



*Cluster Journal*  
**Workbook**

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# Writing things down...

"Language is the currency of consciousness.  
We speak to fill the void. We write it down to remember."

— Andrew Lefe

## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to my "Cluster Journal Workbook."

Journaling has been a major part of my life from the time I was a small child, I had journals, many of them. During my adolescent years, my journals were deeply emotional, raw and cathartic and I am sure slightly explicit and colorful at times. Journaling aided me tremendously in the grieving process when I lost my dad the day before my junior year of high school began. Journaling was a tool that provided me a type of cognitive and emotional processing that in many ways lifted my spirits and gave me added direction particularly during a time when I was discovering who I was. Later in life, my journaling practice continued to play a major role in my personal growth work and healing.

Establishing a habitual practice of journaling is something I highly encourage with my clients. There are an infinite array of strategies one can use to record their life. I am highly supportive of ANY journaling, as I consider it a win no matter what.

With that in mind I'd like to draw your attention to a few approaches to journaling that most people are familiar with.

Traditional journaling, which I call "Narrative Style Journaling," This generally follows a story, is somewhat chronological and includes date/time/setting and happens to be the style least preferred. Unless this was a practice developed early in life, it is often a hard one to pick up in adulthood. Some of the common objections I hear about this kind of journaling is people have a hard time knowing what to say, who to say it to, how to summarize, what to summarize, will someone read it...? which then creates a different narrative based on fears or concerns of potential readers. Not to discourage this kind of journaling, because I actually really love this style, but I can see and understand the objections.

Another style of is called "Intention Setting" which often includes to-dos and goal setting and often New Years Resolutions. It is pretty straight forward and most people do this to some extent. My only recommendation would be to compile these lists. Create an "Intention/Goal Setting Journal". Cumulatively, this is can be an incredibly powerful collection of successes, failures, trials and triumphs.

Lastly, an even more common approach to journaling is a simple "Gratitude Journal." This strategy is popular because it bypasses some of the normal objections people have towards journaling (already mentioned.) Again, I recommend getting a special book to collect and record your perspective on gratitude in your life.

# L I F E W O R K

## Cluster Journal

### THE ANATOMY OF THE BRAIN

Before I explain the strategy of "Cluster Journaling" I want to teach you a few things about the brain and how it relates to writing things down, and why it is so important.

The **frontal lobe** of the brain is sometimes referred to as the "control centre" of our voluntary actions because it is in charge of decision making and planning. This planning function comes into play fairly early on during the writing process.



The **hippocampus** is involved in both the formation and the retrieval of long term memories (i.e. memories that need to be stored for over a minute or two) and so it is what pulls that memory from storage so that you can relive it and write it down.

When we write we carry out the following mental activities:

1. We organize ideas to translate them.
2. We coordinate our sight with our movement of the hand.
3. We synthesize our ideas.

The neuro-writing system is a complex and multi-component system. Writing involves the activation of various brain areas and their coordination. Those who do it regularly get physical and psychological benefits such as better immune function and fewer symptoms of anxiety and depression.

The very act of handwriting appears to have important cognitive benefits. Writing things down enables a higher level of thinking and therefore, more focused action. Handwriting is a mental exercise that constantly stimulates the development of neural connections and contributes to self-regulation, self-discipline, will and perseverance. Neuroscience has shown that handwriting contributes to brain expansion and boosting intelligence.

### MEMORY AND LEARNING

The brain regions associated with learning are more active when people write by hand than when they do it with a keyboard. Writing by hand promotes deep coding of information and makes learning much more consolidated. Slowing down, settling in to our writing process, allows us to take time to search and select the most appropriate words. In this way, it provides us with better self-expression.

It is precisely the fact that handwriting is a slower and more elaborate process that facilitates learning, understanding and memorization of the content.

# L I F E W O R K

## *Cluster Journal*

### INSTRUCTIONS

First of all, there are no rules, no punctuation, no story or narrative with this style of journaling. Think of it like a brain storm of the mind, body and spirit. The KEY and ultimate goal of this style of journaling is to record in "real time" the lived experience. This is why I give a free small notebook to every in person client, something they can keep with them at all times, in their purse, backpack, glovebox etc. Trying to "catch the moment" can be one the biggest struggles, but once you get the hang of it, you will find great enjoyment and relief in this style of journaling.

1. Get a designated notebook exclusively for Cluster Journaling.
2. Come up with a central idea (see prompt list.) Put the MAIN IDEA in the middle and purge from there, like a brainstorm, or better yet a brain-dump.
3. Write the 1st thing that comes to mind. Try not to think too hard. See if you can perge anything and everything that comes up. Emotions, thoughts, sensations, if you have a hard time finding language for an emotion/thought/sensation see if you can give it a color, shape, sound or even rate it on a scale of 1-10 (I promise this works just as well.)
4. Pen to paper! No exceptions. Doing this exercise using pen and paper is essential, as it engages the 3 intelligence centers the mind (thinking), the heart (feeling) and the body (doing). See the neurobiology of writing.
5. Create a prompt list (see example). Leave the first few pages of your cluster journal blank to be used as a running list of prompts, as you improve this practice, more ideas of things you'd like to journal will increase. If you are stumped as to what to journal about, go to your prompt list and choose something.

Although journaling can be incredibly therapeutic, it is not intended to be a substitute for psychotherapy or counseling. If needed I encourage you to consider the importance of such supports for yourself as you continue your work with the Enneagram and any ongoing journaling practices I teach.

**“One way to change our behavior is to change the brain. Scientist used to firmly believe that we were born with a finite number of brain cells and that when anywhere destroys droid we were out of luck. But the brain it turns out is much more plastic we grow new neurons in new links between neurons throughout our lives as well it has as have new experiences. One way to create new neural pathways is to block our usual ways of behaving.” (Love Sense by Dr. Sue Johnson Chapter Plastic Brains pg. 105)**

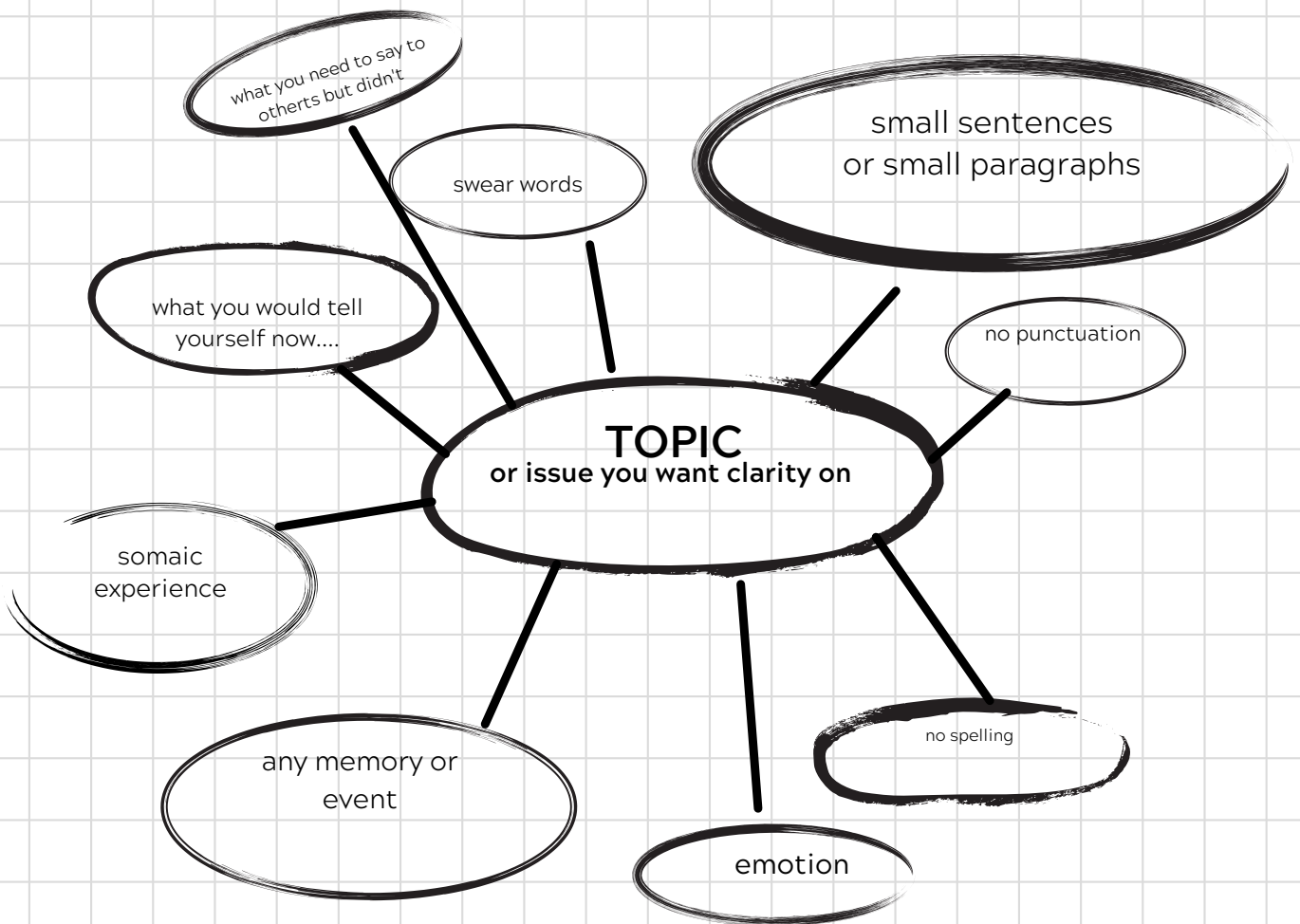
# L I F E W O R K

## *Cluster Journal*

### PROMPTS

- Inner Child work : What the younger version of you needed to hear as a child, but didn't. Lots of work can be done in this arena.
- Grown Child work : What do you (present tense) need to hear, from yourself that you are not hearing.
- I am worthy/wanted/needed (or the dichotomy - I feel "unwanted, needed, or unworthy" - what does it feel like and why? Try exploring the AND/BOTH of these statements.)
- How I am feeling today/right now? (Most popular prompt)
- Loneliness
- Shame/Worthness
- Anger
- Fear
- Sadness
- Numbing/Avoidance
- What are MY needs?
- How do I get my needs met?
- What does my "other" loved one need?
- Conflict
- Co-dependancy
- What is spirituality
- Leadership, what is it? How can I cultivate this
- Emotional Intelligence
- How can I meet my own needs?
- How can I advocate for my own needs?
- Why am I upset?
- What is not serving me?
- Who am I/What do I KNOW about myself that has been unchanging?
- What does feeling KNOWN feel like?
- What does feeling UNKNOWN feel like?
- Why am I afraid to share my feelings?
- Describe me as a child?
- Describe who I am right now?
- Describe who I see myself as in 1 year/5 year/10 year
- \*see written example

# Example

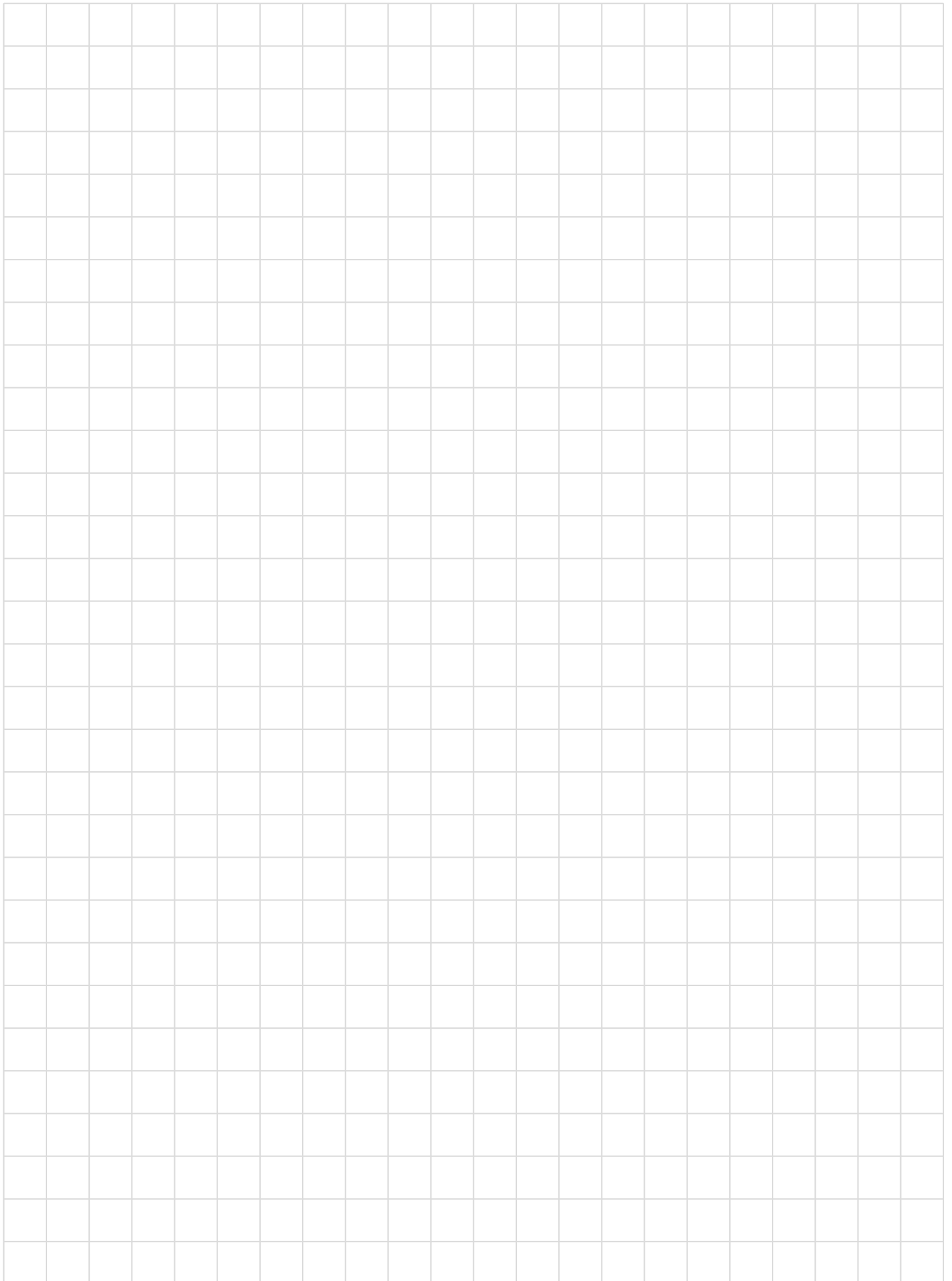








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