

San Mateo County Times 8/13/07 p. 12  
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## JOURNAL-WRITING CLASS NOW IN BOOK FORM

“Write for Life,” the popular journal-writing class that drew Peninsula residents to weekly sessions at Stanford, Kaiser Hospitals, the San Mateo Senior Center and other settings around the state, will soon be available in book form, titled, appropriately, “Write for Life: Healing Body, Mind, and Spirit Through Journal Writing” (Cleveland Clinic, 2007).

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 50<sup>th</sup> 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" 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](http://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](http://www.Amazon.com). Or call Ingram Publisher Services, 800-838-1149. The book will be officially launched Aug. 22.

tagline

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.