Journaling in the New Year

As you probably know, journaling is the practice of writing down your thoughts and feelings in a book, similar to a diary. There are many ways to journal and different types of journals, from keeping a gratitude journal you write in just 5 minutes a day, to choosing something more complex like a bullet journal.

While it is great to use a journal during any time of the year, there are some unique benefits to starting one in the new year. January 1st always feels like a new start, where you feel like you can start over, be better, and do better. This is why many New Years’ resolutions are about getting healthier, being more organized, or trying to keep up with your personal and professional obligations.

If you feel like you have been lacking or looking for a good outlet to get your life together, more organized, and be the healthiest version of yourself, you should consider starting a journal for the new year.

Now is a great time to get ready, as you try to find the best journal and writing utensils. If you try something like a bullet journal or art journal, make sure you get other supplies as well. In the following 8 sections, you will be learning the following:

Why you should start journaling in the new year  
Different types of journals to use  
How and why you should consider a bullet journal  
Types of goals and lists for a journal  
What a 5-minute gratitude journal is and how to use it  
Finding time to journal daily  
How to use the journal for your New Years’ resolutions  
Questions that help you get started with writing

Keep reading if you want to learn more about starting a journaling practice in the new year.

**1. Why You Should Start Journaling in the New Year**

Lots of people start journaling in January, and there are some clear benefits to doing so. Keeping a journal can help you to deal with stress, provide a serious mental boost, and even support your mental health. If you want to know why the new year is a good time to start journaling, here are some things to consider:

*Stress Relief*

Life can be stressful. While it is often possible to cut causes of stress out of your life, it isn't possible to eliminate it entirely. Instead, it is important to find healthy ways to deal with that stress. Journaling isn't the only option, but it is one of the best.

Journaling gives you a chance to sort through all of the things that happened during the day and work through your feelings about them. Since writing doesn't provoke strong emotions as easily as talking about things, it also gives you a little bit of distance that can help you to understand the situation. In some cases, it can even act as an outlet for anger or frustration that doesn't involve getting into a conflict with another human.

*Boosting Memory*

Most people forget things far more often than they realize. Keeping a journal will give you an opportunity to take notes on your life while you still remember things clearly, so that you can check back on the details later. At a practical level, this will make sure that you can remember any good ideas that you have for when you have time to pursue them. At an emotional level, it will keep a record of the good times in your life so that you can look back on them when things are a little bit harder.

*Getting Perspective*

Humans don't remember all events equally. We tend to remember bad things more clearly than good things, and our emotional responses to events can change the way that we remember them over time. You can avoid that problem by writing things down in your journal and looking through them later.

It will help you paint a picture of events as they really happened, which can give you valuable perspective on the balance of good and bad things in your life. It's just like looking at history to get a better grasp on how well the world is doing at the moment, but at a personal level.

*Tracking Success*

Your journal can also help if you find yourself getting discouraged when you try new things. That often happens when people focus on their failures and ignore their successes. If you write down your victories as they happen, you will get a clear record of your success. That will act as proof that you can succeed at things, and looking at that proof will be a powerful motivator when you feel discouraged in life.

It is a really amazing way to keep track of your New Years’ resolutions, no matter what they are, so that alone is a good reason to start journaling in January.

**2. Types of Journaling to Choose From**

When you want to journal in the new year, one thing you should know is that there are many types of journals to choose from. The type you decide on will depend on a number of factors, including whether or not you like to write, what the journal will be used for, and how often you want to use it. Think about your goals and reasons for journaling when deciding on which one is best for you. Here are a few ideas:

*Simple Daily Journal*

The first type of journal is a basic journal, similar to a diary. The great this about this type of journal is that you can write anything and everything in it. You might want a theme for the journal, such as using it to record what you eat and how often you work out if your New Years’ resolution is to lose weight, or you write down what you are thinking each day.

Some people also like to use these types of journals to record triggers for things like anxiety and depression. If you have been under a lot of holiday stress, it really helps to write all of your thoughts and feelings down in the journal.

*Bullet Journal*

A bullet journal is one of the top types of journals to use in the new year. This journal is not going to rely on a lot of writing, but more organizing your life. It can be used for absolutely everything in your life, including what you do, what you want to do, birthdays and holidays, appointments and events, to-do lists, dreams, and so much more.

You will learn more about bullet journaling in the next section, but here are a few things to include in a bullet journal:

Daily to-do lists  
Weekly and monthly calendars  
Lists of places to go or things to do  
Business plans  
Cleaning and errands scheduling  
Meal planning  
Tracking your weight, fitness, and other personal goals

*Gratitude Journal*

You can also start writing in a gratitude journal, which is a great way to journal in the new year and embrace your positive side. Instead of writing anything in the journal, it is reserved just fo talking about what you are grateful. Every day, you will have at least one thing you are happy about, whether that is your family, friends, job, pets, something that good that happened, or even simple joys like watching your favorite movie or buying something you have been wanting for a long time.

Tips for Starting a Gratitude Journal

Here are some different ways you can really benefit from the gratitude journal:

Write in it every day  
Try to set a timer for 5-10 minutes  
Do stream of consciousness writing (explained in next section)  
Keep it positive  
Write about as many things you are grateful for each day  
Bring it everywhere with you

*Stream of Consciousness Journal*

This type of journal is similar to the basic journal, but you don’t really have a theme or subject you are sticking to. With this type of journal, the goal is just to write whatever comes to mind first. This is another journal that benefits from having a timer. With a stream of consciousness journal, you just start writing without thinking too much about it. The point is not to think about what you want to write about. Just start doing it and see what comes out.

The options for journals in the new year truly are endless. Be creative and make a list of why you want to journal and what you want included in it when deciding which one will be the best fit for you.

**3. How a Bullet Journal Can Help You**

Journaling can help you stay organized and feel fulfilled. There are many different types of ways to journal. You can keep a stream of consciousness journal. You can journal weekly. Or you can use a journal to keep tabs on all the important happenings in your life. A bullet journal is a great way to document to do lists, events, and other milestones on a regular basis. As you make bullet journaling a habit, you'll begin to accrue a library of each year's activities. These are great mementos to look back on in the future. Here are a few ways a bullet journal can help you in the New Year:

*Get Organized*

If you've tried to keep a journal or planner before but find yourself getting off track, a bullet journal is a great way to get organized. Bullet journals lack the rigid structure of a planner. And bullet journals provide opportunities for personalization beyond pen color. There are a few standard approaches to a bullet journal, but it's up to you to make a bullet journal your own. These are some best practices:

Pick a notebook you love

Set aside the first few pages for an Index

Number all your pages

Label your pages appropriately

Review and revise as needed

Many people choose to use a blank or grid-style notebook. These notebooks provide you with more flexibility than lined notebooks. The first few pages may stay blank for a while, but as you add content your index will grow. Your index can include topics, like planning a wedding or birthday party. Any time you write down information about that topic, put the page numbers in the index. It's important that you number all pages in order to stay organized.

Use Symbols

Some people think that a bullet journal is just bullets. And those people are kind of correct. A bullet journal is based on bullets, but these bullets can be changed or modified to accurately reflect the status of a list item. For example, a single bullet can represent a task that needs to get done. But when you complete that task, you can change that bullet to an X to indicate a job is done. Some people use > and < symbols to "migrate" their bullets.

*Be Creative*

A bullet journal provides you with the freedom to keep things as simple or as wild as you like. You can express your creativity with funky headlines, washi tape, colorful markers, or any other fun additions you'd like. Bullet journals free you from the conventional planner. Add what matters most to you, and enjoy seeing your life's story told one page at a time.

**4. Types of Goals and Lists for Your New Years’ Journal**

At some point, nearly everyone dreams of bigger, better things for their lives – the dreams of personal goals, family goals, or even business goals. As another new year approaches, many find the practice of journaling to be an effective way to record those goals and how to attain them, as well as reflections on personal development and growth.

Here are a few great suggestions of things to include in your new journal:

*Memories*

Many important events, both good and bad, happen in our lives, but unfortunately our minds can’t capture every single one of those experiences. Journaling is a great way to record those significant memories, including life milestones such as a graduation, reaching a certain age, or buying a first home.

*Personal Development*

Want to lose 20 pounds or start a new business? Writing down personal goals, including step by step lists of how to reach those goals, is a great way to make use of a journal in the new year.

*Gratitude*

In the midst of life’s challenges, maintaining a journal listing of all the things you have to be grateful for can be especially helpful. But hardship or trials aren’t required to keep such a list; jotting down expressions of gratitude, no matter how small, on a daily or weekly basis can help keep life in perspective through good times as well as bad.

*Quotes*

Quotes are a great way to keep you inspired and motivated to reach particular goals or to persevere during difficult experiences. Get in the habit of writing them down in a journal so you can reflect on them whenever you need or want.

*Bullet Journals*

Many people also find great use in a bullet journal – a relatively new, creative way of journaling that helps maintain organized lists of goals and tasks. These journals can be kept by the day, week, or month, but rather than simply filling out a typical day planner or organizer, the blank pages of a bullet journal can be completely customized by the author. If the idea of bullet journaling intrigues you, some great journaling ideas can include:

• Tracking finances/monthly savings goals

• Weight loss management/daily workout routines

• Meal planning

• Books read

• Relationship goals (such as spending more time with friends/family)

• Daily/weekly to-do lists

• Educational goals

One of the hardest things about journaling is actually getting started, but the fact is that, with a little discipline and creativity, journaling can become a fun, enjoyable, and even therapeutic habit to develop this new year.

**5. The Power of a 5-Minute Gratitude Journal**

*The Social Psychologists Are on The Case*

Are you looking for a way to enhance your feelings of gratitude in day-to-day life? Researchers at the University of Pennsylvania have shown amassed a body of research on the benefits of gratitude exercises, a subfield of positive psychology. Being grateful can be an incredible way to cope with stress, making you more resilient to begin with when facing stressors. There are simple strategies to nurture and increase feelings of gratitude in yourself, which can be easily be incorporated into your daily schedule by taking 5 minutes each day to document your progress in a gratitude journal.

*Put it in Your Planner*

Intentions are not the same thing as follow-through. Set aside time during the day to engage in this practice, such as while you are having your morning coffee or before you go to bed at night. These exercises are thought to bring your attention to the existing positive events happening throughout your day, you can greater steep yourself in these experiences, leading you to notice energizing things around you that been overlooked before.

Often times we fail to appropriately savor these things, and they quickly become forgotten, leading us to dwell on the bad. Taking time to refresh these memories of pleasure and satisfaction is an incredible way to enhance your psychological and social health. Look back at your notes when you feel like your motivation needs a pick-me-up.

*Different Ways of Engaging in Gratitude*

You can note three good things, successes big or small that have happened to you during that day. These things can be relatively small in importance such as having a really good cup of coffee, or bigger successes such as completing a long-term project or making it to the gym. This can help you to put a positive tone on your day, and prevent you from getting stuck thinking about the things that you didn’t get done.

Savor your successes and be grateful for the life that you have right at this very moment, break out of your lack-mentality. This is most effective however, if you keep it up. Try to do it at least once a week for as long as you can, likely you’ll begin to enjoy doing it so much that you’ll want to continue with your journal.

*Getting Others Involved*

In addition to keeping a journal, by sending a heartfelt letter of thanks to someone in your life that you feel gratitude towards has been shown to lead to feelings of happiness and contentment. This can allow you to savor the connection with the other person, as well as strengthen your relationship as you show your appreciation. Working to nurture your sense of gratitude can have the effect of warding off depression and anxiety while instilling feelings of well-being.

**6. Finding Time to Journal Every Day**

Journaling is a habit that a good majority of people would love to get into. It's a way to document your life and get your worries, excitements and frustrations out onto paper. You might have heard experts claim that journaling helps with anxiety, depression and other mental health issues. You might be journaling for any one of these reasons, or you might just want to keep a journal because you want to remember small details that you're likely to forget in a year.

The New Year is the perfect time to start a journal and to stick with it all year. You'll find that it's fun and even informative to go over your journal a year from now and remembering all of the little things you did throughout the year. However, if you don't start in January and keep leaving it until "later", you'll likely never make it a habit.

Here are five tips for finding time to journal every day and actually get into the habit:

*Try a Method That Works for You*

You need to find a method of journaling that's right for you. If you're constantly on your tablet or computer at night, you might want to think about keeping a journal online. Not only are there tons of lockable journal websites that you can make a free account on, but there are tons of mobile apps as well. If you're a paper and pen type of person, get yourself a large notebook of your choosing and try to find a little time each day to journal your thoughts of the day.

*Make it a Habit*

The key to keeping up with your journal is to make it a habit. This might not come easy if you're not used to journaling every day, but over time, you'll notice that you feel off or weird when you skip a day. The key is to stick with it. If one morning you don't have time to journal, do it at night. Try to pick the same time every day so that it's just something you do, like brushing your teeth or showering.

*Keep it Short and Simple*

One issue that a lot of writers have when keeping a journal is that they get too detailed. If your journal entries are a mile long, you're probably not going to be able to write a post every single day without it taking an hour or longer. Keep your posts short, simple and sweet and you might even find that they're more enjoyable to read through later on. No one wants to read through an entire essay on how your day went, including the future you.

*Make it Public*

One way to keep yourself motivated to journal is to make the journal public online. If you have an online journal and don't care about privacy, keeping the journal public allows people to visit, view and comment on your entries. When other people show interest in your journal, you'll find that you begin to get motivated to write more often.

*Customize Your Journal*

Another method for getting into the habit of journaling is customizing your journal so that you'll want to write in it. If you have an online journal, you can grab a template or create your own so that you can customize it to your needs and interests. If you have a pen and paper journal, you can easily find a great-looking book and get a really nifty pen that you'll look forward to using every day.

Getting into the habit of journaling each day is a great way to keep tabs of what's going on. It's a good outlet for mental health issues ranging from anxiety to depression, and it's a wonderful source of memories that you might want or even need to go back to a year or two down the road. Be sure to utilize each of these methods so that you're able to find both the time and motivation to journal each day.

**7. How to Use the Journal for Your New Years’ Resolutions**

Your journal is a tool that can help you to keep your resolutions during the coming year. There are a few different techniques that you can use to help, so you can probably find at least one that meets your needs. It's best to give them all a try, and then mix and match to find a program that works for you.

*Organize Your Plan*

Planning is the key to success, especially if you have complex resolutions that involve dieting or other major life changes. Relying on a vague plan is a recipe for disaster, but you also need to be able to adjust your plan when necessary. The key to managing both of those things is your journal.

Start by writing out your plan for the first week or two of the year. As you progress through that period, take notes on where you succeeded or failed with it. Once you have done that, you can look back on your records and adjust your plan to deal with any problems. Repeat the process until you have something that works well!

*Track Your Success*

It's important to have big goals, but it can be hard to work towards those goals if you don't see any signs of success. Fortunately, this is another problem that you can solve with a journal and a little bit of planning.

Start by breaking up your big goals into a bunch of little ones that are easier to accomplish, and keep a list of those little goals in your journal. When you reach one of those goals, be sure to make a note of it. This will immediately give you a feeling of progress that can motivate you to take the next steps. If you ever feel discouraged, you can look back at your journal to see the progress that you have made and find the strength to keep going.

*Emotional Support*

Major life changes can be stressful, and resolutions are no exception to that rule. People who give in to stress are more likely to fail to achieve their resolutions than those who find a way to deal with that stress and keep working towards their goals. There are a lot of ways to do that, but journaling can be a vital part of a stress-relief program.

Writing about your experiences and how they made you feel will help you to work through those emotions and put them behind you. It will also give you a chance to look back at the past when you feel stressed. Since it usually gets easier to keep resolutions as time passes, that will give you a chance to see how far you have come. It will replace feelings of failure and anxiety with a feeling of success, and that will help you to keep working at your goals.

**8. Simple Questions to Help You Decide What to Journal About**

If you want to write in a journal in the new year, but aren’t sure where to start, you’re not alone. The hard part is often figuring out what you should write about. Journaling prompts are a great way to get a little more insight into what to write about, but the simplest type of prompt is a question. So, here are some questions that you can answer in journal entries, making it easier to start with a new year’s journaling practice.

1. What do you want to accomplish this year?

2. Do you have any personal health goals? Maybe you want to lose weight or reach some fitness goals.

3. What made you want to start a journal?

4. Did something good happen to you today?

5. What is one goal this week that you can accomplish?

6. What are 10 things you want to accomplish this year?

7. What actionable steps can you do to make your first goal a reality?