

# Journaling for Growth — Workbook

This workbook accompanies the Journaling for Growth course and gives you practical exercises, templates, and checklists for each of the four modules. Work through each section alongside the corresponding course module, completing exercises before moving forward so your insights stay fresh and actionable. Every template is designed to be reused across your journaling practice, not filled in once and forgotten.

## Foundations of Reflective Journaling

Audit your current journaling habits, design your start ritual, and complete your first Morning Pages session.

### Exercise: Journaling History Audit

Before designing a new system, understand what has and has not worked for you before. Answer each prompt honestly in your journal, then transfer key findings to the worksheet below.

- Describe every journaling attempt you have made in the past (include format, frequency, how long it lasted, and why it stopped).

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• What did you actually find useful or interesting in those attempts, even briefly?

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• What conditions were present when the practice was at its most consistent?

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• What single friction point most often caused you to skip or quit?

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### Worksheet: Start Ritual Design Sheet

Complete every field before you write your first journal entry. Specificity matters — vague intentions produce vague habits.

My anchor habit (the existing daily behaviour I am attaching journaling to):

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The exact location where I will journal (physical spot or app):

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My target journaling days per week (3 is the research minimum):

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My minimum session length in week one (5 minutes is acceptable):

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The format I am starting with (Morning Pages / prompted / structured review / tracking):

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How I will mark a successful session (streak app, checkmark, physical tick):

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My identified friction point from the audit, and my pre-planned response to it:

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## Checklist: Morning Pages Launch Checklist

- [ ] Place notebook and pen beside bed or morning station the night before.
- [ ] Set my phone to Do Not Disturb until Morning Pages are complete.
- [ ] Commit to not rereading entries for the first 14 days.
- [ ] Write the starter sentence 'Right now I am thinking about...' on the first line if blank.
- [ ] Complete three full pages without stopping or editing.
- [ ] On day 15, begin underlining one surprising sentence per session and transferring it to a signal log.
- [ ] At day 21, evaluate whether to continue, modify, or replace Morning Pages before proceeding to prompted journaling.

## Structured Reflection Frameworks

Practice the GROW model, run your first AAR, and set up your 5-Year Journal structure.

### Exercise: GROW Model: Live Goal Session

Choose one real goal you are currently working on — not a hypothetical. Work through the four GROW stages in sequence. Allow at least 15 minutes. Do not skip to Options before completing Reality honestly.

- **GOAL:** Write your goal in specific, measurable, time-bound terms. What does success look, feel, and sound like on the day you achieve it?

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- **REALITY:** What is the honest current state? What have you already tried? What is working, what is not, and what are you avoiding acknowledging?

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- **OPTIONS:** Generate a minimum of five possible actions. Include at least one that feels too big, one that feels too small, and one that feels slightly embarrassing or vulnerable.

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- **WILL:** Which option (or combination) will you commit to? Write the specific action, the deadline, the potential obstacle, and your planned response to that obstacle.

### Worksheet: After-Action Review Template

Run this template within 24 hours of any significant event — a difficult conversation, completed project, important presentation, or major decision. Fill in all five fields for maximum learning extraction.

Event description (what, when, stakes — 1 sentence):

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My pre-event intention or expectation (what I planned or hoped would happen):

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What actually happened (factual, no adjectives carrying judgment, 3–5 sentences):

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Root cause analysis — Why did the gap between intention and result exist? (Ask 'why' at least three times on each cause):

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One thing to SUSTAIN (do more of, with specifics):

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One thing to CHANGE (do differently next time, specific enough to appear in a future GROW Will entry):

### Checklist: 5-Year Journal Setup Checklist

- [ ] Choose implementation method: physical 5-year journal product OR digital folder of MM-DD.md files.
- [ ] Select and write down my four fixed annual prompts (settle these now — do not change them across years).
- [ ] Create the first entry for today's date using all four prompts.

- [ ] Schedule a recurring annual review block (birthday or January 1, 2–3 hours).
- [ ] Set a calendar reminder for this date next year to reopen today's entry and add the next year's response.
- [ ] Note the date my longitudinal comparison becomes meaningful: after year two, entries become comparable.

## Cognitive and Emotional Depth Work

Audit your cognitive distortions, clarify your values, and run your first structured emotional processing sequence.

### Exercise: Cognitive Distortion Audit

Select a journal entry written during a period of distress or frustration. Reread it with fresh eyes and apply the four-step distortion audit. Complete the exercise in writing — do not do it mentally.

- Copy or describe the entry here. Highlight every evaluative statement (any sentence that judges, predicts, or interprets rather than describing facts).

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- For each highlighted phrase, identify which of Beck's distortion types best fits: all-or-nothing thinking, catastrophising, mind reading, should statements, or personalisation.

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- For each distortion you found, write the most balanced, accurate restatement of the same situation. Use only claims you could defend with evidence.

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- Note which distortion type appeared most frequently. This is likely a signature pattern for you — write what you will watch for in future entries.

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### Worksheet: Values Clarification and Alignment Sheet

Work through the values clarification sequence from Module 3, Lesson 2. Complete each step in order. Reserve at least 30 uninterrupted minutes.

Admired qualities list (from the 'who do I most admire' prompt — traits and behaviours, not names):

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Headstone qualities list (from the 'what do I want written on my headstone' prompt — qualities, not achievements):

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Peak aliveness description (from the 'when do I feel most like myself' prompt):

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My 5–8 extracted value words:

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Top 2 anchor values (the ones I would uphold even at personal cost):

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My enacted values this week (based on where I actually spent time and attention, not where I intended to):

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The gap I am most committed to closing between stated and enacted values:

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### Checklist: Emotional Processing Session Checklist

- [ ] Identify the difficult experience I want to process (specific event, not a general feeling).
- [ ] Day 1 entry: Write raw emotions and factual description without editing.
- [ ] Day 2 entry: Write about meaning, perspective, and how others might see the same event.
- [ ] Day 3 entry: Write what I have learned from this experience so far.
- [ ] Day 4 entry: Write one specific thing I am doing differently because of this experience.
- [ ] Apply the three-part self-compassion protocol (mindfulness, common humanity, self-kindness) on

whichever day the emotional charge is highest.

[ ] Check: am I developing a coherent narrative or re-experiencing the same emotions repeatedly? If the latter, shift the angle of approach.

### Exercise: Values vs. Behaviour Gap Analysis

This exercise is most valuable when done with complete honesty. There is no correct answer — only useful data.

- Review your calendar and bank statement (or spending app) from the past two weeks. How did you actually spend your time and money — not how you intended to, but how you did?

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- Based on that behaviour data alone (ignoring your stated values), what values would a stranger infer you hold most strongly?

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- Where is the gap largest between your stated anchor values and your inferred-from-behaviour values?

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- Write one specific, concrete change to your weekly schedule or spending that would reduce that gap by at least 20% over the next 30 days.

## Building a Sustainable Growth System

Finalise your personal journaling system, set up your tracking dashboard, and complete your first 90-day review structure.

### Worksheet: Personal Journaling System Blueprint

Complete this blueprint before you finish the course. This document is your operating manual — return to it when consistency wavers or the practice needs updating.

Daily anchor session: time, anchor habit, location, and 3 fixed daily prompts (list all three):

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Weekly debrief: day of week, time block, format (GROW + AAR), duration target:

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Monthly review: scheduled date each month, duration target, what I will read and extract:

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Annual synthesis: scheduled date, duration target, which 5-year prompts I will use:

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My identified failure point from the pre-mortem exercise:

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My specific protocol for that failure point (what I will do when it happens):

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How I will know the system is working (what observable change will I see in 90 days?):

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### Exercise: 90-Day Portfolio Pre-Mortem

Run this exercise before you start your journaling practice, not after. Imagine it is 90 days from today and you have completely abandoned the system. Write your answers as if the failure has already happened.

- Describe in detail why the practice failed. Be specific about the circumstances, the trigger moment, and the rationalisation you used to stop.

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- What warning signs appeared in weeks 3–5 that you ignored? What did those early failures look like?

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- What would you have needed to have in place at the start to prevent this specific failure mode?

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- Now write your pre-planned response for each failure point you identified, in the form: 'When X happens, I will do Y specifically.'
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### Checklist: 90-Day Growth Portfolio Review Checklist

- Block 90–120 minutes in my calendar on day 91 of the practice (schedule this now).
- Read all journal entries from the 90 days, highlighting sentences that still feel significant.
- Extract 3–5 recurring themes from the highlights and name each in 3–5 words.
- Review all GROW records: calculate what percentage of Will commitments I completed.
- Review all AAR records: identify the most common finding across all AARs.
- Review my dashboard charts: identify my lowest-alignment week and my peak week.
- Write the one-page portfolio summary: themes, key growth, persistent patterns, honest stuck point.
- Write the 90-day forward plan: three priorities, each with a GROW goal entry and a values-alignment check.
- Schedule the next 90-day review block before closing this review session.

### Your Action Plan

1. Complete the Journaling History Audit and Start Ritual Design Sheet before writing your first entry.
2. Set up your journaling medium (notebook or digital app) and place it visibly at your anchor cue location today.
3. Run Morning Pages for the first 14 days without rereading entries — commit to this constraint.
4. On day 7, run your first full GROW session on your most active goal using the four-stage sequence.
5. On day 10, run your first AAR on any significant event from the past two weeks.
6. On day 15, begin the signal log practice: underline one surprising sentence per Morning Pages session.
7. On day 21, set up your journaling dashboard spreadsheet with the four core metrics and begin daily rating.
8. On day 30, run your values clarification sequence and complete the Values vs. Behaviour Gap Analysis.
9. On day 30, switch from Morning Pages to your personalised prompted journaling system (three fixed prompts).
10. Block 90–120 minutes for your first 90-day portfolio review and schedule it as a non-negotiable calendar event.









