

Our Prison Neighbors



Journal Writing Ideas

Writing has always been an important tool for slowing down and taking a deeper look at our lives. It has provided some of our greatest literature but also countless moments of personal reflection and growth. Some ways participants have used journals include:

- *Taking notes and recording points or passages which are especially meaningful to you. If you do this, please bring them to class to help guide our discussion.
- *It is said we are all on a spiritual journey. Write about yours.
- *Reflecting on your reading and the events of your day
- *Vocabulary development
- *What is maturity? Integrity? Wisdom? Where do you find it? Do you have it?
- *A listing of all the positive things you do with your time: improve your fitness, books read, insights learned, relationships deepened, and classes taken. It may be that you will want to do some college work and you may be able to use some of this material for 'life experience' credit or to place into a more advanced class. You can often earn a number of credits toward a degree by learning another language.
- *In the morning write down one or more things that you challenge yourself to do TODAY. In the evening, or the next morning, check to see if it happened and how that was
- *Write the rough draft of a letter to someone important to you. You can decide later if you actually want to send it
- *Write a letter to someone who has died
- *Try to write a balanced account of powerful moments in your life
- *Work on a 'Fearless Moral Inventory'
- *Keeping identities unrevealed, write about a conflict you have had or have observed. How did it go? What might have helped it end more positively? Will you do anything to follow up?
- *Start a meditation practice. Write about it. What popped into your mind?
- *Write an account of each 10 year period of your life; 1-10, 11-20, 21-30, 31-40 etc.
- *Write about each teacher you remember; good ones, bad ones, in school, outside of school

Solution focused questions are derived from the work of Bill O’Hanlon.

A. Finding a vision for the future

- I. What is your life purpose?
 - a. What is your vision of your preferred future?
 - b. What dreams did you or do you have for your life?
 - c. What are you here on the planet for?
 - d. What are human beings on the planet for, in your view?
 - e. In what area(s) could you make a contribution?
- II. What are your most passionate interests/hobbies? What kinds of things compel you? How might these interests be part of your preferred future?
- III. How will your life be different when you begin to reach your goals for a preferred future? How will you be able to tell when you are heading in the right direction?

B. Dealing with and Dissolving Barriers to the Preferred Future

- I. What, in your view, is getting in the way of you realizing your dreams or getting to your goals?
 - a. What are you afraid of? What kinds of self-doubts complicate your journey?
 - b. What do you believe must happen before you can realize your dreams?
 - c. What are the actions you have not (yet) taken to make your dreams/visions come true?
 - d. What are the real world barriers you must deal with to realize your dreams and visions? (Consider classism, racism, sexism, ageism etc. in this context)
- II. What would your role models, mentors, or people you admire do, if they were you, in order to realize this dream or vision?
 - a. What are you not doing, feeling, or thinking that they would in this situation?
 - b. What are you doing, feeling, or thinking that they wouldn’t?

C. Making an action plan to reach the preferred future

- I. What could you do in the near future that would be steps towards realizing your visions and dreams?
 - a. What could you do immediately - right now?
 - b. What could you do tonight? Next week?
 - c. What feeling will you have in your body as you take those steps?
 - d. What will you be thinking that will help you take those steps?
 - e. What images or metaphors are helpful to you in taking those steps?
- II. Would it help to make a commitment to someone to take those steps by a specific time?
 - a. Who would be the best person to keep you on track, to coach you, monitor your progress?
 - b. When will you agree to take these steps and how will the follow-up happen to ensure that you have?