

“Write For Life”
Healing Body, Mind and Spirit
Through Journal Writing

PRESS KIT

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[Youtube author interview: <http://www.youtube.com/user/genogeng#p/u/41/J-tbe3FESJg>]

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NEWS RELEASE
For Immediate Release

Rx for Health & Fun At Any Age!

Dr. Sheppard B. Kominars, author of “Write For Life: Healing Body, Mind, and Spirit Through Journal Writing,” will visit Vancouver, B.C., July 26 - August 6, to launch the book at Banyen Bookstore, July 29, Little Sisters Bookstore, August 3, and present a 3 hour journal writing workshop for Qmunity on August 4. He lives in San Francisco and has presented workshops all over the U.S.

“Why, oh why didn’t someone walk up to me when I was 25 and hand me a book like this?” wrote Frank McCourt, Pulitzer Prize author of “Angela’s Ashes,” “‘Tis,” & “Teacher Man.”

Complaining and dumping problems and worries in a journal can make you healthier without spending a penny! More than 20 years of research on the effects of journal writing reveals that people struggling with chronic pain or recovering from health or emotional crises experience significant benefits by writing instead of just talking about their problems or stuffing them. “Whine and complain all you need to,” says Dr. Sheppard Kominars in this fourth book on recovery, “Write For Life” that appears this July in a Revised Edition by Kaplan Publications as part of its mission to extend health literacy in the world.

With a lively introduction by Frank McCourt, Dr. Kominars’ book presents fifteen different journeys into healing that include Dreams, Legacy Letters, Last Rights, Zen, along with scientific research and entries from both famous and infamous journal writers.

From the Preface, by Dr. Richard G. Petty, MD: “I hope that *Write for Life* not only becomes the catalyst for a wider use of writing in health care and wellness, but that it also prompts further scientific investigations into it use. I highly recommend this book for teachers and for people who would like to maintain their health. And for people struggling with physical and psychological problems, this is a must read!”

“I found this book inspiring. Written in a personal style, it gives accessible lessons in journal writing and in life. My own journaling has been enriched, and I have a generous list of new things to try as time goes on. Every chapter is interesting and provocative.” Corey Weinstein, M.D., C.C. H.

There is no “right way” or “wrong way” to write in a journal. This means discovering what works for you to improve the quality of your life.

Meet Sheppard at the bookstore and start journaling!

“Write For Life,” Revised Edition, Kaplan Publications. Price: \$16.95; Trade Paperback, 279 pages. AVAILABLE: June 29, 2010, Simon & Shuster, Special Sales Dept., 866-506-1949 Amazon, Barnes & Noble,

ABOUT THIS BOOK

Frank McCourt's Introduction calls it "warm and wonderful." This book creates a personal wellness center for healing body, mind and spirit through journal writing and makes the process easy for everyone. Reluctant writers as well as long term journal writers explore fifteen journeys through such areas as: Self-Caring; American Indian Spirituality; Legacy Letters; Travel. Bringing the facts discovered by research on the healing benefits of writing into the daily perspective of self-discovery, this self-paced book offers a life-long adventure into living healthier and having more fun doing it.

With fifty years of journal writing experience, and the expertise from workshops all over the United State, the author presents a coherent long-term program for the body, the mind, and the spirit. This journal writing program helps develop inner strength and support for every kind of experience. The book offers important insight into participating more completely in life before, during and after retirement. With its focus on healing, the book is inspirational as well as practical; it sets the stage for living BETTER. Unlike other journal writing books, this one is not about making art or story-telling; it is about healing whatever needs to be made whole in everyone who reads it. Reluctant writers, and long-term journalers will love it!

"Let me start by saying I'm was not a writer and found journals particularly irksome. But Sheppard Kominars book, *Write For Life*, has opened doors for me. Not only has it provided useful and useable tools to help me start writing, I actually feel inspired to write. The book is a wonderful tool with diverse topics and approaches for journal writing. Kominars' gentle but encouraging words helped me break through the fears that made me resist writing about myself. His reflections, information and topics gave me a framework for organizing my memories and reflections. This book is well worth the small cost for anyone who wants to look inside and have the questions, organizational tools and guidance for committing those invaluable thoughts to paper." Jean Schild, manuscript reviewer

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Dr. Sheppard B. Kominars has written two previous books on recovery (Harper, 1989, and Hazelden, 1996) and is himself a cancer survivor who has worked over the past twenty-five years in counseling and consulting. His workshops at UCSF, Stanford Complementary Care Center, Kaiser Permanente, Cancer Center of the Desert, and other senior residences and centers have inspired participants. He began teaching writing in 1956 at Washington College and has a long career in higher education and consulting in health and education. He is a cancer survivor and has been writing journals for over 55 years. He was born in Philadelphia, PA, and has lived in San Francisco, CA, since 1986. He is a graduate of Kenyon College, Columbia University, and Boston University.

INTENDED MARKETS

Consumer health care, health and wellness, health professionals, senior center administrators and staff, recovery centers, retirement centers, cancer centers, arthritis and chronic pain, gerontology centers.

SALES AND MARKETING POINTS

What makes “Write For Life: the Survivor’s Way” unique:

1. It is not therapy centered. 2. It is based on solid research. 3. It is accessible to everyone, including reluctant writers. 4. It includes the entire spectrum of experience – the joy and the anguish. 5. It has been tested with many different kinds of participants of all ages and in all stages of wellness. 6. It is a long-term, integrated program for recovery. 7. It helps people feel good about themselves and their lives. 8. The program can be done on an individual basis or in groups. 9. The benefits of it are obvious to those who make it a priority in their lives. 10. Like the “South Beach Diet,” it works over time to provide results. 11. It requires no expensive outlay of funds. 12. It offers excitement and stimulation to everyone looking for a new way to enjoy life.

ARTICLES ABOUT “WRITE FOR LIFE” BY THE AUTHOR:

“Write For Life:”

Healing Body, Mind and Spirit Through Journal Writing

by Sheppard B. Kominars, Ph.D.

Kaplan Publications, Revised Edition, 2010

I have been writing journals since 1955. In October, 2000, after chemotherapy and radiation for cancer, I wrote four pages in my journal about helping others recovering from cancer. An important work, Pennebaker’s “Opening Up: The Healing Power of Expressing Emotions” (Guilford Press, New York, 1990, 1997), had already validated the importance of using journal writing to recover from crises. These studies made me even clearer about doing workshops for survivors of crises such as health, family problems, divorce, professional set-backs, and especially aging.

My workshops began in February, 2001, on “Eleven Long,” the bone-marrow transplant floor of UCSF. Next, at Kaiser Permanente, and then, at the San Francisco Public Library. In the fall of 2001, workshops began at the Complementary Care Center at Stanford University, in Palo Alto.

I have offered these workshops all over the United States and the Cleveland Clinic Press will publish a book based on this material, in 2006.

“**Write For Life**” is a program of recovery through journal writing. It is a planned sequence of self-exploration: Session One: “Getting Started”; Session Two: “Staying Started”; Session Three: “New Directions.” After the initial sessions, there are fifteen journeys to choose from, depending on the interests of the traveler. Each session offers opportunities to explore personal experience of the recovery process. Participants write about their daily lives in confidential journals, and heal themselves with their own wisdom. In the workshop sessions, they share these

personal insights and discuss the process. Writing about what it means to live in body, mind and spirit, in the house and city and world where each breath is the key to opening the door to living better.

From the very start, it was clear to me that helping others to write about their feelings of suffering & pain was difficult. Few, if any of us, have been taught to be self-caring, accepting of ourselves. Finding the way to do this is at the heart of the “Write For Life” process, and the support of a group can be invaluable. Because writing is action of a very personal nature, it involves engaging the use of imagination, intuition, and the unconscious, at the same time acknowledging the self that needs to be the recipient of healing.

These are some comments from workshop participants. Janel, in the Stanford group wrote: “[Sheppard] guides participants through the major obstacles they face starting and keeping the journal. Journaling is so valuable precisely because it enables us to befriend and make peace with our greatest fears and demons and to savor the beautiful and proud moments of our life.” Diane, wrote: “Affirmation! I can be my self and feel O.K. about it. I can continue to write as a way of life. I can stop worrying about the future and be grateful that I am in this place. I am here because Sheppard’s course title drew me in and I have experience the healing powers of words. I am here because of cancer. Cancer brings more and more into my life. Being with a few others means so much to me. Their specialness touches me. Being able to read something and to not have any comments or criticism. Just to be satisfied is so wonderful.” Eleanor shared that having cancer made her life seem meaningless – until she threw herself a lifeline by journal writing which caused her to remember what she truly valued in her life.

Journal writing brings participants into the light, from the darkness and shadows of illness, or emotional invisibility that sets in because of their belief that it safer to hide suffering and pain from loved ones. Through writing, participants learn to give themselves permission to express emotions, speak about fears, record wishes. These are a revelation to the one who needs it the most: the writer. Without any criticism, with full permission neither to censor nor to confine or limit subject matter, the writer becomes aware that what he thinks and feels is of value in life. And, through this process of learning to live more fully and completely day by day, year by year, the writer creates a personal sanctuary for healing.

Journal writing is an effort at self-caring and supports the journey through life. Each journal entry that explores the pain and the joy and all that is in-between supports the struggle to survive. It is an act of love. Discover how these workshops “Write For Life: The Survivor’s Way,” can change lives. Contact me at 415-863-0901, or at write-for-life@pacbell.net to arrange for presentations and workshops.

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“Write For Life: Healing Body, Mind and Spirit Through Journal Writing” Revised Edition, 2010

“Write For Life: Healing Body, Mind and Spirit Through Journal Writing” (Kaplan Publications, June 2010; website: www.writeforlife.net), brings to a mass audience a technique health professionals have known about for several decades. Their research reveals that the therapeutic effects of journaling are life-enhancing.

People are living longer and surviving life-threatening diseases that only a decade ago would have killed them. Gerontologists, and others in the field of aging, are aware of the growing need to explore new ways to deepen understanding and to find enjoyment – FUN. This book is based on a process developed and refined in hundreds of workshops all over the U.S. Beginning from NOW, with whatever abilities the writer has, this book simplifies the process of exploring and writing about connecting the fragments of a lifetime into an appreciation for the wholeness that has often been missing.

Because there is no intention to publish what is written – this includes blogging – the writer needs no critique, input, or response from anyone. Nor is there is a right way or wrong way to do it: the journal writer is boss. Whining, complaining, and dumping all find a place in the journal because whatever is standing in the way of happiness and well-being is precisely what needs to be written about. This is how people heal from trauma and tragedy. Writing about joyful experiences in life extends these moments into the present and spreads pleasure over the mundane.

Few, if any of us, have been taught to be self-caring and accepting of ourselves. Finding the way to do this is at the heart of journal writing. Through writing, we learn to give ourselves permission to express our emotions, speak our fears, record our wishes. These reveal who we are. With full permission neither to censor nor confine ourselves, we become aware that what we think and feel is of value. And, since we are the source of all value in our lives, we learn to live them more fully and completely day by day, year by year. Supporting ourselves in this new way – one which we have had very little preparation for in the past – we create our own sanctuary for healing and joy.

This book is written for those who have never written as well as for seasoned journal writers. The book includes a lively introduction by Frank McCourt. It offers a life-long program for recovery from crises and maintaining health, having more fun and enjoyment in all activities, and celebrating aging and retirement. Readers discover how to explore their lives in a new and exciting way and connect with their own wisdom. Chapters include a survey of scientific research on the effects of journal writing; excerpts from journals over the centuries; a perspective on survivorship; and fifteen journeys explore Self-Caring; Food; Dreams, American Indian Spirituality, Zen, Last Rights, and Travel.

The author, Dr. Sheppard B. Kominars, is a cancer survivor who has been journal writing for over fifty years. His two previous books have inspired many in their recovery. Born in

***Write for Life* by Dr. Sheppard B. Kominars**

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, he has lived in many cities in the U.S. and abroad. Since 1986, he has lived in San Francisco, California. He is a graduate of Kenyon College (B.A.), Columbia University (M.A.), and Boston University (Ph.D.).

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**WRITE FOR LIFE
OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS**

Preface by Richard G. Petty, MD

Foreword by: Frank McCourt

Introduction

OVERVIEW & USER'S GUIDE: The Big Question: Why Write a Journal?

Making the case for writing (health crisis, 1955). Linking healing with self-expression. Finding answers.

PART ONE: Windows on Healing

1. Scientific Research and Writing Techniques
2. Survivors and Surviving
3. Journal Excerpts
4. Healing the Survivor
5. Expectations

PART TWO: Initiating the Process of Journal Writing

6. Getting Started
7. Staying Started

PART THREE: Exploring New Directions into Healing

8. Self Caring

9. Food and Nourishment
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11. Legacy Letters, Part One: Laying the Foundation
12. Dreams
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15. Legacy Letters, Part Two: Creating the Letters
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Published Reviews

Mount Vernon News, Mount Vernon, Ohio. April 16, 2009, Page 8A

Improving health through daily writing

By *MARK S. JORDAN*

News Staff Reporter

MOUNT VERNON If life is a series of voyages, imagine the baggage that accumulates if one never takes the time to unpack and stow some of it in the closet. Keeping a personal journal is one of the most effective ways to “*unpack* excess baggage, Dr. Sheppard B. Kominars said during a Brown Bag Chat at the Public Library of Mount Vernon and Knox County Wednesday. Kominars, author of the book “Write For Life,” published by the Cleveland Clinic Press, does seminars and workshops all over the U. S. about journal writing.

Kominars explained to the audience of about 25 people attending the program that journal writing reduces anxieties to manageable size and keeps them from being chronic weights carried around constantly.

“You have years and years of stuff you carry around with you,” Kominars said. “This is your opportunity to dump it.”

Just writing about fears and concerns defines their size instead of letting them grow out of control through attempts to not worry about them, he said. He likened writing about problems to putting a handle on a frying pan one was previous holding by the rim. The problem remains and still has to be dealt with, but now it cannot burn.

A cancer survivor, Kominars said that he specifically developed “Write For Life” as a guidebook and inspiration for those reluctant to keep a diary, because he has seen the health benefits journal writing can offer to those recovering health crises or emotional traumas, particularly senior citizens.

But stress reduction and control of chronic pain are not the only benefits. Kominars said that connecting with one’s own inner wisdom is sometimes only possible after putting thoughts down on paper and then stepping back to look at the larger picture they make.

“You know things that you don’t even know you know,” Kominars said, adding that it is important and rewarding to get in touch with one’s growing wisdom over the years, for the body’s physical ability inevitably declines. In turn, Kominars said, a person who has made these inner connections is more able to connect with other people.

Some attendees had questions.

I’ve been keeping a journal for a long time, but it sometimes feels self-indulgent and

narcissistic,” said Robert Bennett.

Kominars said that it goes both ways. The self is the most common obstacle to growth and healing, he said, but then he pointed out that one has to treasure one’s self in order to care for it.

“Stop ‘*shoulding*’ on yourself,” he said, pointing out how past pressures, whether they be from family, society, school or church can latch onto new worries, snowballing and causing numerous health problems, including migraine headaches.

Kominars also emphasized the legacy that can be left to future family members or historians just by keeping personal notes about one’s life, though he did emphasize that sharing journals was the exception to the rule: It’s not a private journal if others are allowed to read it.

Above all, Kominars advocated the value of daily writing whether one felt one had important things to write about or not.

“Doing this captures something that may have slipped away,” Kominars said. “The ordinary, everyday things in life are magical.”

Kominars autographed books afterwards, including copies for the library and its branches. Kominars, who graduated with the Kenyon College class of 1953, has returned to Mount Vernon a number of times and said that it remains a special place. Further information about Kominars can be found at www.JournalDoctor.com.

Excerpt from *Homeopathy Today*, March/April 2008, by Corey Weinstein, M.D.
Journal Writing and Homeopathic Care

Journal writing is a remarkable tool for healing that can help us gain insight into ourselves and our patients. A new book, “Write for Life” by a long-term homeopathic patient, Dr. Shepard Kominars assists us in our clinical encounters in a way that helps deepen and enliven the homeopathic method.

During my thirty five years as a homeopathic physician I’ve remained astounded at the stories people tell me about their lives. Each is unique, multi-layered and complex. It is a fascinating privilege to sit with my patients day after day and hear their narratives. And homeopathy provides a way to use the data of a person’s real experience to benefit them through our principle of “like cures like” using the totality of symptoms.

Some people tell their tale with ease and attention to detail providing a rich portrait of their suffering. Others find it hard to recall important elements of their symptoms. Of course how someone talks about themselves is taken into account as a symptom. But there are some significant barriers to the presentation of a complete homeopathic case.

Standard allopathic medicine does not usually require a detailed explanation of a person’s dis-ease. The allopathic approach searches primarily for the pathological diagnosis that is increasingly rendered through investigation in the laboratory, X-Ray and MRI center or endoscopic minor surgical suite. The individual’s experience and expression of their condition is a sidelight usually brushed aside as idiosyncratic and therefore useless. Few allopaths are interested in Annie’s unique expression of arthritis, or Pat’s skin symptoms that associate with

her headaches or Fred's emotional state since he's been sick with colitis.

As people become educated through their contact with standard medicine they become dumbed down to their own experience that seems of little value to their doctor. Yet it is in the uniqueness of the expression of illness that the correct homeopathic treatment resides. In order to use our microdose of medicine we must individualize the prescription in the extreme by searching for the strange, rare and peculiar symptoms that signify that this is Annie's arthritis, Pat's headaches and Fred's colitis.

In an effort to awaken and nurture my patient's interest in their distinctive manifestation of illness I send each new patient a two page handout on preparing for the homeopathic visit. The handout encourages attention to among other things; the onset of symptoms, location and character of the complaints and what makes them better and worse or associates with the trouble. But still the first visit is an intense learning experience for the patient who begins to see the detail and breadth of my interest about their condition.

There is one group of patients who I have found already awake to their individual symptoms. Those who write in a personal journal usually have already explored much of the territory we need to catalogue. Not only are they well versed in their inner process, but they are at ease with the deep investigation of their troubles that takes place in my office.

During my own health problems I have kept a journal to document and follow my symptoms and signs and to express my inner life that is unfolding during those difficult times. I encourage my patients to do the same. For journal writing not only helps with the exposition of our troubles, it has a healing effect of its own, perhaps based on the principle that "like cures like."

In his excellent and groundbreaking book entitled, "Write for Life: Healing Body, Mind, and Spirit through Journal Writing," Dr. Sheppard Kominars invites readers to explore this useful tool for health. Chapters on Self-Caring, Food and Nourishment, Dreams and Creativity and many others are listed on his website, www.journaldoctor.com.

Dr. Kominars provides the reader with the benefits of his fifty years of experience in teaching writing and journaling. Kominars presents many tools to use in exploring our lives through journal writing. The diversity of the approaches he describes ensures that the reader can find a way to start and sustain this healthful practice. He explains some of the relevant research: *"People who experience stressful life events and patients suffering from hypertension, chronic pain, asthma, rheumatoid arthritis, and cancer experience a decrease in physical symptoms when they practice expressive writing...Healthy and chronic pain patients who become aware of their deepest emotional secrets or pains open the door to measurable positive changes and healing... Writing produced the fastest transition from one emotional state to another."*

I strongly recommend that homeopathic practitioners and patients pick up a copy of "Write for Life" published by the Cleveland Clinic Press. I display the book in my office. Journal writing is a tool for healing and a way of life that deepens the dialogue between homeopath and patient and assists our successful care of our patients.

San Mateo County Times, 8/13/07 Joan Arragone, Correspondent

JOURNAL-WRITING CLASS NOW IN BOOK FORM

Write for Life by Dr. Sheppard B. Kominars

“The book is the outcome of more than 50 years of journal writing by Sheppard B. Kominars, 75, San Francisco-based former counselor and professor of literature, who began teaching the process following his own diagnosis and treatment for cancer in 2000.

While in a support group for cancer patients, he recognized the importance of his daily practice in helping him heal and wanted to share the experience. The result was his first journal writing class, at UC-San Francisco Medical Center in 2001. Others followed. His class in San Mateo was featured in this paper’s “Senior Journal” in 2004.

“Patients need a place to put their worries and fears,” he said in a recent personal interview. “Journals can help them manage the situation and get connected to their problems.”

Now, after seven years of workshops for thousands of people from around the United States, including Elderhostel travelers and his peers at his college 50th reunion in Ohio, he has compiled his ideas, stories of students, academic research on the effects of journal writing and examples of journal writers from history into one volume, laid out in a way that guides the reader to start the process and stay with it.

“I receive e-mails and letters all the time,” he said. “I knew I couldn’t talk to everybody but I could write a book.”

For Kominars journals are more than a place to unload your misery. They’re a place to work out conflicts, trace your emotional growth or lack of it or file experiences and feelings until you’re ready to view them with some detachment. They’re a tool.

One of his tips is to avoid re-reading your entry for several weeks. “Then you can see where you are and if you have changed. You become aware of your issues. This is a way to get connected to our own problems.”

Whining is fine, just be conscious of whether it’s getting you anywhere. “This is the place to let it all hang out, and if you need to repeat and repeat the same old whining, then do so. But if you notice that you are doing nothing but repeating, you may find it’s time to move on. This is a book about getting on with your life. Often you don’t know you are stuck,” he said. “It’s a book about healing.”

The author of two previous books on self-help, Kominars has included in “Write for Life,” information on research by psychologist James Pennebaker in the 1980s that illustrated the effects of journal writing. In an experiment, Pennebaker separated trauma patients into three groups: One did nothing regarding journals; a second wrote about what happened, and a third wrote what happened and how they felt about it. An evaluation six months later showed that those in the third group, who acknowledged their feelings, showed the most change.

Write for Life by Dr. Sheppard B. Kominars

“Write for Life” is a conversational, clearly written and personal book that guides the reader on a journal-writing path, whether one is starting or well-versed in the process, comfortable with the idea of writing or paralyzed at the thought. With an introduction by Frank McCourt, author of “Angela’s Ashes,” it includes excerpts from Kominars’ journal as well as his students’ and famous writers’ and discusses the connection with journal writing and dreams, travel, food, creativity, work and prayer, and other topics. It’s a handbook for a lifetime of journal writing, as ages and circumstances change.

“For information on the book or Kominars’ approach to journal writing, see the informative website www.writeforlifeccp.com. The Frequently Asked Questions section answers specifics about the process, from writing with pen versus computer to how much time or space to spend. For further information, call 415-863-0901. To order the book check www.Amazon.com. The book will be officially launched Aug. 22.

“Like the course, the book *Write for Life* is structured to help the writer “get started and stay started,” with activities, examples of journals by famous journal keepers, anecdotes about other beginning journal writers, but unlike the course, which may last a few weeks, the book can accompany one through a lifetime.”

Review appearing in the Kenyon Fall Alumni Magazine

By Traci Vogel

September 2007

Years ago, when Sheppard Kominars found himself held hostage to crippling migraines, he turned to the page for escape. At the suggestion of his family doctor, he began keeping a journal.

At first, Kominars didn’t see the point. “In my imagination,” he writes, “I saw adolescent girls writing ‘Dear Diary’ in their notebooks. That’s just not me! I thought. I can’t do that!” As his writing sessions continued, however, he found that journal writing helped him “launch the day from a better place in myself.” At last, he came to a realization that “I was not a migraine; I was merely having a migraine In some mysterious way, journal writing helped me find my way not only through health issues but through [other] obstacles as well.”

In *Write for Life*, Kominars maps out that mysterious way. Journaling, he writes, can be an act of confession, therapy, testimony, and self-discovery. Most remarkably, medical studies have found that keeping a journal can aid people struggling with illness, anxiety, or depression. Writing about trauma leads to improved immune function, lower blood pressure, and a more optimistic outlook. *Write for Life* offers a wealth of journaling exercises, designed to give readers permission to express themselves and find their way to health, whether physical, mental, or spiritual. “Beginning today,” Kominars writes, “you can begin to care about what has already happened—not as a source of worry, but as a basis for loving your life in a new way.

ANSWERS TO SOME FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: Can I do my writing on a computer?

A: When it is not possible to write by hand, such as with certain disabilities from arthritis or the trauma caused by accident, etc., any way that facilitates writing about what is happening with you will enhance your healing process.

Q: Is it better to write my journal by hand?

A: Yes, because it strengthens the body - mind- spirit connection. Using the muscles on the body to help you connect with what is going on in your life extends the health benefits you can experience. Just as physical exercise is important for your emotions and your spiritual life, so writing by hand makes it possible for you to connect with healing on more than one level.

Q: Will you critique my journal?

A: There is enough criticism in your life already. The journal is a place to heal and therefore you are the focus of your entries. You are writing only for yourself and not to please anyone else. Getting free of the limitations that others might set for you is one of the most important features of writing in your journal.

Q: How do I know if I'm doing it right?

A: There is no right way or wrong way to write in your journal. However you write about anything – that's how you write. What is MOST important is that you include your feelings in whatever you are writing. Writing about your feelings always enhances the effect.

Q: Do I have to write every day?

A: Writing every day builds up the routine of the healing process and makes it easier to accomplish. Skipping days, or weeks, invites inertia and all the dead weight attached to it.

Q: Is there a minimum length to a journal entry?

A: There are some journal writing practices that require a minimum of three pages with every sitting. For some, this is a daunting requirement resulting in fewer and fewer entries over time. What is most important when you sit down to write is that you allow yourself to write through the first five or so minutes of “noise” – all of the things on your to-do lists, including your telephone calls. When you give yourself permission to write every day you discover that within a period of 20 to 30 minutes you are refreshed and can go on without some of the baggage you've been struggling under. Writing makes some space in your day's perspective that you come to appreciate and anticipate.

Q: What's the difference between blogging and journaling?

A: When you write in your journal, you are writing to heal yourself instead of for an audience.

Blogging is publishing whatever you are writing about and expecting someone else to respond with his or her opinion of what you've written. This is quite different from healing.

Q: I hate my handwriting; what can I do about this?

A: This is only another way of being self-critical. There is enough of that already in your life and writing in your journal is one of the best ways of moving into the realm of self-caring. Whatever your handwriting looks like, you will also discover that over time there will be many different kinds of handwriting that appear. All of them belong to you, and all of them are healing you.

Q: What will happen with my journal after I'm gone?

A: Many people have asked me this question in the workshops. I encourage them to leave instructions for the person who is responsible for looking after your affairs at that time. Be explicit: this is your decision and you can do whatever you choose.

Q: How do I get started if I haven't written in my journal for several days? Weeks? Years?

A: "Write For Life" has some important information about this in the opening chapters of the book, and you can turn to them at any time in your process to support your efforts. Just connect with your wish to live better, and you find yourself already started again on your journal.

Q: What if I want to write in my journal several times a day?

A: Just as there are no prescribed pages to write, so there is no limit to the number of times you decide to open your journal to write in it. Over time, the journal becomes your close friend, and the need to make this connection may arise from any number of circumstances. It is always there waiting for you. What is important to remember is not to let journal writing take the place of living. By expressing your feelings about what is happening in your life, you connect with the richness and depth of your experience and can savor it in new ways.

Q: Can I read anything I've written to someone else? Friend, therapist, etc.

A: You are in charge of your journal, and whatever you wish to tell someone about what you are writing is entirely your decision. But you are writing for yourself, for your own healing, and it is possible that someone else's response to what you've written might result in some form of criticism or debate. Write for several days in your journal about your reasons for revealing what you have written before you do it. You are, in a way, "publishing" your healing process. Being clear about the healing benefits of this publication is crucial to your decision.

Q: Can I use any of the material I write in my journal for a story or an autobiography?

A: The journal is yours to do whatever you choose. Many people have taken excerpts from it to develop short stories or memoirs. The journal is a rich treasury of experience, and the material in it is easily developed into many different creative projects. Allow yourself the opportunity to look on it as a source for inspiration and creativity, while still preserving its value as a place for

you to heal body, mind and spirit.

Q: When is the best time to write?

A: This depends entirely upon you and the way you plan your day. It usually takes some experimenting to discover when you can show up for your journal. It is waiting there, twenty-four hours a day; you can reach for it at any time. I've written at every time of the day or night and can say that some of the times I did it were better for me than others. My usual time now for writing is at night, just before I go to sleep. When I lived beside the ocean, I wrote every morning. Find the best time for you, and make it part of your daily routine.

Q: Where is the best place to write?

A: I have written in every imaginable location under the sun. Trains, planes, buses, lobbies, doctor's offices, classrooms, beaches, antique shows – the list goes on and on. I've written when I've been terribly uncomfortable because I just needed to write; but I find most important is to be in a place that I feel safe and easy in myself – even in the midst of turmoil. Discover this for yourself as you journal.

Q: Why is it important to insure confidentiality?

A: You deprive yourself of the healing benefits of journal writing if you are writing and know that someone else will read it. It is not possible to be honest with yourself under those circumstances. You are then writing for an audience, and that means you are writing with a built-in censor. Healing occurs when you are willing to be as honest with yourself as you can possibly be.

Q: What if I change my mind about something I've already written? Should I tear it out?

A: Give yourself permission to allow everything you've written in your journal to remain there. Changing your mind is part of the growth process, and being able to see this in yourself is a very important dimension of the healing that occurs through writing. When you are honest about what you write, you can change your mind about it tomorrow, or next year, or next decade. What you write today is a snapshot of today. It will provide you with an amazing account of yourself over time.

Q: Do I have to embark on the journeys in the order in which they are arranged in the book?

A: The book is not written with a linear concept but with the reader's need for self exploration and discovery in mind. Getting Started and Staying Started are the kick-off for the process. And the chapter on Self-Caring is useful to initiate the rest of the journeys. Find your own way on the journey that you are living, and let the book support your effort to get, and give, as much as possible in life.

Q: How can I get the most help for healing from writing in my journal?

A: By being as honest as you can each day in the routine you set up for writing in your journal.

The more you exercise your wish to show up in body, mind and spirit, the more help you will offer yourself along the way.

Q: Is it useful to form a journal writing group?

A: Somehow it seems easier to write every day when you have a group of people who you know are also writing. What is most important, however, is that the group meets to discuss the process of journal writing and not the material in the journals. Some things work better than others to facilitate the process, and it is valuable to explore this. With the focus on healing, it can be useful to discuss how you went about including certain material in the entry, but the moment the discussion turns into one-upman-ship, the healing values are gone. Discussing different ideas which come up during journal writing is another way to extend the idea of healing within the group.

Q: How can I get around my intense reluctance to write about my feelings?

A: This, for many, takes practice. When you are not used to doing something, some special effort, encouragement, is needed. Many people find it difficult to acknowledge that they even have feelings, and it is only when they are faced with the task of writing about them do they give them a name. There is a suggestion in the book about writing affirmations that will prove useful in doing this. Affirm yourself for writing about your feelings and you will find your way into this.

Q: Why is it a good idea not to read what I've written until several months have passed?

A: Because the first thing you will do is to edit it, critique it, change it to “make it better.” When we write as honestly as we can about what is happening in our lives, we are so close to it that we have little, if any perspective of ourselves in the midst. Perspective comes over time, and along with it, comes healing. One of the participants in the group shared that she allows herself to read what she wrote three months earlier if she has made an entry that day in her journal. Her practice is an excellent one.

Q: I'm having trouble journal writing because I'm used to producing a “product.” What can I do?

A: It begins with giving yourself permission to become self-caring and valuing yourself not for what you do but for who you are. Workaholics come to mind immediately in this behavior. It is only if they are working that they are worthwhile. This is one of the most harmful, destructive attitudes to live with, and it is a major obstacle to healing.

Q: No matter how hard I try, I can't seem to find the time to write in my journal. What can I do?

A: We are very pragmatic in our lives. We do what works. We do what we value. If we don't value something, truly value it, we avoid doing it. The moment you begin to prize and value the healing that comes from journal writing you will discover that you not only have the time but insist on its being in your schedule – no matter what other priorities you face. Discover if this is not true for you.

Q: How will I know if journal writing is helping me?

A. In the pudding is the proof! Your own journal will reveal the healing benefit you experience and this will be reflected in the way you live your life and write about it. It will not be a secret to you, for you will have ample evidence of new and different perspectives.

Q: Can you tell me who will publish my journal?

A: The journal you are writing each day is not for publication but for healing. Your decision to publish is an entirely different project for you than your daily effort to initiate the healing process. The material in your journal can be reworked into many different forms, and it is possible that you may decide to undertake the work that will translate your entries into a presentation for an audience. Permit yourself the healing that only you can do for yourself before entering the arena of publication.

Q: Are you on FaceBook and Twitter?

A. Yes, and I'd love to hear from you about your adventures in journaling!