

I'm so excited to share with you today's episode on the opportunity of a pen and a piece of paper. I think I've shared with all of you before that I have been an avid journaler. In fact, I started journaling at age six and have not stopped since writing has always been a way for me to clear my head to process my emotions. It's been a way for me to keep track and to tackle my big, audacious goals and plans. The interesting thing is that the research backs this up and supports the way that I've been using journaling. For years studies have shown that really there's some great real tangible benefits to journaling.

First, journaling has been shown to reduce ruminations and brooding. You know, that's the reliving of incidents and occurrences that we do over and over and over again, think that stupid thing you said to your co-worker or the guy at the coffee shop. The one that you keep reliving in your mind, or it's the incessant review of our to-do list for the next day. Or it's just I can't shut my head off and go to bed. I kind of think about it as a NASDAQ ticker at the bottom of the new screen. We all do it and it's human. In fact, ruminations are really an evolutionary mechanism and goes back to the times when we were scanning our environment for true danger like tigers and lions. We have this part of our brain that is continuously scanning, as well as reliving occurrences of the day in order to keep us safe. But of course, that part of our brain in modern day is not really providing safety, and in fact, can do harm by promoting this constant, sympathetic state. So again, studies show that journaling can be an antidote to that. What I recommend is what I call the brain dump. Spending 5, 10, 20, even 30 minutes at night before you go to bed, just dumping everything out of your brain. In doing so you are physically finding a place for thoughts and emotions, closing out the occurrences of the day. Maybe pre-planning for the events of the following day so that you can put your mind to rest and get a good night's sleep.

Second, studies show that there's even more to journaling. It has been shown to increase happiness scores. It's also been shown to help with goal setting and goal getting. It has been shown also to reduce depressive thoughts and anxiety. One disclaimer here though, because if you are kind of in the thick of things right now, journaling can sometimes worsen symptoms of depression and anxiety. If you're in the midst of these mood disturbances, please seek out the help of a trained mental health professional because journaling and sitting with these thoughts on your own can be painful, difficult and can actually do you more harm.

Third, journaling has been shown to also help you in physical symptoms of certain chronic conditions. It makes sense that journaling can help with brooding, ruminations, emotional symptoms, but it actually has been shown to help with physical symptoms as well. In fact, one study that looked at as Maddix showed that a regular writing practice improved lung function. In another study with patients who had rheumatoid arthritis, those patients who journaled actually experienced a reduction in overall disease activity. This is really mind-blowing data in terms of the benefits of journaling. I think it also really speaks to the mind-body connection because when we find a way to process our emotions and to quiet our mind, it invariably offers an opportunity to quiet the body as well.

I want to offer you another kind of journaling practice and this one I like to do in the morning. I call it the three things.

1. First, write down three or five things that you were proud of, or wins that you've experienced that day or that week.
2. Second thing is, write three to five things that didn't quite go your way that you are willing to forgive yourself for, and to let go.
3. Finally, write three to five commits. What are a few things that you agree to commit to yourself with certainty, and actually, it is known that celebrating your wins. Makes you much more likely to continue to prosper, to continue to achieve, it's kind of like offering positive feedback to a child, they're much more likely to continue that behavior that resulted in that positive feedback.

So your brain is kind of the same. When you offer yourself three wins you are proud. You were reinforcing the behaviors that led to that win that celebratory thing. Same with the forgives. If we're able to let go of our imperfections, let go of what didn't go right and what didn't serve us, we are much more able to see ourselves where we are in this moment. To be able to make informed and transformative change. Finally, the commits. Oftentimes we have goals that are kind of swirling in our mind. Until we are really tactical about them, until we really are intentional about them, we can't necessarily expect to achieve them. So getting them down on paper and writing down your commitments allows you to commit with certainty.

Again, three wins, three forgives, and three commits. This is an easy way to get your foot in the door in terms of journaling, as well as the nightly brain dump. I have talked about creative activities a lot in my book *Hungry for More*, and I have discussed them not only in terms of the benefits of creativity but also the benefits of a mindful practice or an introspective practice. I talk a lot about mindfulness meditation because of course, there is a lot of data in terms of how that helps with introspection, emotional regulation, and habit change. But I think you can be mindful and not necessarily participate or practice in mindfulness meditation. And some of those ways include coloring, for example, being outside and in nature, moving your body exercising, and getting movement. Finally, in writing or journaling practice, as a result of my book *Hungry for More*.

Some of the speaking engagements and book signings that I've had since the most common question that I get from people, either via email or in-person, is how do I know what I'm truly hungry for? This is such a great question, but again, there is no one answer. A good place to start is with this type of mindful practice. This type of introspective practice that allows you to quiet down your mind and your body and to truly explore what it is that you are hungry for. In fact, writing can be a gateway to awareness to self-healing, and to true and transformative change. I know this to be true personally, and I know this to be true with my clients. I often recommend a journaling practice to my patients. I'm really excited to share that I've created a journaling course with daily prompts to help you dig deep and determine what you are truly hungry for.

As always, my goal is to spark your curiosity at what is possible when you explore your internal workings more fully. What is it that you individually seek and desire to help you become aware of your thoughts, feelings, and habitual actions, and what they may represent? We know and I've said this often that our minds are always thinking, and the research shows that we have up to 70,000 thoughts per day, many of which are negative. How can we understand these thoughts? How can we have awareness as to how these thoughts make us feel? How these thoughts make us act? How can we engage in our thoughts with kindness, with self-compassion, so that we are in the driver's seat and are not being driven by our negative thinking and our negative patterns. To help you understand that this is universal, that having these experiences are universal and human. To give you permission to seek what serves you and to let go of what does not? My wish is that adopting a mindful practice which includes writing but also the many other things that I have shared allows you to understand what you are truly hungry for. If you're curious, check us out. Take a look at my website dradrienneyoudim.com. I hope that you can find that there is some inspiration in terms of resources.