

## COPING KIT SKILLS: **Journaling**

**Helps with:** Everything!

**What is it?** You can use a journal or computer to write about your experiences. It's a way to get your thoughts and feelings out. You can keep these writings to look back on yourself or to share with others. Or you can tear them up or delete them right away. It doesn't matter what you do because the most important part is just to release your thoughts and feelings and better understand them for yourself.

**What do I need?** A piece of paper and a pen or pencil is all you need. However, other things you might want to use are:

- A special notebook
- A computer
- An audio or video recorder
- Crayons or markers, stickers, pictures

See the Tips section to see how these items can help!

### **When do I use it?**

- When you can't seem to get things off your mind.
- When you are feeling scared, nervous, upset, sad, or angry about something.
- When you want to share with others about what is going on with you.
- When you are excited about something that just happened or is about to happen.
- When you want to encourage, help, or inspire others.

### **How do I do it?**

1. You can write, type, draw, or even talk about your thoughts and feelings.
2. Be open and honest.
3. Consider writing about an upsetting emotional experience, especially if it is something that you haven't talked about with others very much before.
4. It is helpful to keep a balanced view, writing about both the positive and negative feelings you are having.



5. You can tell about the lessons or things you've learned through a particular experience. What would you want other kids who are going through the same thing to know? Who knows... maybe you or someone else might learn from your experience!
6. You can also talk about things you are looking forward to, things you are proud of, or goals for your future.
7. Try not to spend too much time writing about the details of the situation. Writing about your feelings is what really pays off. Really let go and explore your deepest thoughts and feelings about this experience. As you are writing, you may discover ways that this experience connects with past situations, feelings, or relationships.
8. If you can, try to journal for about 15 minutes each day for 10 days and then twice weekly for the next month. You can write about the same experience for several days or about different emotional experiences each day.

### **Tips:**

- Remember that at first, you might find it upsetting to write about some topics or experiences. But those feelings will usually settle down within a day or two. Often, after only a few days of writing, many people find surprising and unexpected insights that can lead to important changes in the way you feel from day to day.
- A special notebook can hold all of your experiences. Place this somewhere where you will always know where it is, so you are never searching around the house for paper.
- If you don't like writing with a pen and paper, maybe using a computer for keeping an electronic journal is the way to go for you. You may also consider blogging, (but remember, blogs are not private and you are sharing your information with the world).
- Another option if you don't like writing with a pen and paper is to use an audio or video recorder for a media journal.
- Some kids may want to draw in their journal if they like expressing their feelings through art. If this sounds like you, grab some crayons, markers, or color pencils and add drawings to your journal.
- Other kids may want to add pictures, photographs, or stickers to their journal entries to more fully capture their experience in a way that is meaningful to them.

**How can this help me?** Getting your feelings out, as you can through journaling, can help you to better understand the problems you are dealing with and to find good solutions, helping you to feel better. Did you also know that Stress – from any part of life (including school, friends, and family) – has an effect on our physical health? Research shows that the effect of stress on our health is the biggest when these issues and feelings are not directly expressed. So, finding a way to “get your feelings out” can not only help with your feelings, but also with your physical health!