



## **Active Dreaming Toolkit – Creative Journaling**

I'm here to invite you to keep and read the most important book you'll ever come across: a book about dreams, a book about life, a book about soul. It's the journal that you will make if you adopt the practice of writing something for yourself and your soul every day that you can. I can hardly begin to explain what a treasury your journal will be until you've kept one for at least five years. You are going to find a place where you can unveil yourself and as you write, you're going to find that you begin to slip easily out of routine habits of mind. You develop the ability to look at yourself with some observer perspective. You become a writer and creator. If you have any interest in writing, well write your journal, write without fear of consequences and write what you have. These can simply be the morning pages but what if you're a dreamer, you don't have to worry about where you start because you've got something from the night to write down and start you off, but you've also got something from the day. You go out into the street, you observe something and you put that in your journal. I'm not talking only about keeping a dream journal, I'm talking about keeping a life journal.

I want to rehearse or go through some of the key reasons why you want to do this, what the gifts will be, and as I say, you will only fully understand this when you become a long-term journaler. When you write in your journal, you're keeping a date with your Self. I'm giving Self a great big capital S here because we're talking about something bigger than the ordinary personality which is often driven by routine and sometimes struggles along like a sleepwalker caught up in other people's expectations. A date with your Self with your journal should be fun, so I want to give you some fun games to play with a journal which will make it almost irresistible not to do it. It's fun and essential. We're going to go through six games to play with your personal journal. Before we go into those, let's say something fundamental. Your personal journal must be your secret book, your absolutely secret book. You are not to show this to anybody else. You can show excerpts from time to time, of course. You can break something out and say to someone that you love or someone who you feel should see it, "Here, look at this." But the book itself must be secret. It must be yours. No one else must be permitted access. If you have a partner who likes to snoop, you either have to stop that or find a new

partner. It's as important as that. I was talking the other day with a well-known writer who said that when she got married for the first time she had to overcome her resistance to the guy because he kept on sneaking a look in her journal. Then after the marriage went absolutely sour and rotten and she discovered that he was sneaking a look at her journal again, she decided that was the moment to get out. And that the problem had been advertised at the very beginning by his unwillingness to give her that private space. Your journal, your secret book is private space. It needs good boundaries, and you need to write, draw, illustrate and do other things in that book without any fear of consequences, inspection or supervision.

All right, let's talk about the six big reasons to keeping a creative journal, and we'll also unfold a practice of journaling as we do that. The first thing is this, when you keep a journal, you give yourself a chance of writing your way through your life challenges and transitions, writing your way through. Some of us of course need to keep a journal for a while in order to vent. In order to vent, rant and let out, want to tear our hair out and do whatever we need to do in private to help get ourselves through something. And it might be a safe way of expressing rage or pain that we cannot fully express somewhere else. That's a very helpful aspect of journaling, but that's a very specific kind of journaling. I call it burn journaling. It's journaling something that you will burn at a certain point when you've gone beyond it. When we think about long-term journaling, we're thinking about a private confessional where you say what you need to say to yourself without anybody seeing it, and you maintain that for the long haul. It's not just about venting in a particularly difficult passage of life, it's about the cleansing and release that comes from getting things down the way you need to do in quiet and solitude over time.

As you see and state things as you are, as they are in your journal, you already begin to change them. As you keep your hand moving as you journal, you might find that you are manifesting the power to rename and revision your problems, your challenges, your symptoms and your difficult situations. So, yes, there's a burn journal or the crisis journal which you need to keep during a particularly difficult passage in which you may literally want to burn at the end of that passage. But in the long-term journal, it's about writing your way through, phase by phase, passage by passage, over life. And learning to look at things, a bit of an observer perspective, and look at yourself. The journal becomes, in some ways, a mirror to you, a magic mirror that does not lie to you and which you can use for all sorts of wonderful purposes.

Now, of course, the second great reason for journaling is the primary reason for us dreamers which is that it's the place where you're going to catch your dreams. We think we're going to remember dreams but by and large, we lose the details. We sometimes lose the memory completely if we don't record them. So every time you remember a dream, please write it down in your journal. Date your entry. Date the entry and give the dream a title. By giving a

name to a dream, you're recognizing that there's a story to be told in your process of becoming a storyteller. When you write down your dream report as a story with a title, also note your feelings around the dream. The first feelings after the dream are more important than feelings in the dream. Feelings in the dream are interesting, but feelings around the dream are immediate guidance on the general quality of the dream, whether it's urgent or not, whether it's personal or not, et cetera. And jot down your reality check. Do you recognize things in this dream from the rest of your life? Ask the question: could it play out in the future? You might, when you thought about the dream, try and decide if there's some action the dream is inviting you to take. You might see whether you can come up with a personal bumper sticker or one-liner that distills some of the qualities or energy of the dream. Those are some initial tips on what it is to make your journal a journal of dreams, a journal of the night as well as the journal of the day.

The third game to play with your journal is: Make it a book of clues. A book of clues, what does that mean? Note down signs, symbols and synchronicities you notice around you in everyday life. The world is speaking to us through coincidences, chance encounters and symbolic pop-ups. If we pay attention, we get clues to the hidden order of events. Once you start paying attention, you will find that synchronicity is a fabulous source of navigational guidance for life. So, your journal also wants to contain and it wants you to include anything unusual or unexpected that you notice on the roads of everyday life. A suggestion: Note in your journal the first odd thing or unusual or unexpected thing you see when you go out of the house or the apartment at the beginning of the day. It might be the novelty plate on a car going by. It might be the sound of that bird. It might be a snatch of conversation on the street. It might be a chalk drawing a child left on the sidewalk. It might be the wind in the trees. Note that down. Make that part of your daily observation and part of your daily practice.

Now, a fourth game to play with your journal: Collect pick-me-up lines. No, I didn't say, "pick-up lines." It could work that way too, but that's not what I'm talking about at the moment. I mean one-liners that you collect day-by-day. They don't have to be original. You might hear a really good line from Mark Twain, from the movie, from the stand-up comic or from someone in the office who's talking about life. Jot down one-liners for life every day. The ones you get from other people, ones that come from you as you write down your dreams and come up with your personal bumper stickers. I'm just looking at what I jotted down on one day, a while ago now, from other people, from great writers that I was thinking about. Here's one from GK Chesterton. "Coincidences are spiritual puns." One is from Charles de Lint, although I think that probably a hundred different people have said this. "Something always goes wrong or there wouldn't be a story." Isn't that an interesting reflection for life? I've noticed that. Perhaps you have too. If nothing goes wrong, you don't necessarily have much of a story to tell. There's

truth in that. Ain't that a consolation in life, by finding a story to tell when something does go wrong? I'm suggesting that you use your journal as practice in becoming an aphorist, a word I like to use which isn't perhaps very familiar today but you've heard of aphorisms. An aphorist is someone who's ready to commit aphorisms, one-liners, snappers or astonishers, who Mark Twain, a supreme aphorist, used to call them. We want to get good at this. We want to get good at coming up with our quips, our one-liners and our bumper stickers. Your journal is a great place to collect them, invent them and hone that ability to say something in a snappier, more interesting way.

Number five, a fourth game to play with a journal and fourth way of looking at what your secret book can be for you. Look at your journal as your personal dictionary of symbols. People ask me where they go to understand the snake in their dreams or the bathroom or some other familiar theme. I say, well please don't go to any dictionary of symbols. Start writing and recording your dreams on the snake or the bathroom. And look at how similar things come up in regular life and notice what the symbol means to you and notice that the symbol evolves. Your journal is going to be, I repeat, the best dictionary of symbols you will ever read. Lots of humans dream of snakes or being pursued, and this is part of our common humanity and our connection with what Jung came to call the objective psyche. But the snake in your dreams ain't necessarily the snake in mine or the snake in anybody else's. And what's pursuing you in your dream space might be quite different from what is chasing me or someone else. As you journal, notice the symbols that take you beyond what you ordinarily know and the symbols that are never still and constantly evolving. You dream of a great tidal wave, of a tsunami, and initially you're astonished, frightened and overwhelmed. You feel you're drowning. It comes again, and you find that you have some shelter. You're able to avoid the great wave. Maybe you're in some kind of bubble under it. Maybe you find you can breathe underwater and then you go on. Eventually the day comes, or maybe you even find that you are riding that wave in your dream. I'm summarizing the evolution of the symbol in the dreams of a woman who worked with me who dreamed again and again of a tidal wave, was terrified to begin with and associated the dream not so much with tsunamis in the world, in the physical world, as with the tsunami-like force of emotions when you are in danger of being swamped by pain, empathy and excess of feeling. As the tsunami, the great wave in her dreams evolved and her reactions to it evolved, she noticed that she is calming, finding presence and centering in regular life and was being prepared to cope with things that blew up with elemental force in her life, that force of emotion, much better as she went along.

There's a great deal to be accomplished by studying how a symbol personal to you evolves. You'll notice that one of the great things about dreams, in dreams, when you hear them from other people, when we compare them, even when we just hear the title, we recognize common

factors. Oh, yeah, naked in public, I've been there, I've done that. Oh, yeah, being chased by a wild animal, yeah, I've been there. We recognize, even with the simplest evocation of the dream, something we have in common with other people. But when we get to work with the specifics, the details of the dream or experience, we're in our individual, possibly unique territory. So, it's fascinating. On the one hand, the symbolic life especially in dreams, reminds us that we are connected. We're connected to all human life, all human minds from the planet, now, in the past and the future, so there are common factors. But on the other hand, the experience, the primal, direct experience of the dream or the symbolic event is also thoroughly individual, maybe unique, so we want to balance both those understandings and both of those factors. Yes, we are linked. Yes, we share in the common condition of our kind. On the other hand, my symbol is my symbol. It's not necessarily the same for you. Let me not forego the chance, the opportunity to look at it in its own sake, in its own right and see how it is. Where do I go to do that? I go to my journal.

Okay, the sixth great reason for maintaining a journal. You write a journal, you become a writer. I don't know how much interest you have in becoming a writer, but if you write a journal, you are already a writer. You're flexing your writing muscles, keep your hand moving and before you think about it, you'll be deep into the writing. Whether the world knows you've become a writer, whether you care to share your writing with the world is up to you. That's a secondary factor. Primary with the journal, you're writing for yourself and without fear of the consequences. You're giving, once again, your writing muscles a workout. You'll find that tones up your whole system.

So, that's a little bit about essential games to play with your journal. When you've been journaling for a while, and perhaps you have, there are deeper games you can play. Let me just review some of them more quickly. One of them is bibliomancy. What is bibliomancy? Well it's going to a book, opening a book at random, for guidance for the day. Maybe you've got a question in your mind. Maybe you want to open a book with the idea that it will give you a take on that question or theme in your life. My favorite book to do bibliomancy with is my own journals, but I'm not just going to do it with the journals for the last few weeks or the last few months. I'm going to dig out an old journal, open it at random and see what is looking at me. One of the things that you do when you dive into an old journal like that is you also notice that you may have dreamed an event long before it manifested in physical life. This is one of the great gifts of journaling dreams. You will establish a firsthand database evidencing, proving the reality of precognition. You notice, you go back to a dream report from several years ago and you notice that it's something that is happening now or happened a week ago or might happen next week. When you make the match, you will know for certain-sure that you have the ability to scout ahead. You do it in your dreams every night.

You'll also notice that when you go back to dreams like this, that you have firsthand data on interesting things like parallel universes and parallel lives. When you look at the evolution of a dream's theme or a dream's story over time in your journal, you might notice that again and again and again, you're with certain people in a certain situation which is not your present reality. It seems to be an ongoing story. It's as if you're living a continuous life somewhere else. Don't dismiss that. Don't shrug that off. That is the way, the royal road to gathering firsthand evidence of what science calls many-worlds theory or some New Zealand scientists are now calling many-interacting-worlds theory which is the theory that you are living right now in one of uncountable parallel universes which impact and act upon each other. How do you know what that means firsthand? Well, track your journals and notice those dream scenes playing out over time in which you seem to be living a continuous life somewhere else. When you go further still with this, you might be able to do something that Thoreau, the homespun American philosopher, loved. Thoreau liked to journal from his journals. What does that mean? Well he journaled all the time. He wrote about everything. He wrote about the light on the pond. He wrote about the sound of the ducks. He wrote about his dreams. He wrote about his philosophy of life. He would open his journals, and he would bring together elements from journals written in different periods, different times from his life. He would mash them together and smooth them together and come up with some really fabulous stuff. Journaling from journals is a terrific practice for those of us who are long-term journalists. It opens treasuries of materials. It supports the writing habit. You play around with old notes. You lose any fear of the blank page. You dip into an old journal. You're never at a loss for a theme.

These are some thoughts about creative journaling, keeping that secret book, and what you'll find is that as you tend to that secret book, over time, you'll discover more about yourself and about your world, and more will discover you. You'll find yourself leaving the tame and settled territory of the ordinary everyday mind and entering the wilder borders of imagination where the big story that has been hunting you can find you and jump on you. And that will change everything. So please, please, please, please, keep that secret book and write in it whenever you can. Decorate it if you like, with art, with drawings, with collage, with photographs, with things, with pressed flowers or with dried lavender and have a wonderful time with this secret book of your soul and your Self.

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