

# Journaling: Power of the Pen


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# Overview

- Health benefits of expressive writing
- Why/How it helps
- Themes / approaches that can be used to guide a personal practice
- Writing activity
- Sharing (no pressure!)

*“I never travel without my diary. One should always have something sensational to read on the train” — Oscar Wilde*



# Health Benefits of Expressive Writing

- Improved immune system functioning
- Improved mood
- Feeling of greater psychological well-being
- Decreased blood pressure
- Increased lung function
- Fewer stress-related visits to doctor



# Why it Works

- Exact mechanism unclear
- Allows you to track patterns, trends, and improvement, which can help you build a coherent narrative
- Enables you to deal with stress, rather than avoiding it



# Tips for Success

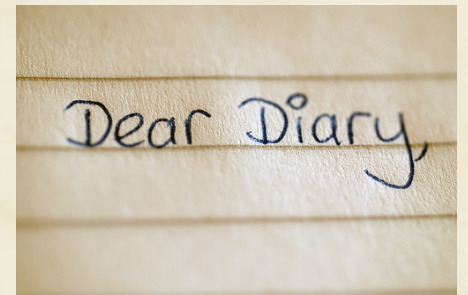
- 3 – 4 sessions (per week or per month)
- Write on consecutive days/weeks
- 15 – 20 min. per session
- Let go of perfection
- Reflecting vs ruminating
- **Meaning-making** (e.g., using words like ‘understand’, ‘realize’, ‘because’)





# Themes / Approaches

- Writing vs Typing
- Essay-style vs. lists/point-form
- Morning pages
- Art-based journaling
- Choose a focus:
  - Three good things, Three bad things
  - 1 hope, 1 fear, 1 gratitude, 1 good vibe to send out
  - Guided questions
  - Quotes/Songs





## kintsukuroi

(n.) (v. phr.) "to repair with gold"; the art of repairing pottery with gold or silver lacquer and understanding that the piece is more beautiful for having been broken



# Kintsugi Philosophy

- Repair becomes a highlighted part of the history of an object, rather than something to disguise
- Embracing of the flawed or imperfect
- Encompasses concepts of non-attachment, and acceptance of change



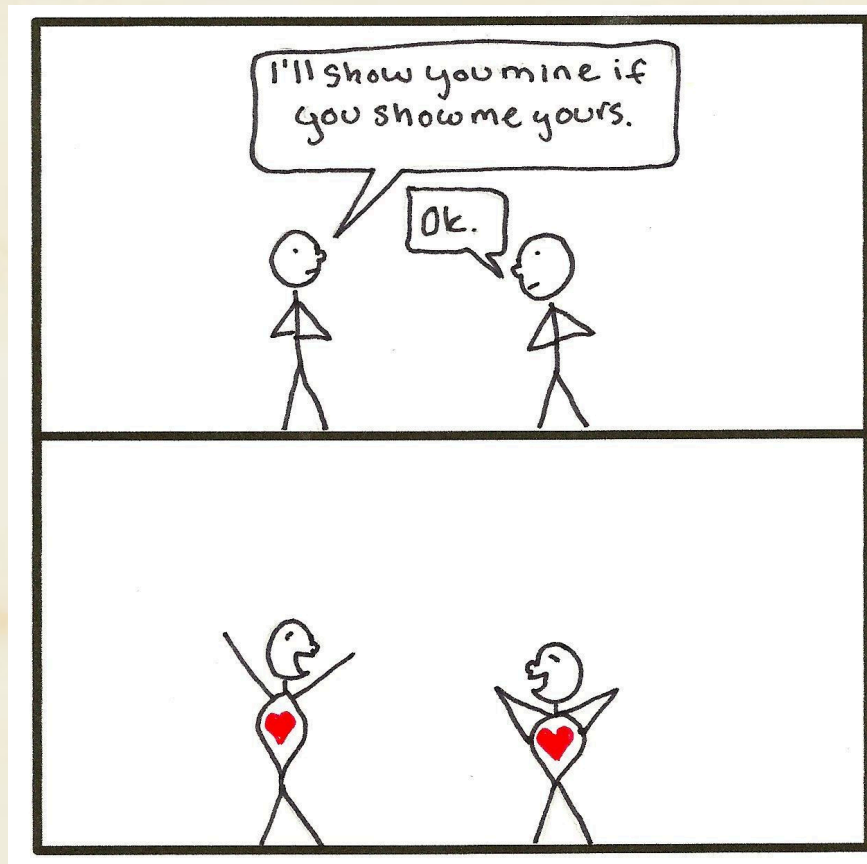


# Writing Activity

Q. How is the philosophy behind Kintsugi reflected in your own life?

Q. What resources/experiences/people have served as the "gold" in helping you put the pieces of your life back together after a cancer diagnosis?

# Sharing (no pressure!)





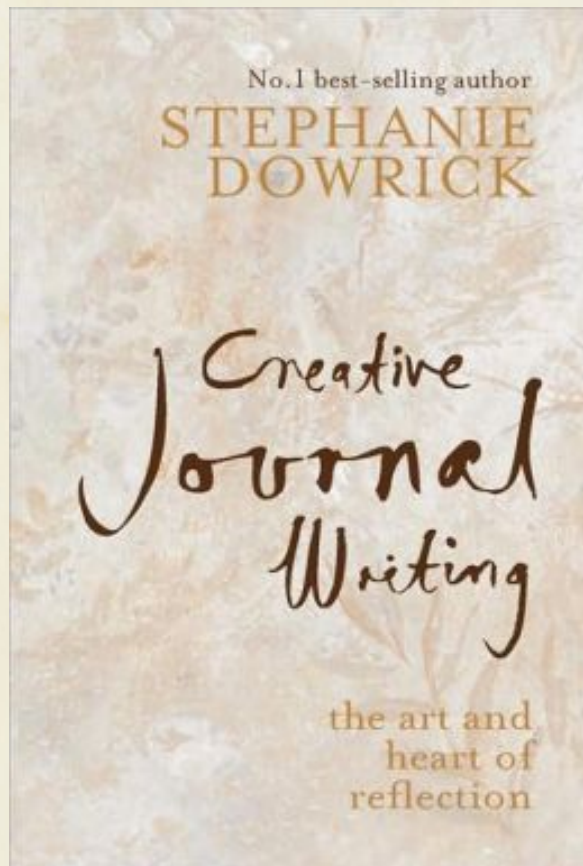
# References

Baikie, K. A. & Wilhelm, K. (2005). Emotional and physical health benefits of expressive writing. *Advances in Psychiatric Treatment*, 11, 338-346.

Murray, B. (2002). Writing to heal. *Monitor on Psychology*, 33(6), 54.

Purcell, M. (2006). The health benefits of journaling. *Psych Central*. Retrieved on May 22, 2014 from <http://psychcentral.com/lib/the-health-benefits-of-journaling/000721>

# Resources



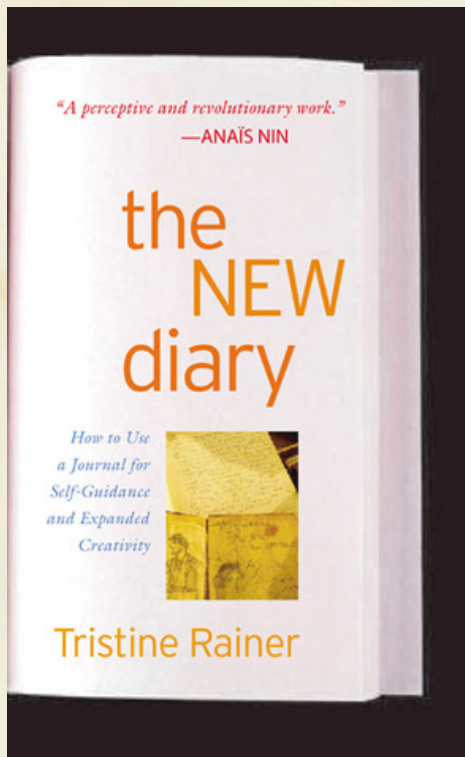
## **Creative Journal Writing: The Art and Heart of Reflection** *(Stephanie Dowrick, 2009)*

This book offers:

- stories of how people have used journal writing to transform their lives
- Inspirational instructions, guidelines, and quotations
- Key principles, practical suggestions, and helpful hints
- 125 starter topics designed to help even the most reluctant journal-writer
- Dozens of powerful exercises



# Resources cont.



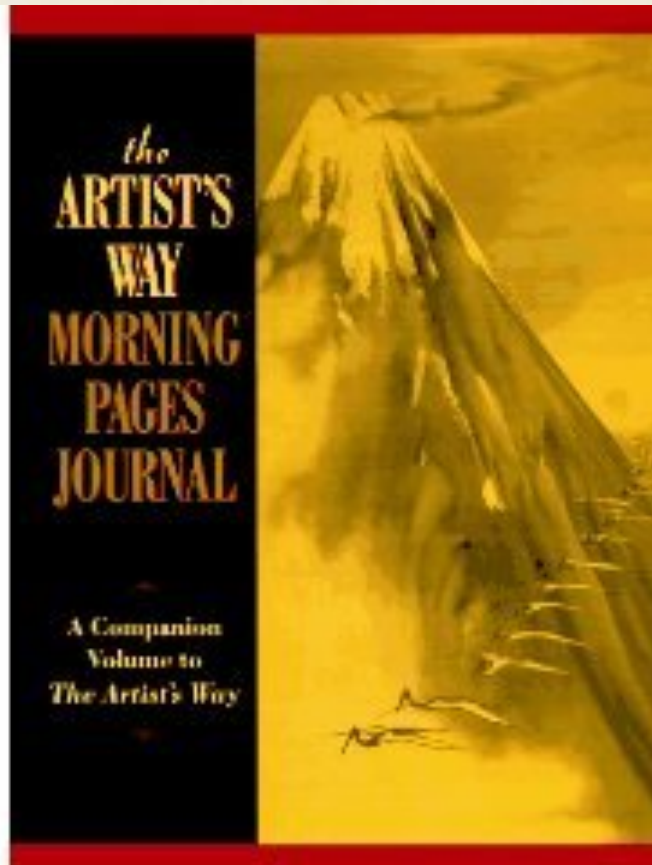
## The New Diary *(Tristine Rainer, 1979, updated in 2004)*

About this book *(from amazon.ca):*

*A New Diary is as much for those who already keep a journal as it is for those who have never kept one. It does not tell you the "right" way to keep a diary; rather, it offers numerous possibilities for using the diary to achieve your own purposes. It is a place for you to clarify goals, visualize the future, and focus your energies; a means of freeing your intuition and imagination; a workbook for exploring your dreams, your past, and your present life. It is for everyone seeking concrete methods for dealing with personal problems. It is for women and men interested in achieving self-reliance and inner liberation, for artists and writers seeking new techniques for overcoming blocks to creativity.*



# Resources cont.

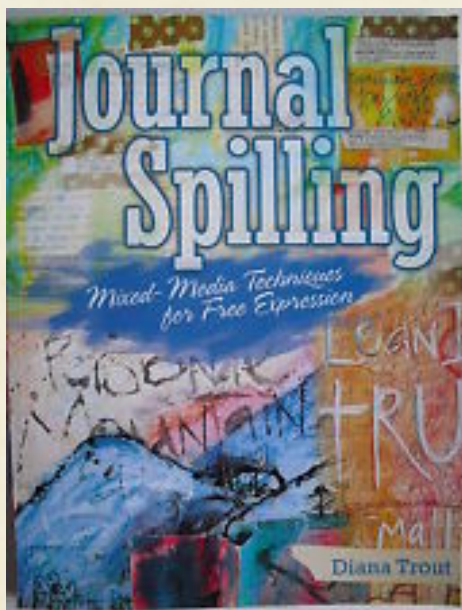


## **The Artist's Way: Morning Pages Journal** *(Julia Cameron, 1997)*

Review from amazon.ca


*The idea behind Julia Cameron's The Artist's Way is that by writing three pages, longhand and stream-of consciousness, first thing in the morning, you can overcome the obstacles that stop you from becoming your most creative self... If you would like to keep your first twelve weeks of morning pages together in one tidy place, The Artist's Way Morning Pages Journal is a fine tool for doing so. Each nearly blank page features an inspiring quotation from The Artist's Way. We should mention that many of these little inspirations include references to God, which may be troublesome even for spiritual atheists. --Jane Steinberg*

# Resources cont.



## Journal Spilling: Mixed-Media Techniques for Free Expression (Diana Trout, 2009)

- Offers step-by-step instruction on mixed media techniques:
  - using salt, alcohol and wax paper as resists for watercolor
  - “spilling” color over your page with the help of watercolor crayons
  - Creating unique lines and shapes with a fun ink-blowing technique
  - Making secret pockets and flaps for storing wishes and private reflections
  - Caring and stamping with hand-carved stamps
- Offers prompts and inspiring writing exercises



“We do not write in order  
to be understood; we  
write in order to  
understand”

- Cecil Day-Lewis