

# Keeping a journal

Keeping a journal can help you learn more about your thoughts and feelings. It's not always easy. It can be hard to write about your feelings. But writing in a journal is a great way to help you identify and deal with the stress in your life.

## Tips for keeping a journal

- **Focus on your thoughts and feelings.** Don't just write about things that happen. Write about the good thoughts and feelings you have, not just the stressful ones
- **Write for yourself.** This helps you to be honest. (At some point, though, you may want to share the journal with someone. It could be a counselor, or a trusted friend, or family member who can give you feedback)
- **Set the stage.** Find a comfortable spot to sit, take a deep breath, and begin. Try to keep writing for 20 minutes without stopping, or for as long as you can
- **Write every day.** It may help to write at the same time every day, maybe after dinner or before bed
- **How well you write doesn't matter.** You don't have to use complete sentences or good spelling. Just put pen to paper and keep it moving
- **Buy a journal you'll enjoy using,** perhaps with drawings or colored pages. Use colored pens or pencils if you like

If you don't like to write, speak your thoughts into an electronic recording device.

## Sample entry

*"My day at work was really stressful. I don't want to make a mess of tomorrow's presentation. I keep thinking about it. I wonder: Why do I feel this way? Will it be worse tomorrow? What if I fail? What's the worst that can happen? What's the best possible outcome? I need to write down the answers to these questions. I need to relax, so I'll plan to take a yoga class this week. That always helps me get rid of tension and helps me see things clearly."*

**Talk to your doctor to learn how to manage stress in your life. Your doctor may recommend seeing a counselor for other ways to manage stress.**



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