

Journaling For Joy

Writing Your Way to Personal Growth and Freedom

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Chapter 8:

Tap Into Your Inner Knowing Opening to the Power of the Subconscious

THE UNLIMITED POWER of the subconscious mind resembles the vastness of the heavens. Your subconscious mind knows no restrictions of time and space. Become the voyager and explore your subconscious mind. Astronomers use telescopes to explore the reservoirs of space and see the revelation of the stars. Journal writing is the telescope to explore the universe of our subconscious mind.

The subconscious mind is the home of your deepest, most heartfelt desires. It does your every bidding. It asks no questions and will accept as fact whatever you consider to be true. The subconscious is limitless. It remembers everything you think, feel, say and do, and stores it quickly in perfect order to return it to you exactly as given. It is a humble, efficient servant always eager to create. It speaks in the language of pictures, symbols and images. The subconscious has the ability to tap into unlimited intelligence. This concept is called possibility thinking.

A useful form of possibility thinking in journal writing is achieved through the use of fantasy. The subconscious mind does not know the difference between reality and possibility thinking. I encourage the use of fantasy in journaling as a most effective means of initiating change. Only by practicing and reinforcing a new pattern of thinking can the subconscious be used at its most powerful and effective level. A few great inventors, composers and mystics have been keenly aware of the power of the subconscious, and have harvested great benefits from the use of possibility and fantasy thinking. For me, journeys into fantasy writing can be one of the most direct means of tapping into this possibility thinking, as well as for reaching our potential, and experiencing our joy.

Journaling provides invitation and access to the subconscious mind or your inner knowing. It was not until I started journaling that I realized I had an unlimited wealth of information and resources inside that I could access any time. One of the simplest techniques to use in contacting the subconscious is simply to close your eyes and ask, "What information wants to come through me?" Remain quiet and receptive for a few minutes. Then open your eyes and begin writing your thoughts without any editing.

To encourage your subconscious mind to come forth you may want to create the most fertile, receptive conditions possible. First, find a quiet place where you can be undisturbed and can eliminate possible interruptions. Set aside the time you will need – anywhere from ten or twenty minutes to an entire day or weekend. Put on some of your favorite background music (or relaxation/meditation audio tapes) that will enhance your focus. Candles, incense, or flowers may be used to add ambience.

Make yourself comfortable, in a sitting or lying position, with notebook and pen close at hand, and close your eyes. Taking several deep breaths, allow your body to become calm and relaxed. Imagine that you

are stepping into a shallow pool of warm water, or lying in the sun on a beautiful tropical beach. Focus on releasing tension from each part of your body, and on breathing peaceful energy in and out. Invite your mind into a state of inner knowing, allowing any thought to flow past your screen of vision like a cloud moving across the sky.

When you feel totally relaxed and ready, open your eyes and re-main "soft-eyed," so that you can begin writing without leaving this state of consciousness. Write any thought or impression that comes into your mind. Record any pictures and images, using drawing or symbols if they occur. Don't try to make logical, intellectual sense of these thoughts, and don't worry about spelling or punctuation. Just record what appears each moment, unedited.

Example:

***creature facing me head-on (a huge creature, frightening looking but not scary to me).
And then:***

Example Using Color Imagery:

Imagery in colors – a treelike form from a fairy book with a huge knothole – my sense of something hiding inside it – a black buglike creature facing me head-on (a huge creature, frightening looking but not to me). And then:

- the sensation of green, growth, all kinds of shades of green gradually drifting...
- the image of a fairy, Tinker Bell, lying on her back, arms under her head, feet in the air, leaning against a tree; then:
- burnt orange, forming itself into an arm carrying a torch, then:
- a sense of light and strength
- then lavender ruffles edged in dark blue, a dancer's skirt then red-not a real object; fingers of color like some strange tropical flower
- becomes then a silvery Christmas tree-like object-crystal? A sensation of crystal floating into white and silver. And then...
- into rosebushes, not yet in bloom, and then
- a stage and a troop of actors-inviting-what? To watch or be? It's like an audition.
- And the final image: an actor looking like Shakespeare, garbed in gold and white, his arms outstretched-welcoming?

When you feel complete and ready to stop writing, open your eyes and reread your work. Give yourself feedback on it. Your feedback may also not flow logically from this type of writing. Go with your feeling about the piece, your hunch about its meaning. Let your intuitive mind speak. What does the piece say to you? What is the essence of the writing? What is the underlying feeling or theme?

Let the Feedback Statement choose you. Don't think about it, just let it come. The writer of the preceding piece wrote the following feedback on her work.

Feedback: I am in amazement at the strength of the color imagery-surprised at the form of this meditation. I feel excitement at getting closer to my unconscious self, my creative

energy. To journal, for me, is to get in touch with the creative, the visionary part of myself. I have the sense of being in touch with untapped power at the source of my being.

NATURE AS YOUR METAPHOR

The energetic, playful spirit of the dolphin-self in you revels in plunging into the waves, and riding the curl of the swirling surf. The free, unencumbered spirit of the seagull in you swoops high into the clouds without a downward glance. The wise owl in you watches and studies every moment, every flicker in the night. The sly fox creeps along in dark shadows as you cautiously size up your best approach. The forever optimistic cocker spaniel in you meets every new opportunity with uncensored glee. You curl up and purr in a pool of sunshine as the sleek, snobbish cat-the world pauses to nap with you.

Nature can be a rich and revealing metaphor for where we seem to be in our lives. Each aspect of nature can be our teacher when we invite forth the metaphor from our subconscious.

Example: I Am Nature

I am like a mountain stream, twisting, churning, bubbling and powerful. Each ripple I feel signifies the life force within me. I am the surge of the constant undercurrents, yet as storms fill me and renew my rushing power, my banks overflow with the new surplus. I want to be like this river – never questioning, always strong on my course, and yet changing as I must in response to "the elements."

The difference between a man-made channel and a natural one lies in the power of nature to be constant yet never changing, twisting and bending to the elements. I need not question "Where is my riverbed to take me next?" but simply go with the flow.

If you close your eyes and ask the question "What in nature am I like?" you may be amazed by the information that comes. Our metaphors are sometimes so close to the surface, they can just leap right out-and we may never realize this until we take the time to write.

Example: The Night Outside

I am outdoors, camping. The sky is pitch black. Sparks fly out from the camp fire, and a cricket chirps in the distance. Tall trees surrounding the campsite reach out to the nearby sky, into whose infinite peace all growing things nestle at night.

I am very much like the dark sky. I have the possibility of infinity, infinite wisdom, knowledge, and love. The sky never asks what it is. God meant this to be true for me, too. I'm sure of it.

Example: Columbines

I am one of those beautiful columbines that grew near the doorway in soil regularly fertilized by the dairy herd gathered there – gorgeous, huge blossoms, nourished by all the shit I've grown through.

Your image of the moment may be beautiful and expansive, or small and annoying, like the woman who reported, "I hate it. My image is a squirrel. Scurrying here, scurrying there, gathering up my little nuts and hiding them away..." Whatever it turns out to be, there is always something valuable to learn from the image and the metaphor.

One of the most powerful images I have ever received came when I once wrote: "I am like a geyser. You can't stop up a geyser." I further realized "Of course you can't stop up a geyser!" I went on to conclude: "I give myself permission to release that incredible force that comes from within."

The strong identity you feel with an image in nature can be tapped from the subconscious to interact with in your journal. Simply ask your image to come forth and teach you.

Example: I Am a Snowflake

I am a snowflake, unique and beautiful. I float down from a soft cloud and gaze down upon the lovely earth. I observe the heavy gray clouds with the rosy pink borders of a sunset. I see the green of the forest, and the purple mountains. I smile at the freedom of the children and animals. I am filled with awe and wonder. I float alongside other snowflakes, joining in their motion without enmeshing together.

When I reach the ground, I feel afraid. Will I melt? Will I be stepped on? Will someone come around and crush me into a snowball? Am I afraid of losing myself?

Feedback: I feel very vulnerable at this time in my life. it's exciting and fun, and I am very alive. But I must keep my vision up off the ground and guard my fragile identity.

By stepping out of our conscious state, we allow our subconscious inner knowing to access the symbols and imagery of universal truth.

ACCESSING YOUR INNER WISDOM

As a small child, I loved to fish with my grandfather in the creek near his farm. "How do you know there are fish in there?" I remember asking him. "First you trust that they're there. Then you put the worm on your hook, you drop him into the water and you can count on those fish being hungry!" Granddad counseled. So it is with accessing inner wisdom. First, you trust that it is there. Wisdom is such a powerful idea. Synonyms for wisdom are knowledge, learning and enlightenment. You have all those within you. Bait yourself with the idea of daydreaming and drop the line to your imagination to feed yourself the guidance you seek.

Einstein, Edison, Franklin and Thoreau were all great daydreamers. When these wise men would come upon a situation to which their logical, rational minds could find no solution, they would relax and daydream, each in their own fashion. Edison would nap and awake with answers. Whatever method you choose, I encourage daydreaming. It is one of the easiest ways to access your inner wisdom. The legacy of accessing inner wisdom is that you dip beneath the analytical surface to the deeper currents of inner truth, awareness and enlightenment.

Example: No Security Inside the Chains

I am in a pool of water. I have a feeling of being weighted down and yet buoyant at the same time. My body feels heavy, yet can float all day. I float through my life not truly-thinking of the heavy thoughts much. The weights I feel are with me, and I strain to rid myself of them. I am free and I am tied up. I am in chains that I have wrapped around myself for security. But there is no security inside the chains.

Feedback: *I am looking at my life with Ken and wondering what I have to do. I am tired of floating. I want to dive deep and swim with my eyes open. I am ready to make a decision.*

Only when knowledge from our subconscious mind surfaces are we able to take conscious action on it.

As we explore the subconscious mind we find that it contains an infinite library of universal truth. When you direct the conscious mind for guidance and information, the wisdom you seek presents itself.

Example: A Place of Light and Color

We are gathered in a place of light and color. Our child selves are in a classroom. We are gathered to learn. A silvery gentle voice says: "The healing of the planet starts with you, as individual child-self and as part of groups and families everywhere who are drawn together to move beneath the surface of life and grow to wholeness.

You must seek to learn forgiveness for those who, from their own need, their own unknowing child-self, have caused you pain. Seek union and trust with all who cross your path and seek to shift the negative mass consciousness from struggle to peace.

Healing is a moment-by-moment process. It comes through releasing demands and expectations of others. Healing IS forgiveness.

One journaler told me that she was bored with herself. "What kind of journaling can I do to find out what is fascinating in me?" she asked. I recommended she journal with the parts of her that create mystique.

Example: The Parts of Me

I was seated in a lovely white chair with soft padding, and I invited the others in. Anger arrived first in red and said, "I've been afraid to cross this threshold before, but now I'm here."

Then on my right came Spirit, floating in and enveloping the room in a soft turquoise mist. "I am here to take you through anything and everything that might challenge you:"

Next Power entered and took its place in a majestic, throne-like chair. "I am here to serve you at all times. And I will remind you to stand up for who you are."

There was Compassion, green and creeping into the corner, wanting to manipulate my power. He whispered, "I can serve you best as the fusion of power with compassion."

Love entered and went to the center of the table. "I'm here to be visual and visible. I come from your center. I came in with you from the beginning, and I will remain here always."

Last came Passion and immediately asked me to hold her. I became an impassioned soul. I was filled with emotion as I looked around me. I thanked all the parts of me for coming and asked them to continue to serve me to become more intriguing.

Feedback: *I embrace all the parts of me. I'm excited about a dialogue with the rest of me.*

I knew a young woman whose primary focus was the unfinished work in her house. When she started writing she realized that her real problem was her marriage, and the state of her house was a metaphor for the state of her marriage. Journaling from the place of inner knowing took her beneath surface concerns to the very heart of the matter.

Example: Wasted Drops

I am chasing Max. Running after him, saying, "Open up! Open up!" There he is, painting the new door, changing the leaky faucet. So busy, trying to please me. I'm sure he's doing these things just to make me happy. The door makes me happy. At least for a day. I look at the windowpanes and notice how much brighter the kitchen is ... then I can't help noticing, beyond that, the rest of the unfinished laundry room. Judging, judging, judging – never enough. Not enough money, not enough projects, not enough time to do what I want.

My life is full of escape. Complain about the leaky faucet or the dirty towels instead of saying, "I feel awful about wasting water and I really feel awful wasting my life." The truth is, I could care less about leaky faucets if my life were filled with love. The wasted drops are like wasted minutes. The drops add up to gallons and the minutes to a lifetime.

Reflection: I'm looking at where I choose to be and what I really want to accomplish in my life. Looking at the overall picture, I have to face it that Max never finished a damn thing in his life. What's really bothering me? That I put up with it. That I'm so disappointed. I'm also looking at the gift of each moment. There are no wasted drops of life – each drop is a gift to be received.

One woman arrived at a journaling class in a state of anger. Her frustration with the organization she worked for prompted the following writing that allowed her inner wisdom to flow.

Example: Woman Warrior

The women were lining the shores of the river. Some were attending busily to their tasks; others stood vacant – or dreamy eyed. Several watched as the men in canoes floated by.

Suddenly one tall woman spoke out. "No, it is not my destiny to stand on the shore. I am to be the warrior. I can no longer be passive." She set her belongings down and stood tall.

She was free. The other women watched as she walked toward the mountains, frightened and energized by her movement.

Feedback: I do know it is the time for women to lead.

A woman came up to me after a writing exercise designed to put people in touch with their inner knowing. "I didn't get very much from this," she said, perplexed.

"Have you ever done this before?" I asked, and she replied that the whole idea was very new to her.

When you're attempting to open the window and look into your inner knowing, you can't wave a magic wand and expect everything to jump into place in a perfectly ordered picture. This kind of writing experience takes time and patience. With practice, listening within becomes more and more natural. With practice your trust builds, and you find yourself more able to slip in and out of the realm of your deep inner knowing. And with time your inner knowing will reveal more and more of the magic and mystery that is inside of you.

Journaling from your inner knowing is an evolving and unfolding process. It is one you may find yourself doing more of because it's a refreshing vacation from the daily processes of the mind – a vacation to bask in and enjoy its gifts.

ACCESSING A DREAM MESSAGE

Dreams can provide us with a gift of truth from the subconscious mind. If you want to unlock the puzzle of who you are, open the treasure chest of swirling internal possibilities, dreams can be one of the portholes to the magic of your life.

To examine and learn from your dreams, try writing out the sequence of the dream as soon as you awake. Record any thoughts or feelings that come up. Read over what you have written. Then write what the dream may be saying to you. Is there a theme, a recurring or underlying thought or feeling? I suggest titling your dreams. Titles provide a means of quickly identifying and organizing important dreams in an accessible memory bank.

In periods of active dream work, when you find yourself having frequent meaningful dreams, it is helpful to keep a dream journal. Your subconscious mind may be busy laying the groundwork for your next growth step.

You may not want to log and interpret your dreams on a daily basis, but I strongly suggest paying attention to what I call the "screaming dreams." These are the ones that jump out from your subconscious mind, begging to be looked at.

Example: Sunday Night Dream

The place where I was staying was filled with rats! They had a route which led from my bedroom, where there was a trapdoor in the floor, to an opening in the wall of the kitchen where they could get through to the outside. I hated the rats – they gave me the creeps! There were many people there in the dream with me to help me get rid of the rats, and I seemed to be in charge. I didn't like the idea of killing them. None died in my dream. The babies were darling. I dreamt all night long.

Feedback: I've been sleeping with a rat. The man in my life right now is a rat ... I see that now! No more rats!

You can use many other techniques to understand and work with your dreams. You might want to write a dialogue between characters or elements of a dream, or write a story that follows up or resolves a dream. When people from your past appear in a dream, it is often valuable to write and answer the question, "What can I learn now from this person who has just reappeared in my dreams?" When there is dream work you would like to do, consider using any of the techniques in the other chapters of this book. For example, employing the conversation technique from Chapter 5 may allow you to find out what the message is to you from the person who appears in your dream.

UNLEASH YOUR IMAGINATION – THE JOY OF PRETENDING

Stories, like dreams, invite us into the joy of discovering and learning. Out of the treasure of our imagination we can tap a fantasy rich in meaning and messages. Some messages are brilliantly obvious and others are hidden behind the gauze curtains of metaphor.

For some, unleashing the imagination is a difficult task. To use the fairy tale, parable or metaphor can be a new and sometimes intimidating experience. To ignite your imagination takes nothing more than

giving yourself permission to play and pretend. To invite the parts of you that represent the clown, the actor, the author or the magician, is to treat yourself to your own great adventure.

Take a piece of paper, and at the top draw your version of a suitcase or flight bag. Title your writing, "I am going on a journey to....." Below list all the things you want to take with you on your imaginary journey. Your list can be limited-not confined to clean socks and a toothbrush. Pack a nightingale to accompany you with song. Tuck in a diamond tiara or a gem encrusted scepter, because where you plan to go you will be the ruler-the king or the queen of your new domain. Read over your list, give yourself a Feedback Statement and begin writing a make-believe story about your adventure.

Remember, your imagination can go anywhere and do anything, and the domain you create can bring you joy.

Fantasy journaling expands your thinking. Instead of recording reality, it lets you create an entirely new story or script. By blending the real and the unreal, a new level of awareness can unfold for the journaler.

Example: A Journey to Oz

A billow of clouds. I am rushing through the air nearly breath-less, propelled by some unforeseen force into the dawn-like Dorothy, I imagine. I surrender into the force, and then I see the yellow brick road, the ruby slippers, and the Emerald City. I skip the bad part (even though I know you can't skip the bad part). There are witches in Oz, you know. They sometimes hide in the corners of my mind and I have to muster the strength to confront them before I can see the Emerald City-before I can go home.

I am reminded that the Wizard doesn't rescue; he rewards the fearless facing of the challenge. It is through action that the cowardly lion becomes brave. But even though the journey re-quires solo starts, it is enhanced by munchkin appreciation, fellow travelers, and a good witch to point the way.

Feedback: The child in me understands more than my every-day mind sometimes remembers. And that's fun.

Fantasy writing can take many forms-poetry, short story, stage play or screenplay. You may want to write in myth, science fiction or fairy tale.

Follow the path to the undiscovered. Open the door to the magician's closet. Don't accept that reality is all there is! Be daring, try a new flavor, break out of the mold!

I love to use the expression "Aha!" – that moment when curiosity becomes awareness. In that illuminating instant a revelation occurs, out of which self-healing can often take place.

Example: Princess Phyllis

Once upon a time, there was this princess named Phyllis. She was not one of your pallid princesses who faint at the drop of a crown. If you faint you miss stuff, and Phyllis didn't want to miss anything. She was tough, and smart, and Irish, and had red hair and a freckle or two. When she was little she lived with her mother and father in Og-wog-bedonia.

Og-wog-bedonia has many kingdoms within its borders, and she lived in sort of the northwest part, in the kingdom of Fruitful Plantings. Her mother, Queen Peaches, lived there. The queen was married but I forget her husband's name. (You know how it is in kingdoms; you remember the ruler but not necessarily the spouse.)

Anyway, Princess Phyllis was very happy in this kingdom. She played and sang and fished and wrote stories and dried tree bark and got into mischief (even princesses have to do that from time to time) and generally got stronger every day. She was so strong she could even take care of her invalid sister. Sometimes that meant giving her a hard time and a certain amount of teasing so she could get strong too.

It is a good thing Phyllis got so strong, because one day there was a war in the kingdom. Phyllis lost both parents and she and her sister were rescued by two dumb elves without a map who took them to the kingdom of Trial by Fire. It happens sometimes. Usually people don't get sent there until they are grown-ups, because it is a place others can lead you to but only you can get yourself out of. This is hard for children, because they are small and usually not allowed to travel by themselves.

The kingdom of Trial by Fire is not a happy place. The scenery can be nice, but that's about it. The grown-ups who run it are mean and selfish and insensitive. They shout and hit and order everyone around and drink too much. In their eyes, nothing you ever do is good enough, and they don't believe in play. It is a place where you have to hide your dreams in jars like fireflies and keep them alive by yourself without help, lots of times. You have to say your own special magic words to keep from being cast permanently under the spell of the wicked witches and warlocks who keep saying you are stupid or ugly or a worm or whatever. Sometimes you have to hold so tight to the knowledge of who you really are-a royal prince or princess-that your fingers hurt.

But Phyllis held on, no matter how sad she got. She knew who she was because of her beginnings in Fruitful Plantings, which was a good thing since she and her sister were sent to live with a real dragon. This creature had taken parenting classes from Cinderella's stepmother. Phyllis also knew that as long as she resisted the fire that wanted to shrivel her and dry her up, she'd be okay even if smoke got in her eyes.

Now part of the reason she knew this was because there was this little voice inside her head. You know, it's that little something that tells you, "I didn't do anything wrong," when other people are ranting and raving and ordering you about. Well, she didn't know

it at the time, but there was this little invisible munchkin named Manzanitas protecting her.

You see, the Imperial Og, who ruled the whole land, had a very large battalion of trained elves, dwarves, angels, and fairies that he would send into Trial by Fire as personal bodyguards. (It doesn't matter if you believe in them or not, if you listen you can hear them. It's real hard to see them because they know you might tell, and then people will say you are crazy and maybe send you to the Booby Hatch, which is even harder to get out of than Trial by Fire!)

The Imperial Og knew that Phyllis had the potential to be one of the Super beings who live in the land of Light That Sparkles. Those are the people who are so strong inside that they can take care riot only of themselves and their sisters, but also of other children and women and men. That's why he sent Manzanitas, who was one of his favorites.

Manzanitas didn't help out much with the work. He was more of an idea man. He had little idea eggs that he hatched for Phyllis whenever things got quiet. His most memorable ideas had to do with ways to destroy the parenting dragons. (These ideas gave Phyllis a lot of comfort, even though she knew she wouldn't stoop to their level and act on them.) He also nudged Phyllis in her ear and told her to sneak outside and go play stick-ball in the alley.

And so the years went by as they do. Phyllis grew stronger every day and Manzanitas grew whittier. (He always did love a good laugh.) The Imperial Og was pleased as well as relieved when Phyllis was old enough to escape with Manz, and did. (Not everyone realizes it's possible to listen to spirits and move out of Trial by Fire. Some people stay there forever. They forget about Light That Sparkles. Hard to believe in this age of air travel, but nevertheless true.)

Phyllis knew her days in Trial by Fire were over, so she set out to travel the world and reclaim her power. She visited many famous places, like Marriage Mountain, Motherhood Manor, Corporate Creations, and Mixed Media, and then she began to write about them. Manz helped her remember the details. He was tickled pink and other colors, as he watched the light of her Super being self grow to diamond-bright brilliance.

Then one day she began to see it too. She finally realized someplace deep inside that people weren't just being nice or polite or well behaved when they said they loved her or that her words moved them or that they no longer felt so alone in the world when they heard her stories. She had always been powerful, but now she finally knew it.

Today Phyllis lives in the land of Light That Sparkles, where she is known as Queen of Fruitful Plantings and Woman Who Heals with Her Heart.

Manzanitas still keeps her company, just for the fun of it!

"Just for the fun of it" turned out to be the gift of this writing which affected two people: the journal writer and the woman about whom it was written. One was empowered by the sheer force of creativity and imagination. The other was deeply touched by the power of the story about herself. In the same way that magic delights and goes beyond the limits of our minds, journal writing can take you to the untouched realms of joy and creative expression.

The following imaginative short story was written by a woman experiencing significant mood swings in her life. This writing allowed her to sort out her thoughts and emotions, as well as discover what is really important to her now.

Example: Racing Silks

In the jockey's room at the track is a wall filled with racing silks-bright, shiny shirts, every hue of nature, hanging carefully on hooks along the wall beneath the owners' labels. How shall I choose?

By color?

By owner?

By bloodline?

What if I were to pick my silks for today by spirit, instead? So many colors, so vivid, can dull the vision and numb the senses; choosing becomes the task of catching a kaleidoscope pattern as it spins in frenzy.

I close my eyes and let my spirit of today catch the gray or the gold, the purple or scarlet, the green or white. What raiment will I don? What steed will I mount and hold tightly reined at the starting gate?

The color of my shirt determines the owner, and the owner determines the horse, and the horse determines the race.

My spirit today is jaded and weary, and I reach for a shirt of gray, trimmed with dull green sleeves and yoke. Above the empty hook, as I fasten the buttons, I read the owner's name: "Overwork Farms." I head for the paddock to find my mount. There, against the railing, stands a handsome triple crown winner of years past, alert, head high, nostrils flared, eyes bright in anticipation; a thoroughbred of impeccable breeding, slightly older than the rest of the field. I am hoisted into the saddle and head to the gate, astride this horse called "Driven."

I may win today. I may not.

Another day my joyful spirit reaches for the scarlet and gold, its companion colors; and the legend over the hook reads: Owner -New Life Stables. When I check for the "New

Life" entry in today's race, I discover a frisky, black-maned entry named "Exultation," and, as I lead this incredible animal out of the paddock, I know in every fiber of my being that I wear the winning colors today and that the horse and I will last the race this time and many more to come. And we shall break records and know the heady smell of roses, and thrill to the noisy celebrations round about as we grasp the cup and hold it high.

Another time, when my spirit is an undistinguishable pattern of confusion and hurt, I look for the worn hook at the end of the wall and take down a shirt of faded blues and dark reds, with sweat stains on the collar, under the arms, and in the small of the back. The owner's name for these silks is "Heart's Acres," and the horse I mount has been ridden by many before me.

We start the race in a spurt and quickly lead the field, yet before long this thoroughbred, with a registry that has been questioned by many judges over the years, who is listed in the daily Tip Sheet as "Frustration," sired by "Negative," born of "Reaction," becomes distracted and seems to forget the purpose of the race. We lose the lead, making many strategic mistakes, and, concentration broken, we quickly fall back.

It is hard to beat the odds makers when you are riding "Frustration."

When you have ridden enough races, you have worn most of the silks on the wall and you have raced on the backs of almost every spirit horse in the paddock.

I am the jockey and it is my spirit which chooses-colors, owners, studs.

Let me choose winning colors again, for I like the smell of roses, the feel of the gold metal as I lift the winner's cup. And my mount and I are one, united in the celebration of the crowds, made richer by our race.

To get out of an emotional or mental rut, journalers can write poems titled according to their desired action or result. Close your eyes and let your imagination soar.

Example: Flight Uniform

***Marked down
Picked over
Taken off the rack
Put in a brown paper bag.
Take home
Make do
Open up the sack
Hang on a big wooden hook.
Shower cap Green soap
Water from the spout
Dry me off on a thick, pink towel.***

Eyes wide
Lips red
Lotion on the feet
Silk slides smoothly over my head.
What's this?
Old dress?
Magic really happens
What was old is now brand-new.
Colors bright Dazzling sight
Diamonds from the vault.
These must be my flying clothes.

A friend of mine was considering going into counseling. He wrote a parable to delve deeply into his own being hoping to see what was at the root of his dissatisfaction, and if counseling would be the next step for him.

Example: Disconnected Buttons

Susan and I are still in the middle of an ongoing discussion about emotional buttons, or the hypothetical connection between external events and internal feelings. I feel disconnected with Susan as though I've let go of something.

The image that comes mind is of someone who habitually carried a large parcel in his arms and refused to put it down to embrace people. Finally one day, he tripped over a crack in the sidewalk and the package fell from his grasp. As luck would have it, the package was crushed under the wheels of a passing truck. He was terribly upset by the loss of the package, for in it he carried all his hopes and desires. And so he sat down and stared at his crushed package. He felt outraged. That crack in the sidewalk was to blame. The truck driver was to blame. His anger grew.

Pretty soon his anger was so out of control that he decided to put it in a box. Now he once again had something to carry with him. The box was heavy. Instead of carrying it in his arms, he got a hand truck to help him lug it around, for he was afraid to let it out of his sight. He had lost one box before from carelessness, and he was not going to let it happen again. His life was centered around the box. He changed the way he did things to accommodate the box. He bought two seats on airplanes. He bought a pickup truck instead of a motorcycle. He never ate at nice restaurants since head waiters were snooty about people with large parcels. Eventually he lost his job over the box.

Support groups had not yet been organized for his particular malady. He became a street person, jobless, friendless, hopeless, angry and frustrated-and yet he held even more tightly to the box. One night he dreamed he was walking on the beach and he had no clothes. Now that was not what really bothered him-it was that his cherished box was gone!

Night after night, this terrible dream became a recurring night-mare, until ... One morning when he woke up, the fear and anxiety of the missing box became a dreaded reality. His box had been stolen. He spotted the garbage truck just rounding the corner, and then he heard a crushing sound as the compactor smashed his box of anger flat, just as his box of hope had been flattened by the wheels of a truck. Now he had nothing. No hope, no desire, no anger. What was left? He decided to set out in search of a box that was indestructible in which to store his despair.

At that moment joy came dancing up the street. She was so delightful; he was drawn irresistibly to her brightness and energy. Never before had he imagined such a Being existed. Enlightenment was new to him. He tried to get joy to live in a box so he could carry her with him always. Joy was not content to live in a box like anger and despair. Joy had a life all her own and wanted to get out and meet people and rustle among all the emotions of life.

He and Joy spent hours together talking, laughing, and creating. Joy told him the truth. The truth pushed his buttons. He often got angry or frustrated with Joy. And yet, Joy remained his friend. Joy was not like the others. They would lie to him to appease his anger. Joy had no attachment to what his reactions were. Joy was wise in the ways of emotional buttons. Joy knew that the truth would evoke his anger, and still Joy spoke the truth with no fear, for Joy knew the truth about buttons!

Feedback: The truth about buttons is that other people don't push my buttons . . . I push them myself. And the black box method is a very burdensome and ineffectual way of trying to keep my feelings under control. Look to Joy, and tell the truth about your feelings.

My friend gained the confidence to proceed with counseling because he had a grasp of his truth. After completing this highly creative and illuminative piece, the writer also came to the conclusion that he had all the information inside to make the necessary decisions and changes in his life.

Committed journalers learn to turn to their journals to answer questions for themselves. It is a valuable technique and practice to enhance working with a therapist, or trusting yourself for guidance.

I often encourage my clients to write a story when they are feeling lost or stuck and unable to see the light at the end of the tunnel. It often allows their subconscious mind to surface to identify the problem and create a solution. It also serves to free them from over analyzing, and "thinking" out their problems too much.

Example: The Grandfathers

I see a pathway – some trees – a black cat, and then the Indian village. The grandfathers' medicine wheel. Seeking wisdom, I find the tent of the grandfather of the north – the speaker to me of the peace within – of silent spaces and a heart that loves the thunder.

His message is acceptance: Let the winds of sadness wash over you and blow past. They will not linger if you do not try to hold them or to ride the wind.

My grandfather of the east, resplendent in cape and crown of eagle feathers, bearing the eagle like a falcon, is angered. It is the repetition, he says. You know the light needs dark to illumine most radiantly. You must learn acceptance of the way of the living world. The eagle's soaring has no meaning to him except in contrast to the moments of stillness. Seek the grandfather of the south. Return to the child self.

The grandfather of the south wears green and is engrossed in playing with his mice. He seems more Irish elf than Indian chief. Become your own good parent; allow the child which is you to flow from mood to mood, moment to moment. Do not carry one day past the sleep that leads to the next.

He fades away and is replaced by the grandfather of the west -who, for today, is garbed in sky-blue doeskin. You have the gift of introspection, but you must not misuse its power by finding fault. Look within for truth-not seeking problems, not seeking justification. I look within you and see the wounded healer- and caution patience. You have come far, but deep wounds require time to heal. Don't irritate tender spots, or knock the scabs off. Sometimes resting in the space between the lines will help the healing more than active medicine.

Feedback: Peace, acceptance, patience, going with the flow allow my healing to proceed.

The power of your subconscious is limitless! Possibility thinking, dreams, fantasy and higher-self wisdom have all been explored as resources to tap your inner knowing and expand your joy-filled states of awareness. Try them in your own journal to go beyond where you have never before dreamed possible!