

Mindful journalling: a beginner's guide

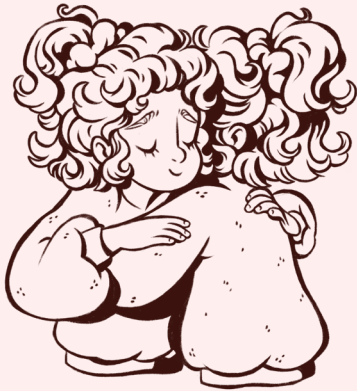
Your journey to calm and creative
resilience starts here



In partnership between:



mindful journalling: your journey to creative resilience



Being mindful means giving your full attention to the present moment, to what is going on inside and around you. Being mindful means not trying to control everything; instead, you're observing your situation, without judgement, and moving towards accepting the things that can't be changed.

If you're new to mindfulness, it might be a relief to surrender to the idea that some things are out of our control and you're just a person doing their best.

Benefits of mindfulness

- ♥ Being able to more fully recognise and enjoy good things in life as they happen, contributing to a greater feeling that life is generally good
- ♥ Stronger connections with loved ones, because you're more present and engaged when spending time with them
- ♥ Greater ability to focus on the task at hand; improved memory; more restful sleep
- ♥ Greater resilience for day to day challenges, allowing you to move forward without getting caught up in your thoughts and feelings.

The five R's of mindfulness

A practical exercise to improve your emotional wellbeing every day:

- ♥ **1 Recognise:** Pause. Take a moment to acknowledge your inner weather.
- ♥ **2 Relax:** You might want to close your eyes for a moment, focus on your breathing, or complete a body scan from head to toe.

♥ **3**

Review: What's happening inside you, and how might it be different to what's happening outside of, or around you? Consider honestly what you can change, control or reconsider about your present situation.

♥ **4**

Respond: Rather than reacting or acting on impulse, especially in stressful situations, how would you like to respond as your calmest most thoughtful self?

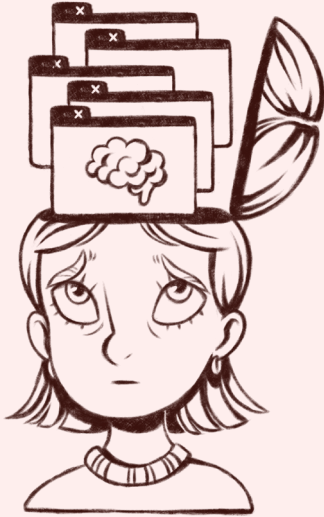
♥ **5**

Return: Come back to yourself in this present moment, hopefully feeling a little more grounded and with a better idea of how to move forward

Mindfulness and journalling

Journalling can be many things. For some, it's a practical way of organising or documenting their daily activities. It might be a creative outlet. Importantly for you, it can also be a physical, visual way of working out our feelings and separating these from facts. Having a mindful mindset can help you get the most out of your journalling practice, and vice-versa.

brain dump journalling



When we're in a chapter of stress, our heads can feel like a noisy place to be. Sometimes, writing things down can quiet these thoughts, or close the many mental tabs we have open.

Below are some prompts to help you start making sense of, simplifying or responding to some of these worries or uncertainties. You can journal however feels good and easeful for you: a written sentence or two for each prompt, a free-flowing page exploring just one prompt, a combination of notes and drawings, or even a voice memo on your phone.

You're not obligated to read over your thoughts if they feel too heavy. You might even consider tearing them up, once you're done getting them out, as a way of lightening your mental load and letting those thoughts go.

The brain dump method of journalling is sometimes referred to as morning pages. The idea is that you get all the stuff that's filling up your brain out of your brain, so you can get on with your day. Setting a loose rule before you begin would be helpful. Maybe you could fill a page or set your timer for five minutes.

What thoughts are taking up most space in my brain today?

I'll visualise my page as a bucket, where I can dump my thoughts. I won't put pressure on myself to fix problems or make judgements, I'll just focus on getting them out of my head, onto the page.

What am I overthinking?

On a new page in my notebook, I'll create four columns:

- 1 I am worried or thinking a lot about...
- 2 What, regarding this worry, can I do something about?
- 3 What am I already doing to address this?
- 4 What can I do in future?

Now I'll have at it. I'll be honest and factual. I won't write this list from the point of view of someone equipped with the magic to retroactively change the past. I'll place myself in the here and now, and hold myself with compassion.

Now I've written this list, what thoughts can I release?

Maybe now there's some space to focus on the positives. I don't have to pretend that everything is wonderful when it isn't. Instead, I will recognise good things are important for reducing stress and developing emotional resilience, both of which I need right now. I imagine these heavier thoughts transforming into butterflies, free to fly away.



glimmer journalling



Let's shift our focus to glimmers: these are the opposite of triggers. Triggers include anything that we or our bodies experience as threatening, and cause us to experience a fight, flight or freeze response. Glimmers include any experiences that help to activate the calming part of our nervous system, increasing feelings of safety and connection in our bodies and with other people.

Glimmers might include things like savouring a hot cup of coffee, noticing the colours of the sunset, the rumble of a purring cat, or appreciating the smell after rain.

Both glimmers and triggers have the power to build in our bodies and create ripple effects. For this reason, noticing glimmers is a really clever mindfulness practice, and is a habit that only gets stronger the more we exercise it. The joy that exists in our lives might not change, but our ability to notice it and appreciate it can dramatically improve our mental health.

With that in mind, let's start small.

What did I learn today?

It might be something I learned about my baby, or it might be something completely unrelated. Either way, I'll take a moment to relish this new understanding that's entirely mine, something no-one can take away from me. Even if this thing I learned was acquired through mistakes, that's still knowledge I didn't have yesterday, and that's powerful.

What inspired me today?

It might be something I did, something I noticed for the first time, an act of kindness extended to me.

What am I celebrating today?

Can I expand on anything I've written and actually reframe it as a success? It doesn't have to be big or world changing, just a small shift in my world, a little gold star sticker I can give myself.

What am I welcoming tomorrow?

Even if today has been hard, what can I make space for in future?



quick glimmers



Once you've developed a habit of writing or recording your thoughts, you might like to try a shorthand or bullet form of journalling. This can be a helpful way to solidify your habit into something that's quicker and more manageable at the beginning or end of the day.

Even though you've started journalling as a way to gain greater peace and clarity in a time of stress, it's helpful to consider creative practices like this may in future become a place of joy and comfort. As your family slowly transitions out of this newborn phase and into the next chapter, it's important to protect time in your week or day that nourishes your mental health and creativity.

Choose a handful of prompts from the list below to check in with yourself, track your mood and celebrate your progress over the coming month. You might like to alternate your prompts every month or fortnight to see which combination works best for you. Alternatively, and if getting started is hard, you might like to print the following pages, colouring in, cutting out and sticking in what feels most aligned to you and disregarding what doesn't.

- ♥ Today I feel/ felt...
- ♥ I will care/ cared for my mind and body today by...
- ♥ I will fill/ filled my own cup today by...
These are all the things my soul needs, after my brain and body are cared for
- ♥ If today were a piece of music, this is the song that would best represent it...
- ♥ Podcasts or audiobooks I'd like to listen to.../ I enjoyed listening to x podcast or audiobook today...Key takeaways I'd like to remember were...

- ♥ A tiny detail or small noticing from today...
It might be something I saw for the first time, something that delighted me, or a familiar comfort that I saw in a new light.
- ♥ The moment from today I would give a gold star to, if I could...
- ♥ I showed up for myself today by...
I might celebrate being a good friend to myself, or set a specific intention to be a better friend to myself tomorrow
- ♥ A moment from today I want to capture in my mind's eye forever...
- ♥ Something that grew inside me today...
Perhaps a wish, a hope or a tiny inner shift.
- ♥ Something that happened today that I would like to do differently next time...
- ♥ Today, I was encouraged by...
- ♥ A wish I will make today for my future self...
- ♥ Something I would like to let go of or release today is...

Date:

Notes/ reminders:

Today I'm feeling:



How I'm caring for myself today:



Podcasts, music, books, movies or creator content I enjoyed today, including key takeaways I want to remember::



A tiny detail or small noticing from today:

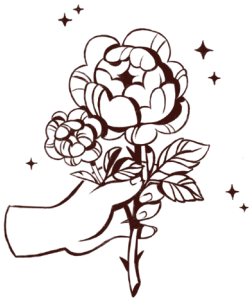


Today's gold star moment::





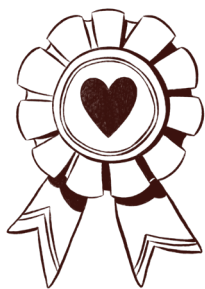
How I'm showing up for myself today:



Something that grew inside me today:



Something that happened today that I'd like to work on, amend, or do differently next time:



Today, I was encouraged by:



A wish I'd like to make for my future self:

Colour these illustrations in, cut them out and use them to decorate and organise a blank journalling page.

