

## PUTTING PEN TO PAPER: THE BENEFITS OF JOURNALING YOUR EMOTIONS

One effective way to really get in touch with your feelings is through journaling because it gives you a chance to figure out what's going on inside your head and why. This might sound intimidating because you may get the impression you need to write pages upon pages of perfectly constructed prose every single day in order for journaling to work. But that couldn't be farther from the truth. In fact, the best way to handle journaling is to write down what's going on in your mind in a stream of consciousness way without worrying about construction — punctuation and grammar rules need not apply. And a little bit of journaling can go a long way. Even if you can only write half a page in your journal every day, it will still give you a chance to monitor your progress. It's better to write a little bit on a regular basis than to write a lot sporadically. Then you can regularly, maybe once a week or so, go through your journal and see how far you've come. You may find that you were upset about something and worked through it, or that emotions you were confused about became clear. Through this process, you can get a different perspective on your feelings, and notice any patterns of how you handle them. That way, the next time you're in a similar situation, you have solid evidence that everything is going to be OK and you don't need to be afraid of what you're feeling.



MIND MATTERS

# Emotional rescue

## How to understand and *work through your feelings*

By Kenya McCullum

**W**e all have them, but we don't always want to deal with them. Emotions are vital to making our lives rewarding and interesting, but they can also be confusing and too painful to bear.

But we have to bear them, because when we don't, the consequences can in some cases be much more destructive than the emotions themselves. Extreme examples are

when people turn to alcohol and drugs in order to mask and numb painful feelings. But even when you don't take hiding your emotions that far, it can still wreak havoc on your life in important ways.

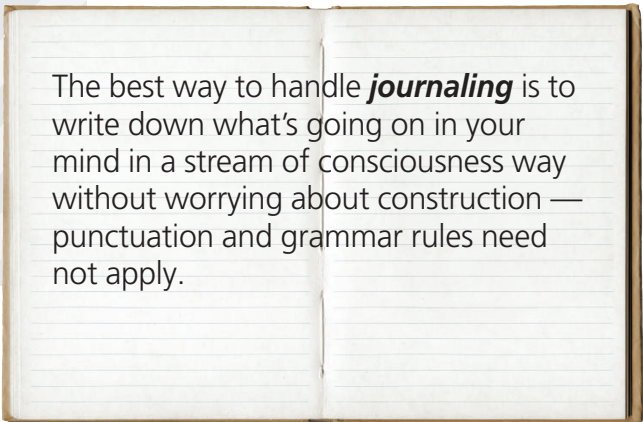
"The consequence of hiding emotions is often feeling like a pressure cooker ready to explode," said Dr. Friedemann Schaub, author of "The Fear + Anxiety Solution." "If you have a lot of frustration inside of you and never really show it, there's a point you become a rageaholic in traffic, you just

explode when someone does a tiny thing wrong, or you feel there's an overflowing sense of heaviness and weight

inside of you. If you're covering up your sadness, everything around you appears more dark and gray, which is basically how depression is described."

In addition, Schaub notes that not dealing with your emotions can also come out in physiological ways, often leading people to feel a physical representation of their internalized stress. As a result, people can develop chronic pains, fatigue, and even autoimmune conditions because they have bottled up their feelings for so long. But the good news is, oftentimes when his patients work through these neglected feelings, their physical problems also clear up.

"It's really amazing how an illness can disappear when you pay attention and you really address what's going on below the surface," he said.



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why you feel the way you do. But these tips can help you sort through your emotions, so you can tackle them head on.

» Ask yourself why. One way to get to the root of your feelings is to have a dialogue with yourself about them. Did you suddenly start feeling angry or depressed for no apparent reason? Ask yourself why you're feeling that way, what's going on with you, and what you've been thinking about. Oftentimes you can figure out the cause of your emotions by linking them to your thoughts. Once you address those thoughts, it will help you to release the emotion itself.

» Give yourself permission to feel. "Feelings are uncomfortable and they often don't make much sense because we can have multiple feelings at one time. Just give yourself permission to experience those feelings," said Dr. Francine Rosenberg of Morris

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Psychological Group. "People are stronger than they realize and often feel they wouldn't be able to tolerate the pain associated with those emotions they're trying to suppress, when in reality, they probably can."

» Visualization. In many

cases, you can actually link your emotions to a certain feeling in your body — like a tightening of the chest, tension in your stomach, or heat in your face. By visualizing that area of tension, taking deep breaths, and imagining the physical

pain getting smaller and smaller, you can actually help reduce the emotional pain that goes with it.



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