



Stonebridge

**JOURNAL THERAPY
CERTIFICATE COURSE**

Sample Pages

INTRODUCTION: THERAPY AND THE JOURNAL

The journal or diary and psychotherapy have developed independently, although along parallel lines, throughout the twentieth century. **Freud** recognised the importance of the journal as a key to the psyche and **Jungians** have always asked their clients to keep dream logs. Besides its use by cognitive therapists as an aid to recovery, “Journalling” is considered an effective lifelong tool in self-therapy and self-guidance for those who feel that they have the necessary resources within to act as their own counsellor.

In this course we would hope to teach the student – whether they be practising therapists, counsellors or simply individuals seeking concrete methods to address personal problems and promote self-reliance and inner liberation – the skills and techniques which will enable them to employ journal therapy to its greatest advantage.

The use of the journal as a therapeutic tool – as an aid to personal growth and for realising creative potential – can only be seen as a phenomenon of the twentieth century. One which would not have been possible without:

- a. modern psychology’s recognition of the subconscious mind
- b. the free experimentation of contemporary art and writing
- c. the recent popularisation of certain psychological insights and concepts of personal responsibility

It is only due to these pervasive cultural changes that it has now become possible for any client – any person who can read and write – to maintain a journal in which feelings and emotions mingle with creativity and inter weave with self-therapy, foster, and complement each other. The student should be aware of the fact that:

- a. “Journalling,” as it has become known, bears little relation to the maintenance of the personal diary one kept as a child, nor to the now outdated notions and misconceptions of keeping a log as a form of self-discipline.

- b. Journalling relates to the use of a practical, psychological tool that enables a person to:
 1. express feelings without inhibition
 2. identify and change self-defeating habits of mind
 3. come to know and accept that self that is you

- c. Journalling should be seen by the student as being a sanctuary where all the disparate elements of life:
 - feelings
 - hopes
 - worries
 - intuitions
 - thoughts
 - fears
 - facts
 - dreams
 - fantasies
 - practicalities

can merge to give a person a sense of wholeness and coherence.

It should be seen by the student as an aid to understanding the past, discovering joy and harmony in the present, and to creating his or her own future.

The therapeutic and creative benefits of journalling are nowadays almost as numerous as the therapist's clients who have benefited from the process. Among the benefits and advantages frequently mentioned are:

- a healthful release for feelings and tensions
- a place to advise oneself, clarify goals, and make decisions
- a way to nourish oneself with friendship and acceptance
- a non-threatening place to work out relationships with others and to develop a capacity for intimacy
- a path to self-awareness and knowledge
- a technique for focusing energies on that which is immediately important
- a place to find creative solutions to problems
- a device for discovering one's path and taking responsibility for the direction of one's life
- a place to celebrate the process of living
- a means of accelerating or concluding psychotherapy

The student will appreciate the fact that such a therapeutic tool, with so many advantages and potential applications, would not have sprung fully formed into existence. It is therefore necessary, in the first section of this course, that we take time to enlighten the student as to its background and conception and, indeed differentiate between what is seen as a **diary**, and the techniques of **journalling** which is being taught in this course.

“Journalling,” as against simply maintaining a diary, can be dated back to tenth-century Japan where ladies at the royal court employed the technique as a form of personal expression that explored subjective fantasies and fiction – not just external realities. As with the more modern implementation, however, the journals were kept according to the writer's inner calendar of feelings and events rather than every day.

In medieval Europe and England, the tap roots of the diary itself are sunk in mystery and magic. Witches kept diaries in an attempt to preserve pagan wisdom – which possibly accounts for the taboo of silence and secrecy associated with them in Western tradition. If a witch’s diary was found, not only would the writings be burned, the author was also consigned to the fire.

From this common root of subserve pagan writing, the diary took on distinct national characteristics. In England, **Samuel Pepys**, amongst others, developed the diary as a place to confess and account for ones life to God. The American tradition of the diary came over on with the Puritans on the Mayflower, who furthered the association of diary writing with self-discipline and self-judgement. Puritan ministers taught children to use it to keep a check on their consciences. But we also at the same period have the philosophically religious journals of the Quakers, and later the journal of self-reliance developed by **Emerson** and **Thoreau** an integral part of American transcendentalism.

Diaries in the form that students would normally consider them, had their own independent tradition throughout the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. By the eighteenth century literally hundreds of women in America had created a network of correspondence and mutual support that stretched almost coast to coast. In fact, so many women relied on the diary to preserve their history and culture that two-hundred years later, many people had come to look upon the diary as primarily a woman’s mode of expression.

Journalling is a widespread, cultural phenomenon that has evolved from, rather than being involved with, that system or programme of writing. No one individual or even group of individuals might be said to have created it, but four twentieth-century pioneers of psychology and literature played major roles in conceptualising the principles of modern journalling. Each of them, in an individual way, pointed out how the diary permits its writer to tap valuable inner resources – and they developed techniques that aid this process.

- **Carl Jung** – emphasised the importance of recording dreams and inner imagery
- **Marion Milner** – the usefulness of intuitive writing and drawing
- **Ira Progoff** – popularised techniques for uncovering an inner destiny
- **Anais Nin** – demonstrated the creative fulfilment achieved through listening for and valuing one’s feelings.

All of them recognised a need in the modern world to reflect calmly upon that knowledge that comes from within.

Psychoanalyst **Carl Jung** used journalling to develop his theory of the collective unconscious. He recorded his dreams and fantasies of recurrent figures, images and symbols, and maintained the belief that many of these inner figures were not unique to him but observable in countless other people's dreams and fantasies in the myths of all cultures. Thus, part of a collective unconscious. His major psychological works evolved out of this intense self-study and in his autobiography he wrote:

“All my works, all my creative activity, have come from those initial fantasies and dreams which began in 1912, almost fifty years ago. Everything that I accomplished in later life was already contained in them, although at first only in the form of emotions and images.”

Although Jung used journalling as a vehicle to the unconscious, he concluded that an awareness of dreams and other images always needs to be integrated with the pragmatic realities of everyday existence:

“Particularly at this time, when I was working on the fantasies, I need a point of support in ‘this world.’ It was most essential for me to have a normal life in the real world to counterpoise to the strange inner world.”

This is precisely the balance that **Marion Milner**, an English psychologist and psychoanalyst, emphasised in her book – *A Life of One's Own* – published under her pen-name, **Joanna Field, 1934**. Milner used her journalling as a practical tool for living as well as a means of self-insight. Her goal was to learn what happiness meant for her.

Among other experiments she made lists of what brought her personal joy – to find out what she really wanted out of life, not what society or those around her taught her, she “should” want. Milner also explored free association in writing and drawing in addition to journalling related experiments in meditation, relaxation, body awareness, and a number of other techniques advanced by human psychologists today.

It was mostly the systematic methods of psychologist **Ira Progoff** that brought journalling as a form of growth work to the attention of the public. Although his system of journalling is quite specific, his views of its benefits are compatible with that of his peers. He describes journalling as:

“...a continuing confrontation with oneself in the midst of life,” and as “ a psychological laboratory in which personal growth is recorded and studied to bring the outer and inner parts of one's experience into harmony.”