

DISCOVERING YOUR TRUE SELF

A GUIDED JOURNAL FOR AUTHENTICITY, CLARITY, AND CONFIDENCE

Discovering Your True Self: A Guided Journal for Authenticity, Clarity, and Confidence

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ABOUT THIS JOURNAL

A guided journal is a special type of journal that gives you prompts to help you reflect on your thoughts, feelings, and experiences. Unlike a blank notebook, a guided journal gives direction and encouragement, making it easier to start writing.

Studies have shown that guided journals offer many of the same benefits as coaching and therapy. Spending time writing about yourself will make you happier, healthier, more productive, and more able to tackle life's challenges. *Discovering Your True Self* was developed by a professional coach and is specifically designed to help you connect to your truest, most authentic self.

INSTRUCTIONS

To use this journal, begin by reading the prompt on the page, then take a few moments to think about your response before writing. There are no right or wrong answers — just be honest and write freely. After you're done each part of the journal, you'll be able to review what you've written and reflect on your answers.

There are three parts to *Discovering Your True Self*. You can complete them all at once, or one page at a time.

PART 1: YOUR INNER CHILD

One of the fastest ways to discover your “true self” is to review your childhood. The passions, hobbies, and interests you used to have provide excellent clues about what your “true self” might be like.

PART 2: YOUR NATURAL MOMENTUM

In the second part of *Discovering Your True Self*, you will reflect on things that you love doing in the present. This will help you discover sources of personal momentum.

PART 3: LIVING AN AUTHENTIC LIFE

In the final part of this guided journal, you will develop an action plan for how you can live an authentic life. This will help you stay true to yourself in the future.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

At the end of this guided journal, you will find some background information that might be informative or helpful. This includes some psychological research on “true selves”.

*But often, in the world's most crowded streets,
But often, in the din of strife,
There rises an unspeakable desire
After the knowledge of our buried life;
A thirst to spend our fire and restless force
In tracking out our true, original course;
A longing to inquire
Into the mystery of this heart which beats
So wild, so deep in us—to know
Whence our lives come and where they go.*

- From "The Buried Life", Matthew Arnold



PART 1: YOUR INNER CHILD

CONTENTS

- 1.1 – Childhood Enthusiasm
- 1.2 – Career Aspirations
- 1.3 – Inspirations at School
- 1.4 – Childhood Heroes
- 1.5 – Wrap-Up Reflections

1.1 – CHILDHOOD ENTHUSIASM

One of the most fun things about being a kid is how *enthusiastic* they are about the things they love. You might have been the kid that absolutely loved dinosaurs, or maybe you loved space. Some kids love rocks, some love photography, some love drawing or writing, and some love dancing.

>> WHAT WERE SOME OF THE THINGS YOU ABSOLUTELY LOVED AS A CHILD? WHY WERE THESE THINGS SO INTERESTING TO YOU?

1.2 – CHILDHOOD DREAMS

Most young children have very specific career aspirations. Some kids want to be astronauts. Other kids want to be crime scene investigators. Other kids dream of being mascots or archaeologists. These dreams are precious, and it's important to reflect on what you wanted to be and why.

>> WHEN YOU WERE A CHILD, WHAT CAREERS DID YOU DREAM OF PURSUING? WHY DID YOU WANT TO PURSUE THOSE CAREERS?

1.3 – INSPIRATIONS AT SCHOOL

For most children, school isn't very fun. Because you don't get to choose what you learn about, a lot of your time is spent learning about things that aren't very interesting. But, almost everyone can remember a book, assignment, or subject that they thought was fun, interesting, or inspiring.

>> WHAT WAS SOMETHING YOU DISCOVERED IN SCHOOL THAT INSPIRED YOU? WHY DID IT APPEAL TO YOU SO MUCH AT THE TIME?

1.4 – CHILDHOOD HEROES

Almost everyone has someone they looked up to as a kid, or a hero that they wanted to be like. Thinking about who that person was for you, and why they were so special, can help you uncover aspects of your “true self”.

>> WHO WERE YOUR CHILDHOOD HEROES? WHY DID YOU LOOK UP TO THEM?

1.5 – WRAP-UP REFLECTIONS

Now that you’ve reflected on different parts of your childhood, it’s time to think about what this might mean about your “true self”. The following three questions will help you discover patterns between your answers and deepen your self-understanding.

>> WHAT ARE SOME PATTERNS YOU SEE BETWEEN YOUR CHILDHOOD INTERESTS, YOUR CAREER DREAMS, YOUR INSPIRATIONS, AND YOUR HEROES?

>> **WHAT ARE THREE WORDS YOU WOULD USE TO DESCRIBE YOUR CHILDHOOD SELF?**

>> **REVIEW YOUR ANSWERS SO FAR. HOW DO YOU THINK THESE THINGS MAKE YOU UNIQUE AND SPECIAL? WHAT DO THESE THINGS REVEAL ABOUT WHO YOU REALLY ARE?**



PART 2: YOUR NATURAL MOMENTUM

CONTENTS

- 2.1 – Discovering Your Strengths
- 2.2 – Your Current Interests
- 2.3 – If Money Didn't Matter
- 2.4 – Consistent Themes
- 2.5 – Wrap-Up Reflections

2.1 – DISCOVERING YOUR STRENGTHS

Strengths are your “superpowers”. These are things that you’re naturally good at, or things that come naturally to you. Being aware of your strengths and where you can apply them is an important part of connecting with your “true self”.

>> **WHAT ARE SOME THINGS THAT OTHER PEOPLE SAY YOU’RE GOOD AT?**

>> **WHAT ARE SOME THINGS YOU KNOW YOU ARE BETTER AT THAN MOST OTHER PEOPLE?**

2.2 – YOUR CURRENT INTERESTS

The things you like right now offer clues about what your “true self” might be like. If you are interested in certain things, it’s worth thinking about what these interests reveal about you and what they might mean.

>> **WHAT DO YOU SPEND YOUR SPARE TIME DOING RIGHT NOW?**

2.3 – IF MONEY DIDN'T MATTER

Once we grow up and start having to worry about bills, rent, and their career, it's easy to lose sight of what we *really* want to do with our lives. This means that thinking about how you would spend your time if you didn't have to worry about "adult stuff" is one of the easiest ways of connecting to your "true self".

>> IF MONEY DIDN'T MATTER, WHAT WOULD YOU DO FOR FUN?

>> IF MONEY DIDN'T MATTER, WHAT WOULD YOU DO FOR A LIVING?

2.4 – CONSISTENT THEMES

Now, it's time to look at the themes hidden within your answers. Review everything you've written so far and try to figure out things that have stayed consistent between your "childhood self" and your "current self". If something is consistently showing up in your answers, that is a strong indicator it's an element of your "true self".

>> LOOKING BACK, DO YOU SEE ANY CONNECTION BETWEEN YOUR ANSWERS SO FAR? HOW MIGHT YOUR "CHILDHOOD SELF" BE CONNECTED TO YOUR "CURRENT SELF"?

2.5 – WRAP-UP REFLECTIONS

Now that you've completed two sections of this guided journal, it's time to think about what this might mean about your "true self".

>> WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED ABOUT YOURSELF SO FAR?



PART 3: LIVING AN AUTHENTIC LIFE

CONTENTS

- 3.1 – Reflecting on Authenticity
- 3.2 – Connecting to Your Values
- 3.3 – Living Your Values
- 3.4 – Tracking Your Success
- 3.5 – Pursuing Your Passions
- 3.6 – Towards Your Dream Job
- 3.7 – Action Planning
- 3.8 – Final Reflections

3.2 – CONNECTING TO YOUR VALUES

A value is defined as “a person's principles or standards of behavior, or one's judgment of what is important in life” (Oxford Languages). Discovering your values is essential because they shape the decisions you make and the life you build. Your values are the core beliefs that guide what matters most to you. Understanding them helps you make choices that align with who you truly are, from the friends you keep to the career you pursue.

Achievement	Family	Recognition
Adventure	Fun	Relationships
Challenge	Justice	Responsibility
Contribution	Knowledge	Service
Creativity	Leadership	Success
Fairness	Patriotism	Wealth
Faith	Peace	Wisdom

>> CHOOSE THREE VALUES FROM THIS LIST, OR DEVELOP SOME OF YOUR OWN. FOR EACH VALUE, WRITE ABOUT WHY THIS VALUE IS IMPORTANT TO YOU.

3.3 – LIVING YOUR VALUES

When you stay true to your values, you gain confidence in your decisions and avoid paths that don't feel right for you. Without this self-awareness, it's easy to get influenced by others or follow a path that doesn't bring real fulfillment. Taking time to reflect on what you truly care about will help you stay true to yourself and create a future that feels meaningful and rewarding.

>> FOR EACH VALUE THAT YOU CHOSE, BRIEFLY DESCRIBE HOW YOUR LIFE MIGHT LOOK IF YOU CONSISTENTLY LIVED THOSE VALUES. HOW WOULD YOUR LIFE BE DIFFERENT? HOW MIGHT IT BE BETTER?

... TODAY?

... ONE YEAR FROM NOW?

... THREE YEARS FROM NOW?

3.4 – TRACKING YOUR SUCCESS

Although a lot of people have values, not everyone spends time thinking about how well they are measuring up to those values. This doesn't have to be monetary, or even related to a number! Get creative about what "success" looks like for you, according to each of your three values.

>> WRITE DOWN EACH OF YOUR THREE VALUES AND THINK OF AT LEAST ONE WAY THAT YOU CAN TRACK YOUR LIFE PERFORMANCE ACCORDING TO THIS VALUE.

3.5 – PURSUING YOUR PASSIONS

Having passions, hobbies, and personal projects are an important part of life. They allow you to express your “true self” in ways that are fully authentic to you. These can be art projects, sports or games, or “do-it-yourself” projects like car repair.

>> WHAT ARE SOME WAYS YOU CAN BEGIN PURSUING YOUR PASSIONS AND EXPRESSING YOURSELF IN WAYS THAT ARE FULLY AUTHENTIC TO YOU?

3.6 – TOWARDS YOUR DREAM JOB

Finding the right career is not just about making money—it's about choosing a job that fits your personality and lifestyle. Some careers require creativity, while others focus on problem-solving or working with people. It is important to choose jobs that allow you to leverage your strengths while giving you a decent living. In today's world, many people are entrepreneurs or have "side gigs", so it may be the case that you are doing multiple things to make money.

>> DESCRIBE WHAT YOUR DREAM JOB LOOKS LIKE. WHAT KIND OF WORK ARE YOU DOING, AND HOW ARE YOU GETTING PAID TO DO THAT WORK?

>> WHAT DOES YOUR DREAM JOB REVEAL ABOUT WHO YOU ARE?

3.7 – ACTION PLANNING

Reflection is great, but it's important to figure out how to translate your thoughts into action. These questions will help you make tangible changes in your life and develop more authenticity.

>> WHAT ARE THREE THINGS YOU CAN DO THIS YEAR TO LIVE MORE AUTHENTICALLY?

>> WHAT ARE SOME SITUATIONS AND PEOPLE THAT YOU SHOULD TRY TO AVOID?

>> WHAT IS A DAILY PRACTICE YOU CAN START TO STAY CONNECTED TO YOUR TRUE SELF?

3.8 – FINAL REFLECTIONS

Now that you've completed the entire journal, it's time to condense what you've learned into things that you can easily remember. This will help you stay connected to your "true self" moving forward, especially when you're under stress.

>> **WHAT WAS THE BIGGEST LESSON YOU LEARNED FROM COMPLETING THIS JOURNAL?**



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

CONTENTS

- Abraham Maslow and “Self-Actualization”
- Donald Winnicott and the “True Self”

ABRAHAM MASLOW AND “SELF-ACTUALIZATION”

Abraham Maslow discovered the concept of self-actualization through his study of human motivation and psychological well-being. In the 1940s and 1950s, he conducted research on highly successful, fulfilled individuals, including historical figures like Albert Einstein and Eleanor Roosevelt, as well as people he personally observed. He noticed that these individuals shared common characteristics, such as creativity, authenticity, deep connections with others, and a strong sense of purpose. These observations led him to propose *self-actualization* as the highest stage of psychological development in his *Hierarchy of Needs*.

Maslow described self-actualized people as those who embrace reality, exhibit deep appreciation for life, maintain strong ethical values, and pursue meaningful goals. Unlike lower needs, which stem from deficiencies, self-actualization is a growth-oriented drive, fostering authenticity, autonomy, and a deep sense of purpose.

QUOTES ABOUT SELF-ACTUALIZATION (FROM “FARTHER REACHES OF HUMAN NATURE”)

“...self actualizing means experiencing fully, vividly, selflessly, with full concentration and total absorption. It means experiencing without the self-consciousness of the adolescent. At this moment of experiencing, the person is wholly and fully human. This is a self-actualizing moment.....the key word for this is "selflessly," and our youngsters suffer from too little selflessness and too much self-consciousness, self-awareness.”

“To make the growth choice instead of the fear choice a dozen times a day is to move a dozen times a day toward self-actualization. *Self-actualization is an ongoing process*; it means making of the many single choices about whether to lie or be honest, whether to steal or not to steal at a particular point, and it means to make each of these choices as a growth choice. This is movement toward self-actualization.”

"Looking within oneself for many of the answers implies taking responsibility. That is in itself a great step towards actualization....one can see it, can feel it, can know the moment of responsibility. Then there is a clear knowing of what it feels like. This is one of the great steps. Each time one takes responsibility, this is an actualizing of the self.”

“...self actualization is not only an end state but also the process of actualizing one's potentialities at any time, in any amount.”

DONALD WINNICOTT AND THE “TRUE SELF”

Donald Winnicott, a British pediatrician and psychoanalyst, developed the concepts of the *true self* and *false self* through his clinical work with children and his observations of early childhood development. His ideas emerged from studying how infants interact with their primary caregivers.

Winnicott introduced these concepts in the 1960s, describing the *false self* as a defensive structure that protects the vulnerable *true self* but can lead to feelings of emptiness or inauthenticity if it becomes dominant. His work emphasized the importance of play, creativity, and relational experiences in helping individuals reconnect with their *true self* and live more authentically. His discoveries had a profound impact on psychoanalysis, attachment theory, and human development.

QUOTES FROM WINNICOTT ABOUT THE “TRUE SELF”

“It is in playing and only in playing that the individual child or adult is able to be creative and to use the whole personality, and it is only in being creative that the individual discovers the self.”

“The most aggressive and therefore the most dangerous words in the languages of the world are to be found in the assertion ‘I AM’. It has to be admitted, however, that only those who have reached a stage at which they can make this assertion are really qualified as adult members of society.”

“The life of a healthy individual is characterized by fears, conflicting feelings, doubts, frustrations, as much as by the positive features. The main thing is that the man or woman feels he or she is living his or her own life, taking responsibility for action or inaction, and able to take credit for success and blame for failure. In one language it can be said that the individual has emerged from dependence to independence, or to autonomy.”