

Focused Journaling

Focused Journaling© is a way of delving more deeply into an experience to further process and integrate that experience. You may focus upon either a past or current experience. It is similar to other journaling in that you record thoughts from your stream of consciousness. It is different from other types of journaling in that you focus on a specific experience or question that you have posed to yourself.

The goal of *Focused Journaling*© is to enhance and increase processing and the integration of experiences that have previously contributed to fragmentation. *Focused Journaling*© is *not* intended for problem solving. Fragmented, we are dysfunctional. Integrated, we are functional—we have integrity. So the goal of personal growth (and of therapy) is to become more and more integrated so that we become more and more functional. *Focused Journaling*© is not the be-all and the end-all of therapy, but it is a very powerful tool and one that we should all make serious use of.

A primary function of *Focused Journaling*© is to reprocess trauma so that we become desensitized to it and its effects. To achieve this, take any specific incident or group of repeated incidences of abuse, and write a detailed account of that event. When you journal, it is most useful if you include not only factual details about events but also details about what you *experienced*. This should include what you experienced at the time as well as afterward up to and including the present time. Include mental processes, emotions, and sensations in your journal! Any and all of the following are helpful to include:

- Sensations, including auditory, tactile, and olfactory impressions
- Mental images
- Associations you make from this experience
- Dreams that seem related
- Insights
- Dissociative episodes
- And anything else you can think of that may not have been included on this list.

You can journal about any specific issues you have! Some examples follow:

- What are my issues regarding control?
- What are my issues regarding safety?
- What is the source of my attitudes and behaviors about money?
- What is the source of my attitudes and behaviors about sex?
- What is the source of my attitudes and behaviors about relationships?
- What is the source of my attitudes and behaviors about marriage?

You can journal about any specific symptoms you have. Some examples follow.

- Are there times when I feel that I have over-reacted, become very emotional, “tranced-out,” or become extremely angry that may be related to my childhood trauma?
- Where do I experience it in my body when I get into a “bad space” or a triggered place? That is, do I feel it in my stomach, do I get light-headed, does my heart race, fists clench, teeth grind, or do I feel numb? Does this location in my body relate to my trauma?
- When do I feel disorganized or discombobulated?
- What are my major triggers – events that cause these feelings?
- When have I become triggered?
- Is there any time of year when I am more likely to become triggered?
- What sorts of events are triggering to me?
- Where do my triggers come from out of my life experiences?

You can also journal about any specific question you have about your current feelings or behavior. Some examples follow.

- Why do I feel the way I do about (a certain person)?
- Why do I keep doing (a certain behavior)?