

Making Peace with Your Thoughts

The Little Booklet of Journaling Activities to Help You Shift Your Thinking

Hello Insight Maximizer:

We've gathered three journaling activities using tools from the experts to help you gain your own insights whenever you want.

How to use the Booklet

You can use it as a journaling companion by printing it double-sided and placing it inside your current journal so you can use it anytime your thoughts are bugging you. Maybe you're struggling with focus or sleeping. Or you're feeling a bit 'off'. These are perfect times to whip out this Booklet and journal for insights.

If you need assistance working through anything, please contact Suze or Jenni. We're happy to chat with you about what you want to work on in your life and whether coaching or therapy would be a good fit for you.

Jenni & Suze



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JOURNALING ACTIVITY #1

Debunking Your Core Wound

Steps for making peace with a primary wound that is limiting you and causing your success to plateau.

Grab your journal and find a quiet space to write your responses to the following questions. See EXAMPLE on the following page to get a sense of the flow of this activity and process and the insight that you can receive.

REALIZE

What am I feeling right now in my life? What is repeating in my mind that feels unresolved? Maybe an unrealized goal, or a relationship issue, or something else.

RECALL

What is a time in my childhood when I felt just like this? Trust yourself to intuitively remember the right memory. It will surface to help you discharge it.

REPEAT

What is a belief that may have formed as a result of that time in my life? What is the repeating negative theme throughout my life? Refer to Beliefs Checklist in the Resources section for examples. • If you wrote several beliefs, find a common thread that runs through them, and underline it! **REWRITE**

HISTORY

Now, write a letter to yourself as a little kid, acknowledging what happened to him or her, and how you feel about it. Be the champion for that little kid by writing what should have happened back then. Be your own parent that rewires your beliefs. Sign your name.

RENEW

Great! Now it's time to pick a new empowering belief. Describe yourself living your ideal life, to your fullest potential. Find a common thread that runs through it and create a new empowering belief that is true for you. Underline it!

- For help you creating your new belief, see the Beliefs Checklist in the Resources section.

REWIRE

Congrats! Now, post your new empowering belief somewhere prominent and recite it throughout each day. Studies show that reaffirming helps us rewire our thinking.

- Common places could be your bathroom mirror, car dashboard, refrigerator, reminder on your phone, etc.

Woohoo! Now, take time to celebrate your new way of thinking!

EXAMPLE

REALIZE

What am I feeling right now in my life? What is repeating in my mind that feels unresolved? *I feel stuck and helpless in my relationship with a few of my siblings. I feel unheard and invalidated when I'm around them. Like their reality of our childhood is valid, and my memories are not valid. If my memories are different than theirs, then I am wrong. I feel judged and criticized for being who I am. Canceled out.*

RECALL

What is a time in my childhood when I felt just like this?

Most all the time as a kid. I remember being in trouble for crying, or feeling angry or hurt, or really having any emotion. I remember being in trouble for being sick and being a burden.

REPEAT

What is a belief that may have formed as a result of that time in my life?

If there is a disagreement, then I am wrong. I really don't know much. I'm not smart or knowledgeable. My voice doesn't count, is not important. I am wrong. I have a bad memory. Common thread: I am not important.

REWRITE HISTORY

Now, write a letter to yourself as a little kid, acknowledging what happened to him or her, and how you feel about it. Be the champion for that little kid by writing what should have happened back then. *Dear little Jenni:*

*You are important. You are a precious and loved child of God. You deserve to be heard. You deserved to be cared for when you are sick, especially when you were unable to care for yourself. You deserved to be taken care of. But some humans were not there for you. I'm sad and angry that you were overlooked and ignored. I'm angry that you were punished for being human and having needs and having something to say. Some people could not fully love you. You deserve to be loved and accepted for who you are. God loves you. He will always listen to you, even when others don't. Even if your memories aren't fully correct, they are your memories. You've always asked God to show you the truth. And He will because you ask.
I love you,
Grown-up Jenni*

RENEW

Great! Now it's time to pick a new empowering belief. Describe yourself living your ideal life, to your fullest potential. Find a common thread that runs through it and create a new empowering belief that is true for you.

Underline it!

my ideal life, I boldly speak what I believe to be true, in a loving and respectful way. I am heard and understood. I'm OK if people disagree or judge me for what I say. They have the right, just as I do, to speak. My memories and thoughts are valid and important. What I have to share is valid. My story is important and can help others. I am valid. I am important, and my story will help others!

REWIRE

Congrats! Now, post your new empowering belief somewhere prominent and recite it throughout each day. Studies show reaffirming helps us rewire our thinking.

"I am important, and my story will help others!"

JOURNALING ACTIVITY #2

Fifteen Ways to Untwist Your Thinking

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1. Spend as much time as you need to write whatever comes to mind. Let the thoughts flow freely with no judgement.
2. Review your writing and underscore anything you see that seems distorted. Refer to the Distorted Thinking chart in Resources section at the end of this document to help you identify distorted thinking patterns.
3. Choose a method or two from below to help untwist your thinking. Utilize the right-hand column to identify a method that would work well with the particular distorted thinking pattern you have identified.
4. Write your responses in your journal. And, VOILA, your thoughts will become clearer.

Please note that many of the methods can work with any distortion. In the beginning journaling can help you build this new skill faster. Once you become familiar with this process, disputing can be done in your thinking alone.

Method	Description of this Method	How to use this method/ Questions to ask yourself	Types of Distortions
1. Identify the distortions	After you write down your negative thoughts, use the Distorted Thinking Chart to identify the distortions in each.	"What are the distortions in this thought?"	any
2. The straightforward approach	Substitute a more positive and realistic thought.	"Is this negative thought really true? Is there another way to look at the situation?"	any

3. The cost benefit analysis	List the advantages and disadvantages of a negative feeling (like getting angry when you're stuck in traffic), a negative thought (like "I'm a loser"), or a self-defeating belief (like "I should try to be perfect.")	"What are the advantages and disadvantages of believing this (or feeling like this)? How will this attitude help me, and how will it hurt me?"	any
5. Examine the evidence	Instead of assuming that your negative thought is true, examine the actual evidence for it.	"What are the facts? What do the data really show?"	jumping to conclusions; emotional reasoning; discounting the positives

Method	Description of this Method	How to use this method/ Questions to ask yourself	Types of Distortions
6. The survey method	Do a survey to find out if your thoughts and attitudes are realistic. If you believe that public speaking anxiety is abnormal, ask several friends if they ever felt that way.	"How do other people think and feel about this?"	jumping to conclusions
7. The experimental method	Do an experiment to test the accuracy of your negative thought, in much the same way that a scientist would test a theory.	"How could I test this negative thought to find out if it's really true?"	jumping to conclusions
8. The pleasure predicting method	Predict how satisfying various activities will be on a scale from 0 (the least) to 100 (the most). After you complete each	This technique can help you get moving when you feel lethargic. It can also be used to test self-defeating beliefs, such as	fortune telling; emotional reasoning

	activity, record how satisfying it turned out to be.	"If I'm alone, I'm bound to feel miserable."	
9. The vertical arrow technique	Instead of disputing your negative thought, you draw a vertical arrow under it and ask why it would be upsetting to you if it was true. You will generate a series of negative thoughts that will lead to your underlying beliefs.	"If this thought was true, why would it be upsetting to me? What would it mean to me?"	any
10. Thinking in shades of gray	Instead of thinking about your problems in black-and-white categories, evaluate things in shades of gray.	When things don't work out as well as you hoped, think about the experience as a partial success. Try to pinpoint your errors instead of thinking of yourself as a total failure.	all-or-nothing thinking
11. Define terms	When you label yourself as "inferior" or "a fool" or "a loser," ask yourself what you mean by those labels. You will feel better when you see there is no such thing as a fool or loser. Foolish behavior exists, but fools do not.	"What is the definition of a loser?" "What is the definition of an inferior human being?" "When I say I am hopeless, what claim am I making? What is my definition of someone who is hopeless?"	labeling; all-or-nothing thinking

Method	Description of this Method	How to use this method/ Questions to	Types of Distortions
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		ask yourself	
12. Be specific	Stick with reality and avoid judgments about reality.	Instead of thinking of yourself as totally defective, focus on your specific strengths and weaknesses.	overgeneralization; all-or-nothing thinking
13. The semantic method	You substitute language that is less colorful and emotionally loaded.	Instead of telling yourself, "I shouldn't have made that mistake," you can tell yourself, "It would be better if I hadn't made a mistake."	labeling; "should" statements
14. Reattribution	Instead of blaming yourself entirely for a problem, think about that many factors that may have contributed to it. Focus on solving the problem instead of using all your energy blaming yourself and feeling guilty.	"What caused this problem? What did I contribute and what did other people (or fate) contribute? What can I learn from this situation?"	all-or-nothing thinking; blaming
15. The acceptance paradox	Instead of defending yourself against your own self-criticisms, find truth in them and accept your shortcomings with complete tranquility. This is a powerful Buddhist idea—when you are nothing, you have nothing to lose. You can experience inner peace.	"Do I feel inadequate? I have many inadequacies. There are things about me that could be improved."	any

JOURNALING ACTIVITY #3

Disputing Your Irrational Beliefs

The goal of disputing is to stabilize or decrease consequences in column C. If there is no change in the intensity level of emotions and impulsivity of behavior after you evaluate them, more disputing is needed. Don't be discouraged, this can often happen.

Take as much time as you need to write in column A about a recent event that seems to be unresolved for you, where you had a strong reaction. Utilize the EXAMPLE on the following page for assistance with this framework.

1. Complete columns A, B and C first, following the prompts at the top of the columns. 2. To work column D, return to column B and utilize the 12 Irrational Beliefs and Disputes list in the Resources section to see if any of your thoughts are connected to any of the irrational beliefs listed. 3. Start disputing by looking for evidence outside of yourself to shift irrational thinking to rational. For assistance with disputing, please refer to the 12 Irrational Beliefs and Disputes in the Resources section of this booklet.
4. Once you complete column D, move to column E to reevaluate what you listed in column C. Notate your evaluation of column C in column E.

A	B	C	D	E
Activating Event:	Beliefs:	Consequences:	Disputing:	Expected Outcome:
Something that happens resulting in a reaction	List all thinking about the event	What are your feelings & their intensity, behavior & physical? Use Scale 1 - 10	Make the irrational into rational thinking with evidence	What changed with your feelings, behavior & physical?

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EXAMPLE

<u>A</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>C</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>E</u>
Activating Event:	Beliefs:	Consequences:	Disputing:	Expected Outcome:
Something that happens resulting in a reaction	List all thinking about the event	What are your feelings & their intensity, behavior & physical? Use Scale 1 – 10	Make the irrational into rational thinking with evidence	What changed with your feelings, behavior & physical?

<p>Tom works at a company in an office. Recently his boss came by at the end of the day, asking Tom, in a stern voice, to come to his office. He has been working for the company 1 1/2 years. He has never been fired by any job he has had.</p>	<p>"I'm in trouble now!" "What did I do wrong?" "I'm going to be fired." "My boss is finally aware that I can't really do my job!"</p>	<p>Sadness – 7 Worthlessness – 9 Ineffectiveness – 9 Shame – 9 Fear – 9</p> <p>Hesitant to get up and go to the boss's office.</p> <p>Shaking Cold Stomach in knots. Difficulty focusing and concentrating.</p>	<p>"Just because my boss came by with a stern tone, doesn't mean I'm going to be in trouble or fired." "I have stayed at jobs for a long time with good reviews." "I have never knowingly made a mistake at this job." "My boss has never told me before that I'm not capable of doing my job." "I can handle whatever happens in this meeting." "It's okay if I'm not perfect at everything." "Just because I feel afraid doesn't mean that something bad is going to happen."</p>	<p>Sadness - 4 Worthlessness – 6 Ineffectiveness – 7 Shame – 4 Fear – 6</p> <p>Able to get up and go to the boss's office.</p> <p>Taking deep breaths. Shaking a little less. Stomach calmed a bit. A little easier to focus and concentrate.</p>
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RESOURCES

Mindset Checklist

Beliefs Checklist

Distorted Thinking Patterns by David Burns, MD

12 Irrational Beliefs and Disputes from Albert Ellis, PhD

Levels of Disputing

MINDSET CHECKLIST

AUTHENTIC SELF

- Imaginative
- Positive thinking
- Unconditional love and acceptance
- Creative
- Original, unique
- Confident
- Conscious
- Focus on strengths
- Your highest, infinite thinking
- Aware of feelings
- Respond to feelings

CONDITIONED SELF

- Limited thinking
- Negative thinking
- Conditional love and criticism
- Stifled, old, stuck
- Fake, copy others
- Doubting
- Unconscious
- Correct weaknesses
- Human, limited, finite thinking
- Unaware of feelings
- Reactive to feelings



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BELIEFS

CHECKLIST

Hi. Use this checklist as you review your personal journal entries. Notate *LB* when you notice a Limiting Belief, and *EB* for Empowering Beliefs.

Allows and responds to feelings

EMPOWERING BELIEFS

Characteristics

Imaginative
Positive thinking
Unconditional love & acceptance
Creative
Original, unique
Confident
Conscious
Focus on strengths
Your highest, infinite thinking
Aware of feelings

Examples

I am trustworthy.
I am intelligent.
I am significant.
I am loved.
I am talented.
I am resourceful.
I am healthy.
I am strong.
I am capable.
I am knowledgeable.
I am growing & improving in relationships.

LIMITING BELIEFS

Characteristics

Limited thinking
Negative thinking
Conditional love & criticism
Stifled, old, stuck
Fake, copy others
Doubting
Unconscious
Correct weaknesses
Human, limited, finite thinking
Unaware of feelings
Resists or reacts to feelings

I am wrong.
I'm not smart.
I'm not important.
I'm not good enough.
I'm not enough.
I am helpless.
I am sick.
I am weak.
I can't _____.
I don't know _____.
I will always struggle with relationships.

Distorted Thinking Patterns by David Burns, MD

1. **All-or-nothing thinking:** You look at things in absolute, black and white categories.

Example: if your performance falls short of perfect, you see yourself as a total failure.

Coping Skill: Learn to use a continuum for evaluating, realizing that absolutes do not exist in this universe. 2.

Overgeneralization: You view negative events as a never-ending pattern of defeat—if it's true in this case, it's always true.

Example: After being turned down for a date, a young man concludes: "I'm never going to get a date. No girl would ever want to go out with me. I'll be alone and miserable for the rest of my life!"

Coping Skill: Evaluate for similarities and differences.

3. **Mental filter:** You dwell on the negatives and ignore the positives, perceiving that the whole situation is negative.

Example: You overhear someone making fun of your best friend and conclude that that's what the entire human race is like: cruel and insensitive.

Coping Skill: Remember times when you overheard someone talking positive about someone—it happens!!

Discounting the positives: You insist that accomplishments or positive qualities don't count, assuming that the worst will happen.

Example: You make a mistake and conclude that your reputation is ruined.

Coping Skill: Calculate the probability that the worst will happen. What is the evidence that it won't?

5. **Jumping to conclusions:** You conclude things are bad without any definite evidence. **Example:**

a) **Mind reading:** You assume people are reacting negatively to you.

b) **Fortune telling:** You predict that things will turn out badly.

Coping Skill: Look for evidence to support or refute the assumption or prediction.

6. **Magnification or minimization:** You blow things way out of proportion, or you shrink their importance, were positive events "count" less and negative events "count" more.

Example: You feel inferior after a mistake.

Coping Skill: Identify all parts of a given situation, the positive, negative, and neutral.

7. **Emotional reasoning:** You assume that your negative emotions necessarily reflect the way things really are. "I feel it, therefore it must be true."

Example: A depressed person thinks, "I feel overwhelmed and hopeless, therefore, my problems must be impossible to solve!"

Coping Skills: Separate objective facts from emotional beliefs.

8. **"Should" statements:** You criticize and judge yourself or other people with "shoulds," "shouldn't," "musts," "oughts," and "have tos."

Example: Your doctor is running behind schedule and is late to your appointment. You think, "He shouldn't be so thoughtless! He ought to be prompt!"

Coping Skill: Recognize that should statements represent preferences instead of vital needs.

Labeling: You use labels or extreme emotional terms in describing yourself, events, or others.

Example: Instead of saying, "I made a mistake," you tell yourself, "I'm a jerk" or "a loser."

Coping Skill: Separate objective facts from emotional beliefs and define terms.

10. **Blame:** You blame yourself for something you weren't entirely responsible for, or you blame other people and overlook ways that you contributed to a problem.

Example: When a parent saw their child's report card, there was a note from the teacher stating that the child is not working well. The parent automatically decides: "I must be a bad parent! I've failed as a parent!" OR The electric bill is overdue, and when your spouse asks you about it, you say, "You didn't remind me to take care of it!"

Coping Skill: Identify all parts of a given situation, the positive, negative, and neutral, along with outside factors that influenced the outcome.

Disputing irrational beliefs is a key aspect of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT). When individuals challenge their irrational beliefs, they can replace them with more rational and constructive thoughts. Here are some common disputing thoughts for each of Albert Ellis's 12 irrational beliefs:

1. The belief that one must be loved and approved by everyone. Disputing thought: "It's okay if not everyone loves or approves of me. I don't need universal acceptance to be happy and worthwhile."
2. The belief that one must be thoroughly competent, achieving in all aspects of life, in order to be considered worthwhile. Disputing thought: "Nobody is perfect at everything, and that's okay. My worth is not solely determined by my achievements."
3. The belief that certain acts are awful or wicked, and that those who perform such acts should be severely punished. Disputing thought: "People can make mistakes, but that doesn't make them inherently bad or deserving of extreme punishment. It's better to focus on learning and growth."
4. The belief that it is terrible when things do not go as planned or desired. Disputing thought: "It's natural for things to not always go as planned. I can adapt and find solutions when faced with unexpected challenges."
5. The belief that emotional discomfort or unhappiness is unbearable and must be avoided at all costs. Disputing thought: "Unpleasant emotions are a part of life. I can cope with them and learn from them instead of avoiding them."
6. The belief that one has little or no control over one's emotional reactions and therefore cannot help feeling the way they do. Disputing thought: "I have the power to influence my emotional reactions through my thoughts and actions. I can choose healthier ways to respond to situations."
7. The belief that external events and other people are responsible for one's emotional experiences and disturbances. Disputing thought: "While external events can influence my emotions, I am ultimately responsible for how I interpret and react to them."
8. The belief that past experiences entirely dictate a person's present feelings and behaviors, and that they have no capacity to change or grow beyond their past. Disputing thought: "My past does not have to define my present or future. I can learn and grow from my experiences and make positive changes."
9. The belief that achieving happiness and contentment is dependent on the existence of perfect solutions to life's problems. Disputing thought: "Perfection is unrealistic, and life is full of imperfections. I can find happiness by accepting and working with what I have."
10. The belief that one must worry about potential future negative events and catastrophize about what might happen. Disputing thought: "Worrying excessively about the future won't change the outcome. I can focus on what I can control in the present."
11. The belief that it is easier to avoid life's difficulties and responsibilities rather than facing and dealing with them. Disputing thought: "Avoiding problems may provide temporary relief but facing and dealing with challenges leads to growth and resolution."
12. The belief that one should be constantly worried about the well-being of others and that their happiness is essential for one's own well-being. Disputing thought: "While caring for others is important, I also need to prioritize my own well-being and recognize that their happiness is not solely my responsibility."

It's important to note that these disputing thoughts may need to be tailored to each individual's specific circumstances and beliefs. The goal of disputing irrational beliefs is to foster more realistic, rational, and healthier ways of thinking, leading to improved emotional well-being and more adaptive behaviors.

When someone is reacting to something that happens in their life, usually they focus subjectively without looking outside of themselves. Yet this is limited because of all the other layers of information and evidence around us.

These layers start with an individual, who is born into a family. As they become adults, they create their own family, which is also part of a community, which is part of a city, which is part of a state, which is part of the US, which is part of North America, which is part of planet earth. If we limit our evidence to just our perspective, the result in thinking will be distorted &/or irrational. That in turn will affect our feelings, behavior, and physical well-being.

The goal of disputing is to broaden our perspective to all the layers of evidence available. Start by asking what you know about what other parts of these levels do in regard to the belief needing to be disputed. Do your best to think of each level, all the way to a global perspective. Use the knowledge you gain to create a dispute to the identified belief. This will change a distorted or irrational belief to a rational thought.