

Journaling for Problem Solving

Creative Problem Solving: Dialoging with Figures

This exercise requires that you use your imagination and let go of all judgment.

1. Imagine a famous thinker that has inspired you, or perhaps a wise relative, teacher, or friend. See them clearly in your mind.
2. Now imagine sitting down with him or her to chat.
3. Hold that picture in your mind and, in your journal, start a dialogue with this figure. Write down your question or what you want to tell them. For example, "My problem is..."
4. On the next line, write down what you imagine their answer would be.
5. Go back and forth as long as you'd like. This will look like a movie script on the page. Don't worry that you're "making it all up". Dialogue is a powerful journaling tool to access the unconscious mind.

Self-Empowered Problem Solving

Answer each question using 2-3 sentences or a list.

1. What problem would you like to focus on today?
2. What do you think your life would be like if this were resolved? What would it feel like, look like?
3. What thoughts and actions would you have to take to deal successfully with this problem?
4. What strengths do you already have within you?
5. What external resources are available to you?
6. What are some other ways of looking at this situation?
7. List 50 ways you could deal with this problem—write anything and write fast.
8. What do you need to move forward or make change right now?
9. How will you get what you need?
10. What is your next step?

Analytical Problem Solving

This exercise takes some time, so please give yourself at least an hour.

1. Identify your problem. Write down 2-3 goals regarding how you'd like the situation to be.
2. Ask questions. Who else is involved? What bothers you? Where and when does it happen? Why does it happen? What do you do? How do you feel? What do you want?
3. Brainstorm alternative strategies. At least 10 for each goal but aim for 20-30.
4. For each strategy, imagine the long or short-term consequences. Cross off items that might be disadvantageous.
5. From your remaining list, select 1- 2 actions you think might work. Try them out for 3-5 weeks. Return to your journal to reassess.

