Mental Health and Gratitude Journal

Atlantic Health System

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

Let's Stand Together to Raise Mental Health Awareness

On behalf of Atlantic Behavioral Health and CONCERN, we want to thank you for all that you do. Giving thanks is a way to show appreciation for someone or something. Gratitude is also a way to lift your mental health and provide an opportunity to stop and think about the people and experiences that bring you joy and comfort.

May is Mental Health Awareness Month where we ask you to focus on growing your mental health. This year we highlight “Loving Kindness Mindfulness.”

There are many ways to do that that with:

- Love and kindness
- Good self-care
- Partnerships with medical providers
- Connections to friends/family/community
- Gratitude

Mindfulness practices are all about grounding you to your senses and the world around you. Loving-kindness meditation helps you add a layer of positivity with simple phrases of love, kindness and compassion towards yourself and those around you.

We hope that you use this journal as a guide to help you write about the things, people, places or experiences for which you are grateful. What are you thankful for? Was there a goal you have accomplished, or a challenge you overcame?

Sharing feelings about gratitude with your family models the value of having gratitude, appreciating the people in your life, and viewing life through this lens. Sharing your feelings in this way can make us feel closer around something positive and life affirming.

Introduction

Welcome to your **Good Mental Health Journal**. The practice of writing a journal goes back many years. As far back as the 1600s, people have been journaling to inspire creativity and document history. Many famous people, and countless private people throughout history have taken up a pen and put their thoughts, feelings and concerns into a diary or journal that no one else may ever see.

There is no rulebook about how to journal. This can be whatever you need or want it to be. Think about why you might want to take up journaling.

Here are a few reasons to journal:

- Some people journal to keep track of things that are happening in their lives or to better understand the past.
- For others, their journal becomes a trusted, safe place where they can hear themselves think more clearly and get to know themselves more deeply.
- It could also be the place you flesh out your hopes and dreams for the future.

One of the best things about keeping a journal is that you become more self-aware. You begin to learn more about yourself. Often our thoughts rush around inside our heads leading to a lot of intense emotions. Ultimately, this can lead to behaviors that are not always our best. Journaling can slow those racing thoughts down and reduce intense emotions, allowing us to think about, plan and make better choices in what we want to do in our life.

There is a lot of research that shows the mental health benefits of keeping a journal. Here are some of the benefits:

- Journaling can help reduce anxiety and depression.
- People have found journaling to be a source of healing and comfort during times of grief or loss.
- When recovering from a traumatic life event, journaling can be a part of recovery.
- It can even help you to feel more joy, happiness, and gratitude.

Frequently Asked Questions

When it the best time to start a journal?

The best time to start a journal is right now. Whenever you feel inspired. There is no wrong time to start. In fact, receiving a journal as a gift is often the time we decide to begin. Take this gift as an invitation to begin.

Do I need to share what I write in my journal?

NO. In fact, there is freedom in knowing that this is just for you. You may decide to share something from your journal, and you might discover that your journal writing leads to important conversations with people in your life. To share or not to share is totally up to you.

I don't know what to write.

That is a common experience when first starting a journal. The blank page can be intimidating. Some people decide to set a timer and write for a specific amount of time. Other decide to write until a page is filled. Sometimes people choose to write exactly that; "I don't know what to write" over and over again, until the ideas start to flow. It is ok, because you can't make a mistake.

Isn't writing in a journal for "kids"?

The truth is that journal writing is for all people of all ages and stages of life.

Where do I start?

This journal offers you twelve prompts to move you through the year. You can begin at any time and if you fill these pages, we invite you to start another one.

May this journal open you up to the most important thing in the world, knowing and appreciating yourself more deeply.

Journal Prompt 1 - Beginnings

Welcome to your new beginning. The beginning might be the start of a new year, or an ending of something significant that will open new doors for you. Take a few minutes to settle yourself in. With your journal and pen in hand, take a few deep breaths.

What is happening right now that is just beginning for you?
This might be a new job, relationship or a new health care goal.

Journal Prompt 2 - Home

Reflecting is a big part of journaling. Take some time to reflect on your life. Here are some prompts to get you started. As always, you can write what you need to write.

What do you remember about the first place you lived growing up? *Write about what it looked like, who was living with you, how you felt living there. Notice any emotions that might come up as you reflect on this time of your life. Be patient and easy with yourself.*

Journal Prompt 3 - Family

We all had someone who took care of us growing up. It might have been a parent, grandparent, or other family. It could have been foster parents.

Looking back on your life, who helped you to grow up?
Who made it harder for you to grow up?
This prompt might bring up strong feelings that you might not have realized were there. Make sure you have some time to rest after writing today.

Journal Prompt 4 - Learning & Growth

Going to school is a major life milestone. Those can be years filled with making friends, learning, and joining clubs, sports or groups.

What was it like for you going to school? How does that experience impact the way you learn today in your life?

Journal Prompt 5 - Friendship & Community

Friendships are important for our well-being and mental health.

Write about a friend who has impacted your life.

Journal Prompt 6 - Work and Meaning

Work is something we all must do. Sometimes we love our work and sometimes it just pays the bills.

Write about your first job, the job you thought you would do or your feelings about what you are doing for work at this time of your life.

Journal Prompt 7 - Love

Relationships are the pillars of human life. They also tend to be where we get hurt the deepest.

Write about who you have loved, who you love now, or how love has disappointed you in your life.

Journal Prompt 8 - Resilience

Hardships happen to everyone at some point in life.

Write about a hardship you have faced and overcome.

Journal Prompt 9 - Joy & Happiness

We all deserve to have some happiness and joy.

What brings you happiness at this time of your life? Is this something you must work on or is it flowing easily for you now?

Journal Prompt 10 - Hopes & Dreams

Hopes and dreams are the fuel that keeps us going forward.

Write about some of your hopes and dreams at this stage of your life.

Journal Prompt 11 - Endings

Endings sometimes are a time of difficulty and sometimes a time of relief.

Write about something that is coming to an end for you and how you feel about that.

Journal Prompt 12 - Gratitude

Cultivating gratitude can be a lifelong skill to be developed. Gratitude is a way to build resilience, increase happiness and promote good mental health. When we practice gratitude, we are tuning into the good that is around us. Even when things seem difficult, with practice, we can find things in our life for which we are grateful.

Take some time to write about the things you are grateful for. There are different levels of gratitude. Think about your gratitude in small, medium and large terms.

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