

Step 1:

Think back over the past week or month, and pick an issue about which you feel stuck or which was troubling in some way, or simply annoying.

Here are some examples of issues you might have been dealing with to help you:

- Argument with a family member
- A conflict with a person at work
- An annoying customer or interaction that left you with some strong feelings.
- A memory that came up, triggering a cascade of difficult feelings
- A challenge that came out of left field for which you were unprepared
- A sudden accident or loss of opportunity
- An experience of despair, desperation, or stuckness, perhaps triggered by an event
- A situation in which you have no idea how to get out of
- A dilemma you're facing and you don't know which direction to go
- A decision you must make, but it's not clear to you what the right thing to do is
- A recent experience that has left you perplexed, worried, or afraid
- A challenge in a relationship in which you don't know what to do to make things better
- A situation you found yourself in where it felt like a checkmate, or a stalemate.
- It could be a chronic or reoccurring problem as well.

Describe the event and try to do so with the following instructions:

- Journal from the point of view of an objective bystander. Describe what happened as if you are writing a newspaper article about it.
- Scrupulously avoid any expressions of sentiment such as anger, or feelings of any kind.
- Also, avoid drawing any conclusions, assertions about another's motives, or judgments about the reasons why things happened the way they did. You are merely stating the facts today.
- Allow yourself no further analysis.
- Describe in as much detail as you can. What do you objectively OBSERVE?

If you have more than one event to write about, you can list them all out but work with only one at a time for the journaling exercise.

Step 2:

Read through what you wrote, and now add what you did after it happened in the moments, hours, even days.

- What sorts of behaviors did you respond with?
- They could be as small as shutting down, or getting a little defensive. Or, they could be bigger and more dramatic such as storming out of the room, plotting revenge, passive aggression, or something else.
- What did you do?

"I behaved like..."

Step 3:

Next, how did you feel about what happened? Write as many feelings as you possibly can. Feelings can be legion and they can be subtle. See if you can capture them all.

"I felt... "

Step 4:

Now, let's explore what lies behind the feelings you identified. What do you believe about what happened? For example, if you felt shame about what happened, you had drawn a conclusion that you did something wrong, or that you were a bad person. Another example: if you felt anger, then you believed that you were wronged in some way, that you were the victim of someone else's ill considered or thoughtless action.

"I believed...."