your body and health, what can you do to get control and seek support? Who is part of your support team?
14. **Write a letter to yourself about adaptability and resilience.** What has your body taught you? How can it help get you through worry around the coronavirus?
15. **Do you feel out of control?** If so, why? What are some of the ways you do have control? How is control connected to life with a disease? Has your disease made control seem appealing, or has it inspired you to let go of control a little more?
16. **What are five things you can do right now** that can support your mental and physical well-being after a night of falling into a bad news spiral? How can these things help your stress levels and your disease?
17. **In which ways do your mental health and your physical health connect?** Do you notice changes in your pain or fatigue when you are stressed out?
18. **Is the quarantine causing accessibility issues for you?** How is this making you feel — and what are the ways you can help?
19. **How are others making you feel** about your experience and feelings?
20. **What does it look like when you show yourself compassion,** patience, and love during hard times? How does this benefit your body and mind?
21. **Picture yourself surrounded by joy.** What is joy? What is its shape, color, sound, or texture? Picture yourself being encompassed by it and held up in its arms. How do you feel? How does this help to provide support for your body and mind?

Bonus Worksheet #2:

Writing Prompts

We often put our renewed energy toward creating something (designing a new room or writing a book) or becoming politically active (advocating for disease funding or working for gun control). Frequently, we focus on helping others face or avoid a similar trauma, while allowing us to create something good and meaningful from the pain we have endured.

If you haven't yet begun to establish your writing practice, get comfortable, select a prompt from the list below, and begin writing. Give it your best. Go at your own pace.



• Writing Prompt: A Positive Change

Choose a person who has changed you in a positive way. You can also choose an experience that has changed your life. Describe this person or experience. Tell the story. Discuss how and why your attitude changed.

• Writing Prompt: Finding an Ending

Is there an experience inside your head that won't seem to go away? What is it? Why does it haunt you? Does this story need an ending? Explore your story.

• Writing Prompt: A Letter

If you are struggling, write a letter to a loved one. Decide what you need to tell her or him. Then simply put your pen to paper and let your message and your stories come. Write for as long as you need to. Come back to this if you need to. When you reread this letter later, decide if you should send it, destroy it, lock it away, or publish it.

• Writing Prompt: Dialogues

When you are faced with an illness, disease, or injury, you need to reach an understanding of what has happened. You can begin by having a conversation with your body. A dialogue is a

script that bounces back and forth between you and another person, pet, thing — or, in this case, your body.

By talking or using dialogue you allow your inner voice or wisdom to help you understand your illness, disease, or injury. Don't judge or criticize what you write. View this as a search that might reveal some important insights. It might start like this:

- Self: Body, why are you so exhausted?
- Body: You saw the test results.
- Self: I did, and I didn't like them. I am afraid of my disease.
- Body: I think we need to make some changes.
- Self: What are you thinking? Maybe diet?

Play out your conversation with yourself to find answers that will help you get a handle on your situation.

Writing Prompt: Exploring Your Truths

Choose one of these prompts, and free-write for five minutes. If the topic takes off, stay with it until you reach a point of completion. If the writing seems stuck, choose another prompt. Revise it if needed:

- I have never talked about this...
- The hardest lie I ever told was...
- The way it really was...
- It is dangerous to...
- This story is hidden in a box in the back of my mind. It begins...

Writing Prompt: Words That Heal

Choose a word associated with healing:

For example: hope, resilience, courage, endurance, patience, fortitude, tenacity, heroism, optimism, confidence, or strength. (Choose a word not on the list if you think it fits.) Write a brief character description of one person you know who mirrors this word in the way she lives. Now choose a word that you want to embrace more fully in your life. Start with a statement like this:

- I want to be more hopeful...

Excerpted from the book *The Story You Need to Tell: Writing to Heal from Trauma, Illness, or Loss*.
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Facilitated by Christie Cox
www.holdingitalltogether.com

- I want to be more patient...
- I want to be more...

Then write a brief character sketch looking into your future. Create a portrait of you as someone who is hopeful or patient or _____.

Writing Prompt: Downside-Upside

Make a list of all the difficult aspects of facing an illness, injury, or any difficult situation. Write first about what brings you down, what you hate, what isn't fair — the downside. Then scribble it out or draw x's through it or rip it up.

Now write about what you have learned, what you value, and what you can build on from this experience. Draw a frame or stars around your upside. Write how you can live your upside more fully. Then go out and live it.