

# JOURNALING FOR BUSY PEOPLE

by Britta Jensen

## Course Workbook



In this workbook I've included some of the text from each module (but not all of it) so that you can work in tandem with the audio, video or text.

My goal is to guide you through a variety of exercises for journaling and self-awareness via writing. These are not prescriptive but are meant to be modified to suit your circumstances and busy life. You can work at your own pace, but the structure is meant to give you anywhere from a month to six-weeks worth of exercises to explore so that you can walk away with a journaling practice that works for you and an established routine of showing up for yourself on the page. Of course, all of these exercises work well for establishing a writing practice for yourself, but there is flexibility with how you use the exercises, or even modify them for your own needs. The focus here is on you, your self-awareness and using journaling as a tool without any judgement. You'll have access to this course for an entire calendar year, so feel free to dive in and give yourself the gift of more peace and internal harmony through exploring on the page.



## **MODULE ONE: Honoring Self, Voice and Emotions**

**Focus: Knowing yourself as a writer and honouring what you want to write about without judgement.**

We're going to start with the feeling that your voice matters and that by writing on the page your voice is being heard without judgement. Remember that you are a writer, even if you only journal.

## **Exploration 1**

Why do we write?

Write down your reasons for writing (or note-writing, listing, or scribbling).

Examine that for a moment.

What do you feel isn't currently being explored in your writing voice?

What other voices are nagging at you right now (especially if you are hard-pressed for time)?

**A big question writers of all sorts ask me is: Where do I start if I don't have time? How do I turn off \_\_\_\_\_ to write?**

The thing is, you don't. You just write--there's no perfect writing place. For some people they sneak it in when they're on the toilet, in their closet, waiting to pick-up their kids, sitting in the driveway or parking lot before going home for the evening, or while taking a morning, midday or evening walk.

Great advice: "Write at the margins of your day" (Maya Angelou) or anywhere in-between that you have a spare moment. When you get up, before you go to bed, in the middle of the night. You can scribble down a line to expunge a bad experience, to frame it, to hold it up to the light.

It's your story, your experience, your voice on these pages, raw and uncensored. Now, let's get back to writing.

**Question: Why don't you write (perhaps as often as you'd like)? Take a few minutes to jot that down.**

A thought: do we not write because we don't have time, our living space is too noisy, or we're afraid someone will read what we wrote. What if it's because we believe our voices don't have value? Which one of those statements resonates for you?

I want you to remember that journaling for many is a form of therapy and evaluation, an opportunity for inner revelation and inspiration. Thankfully, no one is judging us when we write on that page. There isn't a goblin, John Riddle, or other ghostly manifestation who is going to snatch our words and throw them back at us. That page is for you and you alone. Your deepest, darkest, happiest, loveliest, strangest, and most dear feelings can appear there (and disappear) or that page can be a holding place to refer back to for memories.

## Exploration 2

Give yourself a few minutes to write down what you want to express today, right now. (The only rule here is to let your pen move without stopping). If music helps, turn on something soothing.

## Exploration 3

### Listing

Using what you wrote above, write down in the next minute all the things that were disappointing, annoying, horrible, negative, pissed you off, terrifying (you get the picture). The only requirement is that it has to be in list format.

Next list: Write down four or more things that you are thankful for (big, small, generalized or detailed): but it must be specific to today, if you can. If it's hard to think of something specific, then list things that are not bad, but not great either, "I'm thankful that I have this moment to be with my thoughts, or I'm thankful this course isn't asking me to write a research paper, etc..."

Next list: List four wishes, prayers or goals just for today. Then, go back tomorrow and see what has changed.

#### Exploration 4

In our next exercise, you're going to close your eyes (if this is possible). Have your paper/pencil ready beside or beneath you, but I won't ask you to write with your eyes closed :) Start in your mind with a picture of a place you love. I want you to sort through any places you love till you come to the one that feels the most lush, comfortable and gives you the most joy. I want you to first smell it, hear the sound of that place that you love. What's bringing

you there? Imagine seeing it, what do you see, what do you feel beneath your fingers, your feet? If you were to zoom out, what are the things that stand out from the landscape you're in?

Imagine yourself floating above it, like you can fly, then I want you to zoom in slowly, not touching the ground yet, still flying. Find something in the landscape that calls to you. Is it living, plant, animal, vegetable? What's calling to you and makes you want to be there?

Taste this thing that's close by, there's no danger if you taste it. When you get a chance, and you're so immersed in this thing, object, person, dish, whatever that noun is that is going to bring you joy, go to it and enjoy.

Now, open your eyes and start writing. The only rule is to keep your pen moving. Don't let it stop. You're not worried about grammar, just write everything you can. You're allowed to let your mind deviate, when you feel those deviations come, just follow them. (Give yourself anywhere from 5-7 minutes and set a timer).

What else do you still want to write? If there are any dots or reflective or analytical bits that remain unsaid, say them here. Now, you can continue onto the next exercise if you desire, or pause for the day and come back to the next exploration tomorrow.



### **Exploration 5**

Recall something that has been bothering you for a long time that you have not gotten any resolution to. You will write uncensored on this paper. And you can burn this paper, when you're done, bury it in the earth or give it up to God or the Universe. Give yourself as long as you need to write what's in your heart and mind.

## Exploration 6

Choose one picture from the images here and don't think too long about which catches your eye.



Feel free to look at your chosen image and write anything that comes to mind from it. What stands out from this image and calls to you, perhaps to something in your own life, or something that you want? (Give yourself 3-5 minutes).

Go back to the list of things that were bothering you. Circle one of them that relates to something that has been bothering you for a long time, but you haven't had any resolution to. You will write uncensored on this paper. **Give yourself 3-5 minutes and pause the recording.**

Exhale, take a deep breath. I'm putting on some nature sounds to cleanse the palate, if you will. Choose another image from above (or from the video). Don't think too deeply about any of these images, but choose the one that feels like it immediately calls to you after scanning the page. Write anything that comes to mind from it. What stands out from this image and calls you, perhaps to something in your own life, or something you want? Give yourself another 3-5 minutes to write (or longer, if you need to).

### **OUTBRIEF WITH THE PAGE**

1. What exercises in this module did you like?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Which ones did you dislike?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Which ones produced more writing and relief?

The idea behind writing on a spectrum from the above explorations is to give you triggers for writing that might resemble triggers in real life.

Write down: which of these exercises would be most practical for you to use?

Which would be fun to explore (and possibly modify) in the future?

What did the exercises make you feel or think?

Which voices inside dominate, which are silent, what is teetering on the precipice to come out?

## **MODULE TWO**

### **DRAWING ON NATURE & EXAMINING YOUR INNER VOICE ON THE PAGE**



### Exploration 1

In this module we're going to listen closely and record our inner voice whether it is the inner critic, outside voices, or that angel on your shoulder and everything in-between. You are going to allow that voice to guide you as you explore the natural environs outside your house that are safe during the pandemic.

We're going to do something called flow writing where you don't stop writing until you've written everything your inner voice wants to say. You'll do this before you venture outside. If making a chart is easier or fits what you're trying to say, go right ahead. Or, if you had an interesting dream last night, jot that down. Try to write as fast and fluid as you can for the next five minutes and set your timer.

**Now, you're going to go outside.** The instructions are simple: notice how the voice changes when you are outside. Find the nearest thing to nature: a tree, soil, rocks, sandbox, anything that you can touch and feel on your palms or feet. Notice the feel of the textures on your palms or feet (don't cheat and imagine, you must touch something natural to do this exercise). Put down your notebook and notice the texture and smell. What is your inner voice saying now?

Pick up your notebook and record everything you noticed.

What was the difference between your voice inside and out in nature?

Repeat this tomorrow or the next day that you can and see how the voice morphs. What is powering the inner voice inside versus outside?

## **Exploration 2**

In this exploration we're going to see what types of nature you're craving and allowing yourself to write in that place even if you're only imagining yourself in that environment. It will help to find a representation of that place in your home (it might be in your postcard collection), a family picture, or you can find a picture on the internet and print it up (as I find that tactile association can be helpful, if possible).

- What types of nature are calling to you: mostly earthen, water, plasma or air (or a combination)? (Go ahead and find that representation or print it up).

- What words come to mind as you explore that location? What smells, sights, sounds, feelings, textures call to you?
- Are there memories that surface that you want to write? Give yourself five minutes to write all of that down, not worrying about sequence, sentence structure or whether it makes sense.

Try this exercise tomorrow and see if the place you crave is different?

Can you access that place and write there, even in your imagination?

Is there a song that brings you back there?

- Notice how each day a different type of nature calls to you.





## **Outbrief with the Page**

The rest of this week continue to connect with the natural world. Take a look at how different writers talk about nature.

I recommend the following poets:

- Pablo Neruda
- Edna St. Vincent Millay

On the fiction side:

- Emmi Itaranta's *Memory of Water*
- Maria Turtshchaninoff's *Maresi*
- Zora Neale Hurston's *They're Eyes Were Watching God*

**See what new ideas emerge from exploring new writers.**

### MODULE THREE

#### DRAWING ON THE SENSES: TASTE AND SMELL



In this module we'll use your experiences with taste and smell to guide your journaling. Of course, you do not have to focus your writing exclusively on these aspects of this module. The lovely thing about this module is that you can eat and write together! Mmm, delicious! Feel free to grab something small to eat in order to do this exercise.

#### Exploration 1

Taking the food (hopefully not an elaborate meal) in front of you, go ahead and sniff it: what thoughts come about from the aroma of your food?

Which scent is most dominant?

List the aromas as best as you can. Come up with silly words if it is hard to come up with the “best word” as making up words can be the most fun!

Now take a bite and notice how the scent changes. Write down that experience and the associated thoughts that come. Allow anything else that comes to mind to flow onto the page for the next 3-5 minutes.



## **Exploration 2**

In this exploration we're going to notice the aromas in the places you explored outside in the previous module. Take your notebook outside with you and write for five minutes, concentrating only on how the air and natural areas smell. If it's going to rain, snow or be a rather arid day (or something in between) how does scent alert you to that?

If someone walks by, do you notice their scent?

What scents do you gravitate toward and which do you feel repelled by?

Continue to write about scent the rest of the day as it conjures memories or new ideas.

## **Exploration 3**

Scent at home can be very powerful. Do you have candles, incense or other things that you gravitate toward? (If you're allergic to perfumes it might be helpful to instead focus on the aroma of natural things that won't cause harm.) Write about them and how scent moves you in ways that might be unexpected.

What new thoughts come as a result of taste and smell?

Is there a new meal you want to make as a result of something you want to taste?

What types of textures and flavours do you find yourself gravitating toward during this module as a result of writing about them?

At the end of the module write a list of new favourite tastes and smells that have emerged as a result of this exploration.

Recommended next steps: look at your writing and how you've explored taste and smell.

Do you notice any gaps that your imagination wants to fill? Go ahead and write those down.

Don't hold back, you're doing so well already!

## MODULE FOUR-SOUND AND TOUCH



We're going to extend our understanding of the sensory experience started in Module Three. Now, we'll turn our attention to sound and touch (which might not seem related on a first glance/listen). However, many individuals, especially those who are hearing impaired use their bodies to "hear" sounds that the ears cannot pick up. Sound waves, especially strong ones, have the ability to move us and even affect our heartbeats. Anyone who has spent any time around loud music, artillery, or other noisy machines have felt this power of sound. Allow this awareness to seep into your journaling practice this week through the following explorations.

### **Exploration 1**

Turn on a song that always moves you when you hear it. Don't think too deeply about this, but select from a list or playlist (or CD if you're more old school like I am!) What does your body want to do when you hear this tune? Write down the sensation for up to three minutes.

Now turn the music off and sit in as much silence as you can (your home doesn't need to be dead quiet). What thoughts come in now that manufactured sound is quiet? Are there other sounds you feel in your body as well as your ears? What sounds do you feel yourself moving toward and which are repelling you? Write your answers for the next 3-5 minutes.





## **Exploration 2**

Venture outside and walk for a few minutes without writing. Take your notebook with you and start to write every time you hear an interesting sound.

Focus on how that sound makes you feel. Do you feel yourself moving toward the sound in some way?

Once you find a good spot, write down the myriad sounds and the thoughts that come with noticing them and how they flow around, inside and outside of you for the next 5-7 minutes.

### **Exploration 3**

Go into your closet and choose three fabrics that feel nice under your fingers. Bring them to your cheek, if you'd like and inhale the fabric. Lay each one down and sit beside them, describing the sensation of feeling the fabric in your journal. What else comes to mind other than the tactile sensation?

Walk through your home and notice the different textures that are present. Pick three to five objects and bring them back to where you're writing, even if it's the kitchen counter or your bathtub.

Write about each of these objects in turn and the thoughts that flow as you feel them. Is there a different sensation when they are brought to your face? Write any additional thoughts that arrive for the next 5-7 minutes.

## **OUTBRIEF WITH THE PAGE**

### **Further explorations**

This week explore one of these exercises again and watch the differences between writing indoors and outdoors. Which textures seem to make it easier to write?

What sounds make the pen easier to fly across the page?

Other possible questions to answer:

- Sound and touch (how are they related and disparate?)
- What sounds draw you in?
- What textures repel or draw you in?

## **MODULE FIVE-** Integrating Exterior and Interior Worlds



Previously we were focused primarily on what is outside of you and bringing that into your inner realm. Now, we'll focus on reflecting on people, personalities and situations that you feel called to write about: this can be simply reporting what's happened, what you feel, or twisting it with a bit of fiction to feel free to express without judgement. We'll start with looking at outer voices and their impact on you, move to integrating the senses without judgement or revision and finish with allowing the flow of your sensory experience to extinguish any judgement

### **Exploration One**

Sit and notice the voices that occur in both your inner and outer life. Record what you hear people say throughout the day and how it makes you feel.

How does your body change when you hear certain words? Allow your words to flow without judgement or revision.

Try this exercise over the course of two days: bringing in the senses and what you taste, smell, touch, see as these voices speak to you.

## **Exploration Two**

Building on the voices of others, allow your own response to come in to some of what you've written over the past two days. Allow a bit of fiction or imagination to filter in.

What extraordinary thing do you imagine could occur if you could answer these voices differently?

What sensory experience do you want these voices to be carried away on?

What does your voice want to say to triumph over all the other voices, if necessary? Give yourself 5-7 minutes to write.

### **Exploration Three**

Sit in your space and allow yourself to write what is coming to you: what you feel, what you smell, touch, taste (even as a list) and hear.

Turn on music and see how the words change. Integrate the lyrics (if there are any) or create your own if it is instrumental. Give yourself anywhere from 3-5 minutes.

Look at the words you've written and circle a few that stand out.

Next, create a word association for the next three minutes. *This word association can be a column of words from what you've written in a circle, it can be a tree of words, in fact it can be in any shape you decide so long as you aren't thinking too deeply about the shape, but allowing each word to influence the next one you're writing down.*

After that is finished, ask yourself questions (e.g. “Why do I want...or why does this person say x or how can I do y...etc.) for the next minute that can be directly or indirectly related to those words. All these questions can be free form, relating to anything inside or outside yourself (or somewhere in-between).

Take a deep breath. Now, go back to everything you’ve written so far, flipping the page and noticing more phrases and moments. Look at everything you’ve done.

Write for the next five minutes about new ideas and conclusions that have formed as a result of your work.



#### **Exploration Four**

A big part of our subconscious, sleeping life is dreaming. For ages scholars and mystics alike have tried to understand, interpret and categorize our dreams: to bring the life of our dreams into the waking world. In this exploration, allow a recent dream to seep onto the page without trying to tie this interior world into the exterior world.

When I say the word “dream” what recent dreams come to mind? What were the textures, tastes, colours, shapes or even smells of the dream? (2-3 minutes)

How did you feel when you woke up?

What dream or series of dreams has stayed with you or become recurring dreamscapes, if at all?  
Is there a series of dreams that follows you at different points in your life?

What dreams do you wish would play out every night?

What do you hope to learn from your dreams about yourself and your perception of your waking life?

For the next 3-5 minutes Write out the dream you wish would recur from time to time. What do you think it could say about you, your mind and where you'd like to see yourself someday?

### **Outbrief with the Page**

Where do you want your writing to go next? Further journal explorations? A poem perhaps? A short story? Or do you just want to keep exploring and using the exercises this next year as a part of your journaling practice?

Go back to and look at all your writing, just flipping through all you've accomplished. How satisfactory it must feel to have dedicated so much time and effort to yourself! I want you to write at least four phrases congratulating yourself; positive affirmations, praise of so much fantastic writing, anything positive and praiseworthy that comes to mind.

I've enclosed a few inspirational quotes to fuel the forward writing momentum...

"When you focus on multiple, possible paths to achieving a goal, you radically expand your chances of success and satisfaction."--Sage Cohen, *Fierce on the Page*.

"Write what is in your heart first. Leave the rest--revising, worrying, fretting, until the inkwell has run dry."--Britta Jensen

"A good day of writing is one where you just show up and do it."--Dennis Palumbo *Writing From the Inside Out*.

Don't stop writing...and if you want to share your practice and all you've accomplished, you can connect with me at <https://calendly.com/twc-welovewriting> or continue your journey through writing coaching directly available on Teachable.

You're also welcome to join me on a live, online course. Every month I host online workshops over Zoom for both non-fiction and fiction writers. Check out the offerings at <https://britta-jensen.com/the-writing-consultancy/courses/>

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Thank you for taking this course and I look forward to hearing about all that you've learned!

Sincerely,

Britta Jensen