



When Worry Gets Loud: Journaling Prompts to Slow the Spiral

A gentle way to move anxious thoughts out of your head and onto paper

Anxious thoughts move fast, faster than we can answer them. Writing slows them down to the speed of your hand, and that little bit of slowness is often all it takes to see a worry clearly instead of being swept along by it. You don't need a special notebook or perfect words. A few honest lines, whenever you can manage them, is exactly enough.

Why writing helps

When a worry stays in your head, it loops. It repeats itself, gets louder, and starts to feel like a fact.

On paper, that same worry becomes a sentence: something you can look at, question, and set down. You're not trying to make anxiety disappear. You're just giving your mind a slower, kinder place to think.

How to use these prompts

There's no wrong way to do this. Pick one prompt (whichever one tugs at you) or work through a few in a row. Five minutes counts. Two sentences count. Messy handwriting counts.

Nobody grades this, and nobody else reads it unless you choose to share it. You can stop any time, for any reason. That's not quitting. That's you listening to yourself.

The prompts

Try starting with the first one (naming the worry) and see where it takes you.

1. What is the worry, exactly? Finish this sentence: "Right now, my mind is telling me that ____."
Naming the worry in plain words turns a blur into one sentence you can actually look at.
2. What do I know for sure, and what am I guessing? Make two short lists: facts on one side, fears on the other. You're just sorting, not judging.
3. Has this worry shown up before? What actually happened that time? Your own history is good information. Write what really unfolded, not what the worry predicted.
4. What would I say to a friend who came to me with this exact worry? Write it out, then read it back to yourself slowly. You're allowed the same kindness you'd give them.
5. Where does the worry live in my body right now? Describe it like a curious reporter: tight chest, busy stomach, warm face. You don't have to fix it. Just notice it.
6. If the worry had a volume dial from 0 to 10, where is it right now? Where was it an hour ago? Anxiety rises and falls on its own. Watching it move reminds you it never stays at ten.
7. What part of this is mine to do something about today, and what part isn't? Write one small, doable step on one line. Everything else gets permission to wait.
8. What stayed okay today? List three ordinary things the worry didn't touch: the coffee, the walk, the friend who texted back. Small counts.
9. What do I need to hear right now? Write yourself one kind sentence, and let it be the last thing on the page.

Try this: give worry an appointment

Worry has a way of showing up all day, uninvited. One well-studied trick is to give it a scheduled time slot instead of letting it run the whole day. It sounds almost too simple, and it takes practice. But many people find their daytime worries lose steam once they know they'll be heard later.

1. Pick a daily 15-minute "worry time": same time, same spot, and not right before bed.
2. When a worry pops up during the day, jot a few words about it in your journal. That's it for now.
3. Tell the worry, kindly, "You have an appointment later." Then return to what you were doing, as best you can.
4. At worry time, open your list and let yourself think about whatever still feels heavy. Write, plan, or just sit with it.
5. When the time is up, close the journal and move to something else: a walk, the dishes, a show.
6. Notice how many jotted worries feel smaller by the time their appointment arrives. That's normal, and it's kind of the point.

If something heavy comes up

Sometimes writing stirs up more than we expected: an old memory, a wave of grief, something that feels too big for the page. If that happens, you have full permission to stop. Put the pen down. Feel your feet on the floor, take a slow breath out, and name five things you can see around you.

Some things deserve company. Painful memories and past hurts are best explored with a therapist beside you, not alone in a notebook. If your writing keeps circling something like that, bring it to session. We'll go at your pace, together.

However you use these pages (daily, weekly, or only on the hard days), you're doing it right. Writing a few true sentences when your mind is racing is a real act of care for yourself, and I'm glad you're here trying it.

This handout is a companion to therapy, not a replacement for it. Think of it as support between our conversations, and bring anything it stirs up to session. If you're in crisis, call or text 988 (Suicide & Crisis Lifeline), any time, day or night.