

# Journaling in Eating Disorder Recovery



Laurie Glass

# **Journaling in Eating Disorder Recovery**

By Laurie Glass

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## Benefits of Journaling

Journaling can help you express and explore your thoughts and feelings. I don't believe I would have recovered from my own eating disorder without my journal. I spent countless hours writing through the pain, anger, confusion, hopelessness, and other troublesome thoughts and emotions. Since then, I've encouraged others to journal and have seen them benefit from it in their own recovery. Based on my experience, I want to share some benefits of journaling.

1. Journaling can help you sort through your thoughts. Like everyone, you have certain beliefs about yourself and your life, and you may even feel confident that you know what they are. However, sometimes journaling reveals otherwise. As you journal, don't be surprised if you uncover hidden issues, see things from a new perspective, or find yourself writing thoughts you didn't even realize you had. This makes journaling a great tool to help you be honest with yourself, gain insights, and address underlying issues.
2. Journaling can help you release inner pain. Recording the events that hurt you is one step toward healing from them. Use your journal to convey how you feel about what has happened to you. That pain, left stuffed inside, will only hurt you more and more – better out than in. Leave the "sting" on those pages if you can. Try not to be discouraged if it takes several attempts to begin to experience relief. Especially with deep hurts, there is a lot of pain to express, and it will take time.
3. Journaling can help you express your emotions. Rather than keeping your feelings bottled up inside, let them out through your pen. Whether it's anger, sadness, fear, loneliness, shame, or any other difficult emotion, you need a healthy way to express it. Let your journal be your guts on paper; let it all out. Some of your emotions may be strong and deeply embedded. Therefore, if you need to write some of the same things again and again, so be it.
4. Journaling can help you put your concerns into prayers. Examine where you need divine help, and write out your prayers. It's a great way to honestly recognize where you need help as well as open yourself to God's power.
5. Journaling can provide a record of your journey. You can look back at what you've written and see how far you've come. Sometimes it's hard to see progress on a day-to-day basis, but it's more obvious when you can look back at where you started and see the steps you took to move forward. When you review past journal entries, you might also be able to detect patterns in your thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. This can provide insights to help resolve underlying issues. Some people find it too painful to look back, and if you find that to be the case for you, you don't need to do it. But if it isn't too painful, you may find it to be quite helpful to look back.

Journaling is a great tool to help you express yourself in a safe place. Whether it's the food-related behaviors or the underlying issues you find most difficult to talk about, know that you aren't alone. Many people struggle to express themselves. These are very personal matters, and they aren't easy to discuss. It's understandable if you struggle to allow certain memories or emotions to surface. It makes sense if you'd rather not tell someone about some of the unusual food rituals you may practice. In the end, though, what you think and feel needs to come out so you can heal and begin developing healthy coping mechanisms. Use your journal to help you do that.

## Journaling Suggestions – Getting Started

One of the great things about journaling is that there are no rules. It's simply a safe place to record your thoughts and feelings. It doesn't matter if your entries are scattered, and you don't even have to write in complete sentences. Furthermore, if you've already written about something, but it's still bothering you, it's okay to write about it again. You'll likely need to do so with things that trouble you most. Also, remember that your journal is a place where you can admit just how angry, sad, or disappointed you are. You can also pen the struggles you may feel too embarrassed or ashamed to say out loud. Your journal will not judge you.

Let your journal be your safe place to talk. To that end, if you're afraid someone else might read it, lock it up in a safe place. If you prefer to journal on your computer, use only a flash drive and lock that up. Consider using an online journal. There are free ones available. Those are some options if you want to be able to look back at your journal entries. Many people benefit from doing so. But if reviewing past entries is too painful for you, you can write and then tear up the paper, or you can type and not save it. You don't have to keep what you've written in order to benefit from releasing thoughts and feelings. Whatever journaling method you choose, the important thing to remember is don't let anything stop you from being honest and open as you write out your thoughts and feelings. That honesty will serve you well in your recovery.

There are several ways you can use your journal, and you can maintain various sections in your journal. Here are some suggestions to help you get started. Don't do them all at once, though. Just choose one that stands out to you and try it. Try a different one another day and find what works best for you.

1. If you aren't sure how to begin, start by writing just one word, feeling, thought, or experience, and go from there. If journaling doesn't come easy right away, that's okay. Give yourself some time.
2. You can draw pictures, color, make collages, write stories, song lyrics, essays, or poems. They don't have to be art or literary marvels. Just illustrate or write what's on your mind and in your heart.
3. Make lists. For example, list your thoughts or feelings about a matter that weighs heavily on your mind, or list things you look forward to once you have recovered.
4. Maintain a section for inspirational quotes or verses. When you feel down about yourself, tempted to give into the eating disorder, or overwhelmed by recovery, you'll be glad to have this section to review when you need it most.
5. Write prayers. These prayers may be to ask for help, praise God, purge your inner pain, or simply share what's on your mind. Write whatever you want to say to the Lord. Even if you aren't ready to say these prayers, pen them anyway. Then they'll be available when you're ready.
6. Dedicate a section to list things for which you are grateful. Try to add at least one new thing each day.
7. Enter a record of your steps forward. Every step counts and brings you closer to freedom. Looking back at your successes can encourage you when you need that positive reflection the most.
8. Record the positive things that have happened in your life. Write about the joy these events gave you. You don't want to forget the wonderful things in your life, so it's important to have them written down.

So those are some suggestions to help you start journaling. It's okay to start small and work from there. Take it one step at a time. Once you're ready, you can find ideas in the next chapter to help you go deeper.

## Journaling Suggestions – Going Deeper

Perhaps you've already started journaling, but you wonder how you can get more out of it. Below you'll find suggestions to help you go deeper with journaling. Again, don't try them all at once. Review the ideas, and choose one that strikes you. Another day a different suggestion may stand out to you. If any of these exercises brings up thoughts and emotions that feel like too much, take a break from it or choose something else. Also, have someone you can talk to if you feel overwhelmed.

1. If it's difficult for you to identify your emotions, list every emotion you can think of so you can review this list when you find it hard to put your feelings into words. Then start writing about the emotion you feel – such as when it came on, what caused it, or when you've felt the same in the past.
2. Ask yourself thought-provoking questions and answer them. For example, what does recovery mean to you, or what holds you back from trying your best to recover? You might be surprised at your insights.
3. Use your journal to practice what you want to say if you're having a hard time facing a difficult conversation you need to have with someone. For example, maybe you need to consider how to tell a loved one you have an eating disorder.
4. Write letters to those who have hurt you. Although you won't send these letters, you can release some of your emotions by putting your thoughts on paper. This exercise can also help you forgive others.
5. Remember that conversations with God go both ways – that is, when you're listening. Keep track of what God says to you. You'll appreciate those recorded words when you need comfort or feel far away from him.
6. Enter your fears on one side of a page and ways to face them on the other side.
7. List your long-term goals on one page and intermediate goals on another. From there, you can make a page of daily goals. Mark them off as you accomplish them. You can also keep a calendar in your journal and give yourself a star or a sticker on days you've accomplished a goal or taken a step forward.
8. If you find it difficult to open up to your counselor, you can use your journal to practice what you want to say. You can even read what you've written or give it to your therapist during a session. Your journal is there to help you get your thoughts and feelings out, so make good use of this tool.

Perhaps you'd like to try some of these suggestions. Maybe reviewing this list has sparked some ideas of your own. In either case, the main thing is to manage journaling in the way that works best for you.

## [Journaling Suggestions - Changing Your Thoughts](#)

Journaling can be a great tool to help you change your thoughts. Lies and negative beliefs are difficult to change, but journaling can help. Maybe you have thoughts such as: “I’m ugly,” “I’ll never recover,” or “I don’t deserve better than to have this eating disorder for the rest of my life.” Such beliefs can sabotage your recovery efforts.

In the throes of an eating disorder, you can be ruled by lies and negative thoughts. These thoughts affect your emotions, which, in turn, affect your behaviors. In other words, one negative thing leads to another. It’s a tough cycle to break, but the following journaling tips can help.

1. Recognize your troublesome thoughts. As they come to you, list them on a page in your journal.
2. Evaluate how you feel when you focus on these lies and negative conclusions. Write about the emotions that arise when these musings reel through your mind.
3. Consider how your emotions affect your decisions and behaviors. For example, if one of your negative thoughts is, “I’ll never recover,” and that brings about a feeling of hopelessness, how does that affect your eating in the moment? Write about the connection you see between your thoughts, emotions, and behaviors.
4. Search for positive and truthful reflections that directly combat the lies and negative thoughts. Find quotes, song lyrics, poems, devotionals, or Bible verses that encourage and inspire you. Dedicate pages in your journal for them.
5. Examine how you feel when you ponder the positive and truthful contemplations. Write about how differently you feel when you focus on them instead of the lies and negative beliefs.
6. Imagine how your food-related behaviors might change if you believe what is edifying and true. Pen your thoughts about that.
7. Review the truthful, encouraging musings daily. When the lies come, redirect your mind to the truth. Then record your successes in your journal.

While these journaling suggestions won’t “cure” your eating disorder, they can help you take a vital step in your recovery – that of changing your thoughts. Why not give these ideas a try?



## [Journaling Questions](#)

Using these journaling questions can benefit your recovery, but be careful. Answering these questions can bring up some thoughts and feelings that may be intense for you. So don't try to do a lot of them at once. Browse through them and choose one at a time. They are 100 questions, which are divided into 22 different sections for easy reference.

You may also want to check out the journaling pages on the [Recovery Helps](#) page at Freedom from Eating Disorders.

While it's beneficial to process thoughts and feelings through journaling, if it gets to be too uncomfortable for you, pray, give yourself a break, or try a simpler question. Be sure you have someone to talk to if you feel overwhelmed.

If you struggle in any area covered in these journaling questions, please know that each topic is included in one of my other works. These publications include:

*Journey to Freedom from Eating Disorders*

*Give God Your Eating Disorder*

*Eating Disorder Recovery: Staying on Track with God's Help*

*God's Role in Eating Disorder Recovery*

You can find out more about these works on the [Eating Disorder Books](#) page.

### **Body Image**

What are eating disorder behaviors doing to my body? Is my body image worth sacrificing my health and well-being?

### **Body Image**

Am I willing to talk through my body image issues with anyone? If not, what is holding me back?

### **Body Image**

Am I willing to talk to God about my body image issues? If not, what is holding me back?

### **Control**

Is there some circumstance or situation in my life that I feel is out of control? If so, what is it?

### **Control**

Are there traits about myself I fear will spin out of control? If so, what are they?

### **Control**

Am I afraid I won't be able to control how much I eat? If so, why? How can I change that belief?

### **Emotions**

Do I believe my emotions make me a bad or weak person in any way? If so, where did I get that belief? How can I change that belief?

### **Emotions**

What emotions make me uncomfortable and why?

### **Emotions**

Am I afraid to allow myself to feel? If so, why?

### **Emotions**

Am I willing to write about one feeling? If so, which one and what do I want to say about it?

### **Emotions**

Do I realize that when I shut off negative feelings, I also deny myself of positive feelings? What are some positive emotions I'd like to feel?

### **Fear**

When I look beyond the food-related behaviors, deep down, what is it that I really fear and why?

### **Fear**

Do I believe I can break free of my fears? Is there any reason this may be difficult for me to believe?

### **Fear**

Which fear am I willing to face first, and how can I do that?

### **Fear**

Am I allowing God's love to drive out my fear? What are some verses about God's love that I can meditate on and turn to when fearful?

### **Food**

What does food represent to me?

### **Food**

What does “food” give me or what does “restricting food” give me?

### **Food**

What does a normal eater look like to me?

### **Food**

How do I feel about inviting the Lord to be with me while I eat? Am I willing to try it? Why or why not?

### **Forgiveness**

Is there anyone I need to forgive? If so, whom and for what?

### **Forgiveness**

Am I willing to forgive this person? If not, why?

### **Forgiveness**

Do I realize that holding onto offenses only compounds my pain, but that the Lord wants better for me? In what ways have I hurt myself by holding onto wrongs?

### **Forgiveness**

Jesus gave His life for my sins and the sins of all who will walk this earth. Am I, therefore, willing to forgive others? Why or why not?

### **Forgiveness**

If I struggle to forgive others, why is that?

### **Forgiveness**

What verses, or other writings, about forgiveness speak to me and help me be willing to forgive?

### **Getting Help**

Do I feel weak about needing help? If so, why, and what can I do to change that kind of thinking?

### **Getting Help**

Am I willing to seek professional or pastoral help? If not, what is holding me back?

### **Getting Help**

Am I willing to search for support groups or look online if there are none available in my area? If not, what is holding me back?

### **Guilt**

Do I feel I must continually punish myself for my mistakes? If so, why? How can I change this?

### **Guilt**

Do I believe that God will forgive me and not hold against me what I've done to my body (however, realizing that I may still have physical consequences that cannot be reversed at this point)? Why or why not?

### **Guilt**

Do I believe that regardless of what I've done, God continues to love me and wants to help me recover? Why or why not?

### **Guilt**

As I examine my guilt, which is true guilt and which is false guilt?

### **Guilt**

For my true guilt, will I confess it to the Lord and accept his forgiveness? If I struggle to accept his forgiveness, why is that? How can I change it?

### **Guilt**

For my false guilt, will I let go of it and give it to the Lord? If not, what is holding me back?

### **Identity in Christ**

Why do I care so much about what others think of me?

### **Identity in Christ**

Do I understand I am God's much-loved, precious creation? If this is difficult for me to believe, why is that?

### **Identity in Christ**

Do I believe God wants to be close to me? How close do I believe he wants to be to me?

### **Identity in Christ**

Do I believe I'm worth the fight and that he wants to invest in my life because he created me and wants the best for me? Does anything cause me to doubt this?

### **Identity in Christ**

Do I struggle to see myself through God's eyes? If so, why?

### **Identity in Christ**

Will I make a list of positive things about myself – that have nothing to do with my appearance or weight – in order to verify my true identity?

### **Identity in Christ**

What verses define my identity in Christ? How can I hold them in my heart and let their meaning filter through my life?

### **Inner Healing**

Do I see food-related behaviors as a way to numb my inner pain? Can I see this isn't a permanent solution? Why or why not?

### **Inner Healing**

What is the source of my inner pain?

### **Inner Healing**

Am I willing to give my hurts to the Lord so he can heal them? If not, what prevents me from doing this?

### **Meal Plans**

Am I willing to see a dietitian or nutritionist to obtain a meal plan? Why or why not?

### **Meal Plans**

Am I able to view a meal plan as more than a way to gain or lose weight, but a means of balance and good health? Why or why not?

### **Meal Plans**

What are my fears about following my meal plan? What can I do to face those fears?

### **Perfectionism**

Why do I feel I should be perfect?

### **Perfectionism**

Can I accept it when I've done my best, and can I realize that my best might change from one day to the next? Why or why not?

### **Perfectionism**

In what ways can I adjust my perfectionistic expectations of myself?

### **Perfectionism**

If I do something that is mostly successful, but with a small flaw, do I deem it a failure? Do I regularly engage in all-or-nothing thinking such as this? If so, why?

### **Perfectionism**

What can I remind myself of when I engage in all-or-nothing thinking so I can redirect my thoughts and gain a more balanced perspective?

### **Prayer**

Do I ask God to help me recover? If not, what holds me back?

### **Prayer**

Do I ever just talk to God like he's sitting right next to me? Am I comfortable trying this and simply being in his presence? Why or why not?

### **Prayer**

Do I realize I don't have to feel embarrassed about telling God anything I think or feel concerning my eating disorder? Can I tell him anything? Why or why not?

### **Prayer**

How would I like to pray about my recovery? Even if I'm not ready to pray about my recovery yet, if I was ready, what would I say?



### **Prayer**

Do I truly believe that nothing is too small to bring to God in prayer? Why or why not?

### **Prayer**

Do I truly believe that nothing is too large to bring to God in prayer? Why or why not?

### **Relapses**

What caused me to relapse?

### **Relapses**

What can I learn from my relapse?

### **Relapses**

Is there anything I can do to prevent a future relapse?

### **Relapses**

Once I have dealt with the relapse, how can I put it behind me?

### **Renew the Mind**

What lies and negative thoughts do I believe about myself?

### **Renew the Mind**

What verses, quotes, or other positives can I use to replace the lies I believe about myself?

### **Renew the Mind**

What lies and negative thoughts do I believe about recovery?

### **Renew the Mind**

What verses, quotes, or other positives can I use to replace the lies I believe about recovery?

### **Renew the Mind**

What other verses and truthful statements encourage and inspire me?

### **Scale**

Am I willing to weigh myself less often or even get rid of my scale? Why or why not?

### **Scale**

Why is the number on the scale so important to me? What does that number represent?

### **Scale**

How does the number on the scale affect how I feel about myself?

### **Scale**

How do I let the number on the scale affect my recovery?

### **Shame**

Will I share my shame with the Lord? Why or why not?

### **Shame**

Do I genuinely believe that God can heal me of my shame? Why or why not?

### **Shame**

What will happen to me if I hold onto the shame I feel?

### **Spiritual Warfare**

What is my position in Christ?

### **Spiritual Warfare**

Do I realize that the truth is one of the most powerful weapons I have in this fight to break free? Do I act according to that belief? If not, how can I change that?

### **Spiritual Warfare**

Do I realize spiritual warfare can play a role in eating disorders? In what ways can I see it in my case?

### **Steps in Recovery**

What are my long-term recovery goals?

### **Steps in Recovery**

How can I break down my long-term goals into smaller, more manageable steps?

### **Steps in Recovery**

Do I feel comfortable inviting the Lord to take each recovery step with me? Why or why not?

### **Steps in Recovery**

What is the next step forward that I want to take in my recovery and why?

### **Steps in Recovery**

What have I learned from the backward steps I've taken in my recovery?

### **Steps in Recovery**

What steps forward have I taken in my recovery?

### **Thoughts on Recovery**

Do I believe there is a better life waiting for me? In what ways would my life be better without the eating disorder?

### **Thoughts on Recovery**

Deep down, do I truly want to recover? Why or why not?

### **Thoughts on Recovery**

What has the eating disorder taken from me? In what ways has it affected my life and the lives of those around me?

### **Thoughts on Recovery**

What have I learned about myself through my eating disorder?

### **Thoughts on Recovery**

What gives me hope that I can recover from my eating disorder?

### **Thoughts on Recovery**

What inspires me to persevere in my recovery? What motivates me to keep going during the challenging times?

### **Thoughts on Recovery**

What scares me about being free of my eating disorder?

### **Thoughts on Recovery**

In what ways am I doing my best to recover?

### **Thoughts on Recovery**

In what ways can I do better in my attempt to recover?

### **Triggers**

What events, thoughts, or emotions trigger my food-related behaviors?

### **Triggers**

What can I do to avoid these triggers?

### **Triggers**

If/when I can't avoid these triggers, how can I manage them without engaging in food-related behaviors?

### **Triggers**

Do I truly believe that God can give me the power to say no when I'm triggered? Why or why not?

**Trust God to Lead Recovery**

Do I trust that God knows what is best for me? Do I live as if I believe it? Why or why not?

**Trust God to Lead Recovery**

Why have I hesitated to give my eating disorder over to the Lord?

**Trust God to Lead Recovery**

Am I willing to start by surrendering even one area of my recovery over to the Lord? If so, which one and why?

**Trust God to Lead Recovery**

Am I willing to give God control of my recovery? If not, what is holding me back?

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## [About the Author](#)

Laurie Glass has a Master's Degree in Christian Counseling. She is also a recovered anorexic who understands the ups and downs of the recovery process. Laurie is passionate about helping others find freedom from their own eating disorders.

Laurie is also the author of the following:

*Journey to Freedom from Eating Disorders*

*Give God Your Eating Disorder*

*Eating Disorder Recovery: Staying on Track with God's Help*

*Bible Verses for Eating Disorder Recovery*

*God's Role in Eating Disorder Recovery*

*Eating Disorder Recovery Poems*

In these works, she offers personal, practical, and biblical advice on many topics in eating disorder recovery. You can find out more about them on the [Eating Disorder Books](#) page. She has also had several poems and articles published in both print and online publications. In addition, she was quoted in the April, 2012 issue of Women's Health Magazine in an article entitled The Scary Rise of Adult Eating Disorders.

To find out more about Laurie and what she has to offer, visit [Freedom from Eating Disorders](#) at <http://freedomfromed.com>. There's a lot there, so Laurie encourages people to visit often and find what speaks to them for the day. You can also find Laurie on [Facebook](#).

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