



Dearest Diary... The Awareness Journal

by SUSAN POPIEL RN, BSN, CST and BETSY BAKER Lic.Ac., M.Ac., MEd

Can you recall your earliest memories of journaling? Do you remember that small, bound book labeled *My Diary* that closed with a strap and snap or perhaps a lock and key? Maybe it was simply a piece of lined notebook paper that became your first journal. Many of us instinctively knew at that time that recording and consideration of our thoughts, feelings and ideas were important, maybe sacred. They still are.

We can maintain that refreshing

openness to the idea of keeping a journal as we consider why we journal. Before you read any further, take a minute to do just that. Jot down the reasons why you journal. (Save this piece of paper for later.) The reasons will certainly be as unique as we are, likely with a general theme of developing greater self-understanding, self-knowledge and self-awareness.

As nurses, having a process to continually guide us in self-knowledge is important. We must first nurture

ourselves and increase our own self-awareness before we can understand our feelings and reactions in situations with our clients and effectively care for others. We have each come to nursing from varied families, backgrounds and training, and these factors will impact each of us in a different way. A tool that can lead to a deeper process of self-understanding is *The Awareness Journal*©.

The Awareness Journal was created by Betsy Baker, acupuncturist and senior instructor of Process Acupressure. It

was developed with the purpose of exploring the *self* with non-judgmental, merciful awareness — an awareness that opens one to the possibility of healing pain and suffering that comes from habits, rules, scripts and standards that we may have accepted or been conditioned to believe.

At the foundation of *The Awareness Journal* are several influences or theories. First is the importance of *being present* to be able to observe the conditioned mind. *Being in the moment* allows you to see what is real and brings you to a position of choice and action. Secondly, we have all heard the term, “you are what you eat.” This also applies to the words that we say and the thoughts that we ingest mentally. Our language becomes our biology. Also important to *The Awareness Journal* is the utilization of all available senses and signals as we reflect. Using this more holistic approach to journaling will allow the possibility of a deeper awakening to our true self.

Now, you may take your piece of paper and begin your *Awareness Journal*!

Susan Popiel RN, BSN, CST graduated from UNC-Chapel Hill and has served as a nurse for more than 25 years. Her interest in natural, holistic health care led her to study Clinical Acupressure, Process Acupressure, Zero Balancing, Insight Dialogue Meditation, Craniosacral Therapy, guided imagery, and journaling. She holds certification in Clinical Acupressure and teaches the Acupressure Seva Stress Release Protocol Course. Susan has a private practice in Pisgah Forest, N.C.

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The Awareness Journal®

This journal is to assist you in becoming more mindful and aware of yourself (body, mind, emotions and spirit). It will empower you to connect with and use your built-in guidance system effectively and efficiently (with practice) in your daily living, your work, and to help you set specific intentions and goals.

1. Gather data in your journal three times in one day from a place of curiosity, interest and wonder with focused awareness and loving kindness:
 - Early morning before your day begins
 - Mid-day when your day is in full action
 - Evening when your day slows down
2. Focus attention on your senses (sight, sound, touch, movement, body sensations and feelings/emotions) to gather information and then jot notations briefly in a journal:
 - Scan the *Body* noting sensations such as pain, tightness, pressure, itching, throbbing, warmth, burning, coldness – describe and observe location in the body
 - Scan *Emotions* noting anger, joy, sadness, worry, grief, fear (use your own feeling words)
 - Scan the *Mind* noting thinking, internal talk/chatter, images, stream of consciousness (write thoughts for a few minutes)
 - Scan *Soul* consciousness noting soul messages or communication
3. Review the day's data from the witness state. The observer reports the insights about the day, for example:

“I notice now...”

“I realize that... I am able to write more easily in the morning. When trying to work on creative projects in the afternoon and evening, I tend to get frustrated.”
4. Develop conclusions based on the insights noted by the observer. Choices are revealed. For example:

“Since I am more rested and clear thinking in the morning, it is the most productive time for me to work on new or creative projects.”
5. Make a plan based on the conclusions and choices revealed. For example:

“Tomorrow I will reserve the morning for writing. In the future I will plan creative projects for the morning hours whenever possible.”

Continue to keep *The Awareness Journal* daily, weekly, monthly or as you determine necessary. As we explore ourselves via non-judgmental, compassionate awareness, we connect with inner and/or soul guidance available beneath our habits of conditioning, roles, masks, beliefs and attitudes. The practice provides space and time for you to slow down, be present in silence and stillness, and experience a more natural rhythm within. From this place we can use the tool to access deeper self-healing and self-awareness. We can grow to become better nurses.