

# Unleashing The Power of Journaling: Transform Your Life One Page At A Time

Jonathan Besser, Managing Consultant, Intrepid Leadership

November 2023

On the most recent Sunday morning, I woke up to take my youngest daughter to her youth rugby practice and realised two things had happened:

**One**, the clocks here in the UK had gone back signalling the fast gallop towards the festive season when the days start to get longer (it's only 6-weeks folks); and

**Two**, my smartphone had undergone one of the overnight operating system updates.

What was interesting was that I saw that a '*Journal*' app had been added automatically to the home screen. If this is now appearing as a home screen app, then this highly recommended and cathartic activity has *really* arrived!

I say this with my 'tongue-in-my-cheek', as journaling is something I try to practice myself, as well as something I recommend and discuss with all my coachees.



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Journaling can be incredibly reflective and cathartic, it can also be a tool to look back on when undergoing a journey or transformation, through good times and bad.

Journals can take various forms, including handwritten notebooks, digital documents, or even online blogs. The beauty of journaling lies in its flexibility; it can be tailored to suit individual preferences, purposes and needs.

For several reasons, journaling can also be incredibly transformational. These include, and are not limited to:



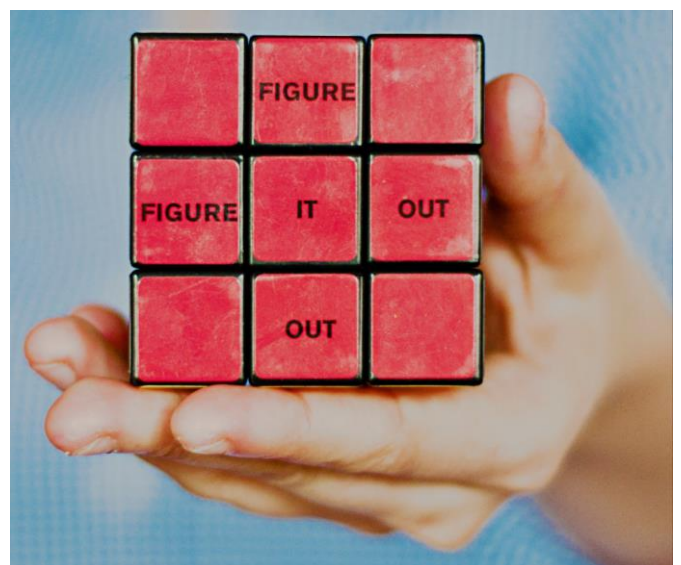
- Self-Reflection and Self-Awareness: Writing down thoughts and emotions, allows one to step back and gain perspective. This can help in identifying patterns of thinking and behaviour, leading to enhanced self-awareness. Understanding one's own reactions to situations creates empowerment to make conscious decisions, fostering personal growth.

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- Emotional Catharsis: Journaling provides a safe space to release pent-up emotions and frustrations. By putting feelings into words, one acknowledges and validates them. This emotional catharsis can be incredibly liberating, reducing stress and promoting mental well-being.
- Problem Solving: When faced with challenges or dilemmas, journaling can serve as a problem-solving tool. Writing about the issue helps one to organise thoughts, explore different perspectives and brainstorm solutions. It encourages logical thinking and often leads to innovative insights.
- Improved Communication Skills: Writing regularly hones communication skills. As one articulates thoughts and experiences, well-reasoned arguments and succinct expression will evolve as a consistent skill. This skill often translates into better communication in personal and professional relationships.``



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- Increased Gratitude and Positivity: Gratitude journaling, where one regularly writes down things to be thankful for, fosters a positive outlook on life. It shifts a focus from what's lacking to what one has, promoting happiness and a more positive outlook.
- Tracking Personal Development: Over time, your journal becomes a record of personal evolution. Flipping through past entries allows for one to see how far along a journey one has come, providing a sense of achievement and insight along your journey of self-improvement.



Getting started is often the hardest part of anything new, especially for journaling. These are a few tips to try, in order to make a start and unblock the inner journaller:

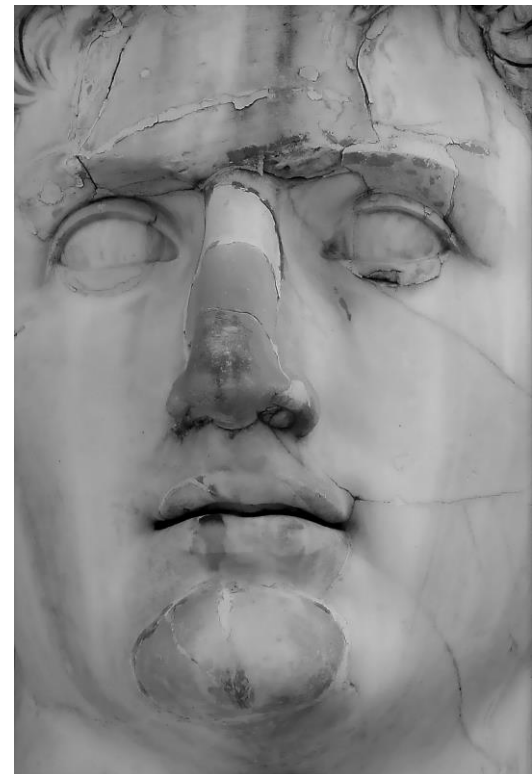
- Find Your Personal Style: Journaling is a deeply personal practice. Some people prefer structured entries, while others thrive on stream-of-consciousness writing..

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- Find the Best Environment For YOU: Find a quiet, comfortable space where you can write without interruptions. Setting a calming atmosphere can enhance your focus and creativity during the journaling process.
- Date Your Entries: Always date your journal entries. This simple practice allows you to track your progress, observe patterns and provide context to your thoughts and emotions.
- Embrace Imperfection: Your journal is not a literary masterpiece; it's a raw, unfiltered expression of your thoughts. Don't worry about grammar, punctuation, or spelling. Embrace the imperfections and focus on the content and emotions behind your words.
- Use Visual Elements: Incorporate sketches, doodles, or clippings from magazines and newspapers if you enjoy visual expression. Visual elements can add depth to your entries and serve as creative outlets





## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

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- Reflect and Review: Try to revisit past entries. Reflecting on your journey, observing changes in your mindset and celebrating your achievements are hugely valuable. This reflection can provide insights and direction to your personal growth.
- Journaling as an Act of Mindfulness: Use journaling as a form of mindfulness. Pay attention to your thoughts, sensations and emotions as you write. Mindful journaling can deepen your self-awareness and provide a sense of calm.
- Be Patient and Persistent: Journaling, like any habit, takes time to develop. Be patient with yourself, especially if you miss a day or two. Don't view it as a failure but as an opportunity to return with fresh perspectives.

Journaling acts as a personal mirror, reflecting innermost thoughts and feelings. I find it incredibly helpful and reflective – from aspirations to working through bad days and poor conversations; family, friends, colleagues, success and losses, I've also used journaling as a tool, when things have been going well and poorly, to remind myself of the journey I've been on and what I might say to my developing self, 30-odd-years ago.

As I say, it's a personal journey and different people will use journaling for different things. What is true, is that by regularly engaging in this reflective practice, anyone will gain profound insights into themselves, paving the way for personal transformation and self-discovery. Ultimately, it is up to you how to use it and what you will get from it. The practice is for you, no one else, and you've nothing to lose by trying!

I'd be really interested to know, perhaps in the comments section, your views on journaling, potential pitfalls, when you use it and why!

Post-Script: It is only subsequent to my Sunday-morning epiphany and writing these thoughts down that I remembered that I am part of a beta-test group, so I have the journaling app in advance of mass release, which will be available in December.

It's still pretty cool that Journaling is not mainstream. IMHO!