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Journaling Can Help

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Emotions and Health

Research reveals that our attitude toward life and how we react (or respond) to life's challenges plays a major role in our health, relationships and life satisfaction.

Sometimes, a major challenge seems overwhelming; other times, numerous little stresses add up, and we feel overwhelmed - like "the straw that broke the camel's back".

A Skill to Release Stress and Get Life in Perspective

Dr. James Pennebaker's research on stress and health has shown that people who journal have less anger, anxiety and depression. People who journaled about an emotional upheaval for as little as 15 minutes for 3-4 days had reduced medical visits and increased immune function.

Journaling is a skill that can be developed over time: it's a skill that can provide insight that can lead to positive life change.

Dr. Pennebaker recommends the following approach to journaling for health: write:

- what you are thinking or worrying about too much
- what you are dreaming about

- what you feel is affecting your health in unhealthy ways
- what you have been avoiding

Dr. Pennebaker notes that sometimes people who are writing about a difficult topic may feel sad or depressed, like the reaction to watching a sad movie. He notes that this sadness probably will pass. If the person journaling gets extremely upset, it may be best to stop writing on that topic for a while (or see a counselor).

Lastly, Dr. Pennebaker recommends that it be remembered that the journaling is intended as a tool to provide a chance at complete honest expression - and that each day's journaling can be thrown away, if you wish (does not need to be kept as a diary).

Pennebaker's Books

“Opening Up: The Healing Power of Expressing Emotion”

“Writing To Heal: A Guided Journal for Recovering From Trauma and Emotional Upheaval”