



Reflective Writing Guide

Making Meaning through Reflective Writing

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Getting Started

This section helps you get started with journaling.

W.R.I.T.E Process

Tips for Successful Journaling

Journaling Options

01

W.R.I.T.E PROCESS



Identify a time to write. Collect your writing paper and pens.

Settle into a comfortable chair or space.

Use the W.R.I.T.E. method—5 easy steps to help you get started.

W.R.I.T.E

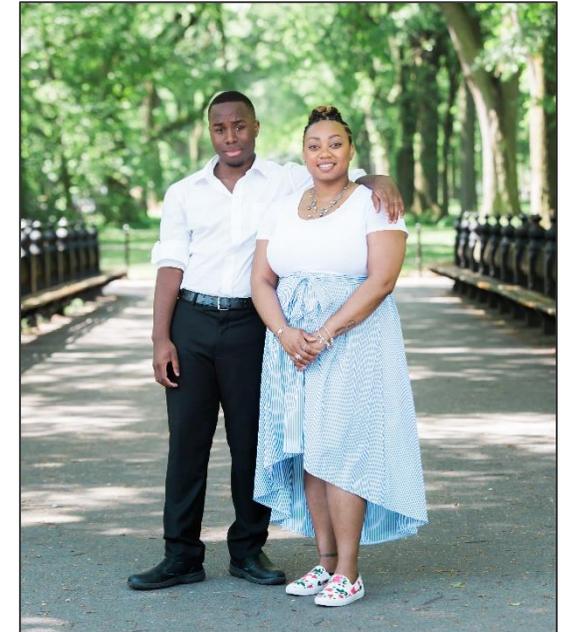
- W** • What
- R** • Reflect
- I** • Investigate
- T** • Time
- E** • Exit

USING THE 5-STEP PROCESS FOR W.R.I.T.E.

The W.R.I.T.E. process helps you focus your journaling process and get started writing quickly.

W	What do you want to write about? What's going on? What are you thinking about? What was your role?
R	Reflect on it. Close your eyes. Take 3 deep breaths. Focus. Maybe start with "I feel..." or "I want..." or "I think..." or "In this moment..."
I	Investigate your thoughts and feelings. What feelings and perceptions surrounded your experience? What might this experience mean in the context of your transplant journey?
T	Time yourself. Write for 5-15 minutes. Think about setting the timer on your cell phone or kitchen timer, or write the end time at the top of the journal page.
E	Exit smart. This means read what you've written and reflect on it in a sentence or two: "As I read this, I notice—" or "I'm aware of—" or "I feel—" As you re-read your writing, do you notice any themes? Do they illustrate your values or how you live your life? What questions could you now ask to further extend your reflection?

W.R.I.T.E. used and adapted with permission from The Center for Journal Therapy, Wheat Ridge, CO. To learn more, visit: <https://journaltherapy.com/journal-cafe-3/journal-course/>



Justin, transplant recipient with his donor Aja-Reigh

TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL JOURNALING

As you start writing, consider the following tips. Use the space provided to write other tips for yourself that you need to help you keep centered in your writing. And remember – enjoy the journey!



Bob, transplant recipient, with Karen, his wife and caregiver

- It's quality, not quantity that counts with reflective writing.
- It's not just about saying what you did, it's about saying **why** or **how** you did it, what you learned from it, and what you might change because of it in the future.
- Don't think about grammar, punctuation, or spelling until after you get your thoughts down.
- Write in the **first person**
- Write **honestly** and **for yourself**, not others
- Write as if you are writing to your **future self**

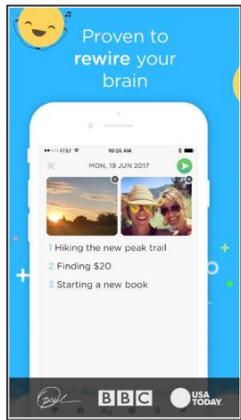
My Personal Tips

JOURNALING OPTIONS

In addition to paper and pen, there are other methods you can use to help you write about your transplant journey. Check out these ideas:

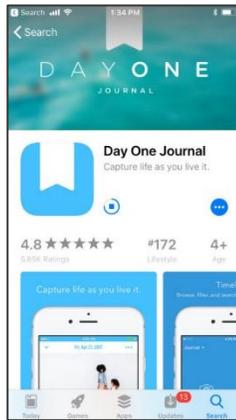
Gratitude

Happy Tapper
(Fee to purchase)
Learn more:
HappyTapper.com



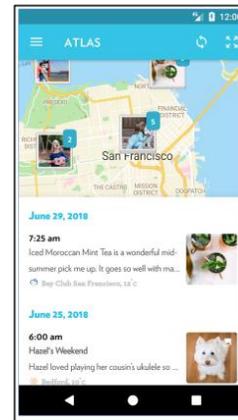
Day One Journal

Bloom Built Inc.
Learn more:
DayOneApp.com



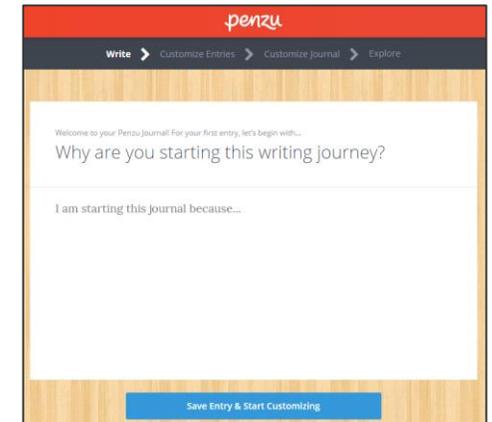
Journey – Diary, Journal

Two App Studio Pte. Ltd.
(Android only)
Learn more: Journey.cloud



Penzu

Penzu
Learn more:
penzu.com/journals



Be The Match does not endorse or promote any specific journaling app.

Giving Journaling a Try

There are many methods for journaling. This sections reviews a few of them.

Clustering / Mind Mapping

Use a Prompt or Answer a Question

Free Write a List

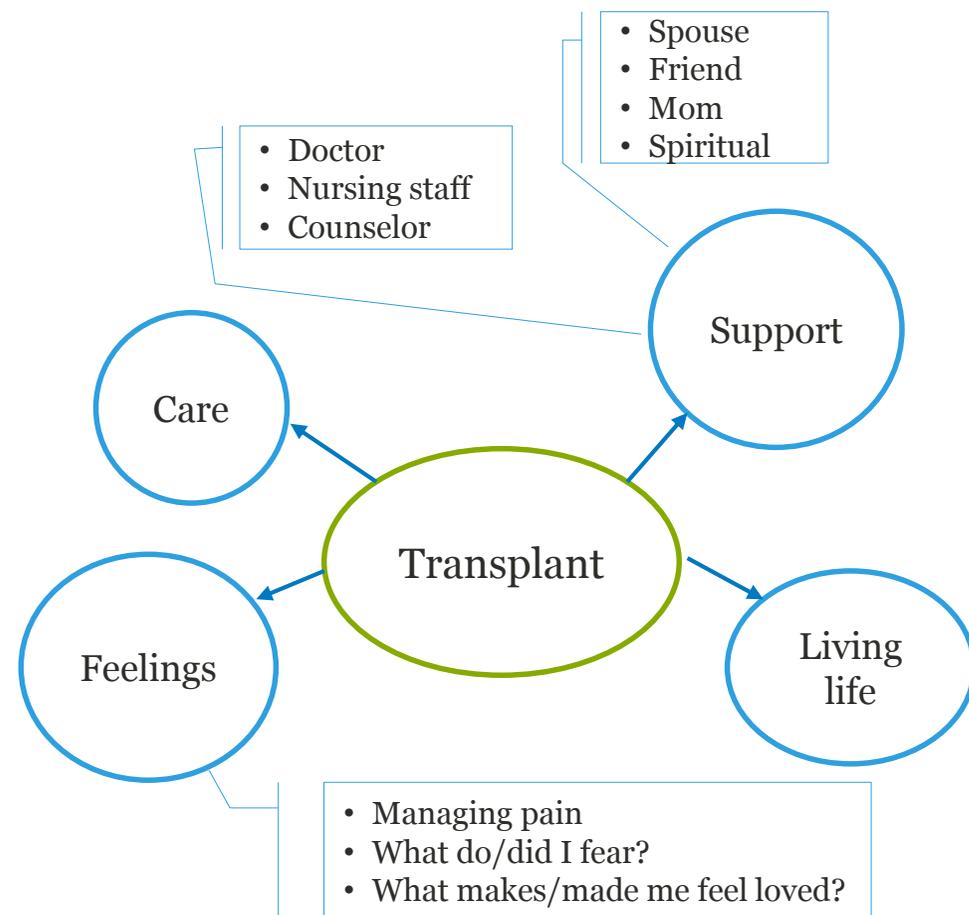
Try a New Perspective

02

CLUSTERING / MIND MAPPING STEPS

1. Write your topic in the center of a piece of paper.
2. Draw related ideas on “branches” extending out from the central topic. Start a new branch with each new idea.
3. Map quickly, without pausing, to keep ideas flowing. Associate freely. At this stage, anything and everything is OK.
4. Circle the key points or ideas. Look at each item and consider how it relates to others, and to the topic as a whole.
5. Map the relationships between the ideas or key points using lines, arrows, colors. Add words or phrases to link them.

SAMPLE



USE A PROMPT OR ANSWER A QUESTION

A prompt can help you start thinking down a specific path. Do any of the following prompts give you some inspiration? Pick one and give it a try on the left.

Type or write the prompt or question here

Journal your response here. Write for 2-3 minutes.

Prompt Ideas

- Right now I feel...
- I am grateful for...
- The moment I knew there were new cells in my body, I...
- I'd like to thank...

Question Ideas

- Think of a challenging situation. How did you handle it? What did you learn?
- What advice would you give to your pre-transplant self?
- How does it feel to be at your current place in your transplant journey?
- What excites you about your future?
- Share your favorite affirmations and what they mean to you.

FREE WRITE A LIST

You may want to journal, but perhaps you have separate ideas and thoughts floating around in your head. Sometimes, taking all of your ideas and focusing around a subject can help. By starting a list, you may discover how to organize your thoughts. Use the questions below, and free write a list—whatever comes to mind. Don't think about it before you write it. Just write it.



Questions

- What experiences did you have during your transplant journey?
- What feelings do you remember?
- What would you change about the experience?
- What types of things did you learn from the experience?

My List

Begin your list here.

TRY A NEW PERSPECTIVE

People tend to attach emotion to experiences. Sometimes looking at our experience through another lens can help get the words out. Try responding to the question below.

Imagine you are a fly on the wall watching yourself as you learned about your diagnosis. What do you see?

OR

Imagine you're a fly on the wall watching yourself on your transplant day. What do you notice?

Free write your thoughts here.



I'm not really into journaling, but I did a bit with my transplant. To my Caring Bridge log I added my notes from when I was first diagnosed. Eventually, I had the journal printed into a book as a reminder of where I have been and how much I have accomplished.

– Charlotte, transplant recipient

Develop Your Story

Now you are ready to further develop your story. This section offers ideas for this step.

What Can I Do to Develop My Topic?

Inspiring Web Sites

Coping with Emotion

03

WHAT CAN I DO TO DEVELOP MY TOPIC?

Once you have a focused idea for your writing, consider expanding your thoughts in a systematic way. Even after your free write, you might still have questions about what to discuss. Re-read what you have written and consider developing your work using some of the following ideas.

- Expand your **sensory perceptions**. What else did you see, hear, feel or smell?
- Think about your **emotional perceptions**. How did you feel when you were experiencing what you wrote?
- What **experiences, ideas, and observations** did you have regarding your experience or in the context of what you have already written?
- What did you find confusing, inspiring, difficult, or interesting? **Why?**
- Think about how you:
 - ✓ **Solved** a particular problem
 - ✓ Reached a **conclusion**
 - ✓ Gained **perspective** and **distance**
 - ✓ Reached a **point of understanding**



Tom, transplant recipient with his health care provider

INSPIRING WEB SITES

Need some more ideas? Check out these web sites for tips, reflections, supply lists, and discussions about journaling.

Journal with Purpose – Inspiring Creative Journaling

Helen offers journaling challenges, ideas for setting up your journaling, an inspiration gallery (including examples of mind maps and sketching), among other fun stuff. Check out her web site at <http://www.journalwithpurpose.co.uk/>.

The Daily Digi

The Daily Digi offers lots of ideas for journaling. Check them out at <http://thedailydigi.com/category/the-write-way/>.

Creative Writing Now

William Victor's site Creative Writing Now offers insights, supply lists, and tips for journaling. See his site at <https://www.creative-writing-now.com/what-is-a-journal.html>.

You can also find inspiration on YouTube and Pinterest.

Enjoy!



I blogged through my entire experience. It was cathartic. I shared the good, the bad and the ugly. Lots of laughs and lots of tears. My readers really enjoyed it. To this day I run across people who tell me how much my honesty through my journey helped them with what they were going through. I did it for me, but it helped others. Such a blessing.

– Wendy, transplant recipient

COPING WITH EMOTION



Ines, transplant recipient

Writing is an extremely emotional process! The process requires that you “re-visit” a trauma from the past, and sometimes, can cause people to re-experience the same feelings they felt during that time. These feelings can be surprising and overwhelming.

You might find that you feel a bit sad or down during or after your expressive writing, this is normal and okay! Experiencing strong feelings as you write is a normal response to remembering, or re-visiting trauma.

The feelings usually go away completely in an hour or two; however, if you feel sad longer or have thoughts that continue to upset you, talk with a friend or family member, a mental health professional, or call the Patient Support Center. They can help you manage your thoughts and feelings and process the experience of re-living your transplant journey through written expression or other art forms.

Patient Support Center

Call: 1 (888) 999-6743

Email: patientinfo@nmdp.org

Other Forms of Expression

Making Meaning Through Music

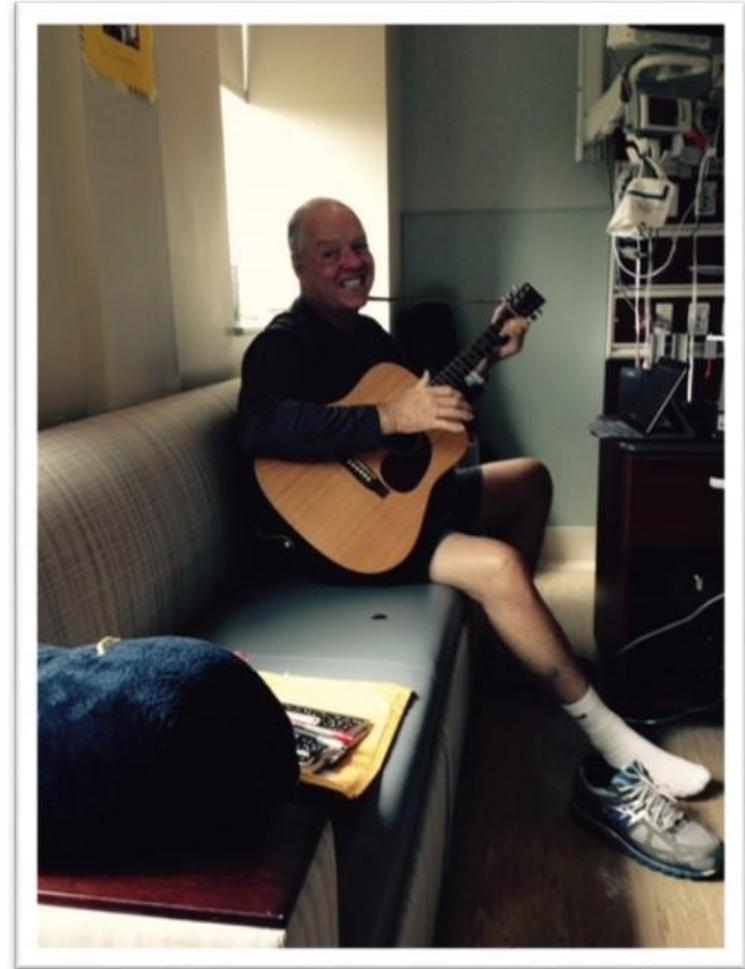
Making Meaning Through Poetry

04

MAKING MEANING THROUGH MUSIC

To me, music is an art. While in the hospital having my BMT, I taught myself how to play the guitar with an app on my iPhone. The music therapist and I would play together a few times a week. I became known to the nurses as “the patient that plays the guitar.” Especially rewarding to me was when the midnight-shift nurses asked me to play for them the night before my discharge.

I play my guitar or listen to music, especially when I have a day that I feel sad. It helps my heart and soul and lifts me up.



David, transplant recipient

MAKING MEANING THROUGH POETRY

The poem on the next page, entitled, “Routine”, was written by Teresa, a transplant survivor, about her days in the hospital.



Teresa, transplant recipient

It helped me release some of the feelings I had at that time. I used to think about nights in the hospital quite often, and since I've written the poem, my mind has been freed of those lonely nights.



ROUTINE

Midnight

In a hospital bed.

Alone.

Anxious thoughts running through my mind.

I need to sleep. To heal.

IV pump humming.

I tell myself to relax. Breathe slowly. In and out.

Let the wave of calm wash away my worries.

Relax. Breathe. In and out.

Sleep finally comes.

4 AM

In a hospital bed.

The kind nurse is sorry for waking me.

The ritual begins.

Name and birthdate.

I open my mouth and extend my arm.

Thermometer, cuff, oximeter.

Temperature, blood pressure, O-2 saturation.

Another blood sample.

The results will dictate my day.

What will it be? Red Cells? Platelets? Magnesium?

Antibiotics?

The nurse flushes my port, thanks me, leaves.

4:15 AM

In a hospital bed.

Alone.

Anxious thoughts running through my mind.

I need to sleep. To heal.

Relax. Breathe. In and out.

Help writing your story

05

WE'RE HERE EVERY STEP OF THE WAY

The Patient Support Center is available to coach you through the writing process. Please don't hesitate to reach out.



Leah, BMT Patient Navigator

Our services include:

- Confidential telephone counseling and one-on-one support
- Financial grants
- Support groups and telephone workshops
- Caregiver support
- Tips for talking with your health care team
- Educational books, DVDs, newsletters and fact sheets
- Information and support in many languages

Phone: 1 (888) 999-6743

Email: patientinfo@nmdp.org

Website: BeTheMatch.org/patient



AT EVERY STEP, WE'RE HERE TO HELP

As you journey through transplant, you're not alone. Be The Match® is ready to help. We offer many free programs and resources to support patients, caregivers and families before, during and after transplant.

LEARN: [BeTheMatch.org/patient](https://www.BetheMatch.org/patient)

REQUEST INFO: [BeTheMatch.org/request](https://www.BetheMatch.org/request)

EMAIL: patientinfo@nmdp.org

CALL: 1 (888) 999-6743



Every individual's medical situation, transplant experience and recovery is unique. You should always consult with your own transplant team or family doctor regarding your situation. This information is not intended to replace, and should not replace, a doctor's medical judgment or advice.