

# How To Use Your New Notebook

Hello!!

Welcome to your new notebook.

In deciding what role this notebook might play in your life, we thought we'd provide a few suggestions, based on a little bit of a science, a little bit of education and a little bit of fun.

Feel free to pick one of our suggestions or go with an idea of your own. All we ask is that you find a place for this notebook in your life.

## 1. JOURNALLING



First there is good ol' fashioned journaling. There aren't any rules about journaling, although you'll find plenty of suggestions online if you want a little more guidance.

We reckon a good focus for journaling is taking a moment at the end of each study day and jotting down the main things you've learned that day and how you could relate those things to your everyday life.

For example, I learned today that Carl Jung (famous psychiatrist/psychotherapist) was fascinated with Mandalas and believed drawing them was good for self-healing. Having learned that, I've included a couple of Mandala drawing suggestions in this guide.

The basic idea behind keeping such a learning journal is to help you connect with what it is you are studying and improve your memory of it through connecting it to your life.

So one thing you could use this notebook for is as a learning journal.

## 2. THERAPEUTIC WRITING

The second thing you could use this journal for are therapeutic writing exercises.

These exercises are designed to help you build positive feelings like self-compassion, gratitude, future orientation, awe and social connection as well as cope with difficult events/feelings in your life.

We've taken 6 of these exercises from the excellent site - <https://ggia.berkeley.edu> and reproduced them below. Consider visiting the site to learn more about the exercises and also access other such tools.

*Please note: Some of these exercises require you think about difficult events in your life. This can lead to a short-term increase in distress. However, over the medium to long-term typically we see a reduction in overall distress. If one of these exercises raises issues for you and it feels a little too much, consider using one of the many online support chat services like <https://www.7cups.com/>, <https://kidshelpline.com.au/young-adults>, <https://headspace.org.au/eheadspace/> or <https://www.lifeline.org.au/> If there are ongoing issues that need addressing, consider making an appointment to speak to a Flinders counsellor - <https://students.flinders.edu.au/student-services/bcd/counselling>*

## Write yourself a self-compassionate letter

First, identify something about yourself that makes you feel ashamed, insecure, or not good enough. It could be something related to your personality, behaviour, abilities, relationships, or any other part of your life.

Once you identify something, write it down and describe how it makes you feel. Sad? Embarrassed? Angry? Try to be as honest as possible, keeping in mind that no one but you will see what you write.

The next step is to write a letter to yourself expressing compassion, understanding, and acceptance for the part of yourself that you dislike.

To do this:

- imagine what someone who loves you unconditionally would say
- remind yourself that everyone has something about themselves they don't like and no one is without flaws
- consider the way that events out of your control might have contributed to this negative aspect of yourself
- ask yourself whether there are things you could do to improve this aspect of yourself
- Put the letter aside and read it when you need to be reminded of these things.
- Repeat the process if necessary over the course of a month.

For more detailed instructions visit - [https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/self\\_compassionate\\_letter](https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/self_compassionate_letter)



## Best possible self

Take a moment to imagine your life in the future. What is the best possible life you can imagine? Consider all of the relevant areas of your life, such as your career, academic work, relationships, hobbies, and/or health. What would happen in these areas of your life in your best possible future?

For the next 15 minutes, write continuously about what you imagine this best possible future to be.

Focus on the future, not on regrets from the past

Be as specific as possible

Repeat this process daily for 2 weeks

For more detailed instructions visit [https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/best\\_possible\\_self](https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/best_possible_self)

## Gratitude letter

Call to mind someone who did something for you for which you are extremely grateful but to whom you never expressed your deep gratitude. This could be a relative, friend, teacher, or colleague. Try to pick someone who is still alive and could meet you face-to-face in the next week. It may be most helpful to select a person or act that you haven't thought about for a while—something that isn't always on your mind.

Now, write a letter to one of these people, guided by the following steps.

Write as though you are addressing this person directly (“Dear \_\_\_\_\_”)

Don't worry about perfect grammar or spelling.

Describe in specific terms what this person did, why you are grateful to this person, and how this person's behaviour affected your life. Try to be as concrete as possible.

Describe what you are doing in your life now and how you often remember his or her efforts.

Try to keep your letter to roughly one page (~300 words).

Next, you should try if at all possible to deliver your letter in person, following these steps:

Plan a visit with the recipient. Let that person know you'd like to see him or her and have something special to share, but don't reveal the exact purpose of the meeting.

When you meet, let the person know that you are grateful to them and would like to read a letter expressing your gratitude; ask that he or she refrain from interrupting until you're done.

Take your time reading the letter. While you read, pay attention to his or her reaction as well as your own.

After you have read the letter, be receptive to his or her reaction and discuss your feelings together.

Remember to give the letter to the person when you leave.

If physical distance keeps you from making a visit, you may choose to arrange a phone or video chat.

For more about this exercise visit - [https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/gratitude\\_letter](https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/gratitude_letter)

## Feeling connected

Try to think of a time when you felt a strong bond with someone in your life. Choose a specific example of an experience you had with this person where you felt especially close and connected to him or her. This could be a time you had a meaningful conversation, gave or received support, experienced a great loss or success together, or witnessed an historic moment together.

Once you've thought of a specific example, spend a few minutes writing about what happened. In particular, consider the ways in which this experience made you feel close and connected to the other person.

For more about this exercise visit - [https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/feeling\\_connected](https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/feeling_connected)



## Awe narrative

Think back to a time when you felt a sense of awe regarding something you witnessed or experienced. Awe has been defined as a response to things that are perceived as vast and overwhelming and that alter the way you understand the world. This sense of vastness can be physical (e.g., a panoramic view from a mountaintop) or psychological (e.g., a brilliant idea). People may experience awe when they are in the presence of a beautiful natural landscape or work of art, when they watch a moving speech or performance, when they witness an act of great altruism, or when they have a spiritual or religious experience.

Try to think of the most recent experience you've had that involved the feeling of awe. Once you identify something, describe it in writing with as much detail as possible.

For more about this exercise visit - [https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/awe\\_narrative](https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/awe_narrative)



## Expressive writing

Over the next four days, write down your deepest emotions and thoughts about an emotional challenge that has been affecting your life. In your writing, really let go and explore the event and how it has affected you. You might tie this experience to your childhood, your relationship with your parents, people you have loved or love now, or even your career. Write continuously for 20 minutes each day.

Tips for writing:

Find a time and place where you won't be disturbed

Write continuously for at least 20 minutes

Don't worry about spelling or grammar

Write only for yourself

Write about something extremely personal and important to you

Deal only with events or situations you can handle now—that is, don't write about a trauma too soon after it has happened if it feels too overwhelming.

Optional final step: After the four days of writing, try writing from the perspectives of other people involved in the event or situation.

For more about this exercise visit - [https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/expressive\\_writing](https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/expressive_writing)

### 3. DRAWING AND COLOURING

Maybe writing isn't your thing. All those words and sentences. You already have enough of them with your studies, you don't want any more of them!

Instead think about harnessing your inner artist.

The science on drawing for wellbeing is nowhere near as well developed as that for writing but increasingly there are studies showing that different types of drawing and colouring can be used to reduce anxiety and stress levels. Some even consider that drawing and colouring can be a type of meditative exercise.

So why not try a few exercises and see if they work for you.

#### Draw and colour a free-form Mandala

A Mandala is essentially a design within a circle. You can read all about them online.

Mandala can have many meanings. However, in therapy settings they are sometimes viewed as a pictorial representation of who we are.

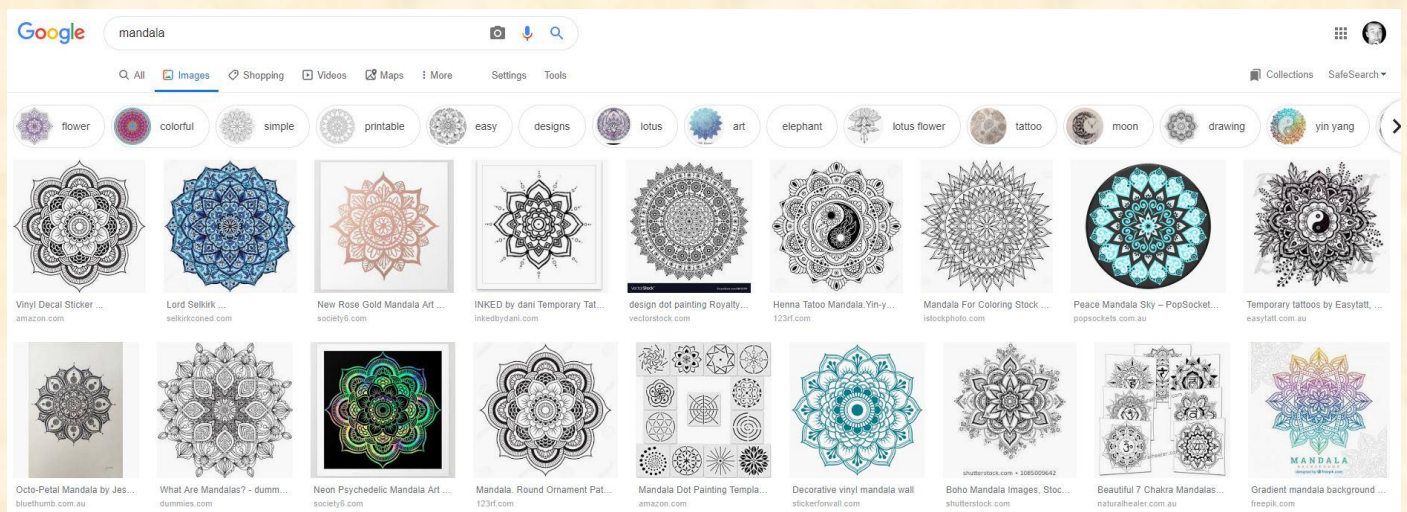
To create a Mandala is to express some aspect of who you in art.

A free-form Mandala is one that doesn't require symmetry or complexity in its design.

To do a free-form Mandala, simply draw a circle on a page. Inside the circle use shapes or colours or designs to represent concepts, ideas, events, memories that you are trying to deal with at the moment. Express your thoughts and feelings through the designs placed inside the circle.

#### Draw and colour a symmetrical detailed Mandala

Mandala can be incredibly intricate. To see what I mean, just do a Google image search for 'mandala and see what pops up.



To learn how to draw such a Mandala, simply visit one of the excellent online tutorials on how to draw them. Google 'how to draw a mandala' and you'll find written and video instructions.

Fundamentally, the process involves dividing your circle into sections and doing concentric repeated patterns from the inside point through to the outside point. You don't necessarily have to be very artistic to draw something quite impressive as the process is very systematic.

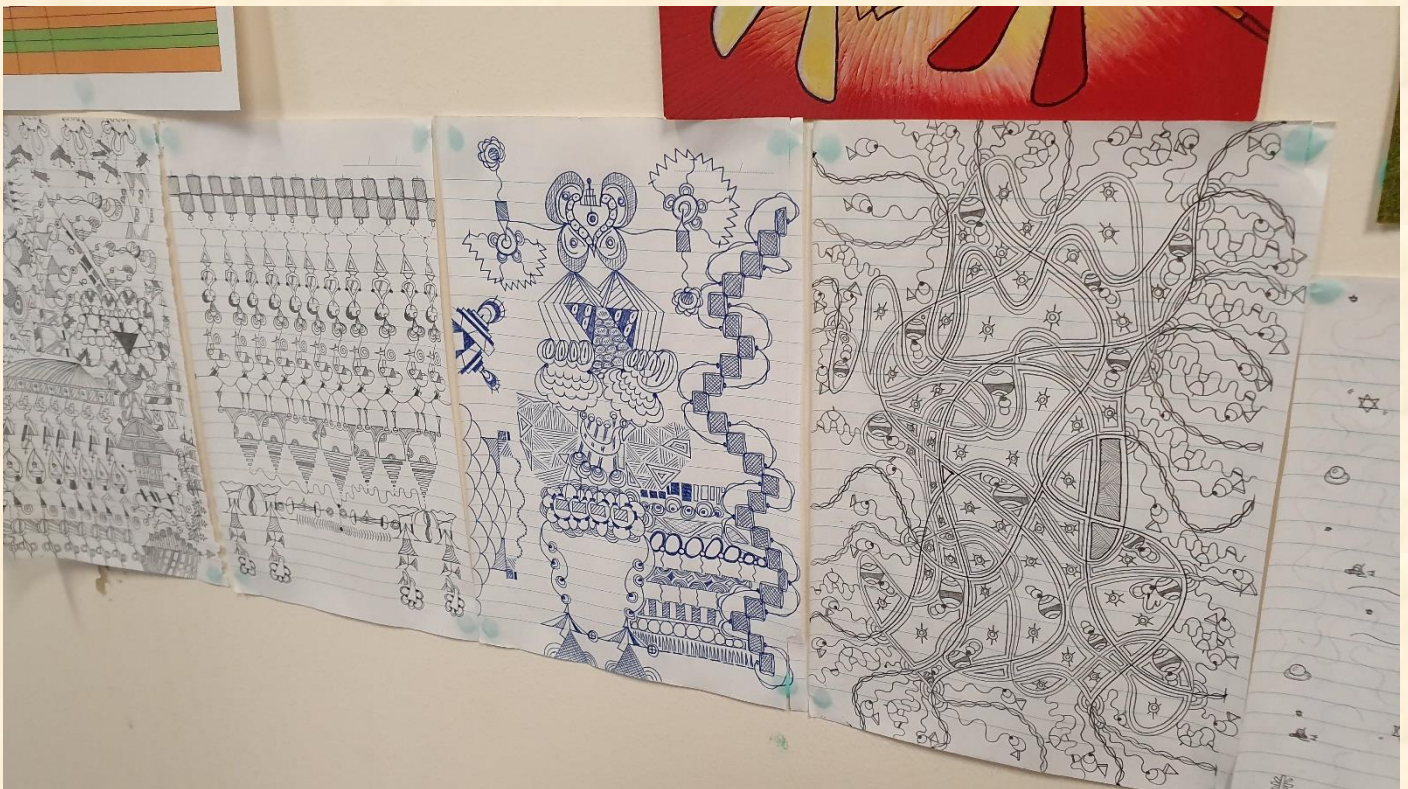
### Just spend time drawing and/or colouring

Maybe you don't want to be tied down to a specific format.

Even the simple acts of drawing and colouring in can reduce short-term stress and anxiety levels in adults.

I often doodle on the pages of my notebooks when I need to separate myself from the world a bit. It is a simple self-soothing strategy.

So use your notebook as a place to store your random drawings. Let your imagination run free!!



This 'How To Use Your New Notebook' handout was developed by the eMental Health Project Officer at Health, Counselling and Disability Services (HCDS) and the Wellbeing Promotion Officer at OASIS. To learn more about HCDS visit <https://students.flinders.edu.au/student-services/hcd>. To learn more about OASIS visit <https://oasis.flinders.edu.au/>