

Calm.

A Journal for Myself



P K P O N I A H

This book contains my personal thoughts
and reflections.

Please close it if it does not
belong to you!

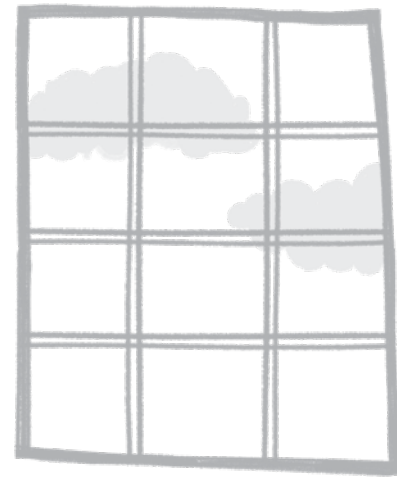
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Calm.

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P K P O N I A H



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It is not meant to take the place of diagnosis and treatment
by a qualified medical professional or therapist. The author
and publisher accept no responsibility or liability whatsoever
and howsoever arising from or in connection with
the contents of this guide.

First edition, October 2020.

If this is your journal,
congratulations!

You have taken a huge
first step to *SELF-CARE!*




Self-care: The practice of taking an active role
in protecting one's own well-being and happiness,
in particular during periods of stress.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

In my practice, I help my clients find solutions in the present, and explore hope for the future to discover resolutions to their problems. The feedback they gave me was that it was very useful for them to identify times in their lives when things matched more closely with the future they prefer. This can be done by simply observing the differences and similarities of different occasions, to be aware of small successes, and to repeat their successful choices and behaviours.

This, I feel, can also be done through journalling. The benefits of journalling for mental wellness have been extensively published. While journalling allows pent-up frustrations to be released, it may have the potential to worsen your mood if it is an unguided process. With this book, I intend to address this potential risk by providing tips, knowledge and a simple guide to help you navigate through the challenges you might face so that you can take an active role in protecting your own well-being and happiness. This book is not meant to be a textbook on self-care. Rather, I hope for it to be another tool that will be helpful in addressing the complex issue of mental health, and that it helps anyone considering journalling as a go-to form of expressing themselves as they journey through the trials and tribulations that life brings.



GETTING STARTED

A hand-drawn illustration on a light gray background. A white notepad with a double-line border is the central focus, containing the text "GETTING STARTED" in a simple, uppercase, sans-serif font. The notepad is surrounded by various doodles: a pencil with a squiggly line at the top right, a diamond shape at the top left, a star and a circle at the top left, a star at the top right, a hand-drawn flower at the bottom left, a constellation of stars connected by lines at the bottom right, a hand-drawn flower at the bottom right, and a tic-tac-toe board at the bottom center. The entire scene is enclosed in a thin white rectangular border.

WHAT IS JOURNALLING?

Journaling and expressing your thoughts in the form of drawings create a habit for validating strengths and identifying challenges. This outlet enables you to develop social and emotional strengths.

In this safe place, you may be more assured of privacy and feel more confident to release pent-up emotions by expressing your ideas, thoughts and feelings openly and without fear of criticism. You may also develop ways to build a buffer between these negative thoughts and the sense of well-being.



There are many benefits to journaling, such as enhancing mental health and improving emotional intelligence. Writing down your thoughts and feelings can also be a form of self-care.





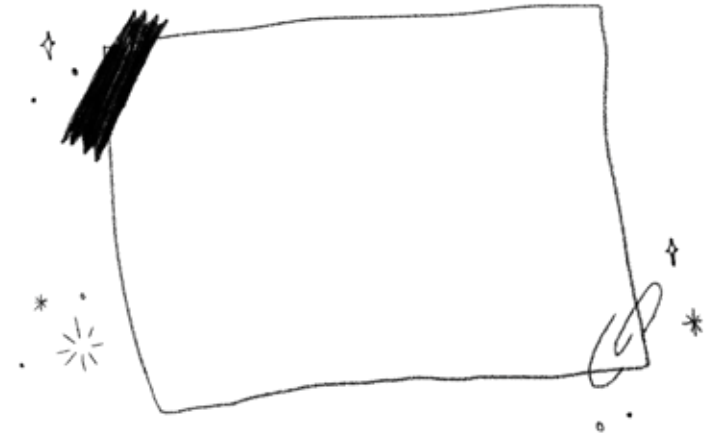
WHY SHOULD I JOURNAL?

While journaling provides an outlet for the release of pent-up frustrations, you must be mindful not to let it worsen the situation, especially if it is not carried out appropriately.

In this book, you will find a simple and solution-centred approach to journaling that can help you develop and reinforce a sense of hope and optimism, facilitating your growth as a self-directed problem solver.

It helps you keep track of the many things that you can do to achieve your goals. Use this book to record your thoughts and feelings. Revisit these at any time to reflect and make sense of what was or is happening.

Keeping this journal is a reminder that you are in control of your life and are committed to making things better for yourself.



HOW DO I JOURNAL?



Let's start. You are the expert of your own life, and you possess the ability and skills to create change—own this!

You can begin by writing or drawing about the difficulties you face on the blank lined pages in this book—whichever you feel more comfortable doing. As you write or draw, remember to include problem-free talk as it can be useful for uncovering hidden resources to help you identify ways to move on.

DATE:





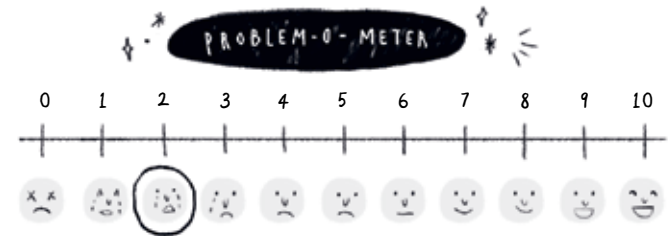
Then, at a later date and in the Reflections box, you can contemplate on the points you have written or drawn, and attempt to overcome the challenges by setting goals and working towards achieving them.

It is important to include your reflections in the journal.

Reflections

MY FEELINGS TODAY

One way to reflect on your feelings for the day is to use scaling. Scaling is a way to help you break down your perception of the way you feel into grades. Scaling can help engage the “thinking brain” instead of the “emotional brain”.

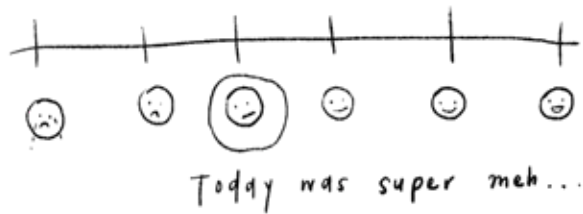


For example, if you have a problem, you may want to scale this problem by giving it a grade on a scale of 0 to 10: 0 being the worst state this problem has ever reached, and 10 being the state where it is not a problem at all.

If you rate the situation a 2, you can write in the journal the specific things that have happened, or are happening, that made you rate the situation as such. The next step is to then determine the goals and preferred outcomes that will help improve the scale from 2 to 3 or higher.

As you write your reflections, try to make sense of the situation you were in. You may perhaps want to adopt a different perspective when you try to understand what happened. Strength drawn from one part of your life may have a positive impact in other parts.





* + POSITIVITY

Attitude has a significant influence on how you feel and how you evaluate your life experiences. If you are optimistic, you are more likely to expect a positive outcome, even in difficult situations.

You can also grade the problem the next time you pen down an entry in the Reflections box. If there has been an improvement, you may want to write down what the improvement was and how it came about.

You could also add:

"What do I want to achieve today?"

"What did I do well today?"

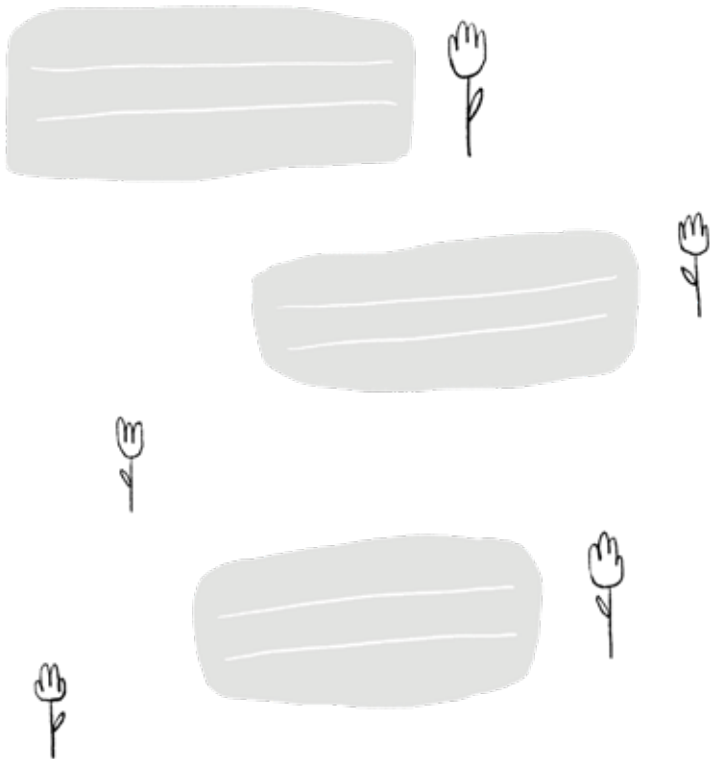
"What do I need to remember for the next time?"

The key is to look out for incremental improvements.



To develop a positive attitude, you may wish to consider doing the following:

Be mindful of what you write or draw.
Write down positive statements to counter the negative ones.

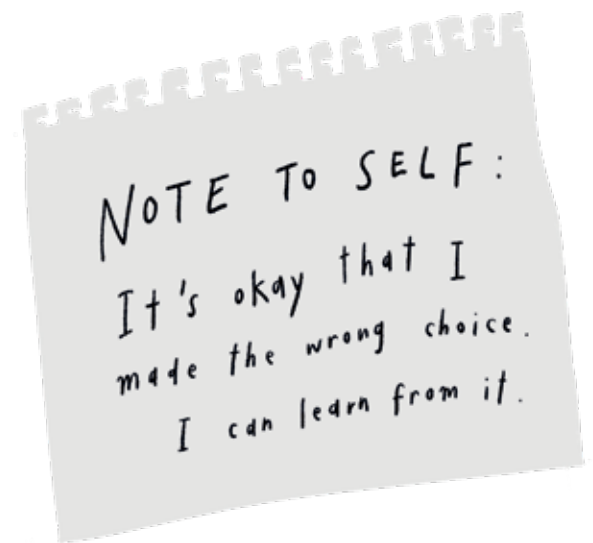
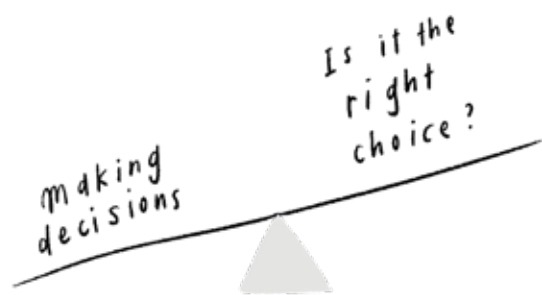


Monitor your progress closely using the journal.



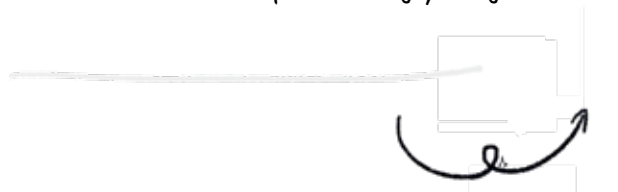
Realise that life is filled with choices.
Some result in positive consequences while
others bring about negative ones.

Accept the consequences, whether
positive or negative, and learn from them.



WHAT ARE MY GOALS?

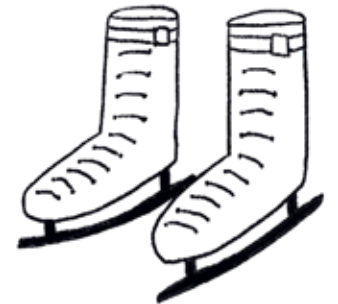
In making sense of the situation you are in, you may want to consider setting goals. Goals will help you focus on what you want to achieve, and you may experience greater success in overcoming your challenges this way. Write down your goals in this book and think about what you must do to achieve them. Follow these steps in setting your goals.



Write down a list of goals you want to achieve.



1. I want to learn the guitar.
2. Try out ice skating.
3. Pass my driving test.



Make them specific,
realistic and challenging.

If you have identified many goals,
prioritise them. Then, focus on the
first goal on your list.



1. I want to learn the guitar.
2. I want to try ice skating.
3. Read one book a month.
4. Learn how to make ondeh ondeh.
5. Save \$500 by August.

Create realistic plans that can help you strive towards achieving your goals.

Keep these plans simple and break them down into small steps, where possible.

WHAT IS THE PLAN?

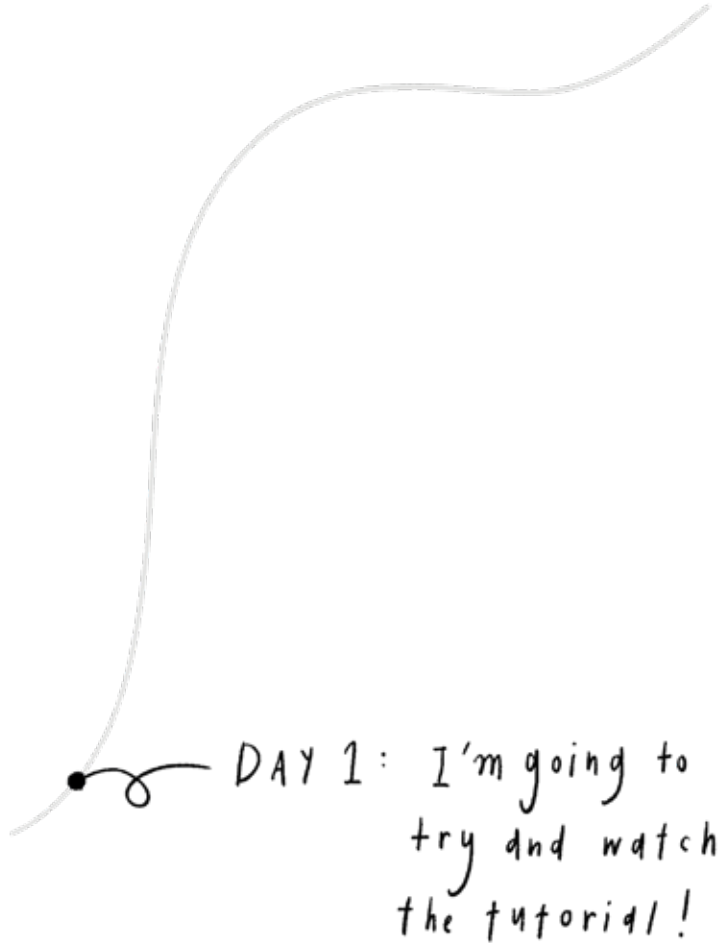
STEP 1 Watch YouTube tutorial.

STEP 2 Follow step by step.

STEP 3 PRACTISE!!!

STAY REAL

Choose a starting point and write it down. Be flexible and redefine your goals, if necessary.



Focus on completing the steps as you work towards achieving your goal. Small successes build positive self-esteem.

As you progress, you will learn more about your abilities and strengths. You will also notice that you have resources to help you.

Strengths :

Weaknesses :

CLICK TO
UNLOCK



What do I want to achieve?



If you're not quite sure how to begin, the next few pages will provide you with an example. Once you're ready, you can start writing your own entries on the blank pages at the end.

Anna T.'s

JOURNAL

(Write your name here)

- This is my diary -
No peeking!
:)

Names, characters, places, events and incidents are the products of the author's imagination and must be read in a fictitious manner. Any resemblance to actual persons and/or actual events is purely coincidental.

MONTH
JAN

- ✓ Buy Mum's present
- Finish studying for SS
-
-

Mood Tracker ——— ★ . . .

Happy	■																			
Sad																				
Angry																				

	MON	TUE	WED
- Math tuition every SAT is		Movie night w FAM BAM #TWILIGHT	
	7		
- Project work due on 12th	14	15	16
	Zahra's BDAY 🎂		22
	26	27	28

THUR	FRI	SAT	SUN
3	4	5	6 *
* 10	CCA FRIDAY CHOIR 🎵	12	13
17	18	19	20
23	24	← Table Tennis w the gang ~ 3pm @ T. a Payoh →	
29	30 ○ □	31	

DATE: 17 Jan



Dear Journal,

I'm so happy! All my Sec 2 friends are now in the same Sec 3 class. And best of all, the coolest student in school, A, is also in this class! Things couldn't be any better.

Zahra and Hazel, my two best friends, choped a seat for me during recess and all we could talk about was A. Zahra said we MUST get her to join us for recess.

Just then, A walked by and asked if she and her best friend Suraya could join us! Never in my wildest dreams would I have expected such a thing to happen—the most popular girl in school and her best friend wanted to join OUR group.

Zahra quickly scooted over to make space. I was too stunned to do anything!

A asked what we were talking about. Hazel sheepishly replied, "Nothing!"

I was still too stunned! I could feel myself blush.

A asked if we wanted to go for the movies this weekend. Of course we did! Me, the class reject, hanging out with A! That's not possible.

Zahra suggested Saturday evening. AND she added, "It's a date!"

We all burst out laughing just as the school bell rang to drown out the embarrassing moment, thank goodness!

I'm so excited and looking forward to the outing this weekend.

This is going to be a great year!



Reflections

20 JAN



I realised that A just wanted to be with Zahra so that she can improve her maths. That's why she invited us to the movies. I stupidly thought that I was the luckiest girl on this planet to get the invitation. And now she has decided to exclude me. Of course, why would she want me to be around? My maths is the worst in the class! I am of no use to A.

This A is a real %@&#!!

Draw your feelings here →



Literally me right now ...



DATE: 20 Jan



Dear Journal,

Movie night was so boring! It started out fine—we arrived at the cinema at 4pm and watched the film. There was not much time to talk because A was late and Suraya didn't turn up. It started to get worse after the movie. During dinner, all A was interested in was Zahra's maths results and how she always got full marks.

"Wah! Your maths so solid! Full marks every time! Wah you so smart. Wah Wah Wah..." Your head!

She didn't even look my way the entire evening. It was like I wasn't even there!

It's quite obvious why she wanted to go out with us. I know this A is plotting something!

It was getting late so I decided to go back first. When I left, they didn't even bother to stop their conversation. Not even a "bye"! Zahra and Hazel didn't even stop me. They both seemed to be getting along just fine with A.

Why must this happen to me?

Is there something wrong with me?



Reflections

22 JAN



I could have better managed the movie outing better. Why didn't I join in the conversation? Why didn't I stay longer? Surely they must have talked about other things? Well, now I will never know.

I know I cannot blame myself for this. It's not going to help. I must not think that A is responsible for my frustrations. I am responsible for my own life! I must win my friends back.

Draw your feelings here →



DATE: 22 Jan



Dear Journal,

Zahra and Hazel didn't save me a seat during recess. And guess who was with them? A and Suraya. Suraya was not even at the movies last Saturday! What is happening? I was too embarrassed to join them, so I decided not to. I just walked around school and stayed in the toilet until the bell rang. I went straight to class and they were still not there.

The four stooges came sauntering in way after the bell rang, and the teacher didn't even say anything! They just walked to their seats and acted as if nothing happened. They didn't even ask me why I didn't join them for recess.

Sigh...

The incident was on my mind the whole day. I was so sad that I started crying suddenly during dinner when Mummy asked me how my day was. It was so embarrassing, but I told Mummy what happened and that I want to transfer to another school. Both Mummy and Daddy were silent and didn't say much. They just listened.

What is happening? I really tried to join the conversation but my maths is super bad. How could Zahra and Hazel do this to me?? I thought they were my best friends.

Maybe I should have just joined them during recess. But there were no empty seats at the table...

What should I have done?

I don't know what do...

A drawing of several fish swimming in a school. The fish are simple line drawings with small fins and tails, swimming in various directions. The text "I don't know what do..." is written above the fish in a cursive, handwritten style.

Reflections

21 Feb



I have bigger problems to worry about and I should not be bothered by losing Zahra and Hazel as my best friends. I'm worried about my dad over the whole "issue". He looks stressed and has been acting differently lately. Anyway, I don't think A is good for my image. I'll get over them and if I have to move to another school, good riddance! It will be a relief that I don't have to see them every day!

Draw your feelings here →



DATE: 20 Feb



Dear Journal,

It's been about a month since I wrote to you. I almost forgot all about you!

Zahra and Hazel are no longer my best friends. The *@&#! has enchanted them into keeping me out of their group. Thank god I found Emily. Now I spend most of my time with her. She is a nice person—quiet, just like me. Things are not so bad in school, but it's not so good at home.

Daddy was retrenched from work. Basically, he lost his job. And we are now living on the little savings that we have. It's been almost two months since he went jobless and I didn't know about it. He says that at his age, it will be very difficult for him to find a new job. Both Daddy and Mummy seem to be very worried. Daddy just sold our car and Mummy wants to go back to work. Who's going to take care of me!

What's worse is that Daddy suggested we move into Grandma's house and sell this lovely home! All this

information is really too much for me to handle. Sometimes when I hear Mummy and Daddy quarrelling about these things, I suddenly feel like I cannot breathe!

I remember what my school counsellor told me about taking deep breaths. It did help a little, but I'm still very worried about moving into Grandma's house. It will mean that I have to move to another school. It's not great at this school, but I just don't want to make new friends and start the whole cycle again. I was very fortunate that I managed to find Emily as a friend and I'm going to miss her if I move.

Well, let's see what happens. Anyway, this is not going to be within my control. Sigh!



Reflections

4 Mar



I miss Emily. She was a quiet girl who was good company. I guess we clicked because we were the same. I don't see anyone like Emily in this new school. I guess I miss Zahra and Hazel too...

I'm upset with Daddy for rushing through the move, but I can imagine it must also be scary for him 'coz he's not able to find a new job. And Mummy going back to work after all these years of staying at home with me must not be easy either. I think I should spare a thought about their challenges too.

Grandma's house is not so bad after all. At least I have my own room. Mummy is at work the whole day and comes back very late, but Grandma is around.

Draw your feelings here →



DATE: 4 Mar



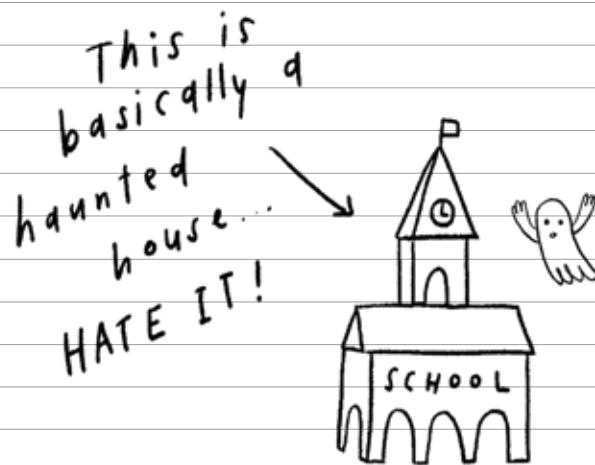
Dear Journal,

Things have been moving very fast over the last few weeks. Daddy has decided to rent out our flat and we have moved into Grandma's house. And I have moved to another school! It all happened so fast, they didn't even let me know about any of their plans. I didn't even get to say goodbye properly to Emily, Zahra and Hazel...

I don't like the school. It's old, the uniform's ugly and I have to walk 15 minutes from Grandma's house to get to school. All this was done so quickly and no one even asked me if I was okay with this school. They just made all the arrangements. I went for a meeting with the school vice principal and VOILA! I'm in a new school! I should have opened my golden mouth and said something! AS usual, I was just too stunned and I just nodded to everything my parents said. And now I have to deal with the sudden move! I have to be careful what I wish for. I wanted to change schools after the whole ordeal with A, Zahra and Hazel, but I wish I could take back those words now!

The mid-year exams are coming and they still made these

arrangements. How can I sit for the exams? How can they do this to me? I'm not ready for the exams. I don't know what to study and I need to find new friends. This is getting very scary. What shall I do?



Reflections

22 May



Moving to a new school so suddenly was partly Mummy's and Daddy's fault, but I guess it was also mine. I should learn to speak up. If I don't share my opinions or thoughts, how would they know? After meeting with the vice principal, I should have told my parents that I didn't like the school, or the uniform. Maybe we could have looked for another school.

Speak up! Don't be so frightened of everything

Draw your feelings here →



DATE: 7 Mar



Dear Journal,

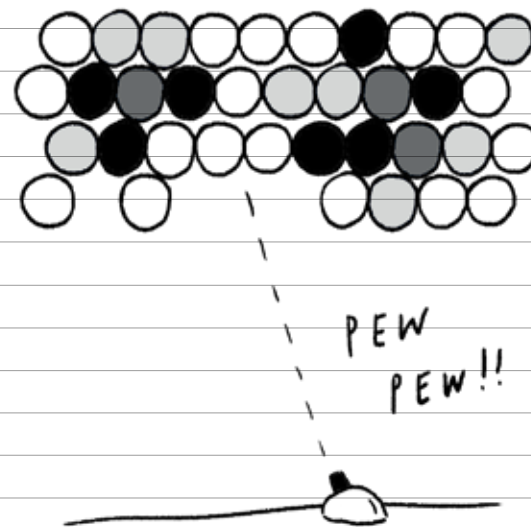
This school REALLY sucks! The form teacher assigned a classmate to accompany me for the first few days and guess what her name was? Suraya! Just more reminders of my miserable past. We didn't click and the next day she abandoned me.

Now I'm all alone again. When the recess bell rang, I slowly walked to the canteen and headed straight to the long queue at the rice stall. The food is nothing to talk about but I was hungry and I wanted to eat. I stood in line for what seemed like hours and was playing with my usual Bubble Blaster game on my phone. By the time I got my food I had only 10 minutes to gobble it down. I ate like a pig! I think.

Bubble Blaster is now my best friend. I'm at level 1,917. It's a mindless game and I am on it for hours. There is some strategy to it. You have to connect as many bubbles of the same colour before bursting them to get more points. But more importantly, Bubble Blaster makes me forget that I am lonely.

Oh, and after recess, it was a maths lesson and I fell asleep in class! OMG...me falling asleep in class! If Mummy finds out, I'm screwed! I only woke up when there was a commotion and I realised that it was already the next lesson. I slept throughout the entire period and the teacher didn't even bother to wake me up. No one did.

I really don't like this school...



Reflections

15 Mar



It's kinda lonely without friends, but I think I'm okay with it. I don't get interrupted by anyone and I can focus on my game. I'm at level 2,837 now, and I think I can reach level 3,000 tonight.

Who needs friends? Not me.

I've got to be careful though. I was lucky I didn't get into trouble for sleeping in class. So far, no teacher has called my parents. If any teacher complains, I am going to get it from Mummy and Daddy.

Draw your feelings here →



DATE: 6 Apr



Dear Journal,

I spend a lot of time on my phone these days. My old friends seem to have totally forgotten about me, since they look like they're having so much fun on their own on Instagram. I haven't spoken to Emily since I moved to this new school. She hasn't texted or called me either... I must be the biggest loser on this planet!

Sleeping during maths and history lessons has become a routine. The other teachers are fierce, so I force myself to stay awake. But I really don't know what the teachers are talking about. My mind feels like it's a million miles away.

It's all Mummy and Daddy's fault! Why must they move to Grandma's house and make me change school? I want to go back to my old school. This school is also stupid. The class is so boring that I keep falling asleep. And at night I can't sleep and I'm too tired to do any revision. At least Bubble Blaster keeps me company. Dinner is so yucky, I hardly eat at all, and I'm so hungry at night! By the time I finally fall asleep, I have to get up and get ready for school. I hate the walk to school. Daddy used to drive me

and I could catch some sleep in the car.

Now that Daddy has found some part-time work and Mummy has gone back to work at her old office, I have become the house maid, responsible for looking after Grandma. Grandma is nice, but I really don't know what she's saying half the time. She's either cooking or resting on her rocking chair. I think she doesn't like me. The only thing she tells me is to eat! And I hate the soups she cooks. They taste like water.

There is no conversation, no "how are you" or "how's your day". Nothing.

I'm lonely at home and I'm also lonely at school. What a lonely life I live.

And I don't have a good feeling about the coming exams. I think I am going to fail big time!

Reflections

8 Apr



Maybe I should be the one who starts talking instead, rather than wait for people to talk to me. Maybe Grandma isn't used to having someone around all the time as she used to live on her own and we only visited once in a while, and she's not used to chatting. I think that's the case in school too. But that's me. Maybe I'll try and talk to her tomorrow, or my desk mate in class.

Draw your feelings here →



DATE: 9 MAY



Dear Journal,

I am in big trouble. I just finished the mid-year Maths Paper 1 and I left half the answers blank! I am doomed. And yesterday during the history exam, I fell asleep and did only one question. One! After the exam, I looked at the questions again and realised that I could have answered the last few. What a moron!

Tomorrow is Social Studies and Maths Paper 2. I tried revising but I don't know where to start. I don't know what to do! I'm very scared. This time I'm going to get a real good yelling from my parents. I have never failed my exams before. I did badly for maths last time, but never failed. I am doomed.

It is 2am now! I better force myself to sleep! Wish me luck!

Good night, Journal.

* PEP TALK =
to myself
"You can do it!!!"

Reflections

9 Jun



That was a scary time, not knowing what to study or do for the exams. Sleeping in class was just going to make it worse for me. I need to figure out why I'm so tired all the time. I think I should stop playing Bubble Blaster till late at night. Maybe I'll ask my desk mate to help me out with my homework... She seems friendly after I tried talking to her a few times.

This whole time being grounded has made me think a lot about what's wrong with my life. I hate Grandma's food, but I know it's good for us 'coz there's lots of veggies. She keeps telling me to eat, maybe 'coz she knows it's unhealthy if I keep on starving myself. I'm also exercising these days. I go jogging on alternate days. I've put all this in my calendar. I'm also sleeping better now that my phone has been confiscated. I'm reading more too. I think this routine might be good for me. I might just stick to it!

Draw your feelings here →



Don't bottle!
Feel it

DATE: 20 MAY



Dear Journal,

The unthinkable has happened! I failed all my subjects except for English and mother tongue. Maths, as expected, was the worst, 18/100! I had a non-stop lecture from the time I got back from school until bedtime. Both Mummy and Daddy took turns to hammer me. They said that I was a spoilt child, that I didn't appreciate what I have and that I was behaving like a baby. They complained that I wasn't eating my dinner and that I'm always on the phone. The list goes on and on... Can you imagine? Non-Stop the entire evening!

I got so angry, I yelled back at Mummy and Daddy. I told them that it was also their fault. I didn't want to change school. They forced me to without even asking me! It's not my fault that Daddy lost his job and Mummy has to go back to work.

Mummy teared up and went into her room, but Daddy continued to yell at me. He called me an "ungrateful child" and confiscated my phone. I have been grounded for the June school holidays.

But, isn't it also their fault? Am I really so ungrateful?

Reflections

22 May



I must have made Daddy very angry. I probably deserved the scolding and the punishment. I guess I've been selfish and I only thought about my own problems. I have a nice room to myself at Grandma's house, and I guess Mummy and Daddy cared enough about me to worry about my well-being. Maybe I'm not that alone after all. I'm also pretty sure that all this has not been easy for Mummy and Daddy as well.

Draw your feelings here →



DATE: 9 Jun



Dear Journal,

Day nine of being grounded...

Grandma's been nicer to me. She brings me snacks from time to time. But her soups are still terrible. They're so tasteless, I don't understand how they're supposed to be good for you. But her snacks, I like! This place is starting to feel more like home I guess, now that I have ALL the time in the world to think about it.

Mummy and I are spending more time together. She puts aside some time after she gets home from work to ask about me. I've been talking to her a lot, and that's helped me focus and set some goals. I also talked to her about feeling lonely at school. There's joy in having friends and I remember the good times I had with Zahra and Hazel. Emily was a good friend too. Mummy suggested I join an activity group I'm interested in. I think I'll try that when the school holidays are over. Mummy and I have also made plans to bake a cake next week. She's taken a day off so I'm looking forward to the mummy-daughter bonding time. I hope the cake doesn't turn out like the horror stories I

saw on Instagram though LOL.

I'll also call up Emily, Zahra and Hazel and ask them how they have been. I can't meet them yet because of the house arrest, but maybe we could make plans for the future.

I'll also control my phone activities and stop after 10pm.

Goodbye Bubble Blaster! I'll only see you on weekends. This is going to be difficult, but I know I can do it!

Reflections



Lined writing area for reflections.

Draw your feelings here →



Important to Note:

This guide is not intended as a substitute for clinical advice. The reader should consult a professional in matters relating to his/her mental health, particularly when there are symptoms that may require diagnosis or medical attention.

USEFUL TIPS

* ✦ IS IT OKAY TO BE ANGRY?

Anger is a normal response when expressed appropriately. It's an outlet to relieve stress and frustration, after all. But when anger is expressed through blame and aggression, it can be a destructive force.

If you think or feel that someone else is responsible for your frustration, you might consider it valid to act aggressively. It may be helpful to be alert to such situations. Bear in mind the following points:

1. You are responsible for your own life.
2. Clarify your thoughts and feelings.
3. If thoughts and feelings are in conflict, try to seek ways to reconcile them.

Don't blow up! Use this journal to deal with the anger. You can also consider letting off steam by exercising, or sharing your thoughts with someone close.

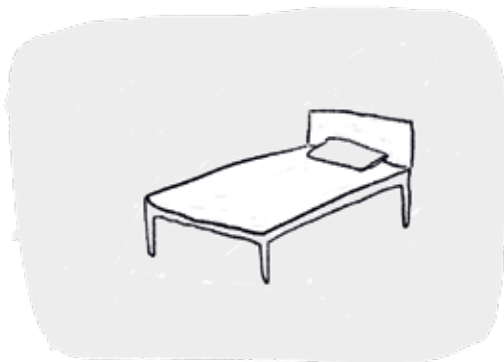


WHAT IF I FIND IT HARD TO SLEEP?

zzz...

Sleeping and being well-rested are critical parts of our daily lives. There is a notable relationship between sleep deprivation and fatigue. If you have insomnia or are unable to get adequate sleep, it's okay to seek help from a doctor or a therapist. These professionals are able to provide different types of intervention strategies, which include medication, therapy and/or a suitable self-care programme to address the reason(s) for sleep deprivation and fatigue.

If the situation does not warrant such serious intervention strategies, you can consider improving your nutrition, enforcing regular sleep timings, exercising and allocating enough rest in between activities.



FINDING THE RIGHT RHYTHM



If you're constantly rushing, missing deadlines, not getting sufficient rest and feeling overwhelmed by daily activities, it's time to look at how you manage time!

You can start by recording your daily activities in this journal. It will provide you with an overview of how you spend time every day. You could split your list into three time frames: breakfast to lunch, lunch to dinner, and dinner to bedtime. Review your daily activities and circle those that are important. Prioritise these activities in a list so that you have sufficient time to complete your tasks without feeling overwhelmed. Start a routine with this list as a reference and give yourself a few months to get used to this routine!

Manage your time effectively with three steps:

1. Establish your priorities.
2. Create a realistic schedule of activities.
3. Seek help for tasks you have difficulty accomplishing.

You can use the monthly planner at the back of this journal to create your schedule and to write down your goals so that you can keep track of them.

MANAGING ANXIETY

In life, it is normal to feel anxious from time to time. However, when the anxiety gets too intense over a prolonged period, you might start to experience anxiety attacks. To manage this, understand how you react in situations that induce anxiety, identify the concerns surrounding these reactions and learn ways to “let go” of these concerns.

There are several ways to manage anxiety attacks. Journalling, when carried out regularly, could be one of them—it provides a ready outlet to write down your thoughts and feelings, which can be subsequently revisited and addressed appropriately.

If you need immediate relief for anxiety attacks, one way to do this is through deep breathing. This is to enable you to get sufficient oxygen to your brain so that you can think objectively.

Take a deep
breath and count
to 10 ...

You must understand that it is physically impossible for the nervous system to be stressed and relaxed at the same time. Adopting a simple relaxation technique like deep breathing may provide you with temporary respite from anxiety and enable you to think clearly and objectively.

Try these simple steps:

1. Select a comfortable position. Close your eyes. Focus on your breathing.
2. Breathe in for 4 seconds—think about the air flowing into your lungs.
3. Hold your breath for 2 seconds.
4. Breathe out for 4 seconds—think about the air flowing out.
5. Tell yourself, “I am relaxing. Fresh air is flowing within my body and I feel refreshed.”
6. Continue doing this for 3 to 5 minutes.
7. Focus on the smooth, rhythmical process of your breathing.

Once done, have a deep stretch and continue with

DEALING WITH SELF-ESTEEM

Self-worth, self-competence and self-acceptance are components that make up your self-esteem. It affects the way you view yourself, and if you lose your self-esteem, you might end up viewing yourself as worthless and a failure.

If this is how you feel, you have to take an honest, objective look at your accomplishments, which include the small goals that you have set and achieved.

If you want to improve your self-esteem, you must have a strong sense of self-awareness. Start by jotting down your feelings in a journal. Next, identify the challenges you face and set goals that will help you to overcome them. Write an action plan to help you pursue these goals. You will feel a strong sense of achievement when you attain your goals. Repeat this process and over time, you will turn your positive thoughts into positive behaviours that will help raise your self-esteem.



WHAT CAN I DO IF I'M FEELING LONELY?

Loneliness is a state of mind in which people feel empty and unwanted. Often, people who experience loneliness yearn for human contact, but their state of mind hinders them from making connections with others.

It is important to note that there is a difference between loneliness and being alone. One can be in the company of many people and still experience loneliness. On the other hand, one can be alone, yet not experience loneliness.

If you should feel lonely, use a journal to help you. Record the occasions when you experience bouts of loneliness and be mindful of the triggers that may cause you to feel this way. This strategy can help you to identify behavioural patterns that you may want to avoid, so as to tackle loneliness.



NAVIGATING GRIEF AND LOSS

Grief is the intense emotional suffering that can be triggered by a loss. When unresolved, it can lead to acute anxiety and depression. Grief is a natural and inevitable process that people go through when they lose someone or something important. There are five stages in the grief process: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance.

Denial is usually the first stage in the grief process. It acts like a protective wall that blocks out the pain, hurt and disappointment. After experiencing denial, one may transit into anger, where one may start to lay blame on others for causing the grief. Some people may move to the bargaining stage of grief—either with life, self and/or others. Negative outcomes at any stage may result in one experiencing depression. When one overcomes the feelings of depression, they will typically transit into acceptance.

The grieving process is not the same for everyone, but we can try to accept the past, accept life as it is and accept the loss.



DEALING WITH DEPRESSION

From time to time, everyone experiences feelings of sadness. This could stem from the loss of a loved one or a failed relationship. However, if this sadness never seems to fade away, then this may be an indication that one may be suffering from depression.

The three main causes of depression are:

1. Environmental or situational factors triggered by the stress of change or loss one experiences.
2. Biological factors such as a chemical imbalance in the brain that results in changes in thoughts, behaviours and emotions.
3. Genetic factors where one may be predisposed to this condition because a family member or relative suffers from some form of depressive illness.

Journalling is a good outlet to help address depression. However, if you continue to feel hopelessness and despair despite your best efforts at journalling, reach out to others for support. Create a list of people who can help you.

Family member: _____

Counsellor: _____

Friend: _____

LIMITS OF SELF-HELP

While journalling brings with it many benefits, one must be mindful that it is not a miracle solution to all conditions related to mental health. This guide aims to provide assistance in the journalling process and is by no means prescriptive and/or exhaustive in its content.

It is important to note that the information imparted in this journal is not meant to provide emergency help. If you need immediate assistance, contact a responsible adult or a professional. Should you or someone you know need help in managing mental health issues, reach out to the Samaritans of Singapore at 1800-221-4444.



Reflections



Lined writing area for reflections.

Draw your feelings here →



Reflections



Draw your feelings here →



Reflections



Lined writing area for reflections.

Draw your feelings here →



Reflections



Lined writing area for reflections.

Draw your feelings here →



Reflections



Lined area for writing reflections.

Draw your feelings here →



Reflections



Lined writing area for reflections.

Draw your feelings here →



Reflections



Draw your feelings here →



Reflections



Lined writing area for reflections.

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Reflections



Draw your feelings here →



Reflections



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Reflections



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Reflections



Lined writing area for reflections.

Draw your feelings here →



Reflections



Lined writing area for reflections.

Draw your feelings here →



Reflections



Lined writing area for reflections.

Draw your feelings here →



CONGRATULATIONS!
YOU MADE IT TO THE
END OF THE JOURNAL!





ABOUT THE AUTHOR

PK Poniah has a Masters in Guidance and Counselling and many years of experience working closely with teenagers and youths who face challenges in different areas of their lives, such as academic studies, peer and family relations, and mental health.

“This journal gives us an opportunity to distil what’s important and what’s not; it helps us have a conversation with our mind that gives clarity in our choices on this journey of life.”

—Anthea Indira Ong, author of *50 Shades of Love*,
mental health advocate, Ex-Nominated Member of Parliament

**Put down your phone and pick up a pen.
Flip open these pages and fill them up
with your daily thoughts. Make a change.
Start with yourself. This is your journey
to self-care, so let it begin here.**

“With the many demands on our daily lives, journalling allows us to slow down, reflect and discover what works for us.”

—Dr Delphine Koh, Principal Psychologist (Clinical),
REACH (East), Department of Psychological Medicine,
KK Women’s and Children’s Hospital

“Journalling is a great friend and potential comforter—a ‘comfort blanket’, if you will—that is uniquely mine and which will see me through the good times and the not-so-good times.”

—Dr Geoff McNulty, Senior Lecturer in Education
(Guidance and Counselling), James Cook University

NON-FICTION

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