

# THREE FINDING YOUR FLOW - JOURNALING TECHNIQUES FOR BEGINNERS

Emma stared at the blank page, pen hovering uncertainly. The gentle ticking of her bedside clock seemed to mock her hesitation. "I want to start journaling," she had told her therapist last week, "but I never know what to write." Now, faced with the reality of the empty page, those words echoed in her mind.

Sound familiar? Don't worry – writer's block happens to everyone, especially when you're just starting out. Let's explore some techniques to get those words flowing, following Emma's journey as she discovers her journaling voice.

## 1. STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS WRITING

Emma set her phone timer for 5 minutes, took a deep breath, and began to write whatever came to mind:

*"This is stupid I don't know what to write about maybe I should give up no keep going what's that noise outside probably just the neighbor's cat I wonder if I remembered to buy cat food I need to make a grocery list focus*

*Emma you're supposed to be journaling what does that even mean I guess I'm doing it now these are my thoughts on paper weird..."*

As the timer chimed, Emma blinked in surprise. Her page was full of rambling thoughts, but she felt a sense of release. It wasn't Shakespeare, but it was a start.

**Tip:** Don't worry about grammar, spelling, or even making sense. The goal is to bypass your inner critic and tap into your subconscious.

## 2. GRATITUDE JOURNALING

The next evening, Emma decided to try a different approach. She'd read about the benefits of gratitude, so she titled her page "Three Things I'm Grateful For" and began to write:

1. *"The way the sunlight hit the trees on my walk this morning, making everything look golden.*
2. *My sister calling just to check in.*
3. *Finding that last piece of chocolate I forgot about in the back of the cupboard."*

As she wrote, Emma felt a subtle shift in her mood. The stress of her day seemed to recede as she focused on these positive moments.

**Research Note:** Dr. Robert Emmons, a leading gratitude researcher, has found that practicing gratitude can increase happiness and life satisfaction. In a 2003 study published in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Emmons and McCullough found that participants who kept gratitude journals reported higher levels of positive emotions and better sleep quality.

### 3. PROMPT-BASED WRITING

On a day when Emma felt stuck, she turned to a list of journaling prompts she'd found online. One caught her eye: "What's the best thing that happened today?" She began to write:

*"The best thing that happened today was nailing that presentation at work. I was so nervous, but all the preparation paid off. I felt confident and articulate, and my boss even complimented me afterward. It's a small win, but it feels good to be recognized for my hard work."*

As she wrote, Emma found herself delving deeper into her feelings about work, her aspirations, and her self-confidence. The prompt had sparked a rich vein of self-reflection she hadn't expected.

**Tip:** Keep a list of prompts handy for days when you need a little nudge. Websites like "Journal Buddies" offer hundreds of free prompts for all ages and situations.

### 4. REFLECTION ON MEDIA

After finishing a novel that had deeply moved her, Emma felt compelled to write about it:

*"I just finished 'The Midnight Library' by Matt Haig. The idea of being able to see all the different paths your life could have taken is fascinating. It made me think about my own choices and regrets. But ultimately, the book's message about appreciating the life you have really struck a chord. I want to focus more on being present and grateful for my current reality, rather than always wondering 'what if?'"*

This entry led Emma to reflect on her own life choices and values, sparking a deeper level of introspection than she'd experienced before.

**Tip:** Writing about books, movies, podcasts, or art that resonates

with you can be a great way to explore your own thoughts and feelings.

## 5. BULLET JOURNALING

Intrigued by the bullet journaling system she'd seen on social media, Emma decided to give it a try. She created a simple spread:

*March 15, 2024*

- *Call the dentist to schedule cleaning*
- *Buy birthday gift for Mom*
- *Finish report for work project*
- > *Start daily meditation practice*
- \* *Had a great catch-up coffee with Alex*
- \* *Feeling anxious about an upcoming presentation*

Emma found the structured approach freeing. She could jot down tasks, events, and feelings all in one place, giving her a bird's-eye view of her day.

**Research Note:** A 2020 study published in the *Journal of Environmental Psychology* found that writing tasks down can free up cognitive resources, reducing anxiety and improving performance. The researchers dubbed this the "intention offloading" effect.

## 6. DIALOGUING

On a day when Emma felt conflicted about a decision she had to make, she tried a technique her therapist had suggested: dialoguing with herself. She wrote out a conversation between her "logical" side and her "emotional" side:

*Logical Emma: We should take that new job offer. It's a great opportunity for career growth.*

*Emotional Emma: But I'm scared. What if I'm not good enough? What if I fail?*

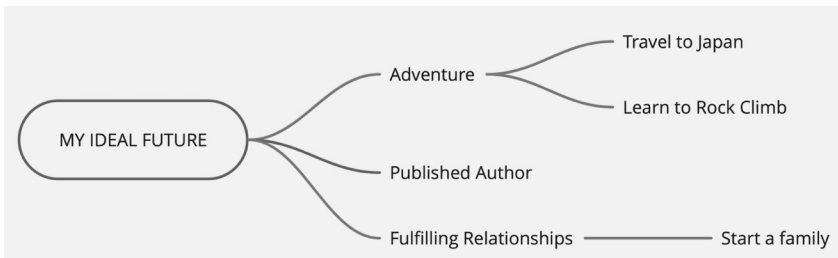
*Logical Emma: We've succeeded in challenging situations before. Remember the Johnson project?*

*Emotional Emma: That's true. I did handle that well...*

As the dialogue unfolded, Emma gained clarity on her fears and motivations, helping her approach the decision with more self-awareness.

## 7. MIND MAPPING

When Emma's thoughts felt tangled, she turned to mind mapping. In the center of a blank page, she wrote "My Ideal Future" and began branching out with related ideas:



The visual representation helped Emma see connections between her various goals and dreams, sparking new insights about what she valued.

**Tech Tip:** For digital journalers, apps like MindMeister or XMind offer robust mind-mapping tools that can be integrated with journaling practices.

As weeks passed, Emma found herself reaching for her journal more frequently. Some days she wrote pages; other days, just a few lines. She experimented with different techniques, finding

RICHARD FRENCH

some that resonated deeply and others that didn't quite fit her style.

She began to view her journal not as a chore or an assignment, but as a conversation with herself - a space for exploration, reflection, and growth.

Remember, there's no "right" way to journal. The techniques presented here are just starting points. As you begin your own journaling journey, feel free to experiment, combine approaches, or invent entirely new ways of engaging with your thoughts and feelings on the page.

The most important thing is to show up and write. Your unique voice and style will emerge over time. So, grab your pen (or open your app), take a deep breath, and let your thoughts flow. Your journal is waiting to meet you.