

Appendix 30 - Expressive Writing Prompts by Chapter

Introduction

[None]

Chapter 2 - The Back Story

1. Establish the habit of listing five things for which you are thankful? There are healthy neurological reasons for doing so, discussed later.
2. At present, write about your greatest challenges?
3. Who in your journey has been providing you with support and accountability? How have you shown them your appreciation for them?
4. In what ways has pain changed your thinking and/or personality? Consider the descriptors in Appendix 25 and 26.
5. List five qualities of your personality or your outlook that you think define you as a wonderful person. Write just one word/phrase/sentence for each-not a summary of your whole life. Don't overthink. What rises to the surface as important now? You can even do this prompt periodically to see how the list changes. Then expand on the qualities, writing about each of those aspects of you.

Chapter 3 - Ouch, That Hurts

1. Describe your pain using terms you learned in this chapter.
2. When I'm in pain - physical or emotional - the kindest thing I can do for myself is...¶
3. List five roles or labels that you think define you. This is different than the "qualities" you listed in a previous chapter. Write just one word/phrase/sentence for each, not prioritized, not a summary of your whole life. Don't overthink. What rises to the surface is important now? You can even do this prompt periodically to see how the list changes. Then expand on the roles/labels.
4. In what ways has pain changed your thinking and/or personality? Consider the descriptors in Appendix 25 and 26.

Chapter 4 - God or the Guy in Blue Jeans

1. If my body could talk, it would say...
2. Write about one time when a follow-up appointment was scheduled, and you were anxious about what the result might be. How did it affect you? What could you do to minimize any anxiety you might have had?
3. One of the things this experience has taught me is
4. What do you miss the most and why? It can be anybody or anything, external or internal.
5. Continue with gratitude writing and list 3 to 5 things for which you are grateful, great or small.

Chapter 5 – Protecting the Temple – The Bio in BIOpsychosocial

1. Describe what you would like your daily health routine to be.
2. Write about a time when you felt absolutely great. What were you doing and where were you doing it? Write about the emotions you and those around you felt.
3. If your body had a voice (which it does, sort of) what would it tell you?
4. Describe what good health is to you?
5. If you could change one thing regarding your health, that is within your power to do so, what would that be, and how would (or could) that change your life, or the lives of those close to you?

Chapter 6 - Am I Losing My Marbles – The Psycho in bioPSYCHOsocial

Since this chapter contains so many psychological aspects that influence your pain, the writing prompts are divided according to the psychological challenge/condition. As such, you may want or need to select between one,

two or more, whichever applies to you. You can use the assessments in the appendix to help you determine which ones apply to you.

1. Anxiety

- Make a list those things that cause you anxiety. After each item classify them as something within your control and outside your control. For those things within your control, write what you can do to minimize or eliminate their influence on you? Use terms like “I feel,” “I think,” “I realize.”
- I am most anxious when...[describe a situation] because [describe why that makes you anxious], but [describe the benefits, if any, you might enjoy despite any anxiety]
- I am most relaxed when I
- What role does food play in your life? Are you filling an emotional void with food or drink, using it as a friend?
- Make a list of everything you'd like to say NO to.
- Make a list of everything you'd like to say YES to.
- Identify and write about a situation where you kept your cool and because you did the outcome(s) were positive.

2. Depression

- I really wish others knew this about me...
- The times I feel the lowest are ...
- I wish others could understand ...
- What always brings tears to your eyes? (As Paulo Coelho has said, “Tears are words that need to be written.”)
- To allow these feelings room to transform into something else, I am willing to...
- What are some positive family traditions that you would like to return to or begin? Are there any unhealthy traditions that you can change or let go of altogether? When you feel good about yourself, how do you speak and what do you say?
- Write about 3 things that get you excited, and why.
- I am happiest when
- Describe a time or an event when someone showed you appreciation for something you did for them. Write about how you felt as a result of their positive comments.

3. Anger

- The biggest thing that I need to let go of, that seems to weigh me down the most is,
- Dear Anger, Every time I give into what you want, I ...
- I no longer want to be bound by my anger, so to make a positive difference I will ...
- Before I lose my cool next time, I will
- My anger has cost me ..., but I can
- The things that anger me most are ... After each item, describe what you can do (if anything) to make thing better.
- Using 10 words, describe yourself when you are angry.
- There's a relationship between our thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. Chart your thoughts, emotions, and behaviors over the past month, listing two examples for each. What effect did your thoughts, emotions, and behaviors have on one another? How did your changes in each category affect the other two?
- Describe your physical changes and reactions when your level of anger is rising.
- Write about a time when you got angry about a situation only to find out there were justifiable reasons the situation existed and had you known what they were would have acted differently.
- Describe coping skills you feel would help you maintain control or diffuse your anger, and why you didn't/haven't started using those skills sooner.
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4. Guilt

- How might you use guilt in a positive way?
- The things that make me feel guilt that are WITHIN my control are ...
- I need to make amends with [person/people] for [your behavior/choices], and I can do this best by [choose your action]. The more detailed your descriptions, the greater likelihood of successful outcome.
- I sometimes feel guilty for not being able to do for other that I used to do, but I can ...

5. Grief

- My fondest memory of us is OR, My fondest memory is
- The greatest contribution you made to my life is
- I really miss
- The first time I did [name action or event] without you was I felt
- If I could do it all over again I would
- A simple activity or non-activity I could try today to make things easier is...
- If I were to ask for help, who might I ask and what would I ask for specifically?
- My support system includes...
- I feel most connected when I...
- One way I can express this feeling (or these feelings) in a creative way is...
- If I could be like [name of person you respect and admire] one in any way, I would adopt their...
- I can honor what I've lost by...
- Writing about present life situation
- Writing a story based on pictures which illustrate different aspects of grief
- Home writing based on a previous theme
- Defining loss and loneliness
- Home writing about a good memory
- Relationship previous and present to important persons homework with writing about good and bad thoughts and feelings during the last few days experience of grief and longing/hope and joy home writing about situations related to a strong feeling of grief/situations related to joy
- Writing about what is important to know; the capability to meet the new life situation, a meaningful life and future plans

6. Stress

- The things I liked today are
- One positive adjustment I can make in my morning routine is
- Are there areas in your life where you can be more organized? How will you accomplish this? What things must you do to avoid disorganization in the future?
- What did you learn from a past mistake and how can that lesson be applied to your future?

7. Love

- What does unconditional love look like for you?
- What do you love about life?
- Write about your first love — whether a person, place or thing.

8. Appreciation

- My favorite way to spend the day is...
- Joy Make a list of everything that inspires you — from books to websites to quotes to people to paintings to stores to the stars.
- Make a list of 30 things that make you smile.

9. Joy

- I feel happiest in my skin when...

- List five things that you're grateful for— people, positive experiences past or current, places, material items—then expand on each one, describing it/him/her in detail, perhaps at a particular moment in time. Make Time for Joy.
- List three activities that bring you joy. Expand on each activity, describing a recent time when you fully engaged in it. If you're finding it challenging to engage in these activities as often as you'd like or need, explore strategies for working them into your schedule more often.

10. Gratitude

- I am thankful for [a person's name] and their influence on my life because ...
- I am blessed because ...
- Five things I am thankful for today are ...
- I could bless someone by ...
- The best things about my home are ...
- I am thankful for my family because ...

Chapter 7 – Get the Hell Out – The Social in biopsychoSOCIAL

1. Study the photograph titled, “Where to Go Next.” Imagine the person in the photograph is you. What are you thinking about and what do you see? What might the clouds, mountain and vast space about you mean?
2. Generate a list of 20 things of which you are thankful and why. Post this in a prominent place, or tag it in your journal.
3. Write about the last time you “got out” and had a good time with family and/or friends. What were the specific things that made this time enjoyable?
4. The two moments I'll never forget in my life are... Describe them in great detail, and what makes them so unforgettable.
5. If I were asked to plan an outing for my family (of close friends) it would be [describe the activity or activities] and we would [describe how, why, where etc.]
6. What activities make you feel alive?

Chapter 8 - Drugs – Friend or Foe – Drugs in Pain Management

1. The best thing about my medication is
2. The worst thing about my medication is ...
3. The reasons I don't like to take opioids are ...
4. If I didn't have to rely on medication to feel better my life would be (or look like Study the photograph titled, “Where to Go Next.” Imagine the person in the photograph is you. What are you thinking about and what do you see? What might the clouds, mountain and vast space about you mean?)
5. Generate a list of 20 things of which you are thankful and why. Post this in a prominent place, or tag it in your journal.
6. Write about the last time you “got out” and had a good time with family and/or friends. What were the specific things that made this time enjoyable?
7. The two moments I'll never forget in my life are... Describe them in great detail, and what makes them so unforgettable.
8. If I were asked to plan an outing for my family (of close friends) it would be [describe the activity or activities] and we would [describe how, why, where etc.]
9. What activities make you feel alive?

Chapter 9 - Protecting the Temple

1. Write about a moment when you felt a particular emotion and how you physically experienced it. Were your palms sweating? Was your heart racing or head throbbing? How did you experience/ interact with your environment through all your senses? Was it happy, joy-filled, dark, sunny, stuffy or breezy? What did you hear and smell? By expressing your emotional state through your physical experience of it, you're

able to delve into the heart of it. You can also write about your current state: What emotions are you experiencing right now, and what's the physical response?

2. Name a compassionate way you've supported a friend recently. Then write down how you can do the same for yourself.
3. Describe a recent food craving. Were you really hungry? Scan your body for its food needs. What does hunger or fullness feel like right now? How do your eating habits contribute to a better (or worse) level of pain?
4. Describe your sleep hygiene routine and what might you do to improve to it?
5. When you look at your favorite food(s), what is your body saying to you?
6. Describe your perfect walk. Where would you walk and with whom (if anyone), what sights, sounds, sensations would you experience. Try to create vivid word-pictures in your descriptions and let your imagination take you away. End by telling how revisiting this experience might be beneficial to you?

Chapter 10, Exploring the Horizon

1. What's surprised you the most about your life or life in general?
2. What can you learn from your biggest mistakes?
3. Moving forward, what one thing would make the greatest benefit to your life other than having no pain.
4. List those things that excite you or your imagination. How can you use that knowledge to make your life richer and more satisfying.

Chapter 11, Don't Go It Alone

1. Make my support system includes... [make a list of the people in your life who genuinely support you, and who you can genuinely trust. Then make time to hang out with them.]
2. Write a letter to your loved ones and/or caregiver(s). What is on your mind and in your heart that you find hard to express in real life? You may find that expressing it on the page is a useful preparation for expressing it. You also may find it useful as a private exercise to work out your thoughts and feelings on your own to interact with him or her more productively.
3. I really wish others knew this about me...

Chapter 12, Rewiring the House

1. Make a list of three qualities you have that you consider weaknesses, then explore how these so-called weaknesses might be recast as strengths. For instance, if you believe micromanagement is a weakness of yours, it could also mean that you're organized and responsible. Once you determine the strength on the flip side of that quality, write about a time when you used that quality in a positive way. If you can't think of a recent example, write something aspirational (how you might one day use this quality positively).
2. Think of a real or an imaginary place where you feel safe and at peace. Create that place in your mind and write a detailed description of it using all your senses—what you see in this place, but also what you hear, smell, taste and feel through tactile contact. You can then use this as a visualized meditation, closing your eyes, breathing and imagining this place thoroughly, one sense at a time.
3. Grief is one of the most common experiences for those suffering with chronic pain. Some losses include loss of function, job, relationships, a sense of self, favorite activities, and so much more. Identify one or two losses you're still grieving and describe them in detail. Take your time doing this. After completing this, write a letter to of thanksgiving to whatever or whomever you've lost thanking them for the positive difference they made in your life and how much that means to you. Then describe how you are going to use that blessing to create a better world for you and those around you.
4. I couldn't imagine living without... but if I have to, I will ...
5. If I could be like [name of person you respect and admire] one in any way, I would adopt their...
6. I feel most energized when...
7. Create a list of questions for which you urgently want answers.
8. List two things you tend to say yes to or have said yes to recently and two things you tend to say no to or have said no to recently. What was good self-care and what wasn't? For example, saying yes can be a way

of embracing an opportunity and engaging with the world (good self-care), but it can also be a way of spreading yourself too thin. Saying no can help you maintain healthy boundaries and manage your time (good self-care), but it can also isolate you and cause you to miss opportunities. This awareness can help you prioritize, and determine the value of things and what's truly important to you.

9. List three positive qualities/strengths that you value in yourself. Then list three qualities that you aspire to achieve. Expand on each quality. For the qualities you already have, what are recent examples when you showcased them? For the qualities you aspire to, how might you achieve them?
10. What's one topic you need to learn more about to help you live a more fulfilling life? (Then learn about it.)
11. What is the greatest investment you can make in yourself that would make your life, and the lives of those close to you, more rewarding.

Chapter 13, Being True to Yourself

1. The words I'd like to live by are...
2. Make a list of everything you'd like to say no to.
3. Make a list of the people in your life who genuinely support you, and who you can genuinely trust. (Then make time to hang out with them.)
4. "Write about a time when work felt real to you, necessary and satisfying. Paid or unpaid, professional or domestic, physical or mental." (Also, a prompt from Abercrombie's Kicking in the Wall.)
5. Describe ways in which accountability could help you in your journey through life while you reclaim your life from chronic pain.
6. Everything in life is a result of choices. What are some of those things you feel you must start saying "No" to and those things beneficial you feel you would best be served if you said "Yes" to, and why?
7. Describe what it means to be "Honest with yourself."
8. What might be some bad habits to avoid and how would you use your strengths to avoid them. If needed, review or take the Strengths Assessment at <https://www.viacharacter.org/> to determine what your strengths are.