

CREATIVE WRITING | TOOLKIT

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WE'RE ALL STORYTELLERS -

How to begin

Here are a few tools, tips and techniques to get your journaling practice started and keep you going. This list is by no means definitive!

Over the years, I've had participants tell me the best thing to unlock their creative juices was to stand in the shower with the water pouring over them. For others, it was a long drive in the country, where there's no traffic. One young participant told me the best time for her was swimming laps, "where you let your thinking mind go, and just feel free."

As author of a time-travel series, *Edge of Yesterday*, some of my best moments are when I imagine myself—or my characters—into some period of history. That act of imagination allows me to create new worlds.

Maybe you're a time traveler, too. Or will become one once you're in the zone. In the end, it's whatever practice allows you to open up your imagination.

Here are some of the ways you can open up to the creative possibilities for storytelling yourself, and your world:

- **Go outside.** Taking a walk, sitting under a tree, even running in the snow are all little tricks to unlock the brain. Take a sketchpad, or your camera, and capture one little tiny piece of it—a leaf, a stone in a stream, a cicada—and write about how it made you feel. Not what you thought about it. I'll repeat that: how did that make you feel?
- **Play with your kids—go all in.** If you have young children, or know of any, you might take 20 minutes without your devices, your to-do list, your deadlines or dishes, or any of the normal adult distractions to dive into their world with them. If you don't have any kids to play with, call up your own "inner child." Who is that? Ask your 8-year-old

self a question or just tell her you see her. What does playing with the abandon of a 5-year-old feel like?

- **Put on some music and dance.** Don't worry about making dinner, doing the laundry or getting that presentation for tomorrow done.
- **Find an old picture album** (or a photo on your phone from at least 3 years earlier). What were you doing? Who were you with? What memory does it unlock?

ADDITIONAL STORY AND CREATIVITY RESOURCES

Heart Math Institute <https://www.heartmath.org/research/>

Mindsight <https://drdansiegel.com/mindsight/>

Shifting the Narrative <https://hbr.org/2021/09/athletes-are-shifting-the-narrative-around-mental-health-at-work?ab=hero-subleft-1>, Harvard Business Review

Health and mental health for frontline workers <https://hbr.org/2020/05/how-health-care-workers-can-take-care-of-themselves>, Harvard Business Review

Happiness index, by Arthur Brooks <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4UNulwYqHEs&t=84s>, The Atlantic

Make the Story Yours <https://www.edgeofyesterday.com/make-the-story-yours>, Edge of Yesterday creative submissions by teens

Being Creative <https://edgeofyesterday.com/blog/2021/06/12/being-creative-is-like-feeling-well-stupid/>, by Robin Stevens Payes, Edge of Yesterday

Daydreaming <https://edgeofyesterday.com/teaching-lab/daydreaming-for-brain-health>, by Robin Stevens Payes, Edge of Yesterday

MENTAL HEALTH, SEXUAL ASSAULT AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE GUIDANCE

In the course of your journaling practice, you may touch on things that represent deep wounds or trauma. Let me stress, I am not a mental health counselor. But if you are finding elements of your story that reawaken any trauma, stress, anxiety or depression, or if these practices bring up suicidal thoughts, please seek help.

If a reflection, memory, flashback or anything else in your practice triggers you, please consult a mental health or addiction professional, or seek help from one of these 24-hour resources:

FIND HELP NEAR YOU

- [Mental Health - SAMHSA Treatment Locator](#)
- [Suicide Prevention hotline - 1-800-273-TALK](#)
- [National Sexual Assault hotline - 1-800-656-HOPE](#)
- [If you have trouble with drugs - NIDA step-by-step guides](#)



