

Word Balm

THERAPEUTIC JOURNAL PROMPTS
TO SOOTHE
PANDEMIC PANDEMONIUM



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Welcome

A FEW WORDS ON FINDING YOUR WORDS

Here you are, reading my words, preparing to write your own.

Before you begin your journaling journey with me, I want to invite you to take a moment to close your eyes, take three deep breaths, and focus on your intentions for this process. *Are you seeking grounding? Guidance? Hope? Release? Creative flow?* Rooting yourself in your “why” here and now will help you sustain this practice in the days to come.

Now that you have in mind what you’d like to receive, take another moment to pause and set a specific goal for when, where, and how often you will make time and space to respond to the prompts that follow in these pages. Be gentle with your expectations of yourself; start small knowing you can move the bar as you go.

Here are a few examples of what specific goals may look like for you:

-I will read the prompt in the morning and bring my mind back to it as I have space for it throughout the day.

-I will set aside ten minutes each day to read the prompt and jot down words and phrases that come to mind.

-I will set aside twenty minutes each day to read the prompt and respond with a few paragraphs.

-I will set aside thirty minutes each day to read the prompt and respond with a page or two.

-I will....

Be as specific as you can without limiting yourself. Schedule a consistent point in your day if you are the sort of person who prefers structure or allow for more fluidity if going with the flow is your comfort zone. You can also mix and match your goals, making less time on days you know will be particularly full or draining and more time on days with extra space. If making time each day feels like too big of a commitment, make time two or three times per week instead.

Feel free to re-evaluate as you go, checking in with yourself to see if your investment of time and energy feels sufficient to be meaningful without becoming overwhelming. Hold in mind that more disruptions or changes may come and give yourself permission to adjust your goals as life evolves.

When the moment comes for you to reflect and write, set aside self-judgment and self-editing as best you can. These are your words, intended for you alone. Loosen any need you may have to control or perfect what you write. What comes from your mind and hand may feel surprising or even unsettling to you at times--let that be a signal to you that you are on a path of discovery that can unearth new possibilities.

It may help you feel emotionally safe and ready to write if you attend to your environment. Sit in your favorite chair or snuggle up in your bed. Light a candle or play soothing music. Use a beautiful blank book or write on your laptop without anything else open on your screen. Tell others in your home not to interrupt you or choose a time to write when others are occupied or asleep. While all of this may be helpful, if you don't have the energy or time to prepare your space, write when and where you can without expecting control or perfection from your environment any more than you expect it from your words.

I intentionally ordered these prompts from start to finish; each prompt loosely builds on the reflection you've done before. At the same time, each prompt can stand alone and you are welcome to skip around or pick and choose. If a prompt doesn't speak to you, let it lead you to your own prompt for yourself or move on to another prompt.

Use these prompts as a jumping off point rather than a destination--let them assist you with bringing your thoughts to the surface but don't hold yourself to the prompt alone if you find your thoughts wandering in an alternate direction. Trust that you have a compass within you, unique to your experience, and privilege your sense of inner direction over the outer direction you will receive from me.

I'm so glad you are ready to tend to your own words and wisdom. I hope your writing and reflection soothes you, comforts you, and moves you onward--one word at a time, one day at a time.

*With Love,
Laurie*

Beginning: Naming Our Condition

THEME ONE

Day One:

Describe three of the biggest ways your life has changed since the onset of the pandemic. How have these changes affected you?

Day Two:

Describe three seemingly small ways your life has changed since the onset of the pandemic. What have you noticed about the impact of the little things that have shifted for you?

Day Three:

Write a brief story about an experience you've had that illustrates what it's like to navigate this unique moment in your life.

Day Four:

Imagine twenty years from now. What do you hear yourself saying to others about this time period?

Day Five:

What in your life remains steady and stable despite the widespread disruptions? What do these pockets of "life as usual" feel like amid what's happening in other parts of your life?

Peace: Balm For Our Fears

THEME TWO

Day Six:

What part of your life are you finding yourself most worried about?
What about that part of your life makes it so important for you to protect?

Day Seven:

Where is worry most showing up in your body? What has helped you best ease these physical manifestations of worry? What else might you try?

Day Eight:

What part of your life are you finding yourself the least worried about? What is helping you find a sense of peace and trust around that part of your life?

Day Nine:

What are you typically doing when is fear most present for you?
What are you typically doing when peace is most present for you?

Day Ten:

In other times in your life when you've experienced an increase in worry, how have you responded? How might those responses be similar or different from how you are responding right now?

Connection: Balm For Isolation

THEME THREE

Day Eleven:

Who has been your most meaningful source of support in this time of increased social distance? What difference has this support person made to you?

Day Twelve:

What important relationship has felt most strained or challenged by the recent disruptions? How have you responded to the difficulties in this relationship? Are there other responses you would like to try?

Day Thirteen:

What about increased social distance and isolation has been most difficult for you? What have you liked best about it?

Day Fourteen:

What new observations regarding your relationships have been emerging for you? What might these observations teach you about yourself or others?

Day Fifteen:

Take a moment to ponder if there are ways you would like to be more intentional or proactive in staying connected with those who matter most for you. What pathway to increased connection feels like it holds the most promise for you?

Comfort: Balm For Our Losses

THEME FOUR

Day Sixteen:

What favorite activities or experiences have been taken from you as a result of precautions and changes related to the pandemic? What have you missed most about these activities or experiences?

Day Seventeen:

What are the most significant plans you had that have been cancelled? What has been lost for you in letting go of these plans?

Day Eighteen:

What hopes did you have for the future that now feel unlikely or even impossible? What has it been like for you to have your hopes diminished or dashed?

Day Nineteen:

Write a brief story describing a moment you felt loss related to the pandemic. Where were you? What was happening around you? What was happening within you?

Day Twenty:

What is one significant loss you've experienced at a much earlier point in life? How has your grief over that loss evolved over time?

Adaptation: Creating New Balms

THEME FIVE

Day Twenty-One:

What self-care activities are you still able to engage in? What is a new form of self-care you are discovering or rediscovering right now?

Day Twenty-Two:

What mantras, quotes, or words are most comforting to you right now? How do these words help you shift your mood and your thinking?

Day Twenty-Three:

What has been the most valued “silver lining” you’ve recognized so far? Describe it in as much detail as you can.

Day Twenty-Four:

What other time in your life has been the moment of greatest change? What lessons did you learn then that you might draw from now?

Day Twenty-Five:

What is one strength or capacity you have within yourself that is emerging, expanding, or newly coming into your awareness? What do you most value about that strength or capacity?

Hope: Envisioning Healing

THEME SIX

Day Twenty-Six:

What current source of distress do you feel most certain is only temporary? Imagine the moment that source of distress is lifted. Describe it in as much detail as you can.

Day Twenty-Seven:

What are some of the new skills you've been developing? How do you envision these skills will serve you moving forward, both during and beyond the pandemic?

Day Twenty-Eight:

What is one thing you've been forced to live without that you think you may choose to continue to forgo in the future? What would improve about your life if you gave up this one thing indefinitely?

Day Twenty-Nine:

When you look back on this period of time after it has passed, what do you imagine you will be most grateful for within what you experienced? What difference will that gratitude make to you?

Day Thirty:

What is one act of kindness you've witnessed in response to the pandemic? If this act of kindness were a window into a hopeful future, what would that future be like?

Your Words, Your Balm

BONUS PROMPT

Set aside an extended period of time to read through everything you've written in this journaling experience. Highlight or underline the words, phrases, and passages that are most moving to you, savoring them and letting them speak to you in the present.

Take a moment to thank yourself for coming to the page and give yourself credit for the importance of the words you have crafted. Create a simple ritual of appreciation that is meaningful to you: hug yourself, blow a kiss to your pages, light a candle, write your favorite self-created quote and post it near your mirror...let your instincts guide you.

Make sure you store what you have written in a place where it can be kept safe and return to it whenever you need to for your own healing.