

# *Review and Renew*

Journaling exercises and prompts to reflect on the last twelve months and to welcome a new year

– or to consider any time you need to slow down and take stock



Dima Dupéré, MSW, RSW

# INTRODUCTION

In 1989, some friends introduced me to the idea of spending December 31 in quiet reflection, and have a personal retreat. It was a good opportunity to think about the last year and determine goals or wishes for the coming year.

I am happy to say that, for most years since then, I have set aside at least half a day at the end of the year to reflect. A few times I have also gathered friends and made this a group process.

Here are some writing exercises, activities, and prompts I have used. I am happy to share these with you. I suggest you don't do them all in one sitting; take one question a day and really reflect on it. There is no rule that says you have to complete the review of one year before the new year begins. Take the time you need, follow your pace and your path. The journaling prompts will provide you with ideas on what to write about. You can use automatic writing or prose. Then, you can use what you have discovered through those prompts to get deeper into the experience by using a writing exercise. Example: One of the prompts asks you to think about the people who influenced your life in the last year. You may choose one of them and complete a dialogue exercise; or write them a letter; or do an exercise to look at a situation with them from a different perspective. The possibilities are endless.

Before starting, you may wish to listen to an interview I participated in for the JournalTalk Podcast - It will explain 'MOSS' and the list making that is explained here. <http://www.write4life.us/journal-writing-with-moss/>

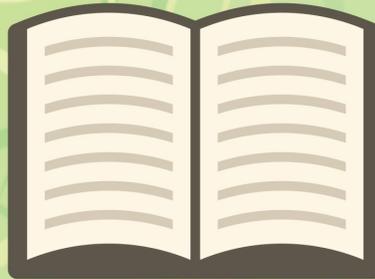
Enjoy!

# REMINDERS

**There is no right or wrong way to do this. You don't have to set aside a full day. Taking at least a couple of hours will offer you time for reflection. Complete only the exercises you want, do them at your leisure.**



**Gather what you may need: magazines, scissors, glue for collages, photographs to jog your memory, paper, pens, markers or colouring pencils**



**Set the stage: Be in a quiet space where there will be no disruptions. Light a candle and take a time of meditation to set your intention. The rest is up to you - whether or not you put music on or sip tea while you write.**



## A review of the MOSS:

**MOSS**  
The 4  
relational  
schemas

**M = Me**



My relationship with myself, my body, my health, my personality, my emotions...

**O = Others**



Any person real or imaginary, acquaintance, friend, family, or stranger, living or deceased who affects my life.

**S = Systems or structures**



Any system, structure or institution affecting my life. I may or may not have any control over it. Example: school, money, church, medical system, workplace, etc.

**S = Sense and sensibilities**



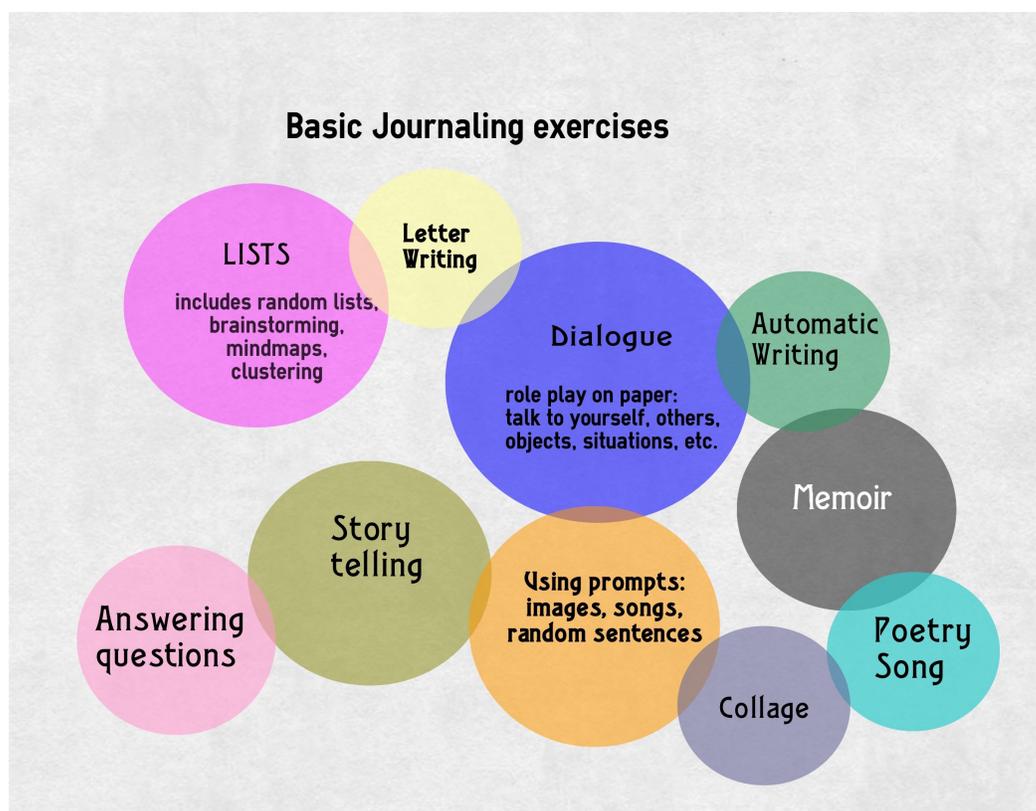
All that is natural or intangible: love, spirituality, personal beliefs, values, ethics, justice, etc.

Dima Dupéré © 2015

Take some time to think about the last twelve months and how the different elements of the MOSS were woven into your life. Which category took up the most space?

- concerns with yourself,
- concerns or interactions with others,
- concerns and interactions with structures you could not control, or
- situations that made you question your life, your values, your spirituality?

The purpose of the MOSS is to help you sort out your experiences so that you may explore them more specifically. If you are not sure where a certain element or situation belongs in the MOSS, place it where you think it fits for you. It is only important how you classify it. You can explore each element of the MOSS with the writing exercises below. If you look at an event, you can also locate it in the MOSS, depending how it impacted you, others, the structures around you as well as your beliefs and values.



I will explain some of these in more detail and how you can use them.

# One way to use this guide



**Meditate; find a quiet space**



Use the writing prompts to get you going in your writing/reflection.



**CONTINUE**



**MOSS**

From the writing you have done, choose one you want to explore further and situate it in the MOSS



**CONTINUE**

Expand your reflection even more with a writing exercise.



**STOP and reflect**



**STOP and reflect**



**STOP and reflect**

**REFLECTION**

Complete the following:

I didn't know that...

I realize that...

What I need is...

## JOURNALING PROMPTS FOR A YEARLY REVIEW

- What event of the last year was most significant for me and why? (go through photos for inspiration).
- Who has had an impact on my life this year? What have I learned from them?
- What have I learned from my challenges?
- Make a list of 30 joys I experienced this year (big or little)
- Who/what are the people, places and things I lost/gained?
- Have I recently made any major decisions or changes? What events have precipitated these changes? How has my life been affected by these decisions?
- Make a list of 20 things I have learned (big or little).
- What events have brought me the most joy? In what ways have I contributed to the joy of another?

## DEEPEN YOUR WRITING WITH THE MOSS

Now what? As mentioned in the introduction, you can take what you learned from writing with the prompts to expand your journal writing.

Example: Suppose one of the things you lost this year was a job, you can see how many items from the MOSS are affected.

M - self-esteem, self-confidence, other emotions (anger, fear, hope, disappointment), your body (fatigue, burn-out?).

O- anger or happiness with others in your life, depending on the relationship you had with your job, your boss, your co-workers. O also includes family who might be affected by this event; and also people who may help you now: friends, strangers.

S - Many structures are probably involved: money, the bank, the EI (unemployment benefits), programs to help you find a new job, church if that is a place you get support...

S - How has this experience affected your view of the world, your beliefs. What are your new goals? How will you find your way through this?

## DEEPEN FURTHER

This is the part where you continue your exploration and reflection by using a specific writing exercise. If we keep the same example of having lost a job in the last year, here are some possible exercises.

### **The period log\***

Write a short statement of one or two sentences describing the situation.

Make a list of ‘stepping stones’ - what are the events, thoughts or behaviours that brought you to this point.

Begin writing by starting with the sentence ‘This period of my life is like...’ Be as descriptive as possible, use analogies and comparisons. Describe your thoughts and feelings when you think of this period of your life.

When you feel you have reached completion with the writing, reflect and complete the following:

- I didn't know that...
- I realize that...
- What I need is...

I SUGGEST THIS REFLECTION AFTER EVERY EXERCISE YOU WRITE.

\* The period log is an exercise first introduced by Ira Progoff, the author of *At a Journal Workshop*. He is what I consider the guru of all things journaling.

### **The dialogue:**

The dialogue exercise is a way to explore two different points of view and can be used in many different ways. You can rehearse a conversation you need to have, explore pros and cons, or give a voice to your fears or your hope.

The dialogue exercise can be used with any part of the MOSS. You can dialogue with:

**M:** a part of yourself 'my anxiety', 'my joy', 'my role as a friend', 'the confident me vs the frightened me'.

**O:** another person, whether are present in your life now or not.

**S:** a structure in your life. Dialogue with a structure you may not have control over such as money, the medical system, rules of society.

**S:** dialogue with your beliefs, with nature, etc.

You create the dialogue by using two different colours of ink, or, if you dare writing with both hands.

You begin by asking a question to the point of view/person/feeling/situation you want to explore.

**Me:** Why are you here?

**Fear:** I always show up when there is chaos.

**Me:** Did I invite you?

**Fear:** No, but my being here protects you. You can hide and not take action.

etc.

You write the dialogue until you feel a sense of completion and then continue with the reflection statements mentioned earlier.

### **Letter writing:**

In the same way you have selected who/what to dialogue with, you can write a letter to one of those elements. Unsent letters are a good way to express how you feel, offer encouragement, come to a better sense of understanding of your situation. Of course, if you choosing to write a letter to someone who has contributed positively to you in the last year, you can send it.

### **New perspective:**

This exercise gets you to look at a situation from a new perspective. Write out the situation you are thinking of. Then, take some time of meditation and let a person come to mind. It can be a family member, friend, a member of



# LOOKING FORWARD

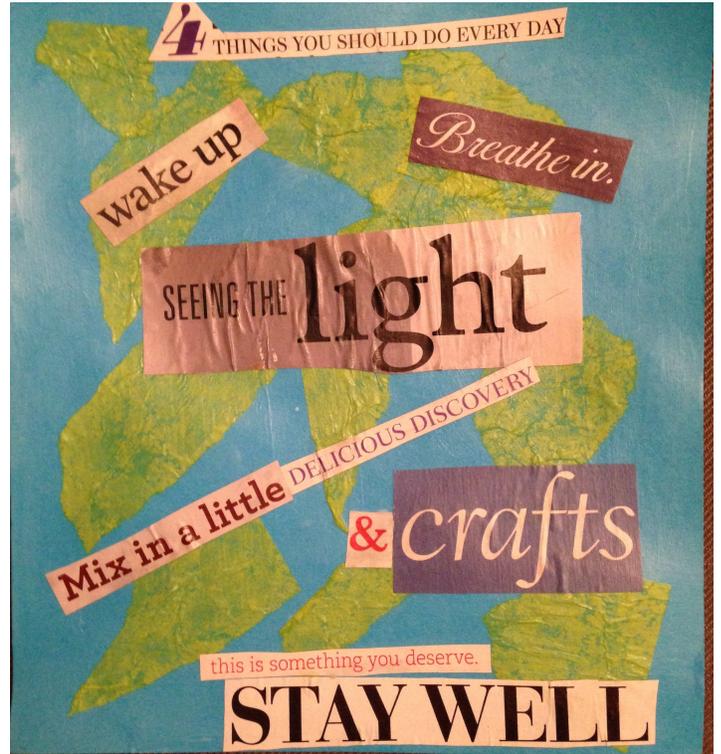
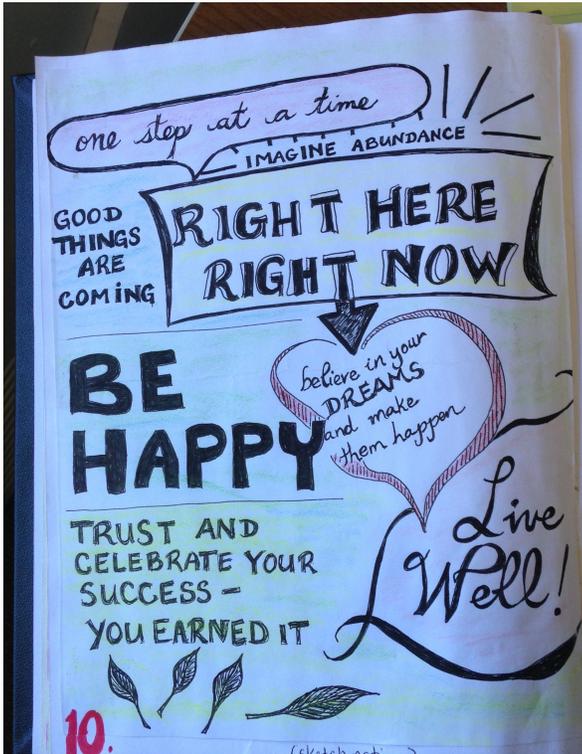
## PROMPTS FOR THE YEAR AHEAD

- If I could do something differently it would be...
- What relationship would I like to deepen? How can I do that?
- Where can I find support for my ongoing personal growth?
- What can I do to take care of myself?
- One thing I need is...
- My wishes for myself are... (the list can be as long as I like)
- My wishes for others are... (the list can be as long as I like)
- What would I like to learn?
- What commitment am I willing to make for myself?
- Is there anything I need to let go of? What do I wish to keep?

As with the first section, you can deepen your writing by looking at the MOSS, using specific writing exercises and reflecting on your work.

## INSPIRE YOURSELF

Create something visual to keep you on track. Write out affirmations, wishes and goals.



## MAKE IT FUN!

The year of my 50th birthday, I created a list of things I wanted to accomplish before the big day. These included projects I had started but hadn't finished, places I wanted to visit, activities I wanted to try. I wrote the list in my journal and as I accomplished everything, I put the date next to it. This was a fun activity and not a chore. If there was something I changed my mind about, I didn't have to do it.

Later on I wanted a way to memorialize what I had accomplished. I had the idea to create mini collages on playing cards.



I hope these few pages gave you ideas to look back and move forward. As always, I welcome your feedback. Please join me on my facebook page:

[www.facebook.com/joythisway](http://www.facebook.com/joythisway)

and visit my website: [dimadupere.com](http://dimadupere.com)

Let me know if there are other themes you would like to explore.

Keep writing,

Dima