

Writing an Emotion Diary

We experience thousands of emotions and thoughts on a daily basis and they tend to slip in and out of our consciousness on a continual basis. Many of these are forgotten or pushed into the unconscious mind soon after experiencing. They generally do not stay long enough in our consciousness for us to understand their significance and impact on us. Thoughts and emotions that are forgotten can not be worked on, therefore it would be desirable to put them down on a piece of paper so that they can be worked on better.

Writing down the emotions that we experience on a daily basis in a journal can help us manage them better, very much like writing down the details of our income and expenses can help us manage our finances better.

The emotions and thoughts that we experience vary from time to time are at times quite opposite to each other creating confusion as to which ones to be taken seriously. For example, in the morning, we believe that a particular person is a friend and after a few hours or days we might perceive the same person as unfriendly. It is important to work out which of these emotions and thoughts represent our true selves and which one's are unrealistic and need to be ignored.

I generally ask clients to start writing how different situations make them feel and to convert their emotions into language. It is important to write something on a regular basis and read what one has written at least twice a week and to destroy the notes that are more than four weeks old. It means that you are not writing for posterity and no one has access to your journal. It is only for one's own use. Writing in this manner can act as a mirror to one's own mind because we can't inspect our emotions properly whilst we are inside them as these emotions colour our perception. We can make better sense of these emotions when if we examine them when we are out of them.

Some clients come and tell me that when they start reading their own thoughts they can see very clearly that the thought was not realistic as it appears alien to them after a while. This helps clients label quite a few of their thoughts as unrealistic, and these thoughts have a tendency to recur. They are able to spot these thought easily and early on next time when they occur. Writing down the thoughts therefore helps clients fine tune them.

Some clients might find that writing about a particularly traumatic experience makes them feel worse as the experience grows on them. If that were true for them then they should start writing down their pleasant experiences and good memories and by the same principle the positive emotions should also start growing.

It is important to note that revisiting old experiences can become problematic when one doesn't know how to deal with them. However, if some one is already in therapy and is learning how to deal with these experiences they find that by writing thing down they are able to work through them better.