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Abstract

Aims to describe a variety of journal-writing processes and how they have been used with students in a graduate course in human resource development; describes possible causes of learning and writing blocks and how they can be overcome; evaluates the creative journal process by describing advantages, disadvantages and issues from both the students' and the lecturers' perspectives; and offers suggestions for people who use the journal process.

Aims

The aims of this article are to describe a variety of journal-writing processes and explain why and how these processes have been used with students in a graduate course in human resource development (HRD) at Curtin University in Perth, Western Australia. The article also explores some possible causes of writing and learning blocks and makes suggestions on how to overcome them. Finally the advantages and disadvantages of the creative journal process are described and advice is given to lecturers and students who wish to undertake journal writing.

Study area

The creative journal process was introduced as an assignment in a one-semester unit of study entitled Developing People at Work in 1990. This unit is one of the first units undertaken by postgraduate students as part of a two-year part-time course called the Graduate Diploma in Human Resource Development. The course is designed for individuals who have little or no background in business, but wish to obtain a qualification in HRD. Hence the student body is composed of teachers, engineers, computing specialists, health workers, trainers, and government workers. There are a variety of different ethnic groups represented, as students come from Australia, Malaysia, Mauritius, India, and the UK. Some students had close ethnic ties with Italy and Spain. The resulting wealth and variety of experience created an atmosphere for lively discussions and a plethora of opinions.

The unit incorporates a variety of experiential learning activities both in and outside the classroom and includes a two-day residential camp involving outdoor learning activities including personal risk management involving abseiling and trust activities[1] and team work involving problem-solving activities.

The journal and report assignments

The first assignment that students undertake is based on adult learning theory whereby each individual is required to:

- Research into his/her own skills base using questionnaires, interviews with peers, team members, family members, self-reflection on work/home behaviour patterns and intuition.

- Identify a skill that requires development and the associated subskills (for current or future jobs).
- Develop a learning contract outlining proposed behavioural objectives, learning strategies, resources, outcomes.
- Choose a "buddy" or support person from the class and a "mentor" in the community.
- Obtain a large journal book and a small pocket notebook.
- Submit a creative journal covering ten weeks of work and a final formal report.

Knowles[2], Tompkins and McGraw[3] and Lane[4] focus on learning contracts as an essential tool for developing learner autonomy. All participants are required to conduct a needs analysis and submit a learning contract in the third week of semester (see Appendix). Previous students suggested that a mark should be allocated for this contract as an inducement to motivate thorough analysis quickly and prevent procrastination at the beginning of semester (their suggestion worked!). Usually minor alterations and/or additions are required. Students are required to make at least two journal entries each week describing their progress (or lack thereof) towards the development of the skill.

At the end of semester students are required to submit a creative journal and a formal report which gives an overview and summary of their skill development.

Rationale

First, in designing a self-development assignment incorporating the use of the journal process I wanted to encourage learner autonomy and empowerment in that individuals who are returning to study were given the opportunity to work immediately on areas of personal interest and need. Frequently students are demotivated early in their postgraduate careers by areas of study which at first appear to be irrelevant to their current working lives. This philosophy of learner empowerment reflects adult learning theory[5]. The self-development assignment and journal exercises involve problem solving and self-direction, they encompass past, present and future experiences and focus on the whole person, i.e. on social as well as work-related roles. Pedler et al.[6] comment:

> Management self-development is a term used for those approaches to management training and development which seek to increase the

ability and willingness of the manager to take responsibility for him or herself particularly for her or his own learning[6, p. 2].

So often at university the experiences of students are devalued when compared with established authors and the "research". I wished to acknowledge the value of all as sources of knowledge, understanding and wisdom. I wanted students to learn about the process of learner empowerment[7] through exercising their powers of choice. In these assignments they exercise choice over both the content of their learning, i.e. what they choose to learn, and the process of their learning, i.e. how they go about their learning.

Second, my goal was also to motivate students to reflect carefully on the experiential learning experiences in class (and in the workplace), so that they are more able to develop self-directed learning and critical thinking. Verbal debriefing and group discussions in class are useful, but I believe the learning process is enhanced by a more private, in-depth reflection when students are free to be and confront themselves. The journal process is a means to an end. The end is a deeper and more long-lasting learning about themselves. Some people boast about having 20 years' experience. However, all too frequently this means one year repeated 20 times over. Length of experience does not necessarily denote learning. Boud et al.[8] state:

> One of the most important areas of learning for adults is that which frees them from their habitual ways of thinking and acting, and involves them in what Mezirow calls perspective transformation[8, p. 23].

Third, I wanted to encourage "deep" and "achieving" rather than "surface" learning. This way of internalizing learning is what Freire[9] calls "conscientization":

> The deep approach is indicated by an intention to understand the material to be learnt, together with strategies such as reading widely, using a variety of resources, discussion, relating the unfamiliar to the familiar, reflection, etc. An intention to reproduce the material to be learnt and avoid failure through focusing on specific detail using rote learning strategies characterizes the surface approach. The achieving approach is exemplified by an intention to excel by using highly organised learning processes. The surface and deep approaches relate to the content of the material, while the achieving approach relates to the particular learning context[10, p. 317].

Fourth, I value holistic learning, that is learning that involves all the senses: sight, hearing,

touch, thought, creativity, spirit, intuition. To achieve this I wanted to engage students in a variety of learning processes which involve the whole person, but which also provided for learner autonomy.

Fifth, I wanted students to learn about self-development through their own experiences. Many organizations have problems taking people off the job, so that they can attend formal training workshops. Self-development programmes are flexible and in many cases cheaper and the effects are longer-lasting.

What is a creative journal?

Creative journal writing began in the tenth century when Japanese ladies of the royal court developed the diary into a form of self-expression and explored their fantasies as well as perceptions of reality[11]. The process has been used for a variety of purposes. Da Vinci, Franklin[12,13], Frank[14], Pepys[15] Churchill (cited in [16]) kept journals of reflections, questions and problems. Many included sketches, symbols and diagrams of their ideas.

Creative journal writing is a tool, a learning mechanism which involves many different writing techniques to enhance reflection and creative thought. It is not a learning log or traditional diary. The creative journal process is designed to encourage the use of a variety of creative as well as analytical methods of thinking.

Tripp[17], Honey[18], Smith[19], Mumford[20,21], Baird and Mitchell[22], Walker in Boud *et al.*[8] and Simons[23] cite journal writing as a useful learning strategy to enhance metacognitive thinking. Kember and Kelly[24], Tripp[25], Kemmis and McTaggart[26] recommend journal keeping as a useful tool for action research.

The journal process provides:
> …resources for becoming a whole person. It systematically evokes and strengthens the inner capacities of persons by working from a non-medical vantage point and proceeding without analytic or diagnostic categories. It establishes a person's sense of his own being by enriching his inner life with new experiences of a creative and spiritual quality[27, pp. 9-10].

The aim is to enable students to monitor their learning goals, processes and progress; inter-relate ideas; develop understanding of themselves at home and at work; describe learning plateaux and blocks and how they overcame these and free up the writing process so that it

can become a source of freedom, relaxation and fun. The journal can include phrases, passages, words, quotes, sayings, dialogues, drawings, doodlings, sketches, scribbles, cartoons, collage, mind maps, mandalas, prose and poetry, graphs and charts, colours, images and symbols.

The learning process is captured in the journal:
> Physical growth is easy to recognise, but personal growth is inward and elusive. In the metaphor of Lao Tse, it is evanescent, like smoke going out the chimney. We know it exists, but its shape keeps changing. It has no shape that we can fix in our mind; we cannot contain it in any mold. We know it is real, but soon it has disappeared and is beyond us[27, p. 18].

The type of journal writing-book depends on personal preference. However, an A4 blank book or loose-leaf file allows freedom of space and movement. A variety of plain, lined, coloured and white paper, coloured pens, scissors and glue. A small pocket notebook is also useful to record impromptu ideas during the day.

Summary of journal processes used

The first step is to start with a positive intention and a conducive writing environment. Creativity and reflection are enhanced by a relaxing writing environment. This will vary according to your specific needs. It is important to enter into a positive frame of mind by saying to oneself:
> I can and I will give this session my best attention and motivation. I wish to achieve increased learning about myself. I wish to increase my health and wellbeing and learn more about the world I live in. I will try to concentrate fully and work to my capacity not pushing too hard nor being too soft but extending as far as I can into my learning.

Remember, if concentration is difficult it may be better to do something else and come back to writing at a later time!

Doodling
Capacchione[28] encourages doodling as a way of warming up to the writing process. Some people find it useful to accompany this activity with music and even a small dance around the room before they begin! It is also a way of invoking the creative child within, to play with colours and just let shapes happen. When the doodling is complete look at it and record responses.

Stepping-stones

This process refers to the idea of stepping-stones across a river, each of which represents significant milestones that have enabled us to reach the present moment. Some stones may represent a pleasurable achievement, others a painful experience or failure, others joyful transitions, travel or relocation to a new abode or workplace. Progoff[27] suggests limiting the number of stones to about 12.

Dag Hammarskjöld in his autobiographical book *Markings*[29] describes the metaphor of a mountain climber who leaves markers up and down the mountains climbed including in valleys and ravines. Stepping-stones are simply "significant markings".

Progoff[27] describes stepping-stones as a time-stretching process which enables individuals to think in chronological time, that is objective sequencing of events and qualitative time. Next Progoff suggests the use of subjective perception by giving meaning and value to "special" events by picking on certain stones which stand out and describing their significance.

## Critical incidents or event analysis

The phrase "critical incident analysis" unfortunately is sometimes misunderstood in that students perceive it as being a "major" event. Tripp has later decided to use the term "event analysis" to suggest small incidents of everyday life. They may be positive or negative (discussions between the author and David Tripp, May 1993).

Learning from experience can be enhanced by using Kolb's[30] experiential learning cycle (Figure 1).

It is useful to answer a number of questions to explore fully the Kolb model. Spencer[31] developed a process called the "ORID" or "ToP Discussion tool". In Western Australia it is known as the "SAID" process, which is a mnemonic combining the first letters of each stage of the process:

(1) *Situation*. Reflect on the actual experience:
- What images/scenes do you recall?
- Which people/comments/words struck you?
- What sounds/smells/tactile sensations do you recall?
- Were there any other elements?

(2) *Affective domain*. Reflect on the feelings and emotions experienced:
- What was the high spot/low spot?
- What was your mood/feeling?

Figure 1 Experiential learning model
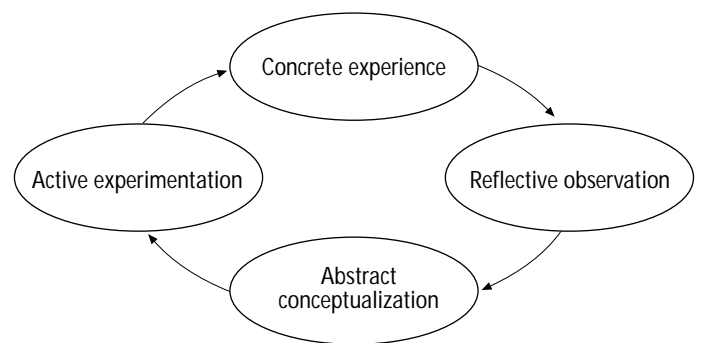
Source: [30]

- Were you surprised/angered/elated/curious/confused/depressed by anything in the experience?

(3) *Interpretation of events*. What did you learn?:
- What can you conclude from this experience?
- What was your key insight/learning?
- How does this relate to appropriate theories and concepts?

(4) *Decision*. What will you do as a result?:
- What do you need to do before this sort of thing happens again?
- What should you do differently next time?
- What would you say to people who were not there?
- What was the significance of this experience to your life?

This process involves an upward spiral of learning and is the basis of "action research" as developed originally by Kurt Lewin[32]. This spiral of learning is rarely continuous. Frequently learning is intermittent and smooth; fast and slow; sometimes deflating and also elevating and multi-dimensional in time and space.

These questions can also be answered in the form of a mind map[33], which enables the learner to connect ideas with arrows (see Figure 2).

In-depth journal writing continually involves people's feelings. Heron[34] describes an up-hierarchy of "the person", which incorporates the feeling dimension at its base (see Figure 3).

Heron maintains that :
A person is a seamless whole, an interacting system which in simplified form has four psychological modes of being: willing is the diamond apex whose facets are cut by the aware

Figure 2 Mind map utilizing the Kolb experiential learning model
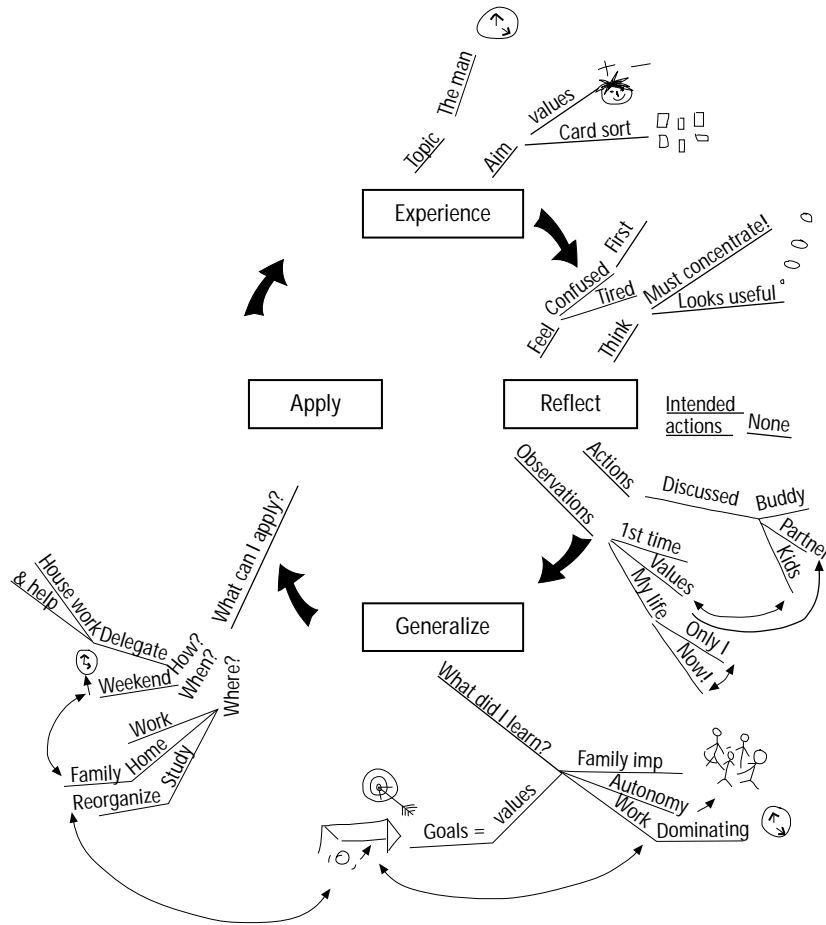
Source: [33]

discrimination of thinking, which is made wise by the holistic receptivity of intuition, and grounded in the participation of feeling[35, p. 126].

Taking Heron's model and argument into account, therefore, holistic learning must include elements of feelings, intuition, think-

Figure 3 Up-hierarchy of learning
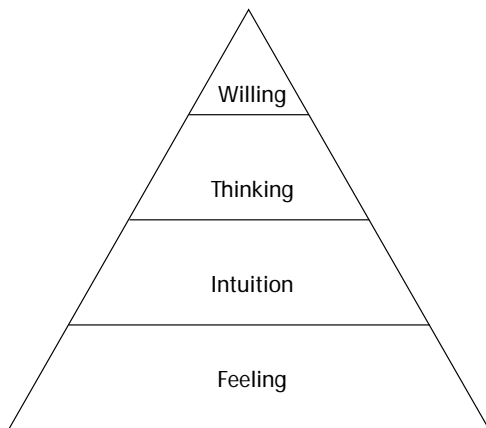
Source:[34]

ing and willingness. Some people find this difficult or even try to block out their feelings. Blocks to learning and writing will be discussed later.

Dialoguing

Dialoguing is an imaginary conversation or script. In the 1960s, *Gestalt* therapists began using the technique. It is a relationship and meeting between the writer and an aspect of your life. It is:

an intimate inner communication carried on continuously in a variety of forms between our conscious self and the non-conscious mini-processes of our individual unfoldment[27, p. 160].

Dialoguing may be between the writer and another person (living or dead), a work (e.g. assignment or text), his/her body, events, institutions, animals, a problem or fear, religious, racial or cultural heritage. For example, a student who was in touch with her fear when contemplating abseiling for the first time decided to confront the cliff:

Diana: Hello, cliff.
Cliff: Hi, there are a lot of people here today.

Diana: Yes, I wish I wasn't here.
Cliff: Why?
Diana: Because I'm scared stiff.
Cliff: What of?
Diana: You, of course ! You're horrible, I hate heights.
Cliff: Why are you afraid of me? I'm just part of nature.
Diana: But I've got to confront you and get over you.
Cliff: You can always say "no".
Diana: True, but that's not my way. I hate giving in.
Cliff: OK, take a good look at me.
Diana: I'm not sure my stomach can handle it.
Cliff: Go on, look at all the strong footholds and that strong rope and your gear. Are you afraid of heights or depths?
Diana: Both – no, depths, falling.
Cliff: Well, don't look down, as you go over the edge.
Diana: That's easy for you to say.
Cliff: Sure, but give it a try.

One student wrote a dialogue with a "path not taken" in her career and examined her attitudes to things that did not happen of which she needed to let go, since they were no longer obtainable. She then examined the positive aspects of the path she did take.

Unsent letter

Rainer[11] suggests that it is useful to write unsent letters when confrontation is either impossible, for example when the person is unavailable, or if such communication is rude or inappropriate or may cause harm. Rainer warns about the overuse of this technique if the writer is avoiding being open with another about an important issue which is obstructing the ongoing development of their relationship. One student sent an "unsent letter" to her husband and also one to herself to investigate learning plateaux.

Mind mapping

Mind mapping is a learning tool which utilizes keywords, colour, symbols and arrows to connect related ideas. Space does not permit a detailed description here. The reader, however, may consult Marguilies[36], Hogan[37], Cacioppe[38], Buzan[33,39] for further information (see also Figure 2).

Mandalas

Pedler et al.[6] and Capacchione[28] advocate the drawing of mandalas or domain mapping to help develop centredness through drawing:

The word mandala means circle in Sanskrit. The mandala, a design form which radiates out

from the center, is ancient and universal, appearing in the art, architecture, dance of cultures everywhere. It is the "magic circle" and often has a ritual, religious symbolism as in the rose windows of medieval churches[28, p. 80].

A mandala may be used for plotting segments of one's life; or for showing one's networks, i.e. those people who are closest and those furthest away (see Figure 4).

Using journals in outdoor programmes

The students were asked to bring a pocket notebook on the outdoor component of the camp. The aims of the two-day camp were to enable students to get to know one another outside the class situation; promote open communication, support and trust; encourage individuals to extend their perceived limits and develop calculated risk management skills; encourage teamwork and group problem-solving skills.

During the risk management-abseiling activity students were asked to monitor their thoughts and feelings before, during and after. Two "thermometer gauges" were used so that they could record how their stress and confidence levels varied before, during and after each activity. Letters of the alphabet were used to monitor changes, e.g. a = before the first descent, b = after the first descent, before the second descent … and so on (see Figure 5).

Learning any new skill frequently involves some levels of stress for adult learners. In this

Figure 4 A mandala or domain map
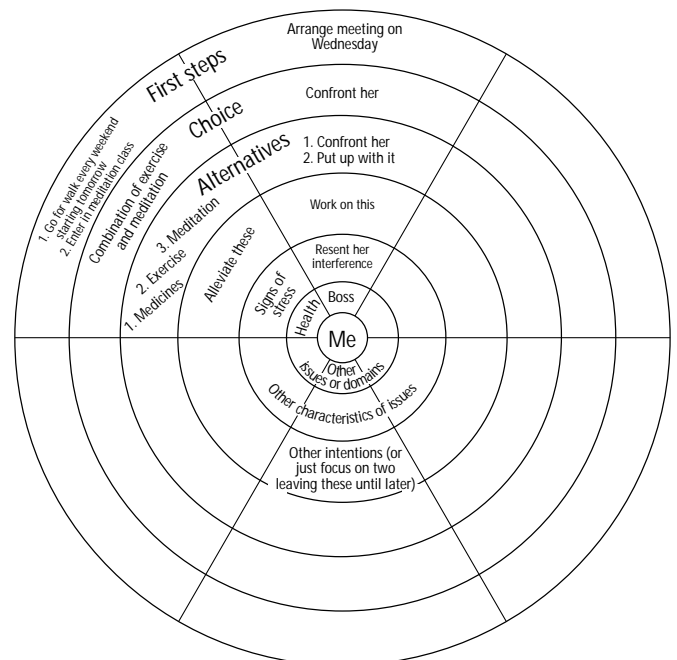
Source: [6, p. 21]

Figure 5 Graph to monitor risk management

activity students learn that fluctuations in stress and confidence levels will occur as they practise the skill and/or move on to harder aspects of the skill, for example steeper and higher cliffs.

The journal is also used by students to reflect on their role(s) and those of others in problem-solving activities, aspects of team-work and communications. Figure 6 is used to evaluate each problem-solving activity.
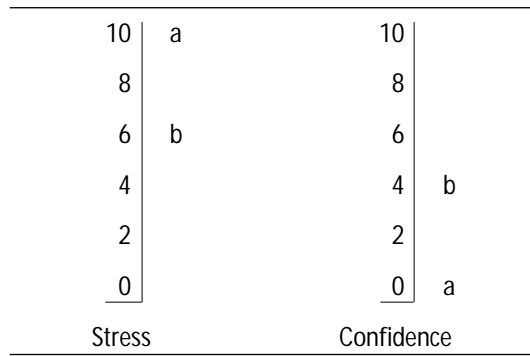
Individuals monitor what they put into the activity, i.e. thought, contribution to task/group maintenance; what they get out of the activity, i.e. satisfaction, learning; the degree of completion of task, i.e. what is achieved and the attention to process, i.e. how they go about the task. As a result learning is enhanced. If time permits, the activity is repeated so that everyone can practise the desired behaviours and strategies discussed in the first debriefing and then evaluate performance on the graph again.

Figure 6 Graph to evaluate problem solving
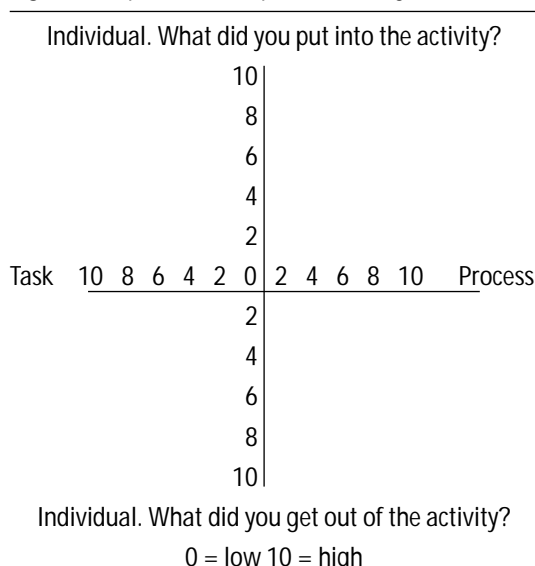
Writing blocks and how to overcome them

> What you have experienced no power on earth can take from you (Friedrich Nietzsche, 1844-1900)

Experiential learning and journal writing involve participants in all of Honey and Mumford's learning styles[40]. They invite participants to have a variety of experiences, which appeals to those who have a preference for being activists; the reflection stage appeals to the reflectors; the generalization stage appeals to the theorists, and the application stage appeals to the pragmatists. Participants who have a strong preference for a particular style may experience resistance or blockages to developing a lesser used style of behaviour. However, as Honey and Mumford[41] suggest, it is useful for everyone to have learning versatility and be able to use all styles.

Rainer[11] describes the "Internal Censor or Internal Critic" who, in transactional analysis (TA) terms, represents fears about "OKness", about the quality or style of writing or who may represent the "critical parent".

One student commented: "I didn't get blocks very often but if I did I found doodling very useful to loosen myself up." Others commented: "Doodling somehow paints a picture" and "I just babbled on for a while and before long I was writing a lot" and "If I get a block I just leave it until the atmosphere is more positive. I put the stereo on, good music and wine provide a pleasant atmosphere and thoughts flow."

Frequently they and I observe a change in writing style and freedom:

> Just picking up my journal the other day I read what I wrote in the initial two weeks. Phew … I mean you can almost notice how the change takes place weekly. Also the manner in which I write now about events certainly is different. For instance, there is not much fear about what I want/should do … in retrospect the initial fear has turned into a triumph for me (Samir).

Regarding blocks to creativity one student wrote:

> To overcome my blocks to creativity I looked for inspiration in Pedler *et al.*[6]; asked for a glimpse of other people's journals; read Rainer[11] – heaps of ideas, some of which I'm now applying to my personal writing; made an effort at least to try the things suggested by Chris each week (Lesley).

Another student realized that writing blocks were normal. In this instance he came to understand that it is not "how you feel" but "how you feel about how you feel" that is important:

> Now if I get a block I will most probably think that it's OK, it's normal, it happens to everyone. I would feel quite easy about it and I would just write about the block and free myself! (Wing)

One student described her fear at the beginning:

> I felt scared that I would be unable to tap into my creative side (I know I've got to), so I sat down and wrote my favourite quotes throughout the journal, so I would come across them as I added to the diary at a later date. Why? Ownership !

One way of overcoming blocks is to write freely and intuitively without paying attention to grammar/spelling. Another way is to make a list, start mind mapping or to do a meditation exercise on the issue.

Rainer[11] suggests a number of strategies:
- Write about the block. Write about the symptoms of the block, for example, "When I sit down to write, my hand becomes heavy like a weight on my mind, which stops me from writing. I can feel it now like a weight on my back …"
- Dialogue with the block:
  Me: Oh it's you again.
  Block: Yes, and you are stuck on me again.
  Me: Why do you bug me?
  Block: Because you let me get the upper hand.
  Me: Aha, but not this time …
- Write about your fear. It is useful to ask "What am I afraid to say?" and then write it down. By exposing it head on, the fear is removed.
- Make a deal with the block and/or critic. Ask "What am I afraid to write?" If it is so bad, then make a deal with it, write it down and then throw the piece of paper away.
- Circumvent the block with altered point of view or audience. Another way to trick the internal critic is to alter the writer's point of view, i.e. instead of writing in the first person using "I", start using "he", "she" or "it". Or you can change your audience, i.e. instead of writing for the lecturer, write as if you were writing for your most supportive friend, e.g. yourself.
- Constructive blocking. Some blockages may be useful. They may indicate tiredness and that the writer needs a break. Or they may indicate that something has been blocked for a long time.
- Preventive strategies. One way is to write in fourth gear, i.e. so fast that blockages do not have time to catch up with the writer.

Learning blocks and how to overcome them

> That which does not kill me makes me stronger (Friedrich Nietzsche).

Learning blocks are a natural part of lifelong learning. Frequently they prevent the learner deeply analysing an event. Tripp[17] suggests the "why? challenge" process to push through these blocks:

> Another simple form of analysis that can be far-reaching and sometimes quite devastatingly dramatising in its effects is, like Sophocles, to ask, and go on asking, the question, Why? When we do this we do not go forever, but we may go on for a long time before we find that underlying our action or idea is one of two things: a normative statement or some form of reification. In effect the end point is the same: we see things are as they are because we choose to make them that way. In practical terms, if we ask Why? for long enough, we end up saying either "Because that's how it ought to be" or "Because that's how it is"[17, pp. 29-30].

The next stage involves really asking why "that's how it is" and can "it" be changed even in some small way. This process, as Tripp points out, can be quite disturbing when an individual realizes that his/her perceived lack of choice may have been a rationale or ego-defence mechanism[42]. Empowerment is about "choice":

> There is always an alternative and we can choose. None of the alternatives in some situations may be desirable, but it is the knowledge that there is always a choice that heralds the beginning of self-empowered thinking[43, p. 57].

The realization of "choice" may be blocked. The author has recently been involved in workshops on domestic violence. Some women who had been subjected to violence as children developed a placating, coping mechanism in order to survive as they could not leave the family situation. In adulthood when faced with similar problems with violent husbands some used the same coping strategies. They forgot that as adults they have the choice of leaving even temporarily to show that violent behaviour is unacceptable. Progoff[27] gives the analogy of sunlight dawning:

The soil of our lives is loosened and softened. The solid clumps of past experiences are broken up so that air and sunlight can enter. New harnesses come in and have a fertilizing effect. Soon the soil becomes soft enough for new shoots to grow in. That softness inside of us is a new feeling, and it opens new possibilities[27, p. 100].

One student wrote:

I have undertaken the greatest learning experience of my life. Controlling what I learnt, how much I wanted to learn and my degree of success. Initially I was resistant to the process … I kept going although at a distance … reading and then suddenly I became focused. Experiential learning took place by challenging the traditional learning methods and involving myself in risk management.

Another student wrote:

The use of the journal initially presented a major blockage. This was the "stranger" threat. It was the perceived tool that had the potential to unlock some inner secrets such as my original perceptions of early childhood, the pain of interpersonal relationships gone wrong, the agony of personal and professional self-doubts. All the little "checkpoint Charlies" I had designed to prevent a breaching of my own "Berlin wall" were in themselves in danger of being breached . Out of this bubbling cauldron of negativity, fears and cynicism came an acceptance of the journal. It became a friend, a secret closet one could open at any time and into which frustrations (and there were a lot) could be unloaded and then close the door.

Having to confront oneself feels like being in a labour ward. The process is a natural part of life, yet it can feel dangerous and maybe frightening. Once in the process there is no going back and we do not know what it is like on the other side. Socrates, who was one of the greatest teachers of all time, based his method of teaching on such questioning. As Chaudheri[44] states:

Socrates (469-399 BC) was perhaps the first to point out that a question is a midwife that brings ideas to birth. He himself used to practise this "art of intellectual midwifery"[44, pp. 30-4].

Reviewing the journal

Capacchione[28] suggests the process of reviewing, which provides a new sense of perspective and reveals patterns, cycles and periods of insightfulness. She suggests many different ways of reviewing including reading segments to yourself aloud and/or taping and playing back segments. She also suggests

keeping a summary log with dates and a synopsis in chronological order. For example:

- 26 February: nervous, concerned, powerless;
- 2 March: better, wrote contract;
- 9 March: depressed, contract to be rewritten, under stress
- 11 March: rewritten contract, more confident, clearer aims.

This process can be used to highlight certain aspects; for example, some journal keepers highlight feelings, others highlight events, others learning issues.

Issues

The skills-learning assignment requires students to confront themselves. Some find this process very rewarding, others find it extremely difficult and at times painful, as many past issues are recalled. Yet this is part of the empowerment process[7]. Some individuals find self-analysis and/or disclosure threatening. Therefore a lecturer has to be aware of and be equipped to facilitate the affective/feelings domain to enable students to work through these issues. One student wrote, "I was worried and confused, I just stared at the page."

Some students were trapped by the issue of correctness. "I kept wondering if I was getting it right". Others were trapped by their own stereotypes. "Journal writing was meant for writers and artists and I am concerned as I do not consider myself to fit into either of these categories … as a result I did not take it seriously and tended to neglect it." Some students thrive on writing freedom, while others find lack of structure a threat at first. One student wrote at the beginning: "I feel frustrated. My learning before has been more structured. I feel silly with the results." Later the same student wrote "I have thoroughly enjoyed doing the journal. It's been a little freer than the norm. I would like to continue with it after the unit. I look forward to other journal experiences."

Journal writing does not appeal to everyone. This is not really a disadvantage as it may be that the processes involved are alien to some individuals yet still stimulate learning. I have tried to help students through their blocks, but on occasions have felt the need to offer an alternative source of assessment. Interestingly enough, no students have as yet availed themselves of this offer.

Many students indicated a change in perception during the semester. At the beginning one student commented "Oh no! I felt perplexed, powerless, unsure, listless. I felt that I didn't have any control over the situation. To begin with I put it out of my mind." Later she said, "This isn't so bad … it's a little stilted but OK … this could be interesting …." At the end, "I have thoroughly enjoyed the journal and I believe have taken to it like a duck to water … maybe my free child revisited or visited for the first time! It has assisted me to clarify thoughts, ideas, concepts/strategies and 'capture' feelings as they're brimming or blocking further learning. I've especially enjoyed the buzz of a little creativity coming out of me."

Another commented, at the beginning, "What in the world does she want? What is the point of the journal exercise? How does it relate to the Developing People at Work Unit?" At the end he said, "I was a bit surprised at how much I actually was able to apply techniques to world experiences. Still feel a bit uncomfortable with some techniques, but I feel progress was made."

Another issue concerns the tension between three of my aims, i.e. to provide a holistic as well as an autonomous, empowered learning experience. When students are in autonomous mode they tend to revert to learning processes that are known to them, e.g. reading texts, watching videos. I want to respect the right of students to choose the skill they wish to develop but also to stimulate them to use learning processes which are new to them. It is sometimes difficult to ensure that their learning is empowered, holistic involving their whole selves *and* autonomous.

Some students had had negative previous experiences with journal writing and overcame this block by choosing a journal book which was totally different in character from those used before. "I went and bought an exercise book and deliberately covered it in a colour I liked, so it would hide the pain somewhat."

Some students had had positive experiences of previous journal writing and directly transferred their previous techniques to this assignment. "Oh, great, a journal again! I had to keep one when I was doing my Diploma in Education." The same student wrote later, "Only recently it has dawned on me that it has to be creative … the one I had done before was just a journal of my learning."

Another issue arose from students who came from a different cultural background.

One student suggested, "Those of us who have come from another culture and education system which were objective and left-brained need a separate group session with you to get hold of what is involved … it would be good to have it in the first week or so before we actually start entries in our journals."

There is a problem maintaining confidentiality regarding personal issues. Students have the choice of what they want to write. If they wish to write about personal issues, I suggested that they tape up those pages or use code so that these areas may remain private.

I have been sometimes in a quandary with respect to occasional students who perhaps indicate by their journal writing that they may benefit from counselling help. At Curtin University there is a very professional counselling service whose personnel help students to overcome learning blocks and in some cases where appropriate help them to re-write their life scripts in TA terms[45].

Advantages and disadvantages for students

Journal writing is an empowering self-counselling skill, "an instrument for life"[27, p. 9]. The techniques once learned may be used in times of stress, conflict and difficulty or in gentler times for quiet reflection and learning. It increases self-reliance. "I use it to get rid of frustrations I felt about my work and the weak and watery boss."

It enables students to see how life situations link to theories in texts. As a result they have an opportunity to delve not only into their thoughts, but also into their feelings about abstract theories.

> The journal process is designed to :
> … provide an instrument and techniques by which persons can deliver within themselves the resources they did not know they possessed. It is to enable them to draw the power of deep contact out of the actual experiences of their lives so that they can recognize their own identity and harmonize it with the larger identity of the universe as they experience it[27, p. 10].

The journal is a useful record for future reference. Learners can start to identify patterns of behaviour; for example, when glancing through my journals I found that before risk taking I always hesitate at the last moment and have learned through positive self-talk to take the responsibility for pushing myself through that block.

Students gain a learning tool which is transferable to a variety of situations later in college, work or home life. One student wrote, "I am happy having learned this technique; I now feel that journal writing will form part of my life as it is an effective tool for self-development which is an endless process."

Journal writing at first is time-consuming as it forces students to integrate course material, reading, theories as well as past and present experiences. This could also be regarded as a positive. Students at first find it difficult to choose one critical incident to work on in-depth. They tend to try to describe everything in class superficially.

It is difficult for students to be totally "free" in their writing, as they know their journal will be read by a lecturer. I cannot find a way around this, as, when I first introduced the journal process six years ago to students as a voluntary adjunct to a course, none of them kept up the process. There was no incentive as no marks were attached to the project. I now invite them to seal personal pages with tape and promise that their privacy will be honoured.

Some students have had poor experiences of journal writing in the past. For example, one student described the story of how she kept a journal at school and confided in it her hatred for a particularly distasteful nun. The nun saw her writing in it and demanded to see it. The student ran home (with the nun in hot pursuit) and tore out the offending pages. Her parents were summoned to the school. This student overcame the resulting negative blocks by obtaining a journal that was totally different in size and shape from her previous one.

Advantages and disadvantages for lecturers

The student journals enable lecturers to find out how their classes, exercises, discussions, the texts are perceived and understood by students. If necessary remedial steps can then be taken. In reading the journal, lecturers can understand the student's experience from a student's perspective[46] and as a result they increase their own learning in the process. It enables lecturers to get to know students more quickly and as a result makes learning altogether more interesting.

The journal-writing assignment generates great demands on lecturer time in that many students need individual attention regarding the choice of skill and overcoming learning and writing blocks. It is hard at the beginning to convince students of the need to commit their ideas to paper and to invest the time necessary. "At first I thought it was going to be an easy, superficial assignment. Now I realise it wasn't and I know how much I have learned. It is one of the best university assignments I have ever done."

Tips for students

These tips have been collected with the help of students:
- Identify a time and place and get into the writing habit. Do not put it off and fall behind.
- Stick at it.
- Record experiences as soon as possible after they happen (carry a small pocketbook all the time as well as on the camp).
- Be selective in what you choose to describe.
- Do not try to describe everything.
- Release the "free child" and suppress the "critical parent" within you[45].
- If you get stuck, go for a walk, have a cup of tea.

Tips for lecturers

Based on my experiences I would suggest:
- Orientate students carefully and explain the purposes of the assignment and how it relates to adult learning.
- Provide a variety of journal-writing processes as students relate to some processes more readily than others.
- Try to allow wide flexibility in how students make entries into their journals.
- Review journals to make sure students are on the right track.
- Sometimes negative past experiences may block the writing process. Invite students to describe these negative past experiences.
- Encourage students to share parts of their journals with trusted peers, so that they can give one another feedback and learn from one another.
- Encourage students to re-read their journal entries and add to past events in the light of time, as frequently patterns of behaviour are identified.
- Encourage students to record fewer incidents but reflect more deeply.
- Allocate time during the learning programme for journal writing and discussion.

- Journal writing should be linked to learning styles and the experiential learning process.
- Participants should be invited to record content knowledge/observations as well as process knowledge/observations.
- Writing blocks should be openly discussed and participants should be encouraged to share how they overcame them.

Assessment

Assessment is very difficult. Students are initially required to self-assess both the journal and the report according to a number of criteria. Then I add my assessment. This enables both parties to see if there is a "perceptual gap" or "blind spot", i.e. a difference in assessment owing to students being either too critical or too optimistic about their work. Students are invited to negotiate if they believe their final mark is unfair.

Other known uses of journal writing in Western Australia and the UK

The author used journal writing with managers as an adjunct to outdoor development, assertiveness and train the trainer programmes conducted through the Australian Institute of Management (1987-9). One participant wrote to me months later and said, "Just thought you would like to know that I'm still using the journal process…it's useful."

Mumford[21] and Honey[18] in the UK use journal writing with managers on training programmes:

> Our own common experience in management and, for those of us prepared to read, the research on what managers actually do show that reflective analytical processes are not widely valued or implemented across the range of management skills. It is not surprising they are not identified as crucial learning skills[21, p. 101].

Management is frequently perceived as an active activity with little time for reflection. Mumford[20] points out that this is a myth and that heart-searching and recrimination about failures do occur but:

> … it is often designed to identify a culprit (preferably someone other than the senior manager involved) rather than to identify lessons. Successes are examined for learning even more rarely – partly because examining the causes of successes would sometimes show how fortuitous success was[20, p. 94].

In Perth, Western Australia, David Tripp[17] utilizes the critical incident analysis in depth with postgraduate teachers, public service managers and administrators. Faye Harris of the Ministry of Education is using the process with "collaborative teachers" who work in the First Step Programme, which focuses on schools who have "children at risk". These collaborative teachers fill in for permanent teachers who are given full-time professional development. On the return of the permanent staff the collaborative teachers work in harness and model new strategies and give the returning teachers feedback on their new skills. Harris uses journal processes with the collaborative teachers so that they can monitor their feedback and performance change.

Deborah Pearson, a psychologist at the Wasley Centre in Perth, facilitates in-depth journal process workshops which are attended by people from all walks of life who wish to take two days away from work and their families to reassess what they are doing and/or where they are going.

Conclusion and summary of learning process

At this point it may be useful to summarize the stages of the journal/report assignment, many of which occur concurrently.
- Perform a needs analysis.
- Choose a buddy and a mentor.
- Choose a skill and analyse subskills.
- Write and submit learning contract.
- Revise learning contract if necessary.
- Choose suitable journal and pocket-book.
- Monitor skill.
- Unlock creative as well as analytical approach to learning.
- Read and develop journal-writing skills.
- Complete journal and develop future action plans.
- Write formal report/overview of whole process.

I believe that the journal process is still in its infancy in education and indeed in our wider society. There is scope for further monitoring and research into how even young children can use these processes to manage their "ups and downs". These learning tools are "life skills" which, once learned, may be adapted to all kinds of situations.

An appropriate place to finish would be a poem written by one of the students. Note the

interesting change of writing angle ending
with herself:

> We create our own
> structure of meaning
> And we are free to change
> We can choose.
>
> You can't always change
> what happens to you
> But you can always change
> how you feel about it.
>
> I can change.

<div align="right">(Rae Peverett)</div>

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Video

Creative and Reflective Journal Processes for Students and Managers (1983), production by Clive Jones in conjunction with Christine Hogan with thanks to the "Developing People at Work" Class, Semester 1, 1993. Please contact Clive Jones, Curtin Business School, Curtin University of Technology, GPO Box U1987, Perth, Western Australia 6001.

Appendix: sample learning contract

Skill
Example: time management

Sub-skills
These include:
- saying no;
- using diaries and planners for long- and short-term planning;
- stress management, etc.

Learning objectives
At the end of this assignment I will be able to:
- Use lists and prioritize, etc.
- Define key terms, e.g. …

Proposed learning methods
These are:
- Questionnaires to diagnose use of time and management problems.
- Keep journal to record and analyse learning events.
- Analyse research on time management on CD-ROM.
- Meditate on topic and for relaxation.
- Listen to intuition regarding saying no.
- Analyse values.
- Record long- and short-term goals.
- Analyse cultural differences regarding time use/management.
- Watch role models.
- Watch time management videos and listen to audiotapes in car on way to work.
- Discuss with buddies, mentors, my colleagues, family, supporters, counsellors,
- Use positive self-talk – "every day in every way I am getting better and better at managing my time".
- Put reminder signs up at home and work "what is the best use of my time right now?"

Resources
Books (five minimum)
Stewart, R., *Choices for the Manager – a Guide to Managerial Work and Behaviour*, McGraw-Hill, London, UK, 1982.

Journals (five minimum)
Phillips, S.R., "The new time management", *Training and Development Journal*, April 1988, pp. 73-7.

Videos/audiotapes
- Professional: *The Organized Manager*, Video Arts.
- Own production: make an audiotape of reminders/positive self-talk.

People
- Buddy =
- Mentor(s) =
- Supporters =
- Role models =
- Counsellors =
- Others =

Learning outcomes that can be assessed
These include:
- self-assessment of … knowledge and skills;
- buddy assessment of …;
- mentor assessment of …

Self-assessed mark out of ten

0	2	4	6	8	10
See me		Needs work/			Excellent,
		more thought			go ahead!!

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