

'That's my story



**A JOURNALING WORKBOOK
FOR FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES OF PEOPLE
WITH ACQUIRED BRAIN INJURY**

My name is:

**This is my personal journal.
Please don't read it without my knowledge and permission.**

If found, please call:

Forward from Brain Injury Canada

BEFORE YOU BEGIN:

When journaling, you may visit past or current trauma, difficult memories, and complex emotions. The purpose of journaling is to connect more deeply with your emotions and experiences, and there may be parts of the journaling process that make you uncomfortable. In this discomfort, you may be able to work through and find other emotions and memories that can help you cope with trauma. While we encourage people not to shy away from prompts that may bring those experiences to the surface, we recommend that if at any point you get overwhelmed, you take a break by either stepping back or moving to another section of the workbook. If/when you are ready to revisit any prompts that may be more challenging for you, do so at a slower pace in an environment where you feel safe and secure. Your journal can be private, but if having someone with you is helpful, you should choose what is right for you.

“To name the world in your own terms, to tell your own story, is an act of authority and power. When you write, you are saying, in effect, ‘I have a voice. I have a story. This is what I have to say.’”

~ Rebecca McClanahan, *Write Your Heart Out*



Journaling and strong emotions

We want you to be comfortable and at ease within this workbook. However, we know telling your story may not always be easy and may sometimes even be upsetting, sparking strong and/or negative emotions.

This journaling workbook strives to help you identify what causes strong emotional responses and provide you with suggested actions you can take when you do experience them.

Emotional provocations when journaling

All of our memories and experiences can spark emotion within us. While some of those emotions are positive, certain memories can have negative or traumatic feelings associated with them. This is normal, especially when we think about or are reminded (consciously or subconsciously) of past/recent trauma(s).

Simply defined, trauma refers to any deeply disturbing event: in reality, trauma has many nuanced manifestations. Native American scholar and psychotherapist Eduardo Duran calls trauma “the injury where blood does not flow.”

Reminders or provocations can be in the form of people, words, opinions, smells, music, or situations, to name a few examples. It’s important to recognize and acknowledge these provocations, and what emotions they generate. Research has shown that journaling can not only help us do that, but also help us process our reactions so that we can let go and move on.

Identifying what causes emotional responses

Some topics or prompts in this workbook may make you feel very uncomfortable, angry, sad, guilty, or even fearful. You may experience anxiety, panic, discouragement, despair, or negative self-talk. You may also experience physical sensations such as indigestion, headaches, or body aches and pains.

Some ways that emotions can be incited include:

- > Certain words
- > A person
- > Aggressive-sounding noises
- > Ambulance sirens
- > Accessing particular feelings
- > Bright lights
- > The end of a relationship
- > Being alone
- > Being judged, criticized, or teased
- > Financial problems
- > Exposure to environmental situations that make you feel uncomfortable
- > Certain smells, tastes, or noises
- > Anything specifically related to how your brain injury happened
- > Trying to be positive

While we want you to be prepared for strong emotional experiences as you journal, we don’t want to discourage you from exploring them. It’s meant to be a process that explores the good, the bad, and the in-between.

If you do come up to a prompt or a part of the journal that you find particularly inciting, the following methods can help you with the journaling process.

Methods for coping with emotions while journaling

STOP AND BREATHE.

Stop journaling, place your hands on your lap, get comfortable, close your eyes, and just breathe. Put all your focus on your breath. Imagine breathing in feelings of calm through your nose and exhaling any bad feelings out your mouth. Repeat this until you feel ready to continue.

WRITE IN THE THIRD PERSON.

If you struggle to write any section of this journal because the topic causes intense emotions or is overwhelming, this technique can make thinking and writing easier. Instead of writing "I," use a different pronoun that you identify with (she/her, he/him, they/them). Writing your journal entry in the third person as an observer will remove you enough from the personal reality to help you gain perspective and recall a situation.

MOVE TO ANOTHER SECTION OF THE WORKBOOK.

Don't be afraid to skip around. You can always return, when you can, to the section that was inciting strong emotions.

PUT THE WORKBOOK DOWN.

Sometimes you have to give yourself a break. There's no deadline to finish any section. However, you will gain the most benefits from doing the exercises in every section at some point.

James Pennebaker's tells us ⁽²⁾ that the shift in pronouns in personal writing predict improvement in the writers' health. This shifting of pronouns demonstrates that the writers are changing the ways that are thinking about themselves relative to others.

Journaling and privacy

Suggestions to protect your privacy:

- Please get in the habit of storing your journal in its own special place where others aren't tempted to read it.
- If need be, you can use a password for a digital journal, a notebook with a lock and key, or store your journal in a private place to which only you have access.
- On the first page of your journal, write your name and phone number and this: *This is my personal journal. Please don't read it without my knowledge and permission. Thank you for respecting my privacy.*
- Encourage others living with you to begin journaling, too. Once they understand the need for privacy a journal requires, they will be less tempted to read anyone else's.
- Other clever ways to protect your privacy when you are expressing something sensitive is by changing names and/or using code words, abbreviations, or shorthand in your journal.

Part one

Getting started

“And suddenly, you just know it’s time to start something new and trust the magic of beginnings.”

~ Anonymous

The 5-minute sprint

The 5-minute sprint is a journaling technique that works as a warm-up or a full journaling session.

As a warm-up, select a journaling prompt or a single word (you can find several at the back of this workbook). Start by writing the first thing that comes to mind and write non-stop for five minutes. Use a timer to track yourself (smartphones, tablets, and ovens or microwaves all have timers). Should you get stuck, just repeat the last word you journaled (like stuttering) until you become unstuck. You can write in full sentences or bullet points.

For a full journaling session, set a timer and, without a prompt, journal for five minutes about anything that's on your mind, in your heart, or what you're experiencing physically. A common five-minute sprint is the Self-Check-In. Start with "I think," "I feel," or "I am," and write about the state of your mind, body, and soul at that very moment in time.



Do a five-minute journaling sprint on each of the following prompts or words.

Today I ...

Start writing the first thing that comes to mind and keep writing for five minutes. Go where your mind takes you. Sometimes it reveals subconscious thoughts.

Joy

Start writing the first thing that comes to mind related to the word 'joy'.

Right now, life is...

Start writing the first thing that comes to mind. Try to end on a positive note.

"Gratitude is the healthiest of all human emotions. The more you express gratitude for what you have, the more likely you will have even more to express gratitude for."

~ Zig Ziglar

Gratitude journaling: Your powerful tool for change & health

Gratitude may be one of the most overlooked tools we all have access to every day. According to research, practicing gratitude even for a short amount of time can lead to higher levels of well-being. Research shows that gratitude can have these benefits:

GRATITUDE BUILDS RESILIENCE

Some people experience profound life losses yet find themselves capable of moving forward and finding happiness again. They find the people and passions in their lives that make them happy and focus on them. A 2003 study published in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* found that gratitude was a major contributor to resilience following the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. Recognizing all you have to be thankful for, even during the worst times of your life, helps create resilience.

GRATITUDE IMPROVES PHYSICAL HEALTH

Grateful people experience fewer aches and pains and report feeling healthier than other people, according to a 2012 study published in *Personality and Individual Differences*. Grateful people are also more likely to take care of their health.

GRATITUDE IMPROVES MENTAL HEALTH

Gratitude reduces toxic emotions, from envy and resentment to frustration and regret. Robert A. Emmons, Ph.D., the world's leading scientific expert on gratitude and the founding editor-in-chief of *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, has conducted multiple studies on the link between gratitude and well-being. His research confirms that gratitude effectively increases happiness and reduces depression.

GRATITUDE REDUCES STRESS

Gratitude and other positive emotions are among the strongest relaxants known to man. Gratitude may be just as or even more effective than relaxation methods such as deep breathing.

GRATITUDE HELPS OVERCOME TRAUMA

A 2006 study published in *Behavior Research and Therapy* found that Vietnam war veterans with higher levels of gratitude experienced lower rates of PTSD. Gratitude has also been shown to lead to positive outcomes following traumatic events (Vieselmeyer, 2017: *The Role of Resilience and Gratitude in Post-traumatic Stress and Growth Following a Campus Shooting*) as well as following negative life experiences (Chen, 2017: *Does gratitude promote recovery from substance misuse?*)

IMPROVED RECOVERY RESEARCH shows that those who engage in gratitude practices feel less pain, go to the doctor less often, have lower blood pressure, and are less likely to develop a mental disorder. (2012 study published in *Personality and Individual Differences*). Grateful people tend to cope, manage, and recover faster from certain medical procedures.

GRATITUDE IMPROVES SELF-ESTEEM

A 2014 study published in the *Journal of Applied Sports Psychology* found that gratitude increased athletes' self-esteem, which is an essential component to optimal performance. Other studies have shown that gratitude reduces social comparisons. Rather than becoming resentful toward people who have more money or better jobs, grateful people can appreciate other people's accomplishments.



I am grateful for...

Journaling technique: List of 100

Most of us make lists—for groceries, to-dos, gifts, etc. We use them for time management or memory jogging. They've served us well for these purposes, but journal-lists - ah! That's something different. Information you glean from journaling a list and breaking it into categories can be insightful.

What is a List of 100?

Just what it says! 100 entries are enough to wear out the conscious mind and get the subconscious mind to come forward.

You can use this journaling technique...

- > When you are struggling to make a decision
- > To help clarify your thoughts
- > To help identify patterns and problems
- > To brainstorm
- > To get below the surface of an issue
- > To gather a lot of information very quickly
- > To focus your attention on the reality of things.

Tips

- > It's okay to repeat
- > Repetition is a very valid, important part of the List 100 technique - these are hints from your subconscious mind
- > Write as fast as you can
- > Usually once you're warmed up, ideas & thoughts tumble out
- > You don't have to write in complete sentences
- > Use ditto marks (" " "), single words, phrases, abbreviations
- > Your entries don't have to make sense
- > You'll have thoughts not connected with the list - write them and keep going!

You'll notice **the first third** of your list will be what you expect...the stuff that's clamoring to get out. **The middle** of your list is where repetition usually begins, and themes start to develop. **The last third of your list** is where subconscious material begins to present itself.



The list of 100 things for which you are grateful ...

Part two

Once upon a time

“We cannot process experience without story.”

~ Christina Baldwin

The story of the brain injury & me

“Writing is medicine. It is an appropriate antidote to injury. It is an appropriate companion for any difficult change.”

~ Julia Cameron, Author of *The Artist’s Way*

We begin at the beginning, the day the brain injury occurred. Here you will write your true account of what happened from your perspective.



- > ***How you’re related or associated to the person who had the ABI***
- > ***The date and time of the injury***
- > ***Describe the day the brain injury happened, before the injury (remember to include as much detail as possible, even the weather)***
- > ***Describe the incident that caused the brain injury.***
- > ***What happened immediately following the incident that caused the ABI?***
- > ***What I remember feeling at first was...***
- > ***What I remember feeling in my body at first was...***
- > ***What I worried about most at first was...***

The worst part

Some of the worst parts for you can be what happened to your loved one, the negative change in your life, or anything else that might have happened. After undergoing trauma, many people find it difficult to explain or explore the worst parts of the experience. They may feel confused or frightened, guilty, embarrassed, or ashamed (even though the event might not have been their fault), or they may simply not know how to begin.

If you’re up to it and can give yourself permission to explore the worst part of this whole incident, try these prompts. Remember to visit our tips for coping with strong emotional responses to journaling.



- > ***If I could tell the story about the worst part of this for me, I would say...***
- > ***How I’ve dealt with the worst of this is...***
- > ***When I remember and write about this, I feel ...***
- > ***When I remember and write about this, what I feel in my body is...***

Recovery begins

“I find my journal to be a companion. If I am having a difficult day or struggling with an ongoing issue, I find that I learn from myself through my writing.”

~ Ruthanne (Rufus) Collinson, poet laureate

Tell the story of how long your loved one was in the facility and what happened to you while he/she/they was there. You can use bullet points if it's easier or go ahead and free-write if you'd like. Remember, this journal is *your* story about *your* experience.



- > **After the injury my loved one was immediately taken to...**
- > **My first impression(s) of this facility was...**
- > **What I remember most about that place is...**
- > **The first thing I remember happening to me there was...**
- > **I remember feeling...**
- > **Some other things I remember feeling while my loved one was there were (bullet points) ...**
- > **What I was thinking and feeling the most while my loved one was there was...**
- > **I was most grateful for...**

Acknowledgement & Acceptance

Many people who support a loved one with acquired brain injury find it difficult to accept what happened. It may be because it's too hard to face or that they think acceptance means giving up hope of further recovery. They think that if they accept the way things are today, no one will ever move forward.

Please know acceptance does not mean giving up. Not in the least. Accepting what happened simply means that you realize your life situation is different now. Someone you love sustained a brain injury, and that will change your life.

When you refuse to accept what happened, it can drain your energy by fighting against fact. Once you stop fighting and accept that the injury happened and how it affects you, you have the energy you need to move forward.

Let's do some journaling around acceptance and acknowledgment.

Awareness



- › *Some of the changes I became aware of after the brain injury are...*
- › *After the brain injury, I remember becoming aware of changes in me or in my life when...*
- › *The awareness felt...*
- › *I'm aware that the brain injury has affected my family and friends in this way...*
- › *I'm aware that the brain injury will affect my life in this way...*

Acceptance



- › *What I accept about the brain injury is....*
- › *I still haven't been able to accept these changes...*
- › *I don't want to accept those changes because...*
- › *Maybe I can begin to accept some of the changes if...*
- › *Instead of using the word "accept" when talking about how I'm adjusting to the changes in my life, I can use the word*
- › *I now accept that my life...*
- › *I now accept that I...*



Accommodations

As a loved one or caregiver of someone with an acquired brain injury, you may have had to, or will have to, adjust and make accommodations in your life. If you used to do everything with your best friend, who has now changed because of an acquired brain injury, you'll need to make big adjustments in your life. If you are or will be the primary caregiver for the person with acquired brain injury, you may have to give up your job or buy a car. These are just a few examples of how brain injury can change your daily life.

Let's journal about these accommodations you have made or will have to make.



- > **List the things that will have to be changed in your life.**
- > **Now write the primary emotion you feel about each of those changes.**
- > **It is or will be very hard to adjust to...**

Now, let's look at how you can make accommodations.



- > **I won't be able to do _____ any longer, but instead I can...**
- > **Even though I understand it might be necessary to make certain accommodations, I'm still resisting because...**
- > **At first, I refused to _____, but now I...**
- > **It's exciting to find new methods that let me...**
- > **To move ahead in the recovery from my own trauma, I choose to...**

Part three

Here and now

“The meeting of two eternities, the past and future...is precisely the present moment.”

~ Henry David Thoreau

What else happened to me

"I write to find out what I didn't know."

~ Robert Frost

Journal any part of your story that you haven't written about yet.



> *My awareness of my situation now is...*

Friends and loved ones

"Friends can help each other. A true friend is someone who lets you have total freedom to be yourself – and especially to feel. Or not feel. Whatever you happen to be feeling at the moment is fine with them. That's what real love amounts to – letting a person be what he really is."

~ Jim Morrison



- > *Who helped you and how...*
- > *I am disappointed in (insert name) because...*
- > *Maybe the lesson in this is...*

Journaling technique: The Unsent Letter

When you have issues with or complicated feelings about a person, it's helpful to express your thoughts and emotions without worrying about how that person would react. The Unsent Letter can help you do this in a structured way.

The Unsent Letter is the 'no holds barred' draft. The idea is to dig down deep and write your truth—whatever it is—from your mind and heart. Don't worry about form, spelling, or punctuation. Don't worry about how it comes out or how horrified people would be if they knew you thought these things. Do your best to write without censoring...if four-letter words come into your mind, put them down. The goal is to get all your feelings into the letter in its roughest form.

Let this letter sit for a day or two, and then visit it again to make sure you've expressed everything you need and/or want to express.

The most important thing of all is that this letter remains **UNSENT**. This is a raw, bluntly honest letter that may cause a lot of hurt feelings if it were ever to be read by anyone else. When we express to someone that we are unhappy or disappointed, it must be done in a constructive and productive manner.

The purpose of the UNSENT letter is to express our burning hurt and anger in the most honest way possible to process and release our thoughts and feelings and help us gain perspective.



Try an Unsent Letter about whomever you need to write about

Now that you've finished your Unsent Letter, remember to let it sit a day or two and then come back to it to make sure you expressed everything on your mind and in your heart that needs to be processed. After you've completed your unsent, you can cut it up, burn it, scrunch it and put it in the garbage, or keep it (somewhere safe!). It's up to you how you take the final step to let go.

Journaling technique: Perspectives

Perspective journaling— As the name implies, this technique involves writing the same event from different perspectives.

This technique can help you work through relationship issues or internal conflicts; see the lessons in misunderstandings and challenges; and understand how they can help you grow.

One of the best ways to get a new perspective is to journal about a problem or issue or something eating at you in the third person. This means, to consciously change your viewpoint, shift the perspective from first person singular (I) to third person (she/he/they/other preferred pronouns).

A change in perspective is a change indeed.

In first-person, everything comes from within you, the storyteller. First-person narrative will almost always include your emotions and reactions. Everything happens to the writer, and the writer gives only their perspective.

The third-person narrative is called the *objective voice* because there's no personal point of view. And no personal point of view gives us a new perspective.

In third-person (he/her/they), you become the narrator and see everything as an overview. The event is still visible but distant—and often easier to write about. We see more of the picture and less of ourselves. It takes the sting out of the experience because it isn't about us anymore.



- > **Try taking something about your journey and journal about it in the third person.**
- > **What new perspective did you gain from this journaling technique?**

Asking for help

“Don’t be shy about asking for help. It doesn’t mean you’re weak, it only means you’re wise.”

~ Anonymous



- > ***How other people’s feelings/actions toward me have made me feel...***
- > ***I am most grateful for...***

Loss and gain

“The most beautiful people we have known are those who have known defeat, known suffering, known struggle, known loss, and have found their way out of those depths.”

~ Elisabeth Kubler-Ross

Although the acquired brain injury didn’t happen to you, you may have been changed and your life altered. These changes can be small or enormous, and they can be short-lived or permanent. Sometimes they can be overcome, and other times they cannot. In general, acquired brain injury can cause loss of some kind for everyone involved. That can be incredibly difficult.

Maybe you’ve even lost your sense of self, those qualities and elements that form your identity. Included here could be things you cannot name or cannot quite identify, but which you sense are missing and know are important.



- > ***Consider what you have lost because of your trauma surrounding your loved one’s acquired brain injury and make a Loss list.***
- > ***Remember to visit our tips for coping with strong emotional responses to journaling.***

Feelings list

"We all suffered in our past, and we all became wiser for it. In writing about past suffering, we can put that acquired wisdom to work, along with the story of how we emerged from it."

~ Robert Yehling, *The Write Time*

It's common and normal to have many different feelings after a trauma. You may have experienced (or are experiencing) anger, intense sadness, fear, regret, and/or hopelessness. These are all part of the grieving process—a deep sorrow that we feel when we experience change or lose anything important to us.

It's healthy to express your feelings about the losses that you just listed. Remember to visit our tips for coping with strong emotional responses to journaling.

The following prompts may help you with expressing what you feel.



- > ***The honest story of my anger...***
- > ***What I feel most angry about is...***
- > ***As I wrote about my anger, this is what I felt in my body...***
- > ***Now I know the real source of my anger is...***
- > ***When I feel anger coming on, I will...***
- > ***The honest story of my grief...***
- > ***What I feel grief about most is...***
- > ***As I wrote about my grief, this is what I felt in my body...***
- > ***Now I know the real source of my grief is...***
- > ***When I feel grief coming on, I will...***
- > ***The honest story of my shame...***
- > ***What I feel shame about most is...***
- > ***As I wrote about my shame, this is what I felt in my body...***
- > ***Now I know the real source of my shame is...***
- > ***When I feel shame coming on, I will...***

Explaining your injury

Sometimes the fact that a loved one's acquired brain injury has affected you isn't obvious to yourself or others because the focus is on the injured person. Here is the place for you to record the story you tell people to try and help them understand.



- > ***What shows and what doesn't regarding your loved one's brain injury?***
- > ***Here's how I explain it to people...***
- > ***How I feel when I explain it to people...***
- > ***My favourite reaction from someone was...***
- > ***The silliest reaction from someone was...***

Journaling technique: Dialogue

A journaling technique for digging beneath the surface

The dialogue journaling technique is called the Swiss Army knife of journaling. It's a marvel of flexibility, a key tool for depth and insight.

The technique is easy, although it can feel uncomfortable or weird at first. The idea is to have a written dialogue with an issue, subject, emotion, or a person, and you play (write) both parts.

People turn to this journaling technique repeatedly when they need clarity about a situation.

Some key things we can dialogue with include:

- > Body
- > Emotions/Feelings
- > Events & Circumstances
- > Material Objects/Possessions

This journaling technique has lots of benefits, but for you as a caregiver for someone with acquired brain injury, one of the most important benefits is that it will help you connect with your feelings on a deeper level.

How it works

Pick a subject, emotion, event, or person with whom you may be having an issue and spend some time in silence thinking about the topic. When you're ready, begin writing by asking a question. Use a "what" rather than "why" for your first question. When you begin the dialogue with a question, you're prompting your inner self to provide you with an answer, and thus begins the two-way written dialogue.

Time yourself. Try to give yourself at least 25 minutes with this technique with no interruptions. A quiet space, a lit candle, and a warm environment helps make this technique easier.

Part four

Moving forward from here

“Keeping a journal of what’s going on in your life is a good way to help you distill what’s important and what’s not.”

~ Martina Navratilova

What I'm going to need going forward

"Writing makes a map, and there is something about a journey that begs to have its passage marked."

~ Christina Baldwin, *Life's Companion: Journal Writing as a Spiritual Practice*



- > **What I'm going to need from myself going forward from today is... (use bullet points here)**
 - > **Because...**
- > **The character traits that I'll need most going forward are...**
 - > **Because...**
- > **From my loved one's professional team, I'm going to need...**
 - > **Because...**
- > **From my friends and family, I'm going to need...**
 - > **Because...**

Considering expectations

"I can shake off everything as I write; my sorrows disappear, my courage is reborn."

~ Anne Frank



- > **Write down four things that you expect from yourself at this point in your journey.**
- > **Explain why you expect each of these four things from yourself.**

The reality check

What we expect and what's realistic are not always the same thing. It's better to under-plan and overachieve. Remember, most great things are achieved one small step at a time. Please reread the expectations of yourself that you journaled and weigh if they are realistic.



- > **Write your thoughts and opinion**
- > **Now, journal about what you expect from your loved one's medical team, your family, and your friends. Then use the reality check on what you wrote about each.**

The chunk-it plan

Here is the place to break your next goals into achievable steps.



- > **List the next five things you'd like to achieve (mentally, emotionally, or physically) here and give yourself a realistic time frame.**

I will (or do) find strength in...



- > **Journal about what you find gives you strength.**

Self-Talk

The most important stories you will ever tell are the ones you tell yourself.

Things you say to yourself every minute, every hour, every day is called self-talk. This ongoing, often habitual internal dialogue is the most important conversation you ever have—because what you tell yourself about yourself ultimately determines how you behave, what you are, who you are, and how you relate to the world.

It only stands to reason that the kinder and more compassionate you are toward yourself, the more patient and positive your self-talk will be.

On the flip side, if you believe your self-talk is too negative, or if you want to emphasize positive self-talk, you can learn to shift that inner dialogue.

Positive self-talk and a more optimistic outlook can have health benefits, including:

- Increased vitality
- Greater life satisfaction
- Improved immune function
- Reduced pain
- Better cardiovascular health
- Better physical well-being
- Reduced risk for death
- Less stress and distress

It's not clear why optimists and individuals with more positive self-talk experience these benefits. However, research suggests people with positive self-talk may be more efficient at coping with hardships or challenges.

How does it work?

Before you can learn to practice more positive self-talk, you must first identify negative thinking. This type of thinking and self-talk generally falls into four categories:

➤ **PERSONALIZING.**

You blame yourself for everything.

➤ **MAGNIFYING.**

You focus on the negative aspects of a situation, ignoring the positive.

➤ **CATASTROPHIZING.**

You expect the worst, and you rarely let logic or reason persuade you otherwise.

➤ **POLARIZING.**

You see the world in black and white, or good and bad. There's no middle ground for processing life events.

When you begin to recognize your types of negative thinking, you can work to turn them into positive thinking. This task requires practice and time and doesn't develop overnight—but journaling can be of great help.

What are some examples?

These scenarios are examples of when and how to turn negative self-talk into positive self-talk. Again, it takes practice. Recognizing some of your own negative self-talk in these scenarios may help you flip the thought when it occurs.

- Negative: I should be doing better at facing all of this.**
+ Positive: I've never lived through something like this before. I need to be self-compassionate.

- Negative: I let everyone down. They expected me to be stronger.**
+ Positive: People understand how difficult this is. I will ask for help.

- Negative: I've never done this before, and I'll be bad at it.**
+ Positive: This is a wonderful opportunity to learn from others and grow.

- Negative: There's just no way this will work.**
+ Positive: I can and will give it my all to make it work.

How do I use this daily?

Positive self-talk takes practice if it's not something you naturally do. If you're generally more pessimistic, you can learn to shift your inner dialogue to be more encouraging and uplifting.

However, forming a new habit takes time and effort. Over time, your thoughts can shift, and positive self-talk can become your norm. *These tips can help:*

> IDENTIFY NEGATIVE SELF-TALK TRAPS.

Certain situations may increase your self-doubt and lead to more negative self-talk. Finding when you experience the most negative self-talk can help you get ahead of it.

> CHECK-IN WITH YOUR FEELINGS.

Stop during events or bad days and evaluate your self-talk. Is it negative? How can you turn it around?

> FIND THE HUMOUR.

Laughter can help relieve stress and tension. When you need a boost for positive self-talk, try finding something funny about your situation or reaction to it.

> GIVE YOURSELF POSITIVE AFFIRMATIONS.

Sometimes, seeing positive words or inspiring images can be enough to redirect your thoughts. Post small reminders around you.

Let's look at your self-talk



- > *I often find that I'm telling myself...*
- > *Something I hear over and over inside my head since the accident is...*
- > *When things get hard, I usually tell myself...*
- > *When I wake up in the morning, the first thing I say to myself is...*
- > *When someone from the medical team comes into my loved ones room, I (used to) think to myself...*
- > *When I'm alone I often say to myself...*

Gratitude list

"The most powerful weapon against your daily battles is finding the courage to be grateful anyway."

~ Unknown

After all the journaling you have done in this workbook, let's make sure to end on an 'up' note. Make a list everything you are grateful for in your life right now. Revisit this list any time you need to be reminded of these things.

Well done!

Thank you for completing this journaling workbook. Please remember that your journaling journey doesn't have to end here. You can use this book as a guide for future journaling as many times as you want. You can also keep reading for more journaling prompts.

More journaling prompts

The following are random journaling prompts for you, and these may help you continue journaling.

- My loved one's acquired brain injury has left me with an empty space that used to be filled with...
- Returning to my job after my loved one's acquired brain injury ...
- Even if caregiving means that I can't resume all the activities I used to do, I can still...
- A new activity that I would like to try now is...
- One of the things I'm most proud of myself for regarding being a caregiver is...
- Something that I now refuse to believe about myself is...
- One thing that no one will ever be able to take away from me is...
- One thing that I love about myself is...
- My mentor through all this has been...
- My hero through all this has been...
- The person I look up to the most now is...
- The best advice someone gave me since all this happened is...
- The person I've been able to count on the most is...
- Advice that I would give someone with who has a loved one with acquired brain injury is...
- The best thing that I've done since my loved one's acquired brain injury is...
- I won't ever again...
- From now on, I will always...
- I forgive...
- Something I've never told anyone is...
- Today I accomplished...
- My temper is...
- When I get really frustrated or mad, I...
- As a caregiver, when I get exhausted or want to give up, I...
- When I'm alone, and it's quiet, what I think about is...
- As a caregiver, when I feel lonely I have to remind myself...

About Brain Injury Canada

Brain Injury Canada is a non-profit organization established in 2004 to support the brain injury community on a national level. ***Our mission is to advance awareness, education, opportunities, and support by:***

- Advocating at a national level on issues important to the brain injury community
- Establishing meaningful connections and collaborations with stakeholders
- Educating and empowering people living with acquired brain injury, families/caregivers, healthcare workers, researchers, and the public

Our vision is for a better quality of life for all people affected by acquired brain injury in Canada.

You can find more resources at the following websites:

- www.braininjurycanada.ca – our brain injury resource website
- www.braininjurycanadaconnect.ca – a growing directory of services and supports for the brain injury community

About the author

Jill Grumbache founded Holistic Journaling Ink (HJI) in 2012 to help champion & share the self-enlightening & healing properties of Journaling.

Jill is a long-life Journaler & award-winning writer. Before founding HJI, she had focused her previous career on Communications in its many forms. When ready to make the leap to living her true passions, she enrolled in the Center for Journal Therapy in Denver, Colorado. There she attained certification as a Journaling Facilitator (CJF). At CJT, she was taught & mentored by its founder, pioneer, author, & primary Journal therapy theorist Kathleen Adams, LPC.

First trained & certified to teach Kay's Journal to the Self & Leia Francisco's Journaling Through Transitions, Jill has since developed several original courses exclusive to Holistic Journaling Ink. These include the much loved and lauded Hallelujah! Letting Go! and what's been called the Ph.D. of Journaling, SelfSIght. Jill facilitates HJI's group courses, workshops, and private classes and does public speaking.

Jill is also an artist, writer, editor, and student of Buddhism. She has two grown & glorious daughters & one awesome son-in-law, and one astounding granddaughter. She resides in Montreal, Quebec, Canada.

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