Structured Journaling

For some, free-flow journaling gets their mind spinning and they buy into dark thoughts. If this is the case, structured journaling is needed. In structured journaling, life situations are journaled following steps that keeps the mind from staying on a negative path.

Here are some structured journaling approaches:

**High-Light, Low-Light, High-Lights**

1. Write about something that you are happy have been in your life today.
2. Write about something that you wished had been different today.
   1. You may only write as much as you wrote for “1.” If you want to write more about “2,” You have to go back and add more to “1.”
3. Write about things that you are happy about or grateful about in general.
   1. Write at least as much as you wrote in “2.”

**How Big of a Deal (for journaling things that are upsetting)**

1. In 7 or fewer words, state something you did not like that has happened (e.g., she would not play with me)
2. Give it a rating from 0-10 for how big of a deal it feels like it is (e.g., “8”)
3. Now give it a second 0-10 rating for how big of a deal it actually is (e.g., “2”)

0 is absolutely nothing, and 10 is someone dying

Example: 1. Mom would not give me the password to the iPad. It felt like a 9. And it was a 3.

**Count My Blessings**

Write down as many things you can be grateful about that happened in the last few days or that you have in your life.

**Blessings Alphabet Game**

Like “count my blessings,” but instead of finding as many as you can, try to find one for each letter in the alphabet

**These are a Few of My Favorite Things**

Write down things about people and the world around you that are fantastic when we actually pay attention to them:

E.g., my sister’s eyes when she smiles; the soft petals on a flower; the clouds today

**The Last 24 Hours**

In this structure, you set aside one line for each hour in the last 24 hours. On the far left side on each line, write an hour of the day, starting with the hour 24 hours ago. Then on each line write what you did each hour, using only 4 or fewer words for each thing you did. Then go back and circle or underline your favorite parts

Example:

7:00-8:00pm (yesterday): Watched TV; brushed my teeth; changed into pajamas; went to bed; slept

8:00pm-6:00am: slept.

5:00am-6:00am: Slept; woke up; couldn’t sleep; went to bathroom; slept again

6:00-7:00am: Slept

7:00-8:00am: Woke up; ate breakfast; watched TV

8:00-9:00am: Read; argued with mom; walked with mom

9:00-10:00am: Played with sister; asked friend to play

10:00-11:00am: Drew; broke pencil; squeezed stress-ball

11:00am-12:00pm: Made lunch; spilled lunch; made lunch again; ate lunch; watched TV

12:00-1:00pm: Talked with brother; read a fun book; wrote a story

1:00pm-2:00pm: Wrote a story; frustrated about noise; practiced 4-7-8 breathing

2:00-3:00pm: Argued about cleaning room; cleaned my room; had a snack

3:00-4:00pm: Walked around the building; looked at flowers

4:00-5:00pm: Played with chalk; drew flowers; walked from mean kid

5:00-6:00pm: Ate dinner; watched a movie

6:00-7:00pm: Watched a movie; did jumping-jacks; journaled last 24 hours.