

Benefits of Journaling for Mental Health

Journaling is one of those habits we've all heard to be healthy, but why is it beneficial? What makes it good for mental health? Even just a few sentences a day can be a game changer for brain function for many reasons:

- 1.) **Increasing self awareness:** Journaling can be extremely helpful for labeling emotions, thoughts, and behaviors and increasing self awareness. Over time when we are intentional about reflecting and writing down our experiences we can start to recognize patterns and know ourselves better.
- 2.) **Reducing stress and anxiety:** Writing about our experiences and feelings is a great way to externalize problems. Putting thoughts down on paper can oftentimes create enough distance between ourselves and the issues to both decrease distress and increase readiness to solve problems.
- 3.) **Boosting memory:** No matter what form journaling takes— bullet lists, free response, tracking habits, etc.-- taking the time to write down work to be done as well as work that has already been done can help with working memory.
- 4.) **Emotional regulation:** Verbalizing emotions, whether through writing or out loud, is a powerful tool for emotional regulation. Think of it as releasing steam from a kettle that has been boiling and getting hotter all throughout the day: opening up and allowing the emotions to move from inside to outside can be a game changer for regulating and working through strong emotions.
- 5.) **Increasing gratitude and positivity:** Journaling can take many different forms, but integrating the practice of writing down 1-3 things you are grateful for each time you take part in the practice can be a powerful tool. Consistently taking time to notice the good can train the brain to increase positive thinking.

Starting a new routine, like journaling, can feel intimidating at first, but small steps can make big changes. Only a few sentences a day, an entry once a week, or a short list can be an extremely useful tool for dealing with stress and building healthy habits.