



**INTRODUCTION TO JOURNALING
FOR INDIVIDUALS LIVING WITH BRAIN INJURY**

Forward from Brain Injury Canada

BEFORE YOU START:

When journaling, you may visit past or current trauma, difficult memories, and complex emotions. The purpose of journaling is to connect more deeply with your emotions and experiences, and there may be parts of the journaling process that make you uncomfortable. In this discomfort, you may be able to work through and find other emotions and memories that can help you cope with trauma. While we encourage people not to shy away from prompts that may bring those experiences to the surface, we recommend that if at any point you get overwhelmed, you take a break by either stepping back or moving to another section of the workbook.

If / when you are ready to revisit any prompts that may be more challenging for you, do so at a slower pace in an environment where you feel safe and secure. Your journal can be private, but if having someone with you is helpful, you should choose what is right for you.

“To name the world in your own terms, to tell your own story, is an act of authority and power. When you write, you are saying, in effect, ‘I have a voice. I have a story. This is what I have to say.’”

~ Rebecca McClanahan, *Write Your Heart Out*



Part one

Introduction

Telling Your Story

By accessing this journaling workbook, you have chosen to tell your story of acquired brain injury and its effects on your life and the lives of your loved ones. You are seeking to make sense of what happened, and you have taken a brave step.

One of the best ways to know and understand the events of our lives and their impact is by using a centuries-old, uniquely human, and innate skill that we all have: storytelling. This journaling workbook is intended to help you tell your own story your way and from your perspective. This journal workbook is your truth. We hope that it will act as an aid in your mental, physical, and spiritual well-being.

We understand that your brain injury may have affected your ability to write by hand or communicate the way you used to. This workbook tells you other ways to Journal than writing by hand (voice & video recordings, for example). And, it's perfectly okay that you may not communicate, find the right words, or write in full sentences as you once did or will in the future—Journal however you can, what you can. Just be you as you are the day you Journal. That's one of the most important parts of Journaling – **the freedom to be exactly who you are at any given time in your life journey.**

How storytelling can support your well-being

Following a brain injury your life and world change. There is a great deal to make sense of. In *Forming a Story: The Health Benefits of Narrative* ⁽¹⁾ by James W. Pennebaker and Janel D. Seagal tells us,

"...constructing stories is a natural human process that helps individuals to understand their experiences and themselves.

This process allows one to organize and remember events in a coherent fashion while integrating thoughts and feelings.

In essence, this gives individuals a sense of predictability and control over their lives. Once an experience has structure and meaning, it would follow that the emotional effects of that experience are more manageable."

Barbara Stahura, a Certified Journal Facilitator, is the primary author of *After Brain Injury: Telling Your Story* ⁽²⁾, the first journaling book for people with brain injury. In this book, she offers the following:

"As a person with brain injury, you have been hurt and traumatized by something most people haven't experienced and can't understand. No matter how you suffered, your brain injury or what type it is, you now must deal with some challenges you never expected or imagined.

One major challenge you face is making sense of a life disrupted and perhaps altered forever. Another is being accepted as a person who still has value and whose life still holds meaning and purpose.

*Yet another is revealing a new self to people, perhaps even your loved ones, who don't realize or understand the change the injury caused you (changes you may not understand, either). Since every brain injury is as unique as those who experienced it, you will face personal hurdles. However, no matter how many challenges your brain injury creates for you, one thing is certain: **You have a new story to tell.**"*

In the book, *Expressive Writing, Counseling and Healthcare* ⁽³⁾, contributor Barbara Stajira writes, "For many people with brain injury, the old story is gone or greatly changed. Journaling can be a tool that helps a person find their new normal post-injury and explore the next chapter."

In *Brainlash, Maximize Your Recovery from Mild Brain Injury* ⁽⁴⁾, author Gail L. Denton, Ph.D., who suffered a brain injury in 1991, writes,

"My Journal... was my way to reach inside and pull out my Self so that I could look at her and begin to figure out the new her! This woman was experiencing and expressing thoughts and emotions that the old me did not easily recognize as being ME. I wanted to know what was going on. I wanted some understanding, if not control. Journaling and storytelling was my way to make sense of my predicament."



Journaling and strong emotions

We want you to be comfortable and at ease within this workbook. However, we know telling the story of your brain injury may sometimes be upsetting or bring up strong feelings. Therefore, this journal workbook strives to help you recognize and be aware of how you feel while journaling. And importantly, we provide you with suggested actions that you can take when you feel strong emotions.

Emotional responses when journaling

Journaling is an emotional process, and in the case of brain injury, there may be aspects of your story that are traumatic or bring up bad feelings.

These feelings can often be brought on by people, words, smells, or even sounds that remind us of a time when we were scared, hurt, or angry – just to name a few examples. Having reactions to memories or your environment is completely normal.

Some of the prompts in this journal may bring up memories that are traumatic or feel bad. This can be difficult. But while you shouldn't journal when you're distressed, it's normal for journaling to make you a little uncomfortable – it's a tough thing to do! The important thing is you do your best, and don't shy away from discomfort.

Identifying what may make you feel strong emotions

Exploring your memories can be incredibly tough, particularly if they are traumatic. You may experience anxiety, panic, discouragement, despair, negative self-talk, indigestion, headaches, or body aches and pains as a reaction to particularly strong emotions such as anger, rage, sadness, and fear.

Some examples of things that can cause strong emotions

There are several things that can make some feel strong, overwhelming emotions – particularly if they are associated with your brain injury. These include:

- > Certain words
- > A person
- > Aggressive-sounding noises
- > Ambulance siren
- > Accessing feelings
- > Bright lights
- > The end of a relationship
- > Being alone
- > Being judged, criticized, or teased
- > Financial problems
- > Exposure to environmental situations that make you feel uncomfortable
- > Certain smells, tastes, or noises
- > Anything specifically related to how your brain injury happened
- > Trying to be positive

Journaling support plan

You may already know that there are some things that make you uncomfortable or that you find difficult to think about. At the start of the workbook, we're providing you with suggestions where you can write down the things that you know cause these feelings, or things you discover as you journal.

It's important to do your best to move through your discomfort and find a way to cope with those feelings while journaling. We have included some methods you can use to support yourself through your journal.

Methods for coping with discomfort while journaling

STOP AND BREATHE.

Stop journaling, place your hands on your lap, get comfortable, close your eyes, and just breathe. Put all your focus on your breath. Imagine breathing in 'calm' through your nose and exhaling any bad feelings out of your mouth. Repeat this until you're in a better place mentally and emotionally.

WRITE IN THE THIRD PERSON.

If you struggle to write in any section of this journal because the topic is upsetting or overwhelming, this technique will make thinking and writing much easier. Instead of writing "I," use the other pronoun you identify with (she/her he/him, they/them). Writing your journal entry in the third person as an observer, will remove you from the personal reality and help you gain a different perspective.

SKIP TO ANOTHER SECTION OF THE WORKBOOK.

Return when you can to the section that was uncomfortable.

PUT THE WORKBOOK DOWN.

Sometimes you just have to walk away and give yourself a break for a while. There's no deadline to finish any section. However, you will gain the most benefits from doing the exercises in every section at some point.

James Pennebaker's tells us ⁽⁵⁾ that the shift in pronouns in personal writing predict improvement in the writers' health. This shifting of pronouns demonstrates that the writers are changing the ways that are thinking about themselves relative to others.

Part two

Discovering a best friend

About journaling

“To journal is to write about your life – it is telling your story. Life-based writing is one of the most reliable and effective ways to heal, change, and grow.”

~ Kathleen Adams, author of *Journal to the Self* and Founder/Director of The Center for Journal Therapy

What is journaling?

- Journaling is the act of freely expressing your self
- A journal becomes your private record of your honest thoughts, feelings, experiences, and observations
- Journaling is an experience of pure freedom of expression; the opportunity to be you, exactly as you are at any given time of your life
- A journal is an empirically proven form of self-care for your mind, body, and spirit
- A journal can be life-changing and therapeutic at almost no cost
- A journal is an excellent form of life- and self-observation and learning

What’s the difference between a journal and a diary?

Simply put, a diary usually keeps a basic record of facts and events. A journal is much richer in content. It keeps a record of life events and facts but is more in-depth and revealing as it includes your thoughts, feelings, and perceptions. A journal also provides self-understanding and personal growth.

The rules of journaling

This may be one of the best things about journaling. There are no rules.

None.

There aren’t many things in life that we can say that about!

There are suggestions and tips for a satisfying journaling experience, and we’ll share that with you in another section of this workbook.

Is journaling for you?

“Journaling is like whispering to one’s self and listening at the same time.”

~ Mina Murray, author

The short answer? Yes!

Journaling is for everyone, and everyone can journal. You don’t need to be a ‘writer,’ have perfect penmanship or punctuation, or know how to spell. To journal, you simply need to be who you are in the moment.

The benefits you can reap will keep you coming back to your journal again and again.

Debunking the myths around journaling

Journaling is becoming more popular, and many people do it. Maybe you have been a life-long journal user. Maybe you have tried it and want to do it more often. Maybe hearing people talk about journaling has made you wonder if you should try it.

No matter where you are with journaling, please, never relate the word ‘should’ with journaling—that’s a guilt inducer that will ultimately stop you from using this amazing self-care tool.

Once you begin, journaling is completely under your control. When and how often you want or need to journal is your choice. What’s great are the many techniques to help you journal for five minutes or hours – whatever works best for you on that day. A few of those techniques are used in this workbook, and you will find out where to learn more about such techniques at the back of this workbook.

There are several myths about journaling that may be keeping you from trying. Let’s debunk some journaling myths that may get in your way.

Never relate the word ‘should’ with journaling; that’s a guilt inducer that will ultimately stop you from starting or continuing to journal.

Myth #1: There’s a proper way to journal

Maybe you read earlier in this workbook that there are no rules to journaling, which gets rid of this myth. “My journal, my way,” is a good motto.

You don’t have to be a writer: in fact, you don’t need to write words at all. Typing them on a computer is a great option, as is using a journaling application on a smartphone or tablet. You can talk aloud and use a speech-to-text program. You can also doodle, sketch, or paste collage materials into a scrapbook because scrapbooking is a visual form of journaling.

You don’t need to worry about spelling, grammar, or messy handwriting, either. Use shorthand or codes if you want. Try to block out the advice of your grammar teachers – remember, your journal, your way!

Myth #2: You can only record deep thoughts while journaling

You don't need to wait until you have something important or profound to say. First, please know that anything you include in your journal about your life—no matter how seemingly mundane—is important because **it's your life**.

The act of expressively writing (or doodling) about anything in your life can be therapeutic as well as often relaxing and anxiety-reducing.

To get the most benefit from journaling, it's important that you don't censor your thoughts by only writing the ones that are "poetic and meaningful." When you open up and freely journal out whatever is within your mind, body, and spirit, you'll find that your thoughts shape themselves.

Myth #3: Journaling is being self-obsessed

We're so happy to debunk this myth. The fact is, the better you know yourself, the more kindness you can show yourself and others during all of life's ups and downs. So, journaling is the opposite of being self-obsessed.

Myth #4: Journaling takes too much time

Yes, journaling takes time, but it also gifts you with time. How often do you take the time to let some steam out of your teapot or to take a bird's eye view of your life? To change your perspective on something that is difficult or bothering you? Journaling gifts you that time and all the benefits that come with it.

Plus, you'll be shocked at how much you can write in just five minutes!

Myth #5: I'm not good at writing

Journaling isn't homework or something you need to do perfectly. Journaling is very much like exhaling. By no means do you have to be a good writer to journal. Your journal isn't about showing off grammar or deep, profound thoughts: it's about writing down what's in your head and heart and soul, so you can get it out or sort it out. Once your thoughts and feelings are on the page you can learn, discover, observe – and do much more if you want.

Remember, you don't have to write to journal

You can type on a computer, use an app, do a voice or video recording and you can doodle, draw, make lists, and even scrapbook as a means of visual journaling.

It's not for an audience: it's for you, and you alone. Now that feels good!

A few reasons to journal

“I never wrote things down to remember; I always wrote things down so I could forget.”

~ Matthew McConaughey, *Greenlights*

The following are some positive reasons for journaling:

Self Care

- > Clear your mind
- > Release emotions
- > Relieve stress and anxiety
- > Improve mental and physical health and well-being
- > Unravel confusion
- > Make sense of your thoughts & feelings
- > Illuminate and recall lessons you've learned
- > Change your perspective
- > Learn more and more about yourself
- > Develop gratitude for the smallest things
- > See progress and changes throughout stages of your life
- > Better appreciate what you've gone through
- > Remind yourself why you acted a certain way
- > Purposely discover happiness within
- > Build self-confidence and self-love
- > Practice positivity
- > Learn to trust yourself
- > Learn what's important and what isn't
- > Record ideas and inspirations
- > Unload secrets
- > Always have a trusted confidant
- > Recall how you experienced your life
- > Record facts from your perspective
- > Capture detailed memories
- > Experience the relief of being 100% honest

Problem Solving

- > Vent!
- > Look at both (or more) sides
- > Foresee issues before they occur
- > Improve relations by describing what you appreciate about people
- > Prepare for confrontation

Family & Friends

- > Become a better parent, spouse, sibling, friend
- > Record details of important events & stories
- > Help future generations know you and the times in which you lived
- > Record the lives of your children & grandchildren
- > Remember what's important to your loved ones

Daily Life

- > Remember events before you forget them
- > Separate fact from fiction
- > Learn how to notice the little things
- > Have a guaranteed moment of reflection
- > Learn/remember from past entries

Trust the experts

“This pouring thoughts out on paper has relieved me. I feel better and full of confidence and resolution.”

~ Diet Eman, *Things We Couldn't Say*

Journaling has become more popular in part due to extensive research being done on the benefits of the practice. A vast amount of information exists to help guide you in your journaling purposes or goals.

Journaling after trauma: Research on the therapeutic benefits

For several decades, an increasing number of studies have proven that when a person writes about emotional and traumatic experiences, they may experience significant physical, mental health, and behavioural improvements as a result.

One of the first researchers to prove the scientific benefits of journaling (expressive writing) is Dr. James Pennebaker, Ph.D., an American social psychologist and lead researcher on Expressive Writing at the University of Texas. He has authored many studies and publications, including *Writing to Heal: A Guided Journal for Recovering from Trauma and Emotional Upheaval* (7). He conducted his original work on expressive writing and trauma in 1986.

In Pennebaker's original research (8), he assigned healthy undergraduate students to one of four groups: three groups wrote about personally traumatic life events for 15 minutes for four nights in a row, while the fourth group wrote about unimportant topics. The researchers tracked the participants' visits to the university health center over the next six months. They found that writing about traumatic events was associated with fewer visits to the health center.

The study showed people's health and productivity improved when they wrote about traumatic experiences or uncertainty—particularly if they constructed causal accounts or plans. Pennebaker found that translating our experiences into our own written language makes the experience more understandable. Pennebaker says, “Emotional upheavals touch every part of our lives. These things affect all aspects of who we are — our financial situation, our relationships with others, our views of ourselves and writing helps us focus and organize the experience.”

Since the initial experiment, the concept has been used in many studies of physical health and biological outcomes after journaling. Analyses of these studies confirmed the original finding: *expressive writing is generally associated with better health.*

The act of converting emotions and images into words changes the way you think and organize thoughts.

A more recent study (presented in a conference paper and submitted for publication by Pennebaker, Keith Petrie, Ph.D., and others) at the University of Auckland found a similar pattern among HIV/AIDS patients. Patients who wrote about life experiences measured higher immune functioning than the control group. This suggested journaling reduced their stress by releasing their illness-related anxiety. "By writing, you put some structure and organization to those anxious feelings," he explains. "It helps you to get past them."

Immediate and longer-term effects of expressive writing

The immediate impact of expressive writing is usually a short-term increase in distress, negative mood and physical symptoms. However, at longer-term follow-up, many studies have continued to find evidence of health benefits in terms of objectively assessed outcomes, self-reported physical health outcomes, and self-reported emotional health outcomes.

The article, *Emotional and Physical Health Benefits of Expressive Writing* offers the following about outcomes of expressive writing.

"By writing, you put some structure and organization to those anxious feelings which helps you to get past them."

Long-term effects of expressive writing

Health outcomes

- Fewer stress-related visits to the doctor
- Improved immune system functioning
- Reduced blood pressure
- Improved lung function
- Improved liver function
- Fewer days in the hospital
- Improved mood/affect
- A feeling of greater psychological well-being
- Reduced depressive symptoms before examinations
- Fewer post-traumatic intrusion and avoidance symptoms

Social and behavioural outcomes

- Reduced absenteeism from work
- Quicker re-employment after job loss
- Improved working memory
- Improved sporting performance
- Higher students' grade point average
- Altered social and linguistic behaviour

Why does writing work?

Journaling is expressive writing. Perhaps the main reason so many benefits can be derived from expressive writing is simply this: the value of expressing oneself and the relief that comes from being as honest as possible with ourselves.

Another explanation is that the act of converting emotions and images into words changes the way we think and organize thoughts. Therefore, once an experience has structure and meaning, it would follow that the emotional effects of that experience are more manageable, giving us greater control over our lives.

Journaling and privacy

Your journal is yours – that means that if you would like to keep it private, it is 100% your right to do so.

Suggestions to protect your privacy:

- Please get in the habit of storing your journal in its own special place where others aren't tempted to read it. If you have trouble with remembering where you keep your journal, leave yourself a note on your phone or a notepad
- On the first page of your journal, write your name and phone number and this: This is my personal journal. Please don't read it without my knowledge and permission. Thank you for respecting my privacy
- Ask the people you live with to respect your privacy
- Encourage others (especially children) living with you to begin journaling, too. Once they understand the need for privacy that a journal requires, they will be less tempted to read anyone else's
- You can use a password-protected digital journal, a notebook with a lock, or a locked drawer for extra privacy protection
- Use abbreviations or shorthand when you need to. If you write about a particularly negative situation or thought, use first initials or code words to portray the people involved

Please remember that if it is easier for you to journal with someone than to write, type, or speak out loud, that's okay! You can communicate your way with a trusted family member or friend who will keep your journal private.



Methods for journaling

“One of the greatest powers of journal writing is that over time it helps us notice, influence, and change the conversation the mind is having with itself.”

~ Christina Baldwin

There are so many ways to journal, and there’s no wrong way to journal. But one question we often get is whether it is best to handwrite a journal.

The short answer is yes. Journal therapists and professionals suggest that writing by hand offers benefits you don’t get with other journaling methods. It forces you to slow down because you must form the words on paper, and this helps organize your thoughts. It’s also more tactile and, somehow, physical. Julia Cameron, the author of *The Artist’s Way*, says that you’ll go flying past important events if you don’t write by hand. Writing by hand is also an easy way to have a journal that can go everywhere with you, because it isn’t dependent on technology.

However, some people do not have the mobility/dexterity to write by hand or don’t like to write with pen and paper. Don’t let that stop you from journaling— it’s not necessary to achieve meaningful, satisfying journaling! There are other ways.

USE A COMPUTER.

You can easily insert photos, memes, icons, and more into journal entries. It can also help you express yourself both verbally and visually. (You can add images in a written journal as well by pasting in things like that.)

APPS.

Many apps are available for your phone or electronic tablets that help you journal and keep you organized. You can find them easily wherever you download applications. Pick the best one for you based on reviews from other users. Please keep in mind that some apps have free versions, and some cost money.

VOICE-RECORDING.

This is a brilliant way to journal if you don’t like to or cannot write. Some computers can record your voice and store your voice journal on your computer. There are software and apps that can also transcribe your voice, so you can store a written version of your voice journal, too.

VIDEO RECORDING.

This method is excellent for people who want to leave a ‘living journal’ for others. There may come a time when you want to share parts of your life story and allowing future generations to see you and listen to you will be a privilege. Your phone can video you so easily and with such good quality nowadays – all you need to do is buy yourself a phone stand, and away you go!

You will need to pick a journaling method based on your abilities and what you like. And remember, there’s no wrong way to journal – you could even have multiple different types of journal entries if you would like to try different methods!

Tips for satisfying journaling

“I write because I don’t know what I think until I read what I said.”

~ Flannery O’Connor

There are no hard-set rules for keeping a journal. How often you write, how much time you spend, and whether you keep a regular journaling schedule are personal choices — and circumstances matter, too. What’s important is you find what works for you.

The following general guidelines may help you set up journaling as a regular habit.

DATE EVERY ENTRY: If you only establish one habit in your journal, let it be this one. This allows you to reconstruct your life story chronologically, and it also helps you observe cycles, trends, and patterns.

CREATE A COMFORTABLE JOURNALING ENVIRONMENT: Connecting journaling with other pleasurable things helps strengthen your routine and create an atmosphere of self-care. When you’re ready to journal, pour your favourite drink, play relaxing music, light candles, and sit in a comfy spot. Most of all, take a moment to stop and consciously breathe before you journal.

START WRITING, KEEP WRITING: Begin. Just begin. Put pen to paper and start to write. Once you’ve started, keep going. And don’t go back to correct your mistakes in word usage: your slip-ups can have meaning too!

LOSE THE GUILT, NO GUILT ALLOWED: Don’t feel guilty about when or how much you journal. Whether you write once a day, once a month, or once a year, congratulate yourself for keeping a journal.

KEEP WHAT YOU WRITE: This lets you learn from your experiences, see what’s changed, see how you’ve grown, and recognize patterns in yourself and others. You can also see associations between your stress levels and your health, improve your mood, what helped you feel better, and be able to review your life from a different perspective than when you wrote the journal entries.

TELL YOURSELF THE TRUTH: Your truth is not your enemy. Don’t try to talk yourself out of knowing what you know or feeling what you feel. You’ll get the best results in your journal if you give yourself permission to write your own truth and be honest with yourself.

DON’T CRITICIZE YOURSELF. Your internal critic is that ‘voice’ that tells you what you’re journaling is bad or even wrong. Those things are simply not possible while journaling. No matter what, your thoughts and feelings matter – so don’t let your inner critic tell you differently!

HAVE FUN! Journal writing can truly be a satisfying experience if we allow it to be. Enjoy the process of sharing your heart and soul in a journal. This isn’t a chore. Think of it as a luxury. Joy and clarity often will be found.

Dangers in journaling

“It is not always possible to do away with negative thinking, but with persistence and practice, one can gain mastery over them so that they do not take the upper hand.”

~ Stephen Richards, *The Ultimate Power of Positive Thinking*

Getting Stuck

Simply put, the biggest danger in journaling is allowing yourself to get stuck in negative thoughts.

It's crucial to your overall well-being to safely express your whole truth and release negative thoughts and feelings—and your journal is the absolute perfect place to do that. But, it's also crucial to recognize when you start to only think about the negatives.

To make sure you get the biggest benefit from journaling, it is vital that you journal your way out of the negativity loop and learn and grow into a more positive way of thinking about your situation. We promise you we can all find something positive in even the worst scenarios.

About getting unstuck

The following are some methods you can use to get unstuck when journaling:

REFLECTION JOURNALING:

This is a good practice to get into every time you make a new journal entry – and it can help you get unstuck. Take a couple of minutes and reread what you just wrote. While doing that, notice any words that give you a little twinge, jump out at you, or that you use repeatedly. Circle them or make a note of how many times they are used if you are using a different form of journaling. Then, write a reflection on your journal entry – just a couple of lines that could include a more positive perspective on what you wrote, says what you need to write more about, or highlight a good life lesson.

USE REPETITION:

The brain loves repetition. The more we say or do something, the more we remember and embody it. It becomes sticky. Don't be afraid of journaling about positive lessons and outcomes as much—if not more—than you journal about your negative ones. You want the positive to be sticky!

GRATITUDE:

We encourage everyone to use this practice at the end of every journaling session. Write at least one thing you're grateful for. That will always flip the negative and help you see the positive.

CREATE A POSITIVE FEEDBACK LOOP.

Practice. Practice. Practice. As you continue to use your journal as a tool to learn about yourself (and about others and life) and practice lifting yourself out of negative thinking & perspectives, incredible things will happen. You will find that the practice gains momentum of its own, setting up a positive feedback loop between your conscious and unconscious mind.

So, you're suspicious of positivity?

"Positive thinking isn't about expecting the best to happen every time, it is about accepting that whatever happens is the best for that moment."

~ Anon

That can be understandable. We've all known that person who tries to make everything positive, or we have received sugar-coated versions of the truth. It can be discouraging. But positivity doesn't necessarily mean smiles and sunshine. Positivity can be realistic and based on awareness, learning, and choice.

Negativity and positivity can co-exist. The trick is to prioritize what can make your life better over what won't. Just learning from experience is positive in and of itself.

Deborah Ross, a psychotherapist, journal therapist, and expert in brain neuroplasticity, is the co-author (along with Kathleen Adams) of the book, *Your Brain on Ink* ⁽⁶⁾. In this groundbreaking, book, Ross assures us that there is a way to overwrite negativity in our brains by "...seeking a positive outcome of the experience – a life lesson learned, a positive quality developed – and holding that in the foreground while the negative experience is moved to the background." This way, we give more focus to the positive than we do the negative.

Ross continues:

"When in the process of writing and reflecting is over, the negative material leaves awareness and returns to our memory stores. But it will take with it some facets of the positive! When this negative experience is recalled again at a future time, it will likely bring with it those positive facets that wired while the two were held together."

If you feel a strong need to hold on to your negativity, we invite you to explore why using the following prompts:

- **What does negativity give you?**
- **Do you like or dislike your negativity, and why?**
- **Does your negativity make you feel good (or better), and why? When you're being negative, what other emotions do you feel at the same time?**
- **How does your negativity affect people you love (because it does)?**
- **Why are you skeptical of being positive (is it related to a past event?):**
- **What would make you willing to explore finding the positive in yourself and your life experiences?**

You're ready for the next step!

Thank you for completing this introduction to journaling. You are now ready for Volume 2: the journaling workbook. You can find Volume 2 on braininjurycanada.ca. Please remember that you can use this book as a guide for future journaling as many times as you want.

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About Brain Injury Canada

Brain Injury Canada is a non-profit organization established in 2004 to support the brain injury community on a national level. ***Our mission is to advance awareness, education, opportunities, and support by:***

- Advocating at a national level on issues important to the brain injury community
- Establishing meaningful connections and collaborations with stakeholders
- Educating and empowering people living with acquired brain injury, families/caregivers, healthcare workers, researchers, and the public

Our vision is for a better quality of life for all people affected by acquired brain injury in Canada.

You can find more resources at the following websites:

- www.braininjurycanada.ca – our brain injury resource website
- www.braininjurycanadaconnect.ca – a growing directory of services and supports for the brain injury community

About the author

Jill Grumbache founded Holistic Journaling Ink (HJI) in 2012 to help champion & share the self-enlightening & healing properties of Journaling.

Jill is a long-life Journaler & award-winning writer. Before founding HJI, she had focused her previous career on Communications in its many forms. When ready to make the leap to living her true passions, she enrolled in the Center for Journal Therapy in Denver, Colorado. There she attained certification as a Journaling Facilitator (CJF). At CJT, she was taught & mentored by its founder, pioneer, author, & primary Journal therapy theorist Kathleen Adams, LPC.

First trained & certified to teach Kay's Journal to the Self & Leia Francisco's Journaling Through Transitions, Jill has since developed several original courses exclusive to Holistic Journaling Ink. These include the much loved and lauded Hallelujah! Letting Go! and what's been called the Ph.D. of Journaling, SelfSIght. Jill facilitates HJI's group courses, workshops, and private classes and does public speaking.

Jill is also an artist, writer, editor, and student of Buddhism. She has two grown & glorious daughters & one awesome son-in-law, and one astounding granddaughter. She resides in Montreal, Quebec, Canada.

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