



GUEST ARTICLE

# Journaling for the Health of It



Mari L. McCarthy is the Founder and Chief Empowerment Officer of CreateWriteNow, home of Journaling For The Health Of It™. She shows health-conscious people how to use therapeutic journaling to heal the issues in their tissues and empower and express their true self. She is the award-winning author of *Journaling Power: How To Create The Happy, Healthy Life You Want To Live and Heal Your Self With Journaling Power* and creator of 20+ Journaling Power eWorkbooks including *Declutter Your Life, Love Your Body and Take Control of Your Health*.

Many of us have a complicated relationship with food. It can be a profound source of nourishment, comfort and delight: a favorite dish, a family tradition, an anticipated treat. But food can also get tangled up with negative emotions like regret, shame and stress – many of which date all the way back to childhood or adolescence.

Journaling is an excellent way to sort out the complex feelings you have toward food and develop a healthier and more mindful approach to eating. The American Society for Nutrition found that mindfulness influences how much you eat and how you feel when you eat.

By setting aside just a few minutes a day for journaling, you can cultivate a positive relationship with food and make choices that help you feel your best – inside and out. Try these strategies as you get started.

### Pay Attention

Practice simply being aware of what you are thinking and feeling, without judgment, when it comes to food. As you eat, bring your full focus to the present moment. Are you hungry? What are you hungry for? What else are you feeling (bored, celebratory, anxious, happy, angry)? What are you eating? What does it taste like? How does it make you feel?

### Sharpen Your Senses

Indulge all five of your senses as you eat. Slow down, savor each bite and listen to what your senses are telling you. Appreciate the crunch of chewing a fresh apple, the smoothness of spreading peanut butter on toast or the savory aroma of soup simmering on the stove.

### Observe & Record

Jot down brief notes in your journal after you eat, but try not to treat it like an obligation or a homework assignment. Aim for curiosity, not criticism, in your writing. If it helps you stay objective and less judgmental, pretend you're taking notes about a good friend instead of yourself.

- **What did you eat and drink?** Describe ingredients, flavors, approximate quantities and any other details you can think of.
- **Where and when were you eating?** At the dining table, in your car, at your desk? First thing in the

morning, right after work, late at night?

- **Did you eat alone or with other people?**
- **What else were you doing while you ate?** Reading a book, scrolling social media, watching TV, chatting with your family?
- **How did you feel while eating? How do you feel now?** Distracted, happy, stressed, satisfied?

Over time, look for any recurring themes or patterns. Do you crave rich comfort food after a tough day at work? Do you eat more fresh fruit in warmer weather? Is dark chocolate your afternoon snack of choice?

Again, don't judge, just notice. Pay attention to which eating habits are aligned with your tastes, goals or values. If you come across practices or tendencies you want to change, write more about them in your journal. Ask open-ended questions, and explore answers with an open mind.

### Cultivate Gratitude

Reflect on what is going well each day in relation to food. What have you cooked or eaten that you've really enjoyed? What nutrition choices have you made that you're proud of? What small change did you make to your meal planning that has been helpful? What new recipe did you try that surprised you?

Celebrate these small gratitudes and victories in your journal. Give yourself encouragement to keep up the behaviors that make you feel nourished, healthy and strong.

Eating is one of the great joys in life, and journaling can help you appreciate it even more. Writing just a few sentences each day can empower you to improve your relationship with food and build mindful attitudes and sustainable habits.