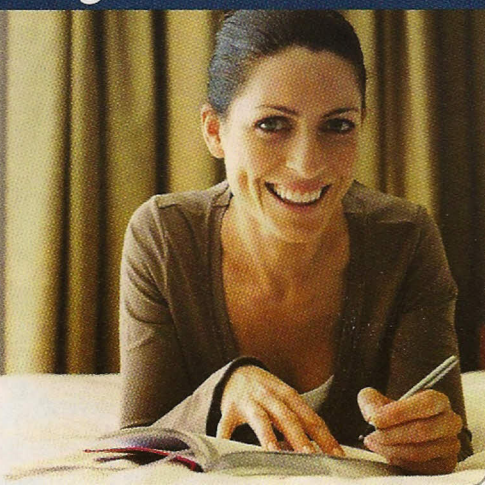




Write Way to Raise Your Spirits

If you're suffering an unhappy event, writing about it in a journal can make you feel better, based on research. In part, writing organizes your thoughts, which makes the experience feel less chaotic. It also provides an emotional release and insight into yourself and your ability to manage the situation.

A study in the *Annals of Behavioral Medicine* (8/02) found that participants who used journaling to express and understand their feelings derived the most health



benefits, including less stress and improved well-being.

Putting negative emotions into words doesn't always come naturally. There are no rules, except these writing sessions are for you alone unless you choose to share them. Your personal journal allows you to explore and quietly vent your negative feelings. In

the private world of journaling, grammar, spelling and format are irrelevant. What does matter is the opportunity to release troublesome emotions about anything or anyone in your life.

Journaling allows you to examine stressful or negative circumstances and move forward with a solution. Just knowing you have choices builds confidence, reduces the stress that's disrupting your life and increases your sense of control.

Set aside time each day to journal, or as often as you can. Choose a quiet, private place to write. No matter what the problem, if it's negatively affecting your life, pull out your pen (or fire up your laptop), and get started. Do it for you.

MIND Your Mental Health

Help for Life's Challenges

At some point, everyone faces personal hardships. At those times, you learn what you're made of – it's probably stronger stuff than you might guess. Whether you are facing divorce, economic loss, or illness, look to your internal strength to manage your external turmoil in positive ways.

Having strong coping strategies can also be a great help.

The first step is to learn as much as possible. If you're facing a divorce or recovering from an injury, think about how this event will impact your life in the next few weeks and years. Collect all the facts and make sure you're viewing the situation realistically. A problem that feels all-consuming may seem easier if you see it in relation to your entire life.

Watch for unhealthy habits. During stressful times, it's easy to stumble along the way and make negative choices, such as abusing alcohol or overeating. But these are warning signs that you're not coping well or accepting the change. Get help before your behavior makes matters worse.

Get support. Don't isolate yourself or be afraid to ask for help. Talking with friends about your fears and frustrations can help you cope emotionally. Seek advice for the problem, especially from those who've had similar experiences. Consider joining a support group or check with your company's employee assistance program.

SELF-HELP: A good way to regain your self-esteem is by taking time out to do something positive for you. Start an exercise program or volunteer for some charity work. Make sound sleep and nutrition a priority every day. Try to write down your feelings – read the article above to learn how.

