

Journaling during therapy

Please note, only persist with this if it is *helpful*. Some of the suggested questions may feel too probing, and if that's the case you can choose not to continue. You are doing the best you can, sometimes we all need support and journaling might not be for everyone. It's up to you which questions you engage with, if any, you can also decide on your own more helpful questions.

Why it can be helpful to keep a journal during therapy:

- it can help you to bring behaviours, thoughts or feelings into your conscious awareness by helping you to view these with some distance
- seeing your words and experiences in black and white can help you to understand yourself a little more and offer yourself some compassion. You might see what you have experienced there for the first time, and see, with an almost factual awareness how painful or tough things have been
- It can almost extend the therapy session and allow more space for reflection about the session and your experiences
- it can give you a space to be totally honest about your experiences without having to deal with another's reaction
- you might become aware of what you are not sharing in therapy and through this awareness hopefully, when it feels right enough for you, share and therefore deepen our engagement.
- record the changes and shifts that you experience during our time together
- record moments, thoughts, phrases, feelings and experiences which have touched you and helped in some way so you might choose to return to this learning in the future.

How do you begin?

1. Choose your preferred way of writing, whether it's a nice book or the computer.
2. Make sure you feel comfortable with the security of your method e.g. so you're not worried about someone reading your journal, whether that is a secret place or a password protected document
3. You will find your own way, but here are a few questions to begin with...
 - What feels bad/good just now? What is so bad/good about this feeling? How do I experience this feeling in my body? What is the worst/best of it?
 - What was helpful in therapy? What could've been better?
 - What am I not sharing? What reaction do I fear? Does this remind me of something?
 - What stands in the way of things change? What feeling is this connected to?
 - What could I have done differently? What did I do well?
 - What else is on my mind? What else am I feeling?
 - How can I take care of myself just now? If I were to do this how might this feel? What stands in the way of me doing this? How can I make it possible to do this kind of thing for myself?

You may choose to ask the same questions each time you make an entry, or mix it up, basically do anything you find useful.