



The Creative Journal

**The Art of Finding Yourself
35th Anniversary Edition**

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Introduction

When I wrote *The Creative Journal* in 1977, the world was a very different place. The manuscript was written on an IBM Selectric typewriter. Pocket-sized cell phones, personal computers, the Internet, and social networking were unheard of. It was before the school shootings at Columbine, 9/11, Hurricane Katrina, and the Gulf of Mexico oil spill. On the heels of the '60s Civil Rights Movement, the Women's Movement was happening and consciousness-raising groups had been launched. Self-help books, therapy, and twelve-step programs based on personal responsibility and the principle that *change starts within* were gaining popularity. New forms of psychotherapy using the arts were being pioneered. Social experiments and psychological exploration of that era would alter forever the way we see ourselves and our relationships. In this atmosphere of innovation, I began developing the body of work I now call Creative Journal Expressive Arts.

My early art therapy clients and Creative Journal students taught me more than I could have imagined about transformation through drawing and writing in a journal. My gratitude to them is deep and wide, especially to those who contributed to this book. Their images and words speak to us of universal human themes and experiences. In pouring out their feelings, struggles, and breakthroughs, these dedicated journal keepers (none of them professional artists or writers at the time) laid bare all that makes us human and opens us to the divine within ourselves. The result was a collection of drawings and writings that still speak to our hearts today. We can thank these Creative Journal keepers for the juiciness and soulfulness of this book.

It is clear that there has never been a greater need for *The Creative Journal*. It is no accident that the book has stayed in print all these years. Hailed as “a pioneering work” and “a classic in the art therapy field,” it has been a required text in art therapy programs and college courses, a guide in writing, memoir, art, journal, and creativity workshops throughout the world. Steadily increasing mail from readers tells me *The Creative Journal* is still inspiring and transforming countless lives.

Since the publication of this book, research has been done on the healing power of writing about trauma, illness, and life crises. This research, pioneered by psychologist Dr. James Pennebaker, author of *Opening Up* and *Writing to Heal*, has been replicated by others with similar results. In control group studies in the '80s, Pennebaker showed that writing and talking about trauma had a positive effect on physical health. Blood tests before and after showed a

strengthening of the immune system and fewer doctor visits compared to control groups who wrote about any topic of their choice. This research echoes my Creative Journal work with cancer and AIDS/HIV-positive groups. Sharing journal entries in a Creative Journal group or with a therapist has been shown to be a powerfully healing process. When I met with Dr. Pennebaker after the publication of his research, he encouraged me to do my own studies on the impact of drawing in addition to writing. (My research appears in the Applications section.) Dr. Pennebaker also endorsed my second book, *The Power of Your Other Hand*.

In recent years there has been a flood of research on neurobiology and neuropsychology as it relates to therapy. The scientific discovery of the neuroplasticity of the brain has confirmed the clinical observations of us pioneers of methods for changing the brain. The writings of authors such as Daniel Siegel, MD, psychologist Alan Schore, and psychiatrist Norman Doidge, MD, support what art therapists, play therapists, and expressive arts therapists have known for years: art heals. In her book *Neurobiologically Informed Trauma Treatment with Children and Adolescents*, art therapist Nancy Chapman presents case studies that clearly illustrate this fact. There are scores of other books, including my own, that illustrate the healing power of the arts.

NEW QUESTIONS

As the world has changed, new questions and issues have been raised by readers, students, and clients using *The Creative Journal*.

The Creative Journal and Technology: The Medium Is the Message

Rapidly advancing technology has altered the way we write, design, and create visual art. I am often asked if Creative Journaling can be done on a computer or tablet. The answer is, No. In order to fully benefit from *The Creative Journal* it is *essential* to use “high-touch” media such as paper, felt pens, markers, crayons, oil pastels, and collage. In this case, Marshall McLuhan’s dictum, *The medium is the message*, has never been more true. Simple, tactile art materials used in *The Creative Journal* open sensory awareness, emotional expression, and creative exploration. Childlike spontaneity, discovery, insight, and inner wisdom unfold *as a result* of engaging with art materials that are highly sensorial and conducive to releasing feelings. High-tech devices have their place, but they limit our physical movements. They cannot provide the range of motion, the sensual and primitive play, or the emotional release found in *The Creative Journal* art and writing activities.

It is interesting to observe that the mushrooming of “high-tech” has been paralleled by a rise in the “high-touch” scrapbook, crafts, and art journal movements. This attests to another, very different human need. Creative Journal keepers tell me how liberating it is to get messy on the page. Emotions are messy a lot of the time and *life* is messy, too. You can’t release anger, frustration, or passion on an electronic tablet as you can scribbling hard with a big fat marker or crayon on paper. There is nothing that smells like crayons, either. That smell takes us back to kindergarten and brings out the Child Within—one of the goals of Creative Journaling. Think about tearing the paper off the crayon and turning it on its side to smooch around the page. Imagine the arm and finger movements used in making dashes and dots and squiggly lines and textures, or blending oil pastels with your fingertips. There is much to be said for getting your hands dirty if you want to get creative and really dig into emotions and into life.

The Creative Journal and Emotional Literacy

I define *emotional literacy* as the ability to speak, understand, and communicate using the language of emotions. Along with facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice, the arts *are* the language of emotions. Judging from the high rate of violence and bullying in our society, we need *emotional literacy* more than ever today. As high-tech, left-brain processes have become more pervasive, there is an increasing need for balance through right brain emotional awareness and expression. Some educators agree with me and have invited our Creative Journal program into their schools, from kindergarten to twelfth grade (see Applications section for examples). In our school programs, the Creative Journal Method has been shown to develop *emotional literacy* in children and teens. Recent research in a south Texas elementary school shows that the Creative Journal approach reduced behavioral problems, increased academic achievement, and reduced physical symptoms of stress related to test taking.

Handwriting vs. Keyboard

Along with drawing, writing in *The Creative Journal* is always done by hand. Printing and cursive writing on paper are essential. Forming the handwritten word on paper involves movements and graphic expressions that are unique to the individual. Like fingerprints, our handwriting is a one-of-a-kind phenomenon. Cursive script reflects our inner world and who we are at any given time. The fields of graphology and graphotherapy demonstrate this clearly. That is why graphoanalysis is used in forensics and recognized in courts of law. It is also used in some personnel departments for identifying personality traits and work styles.

There is a current trend to drop cursive writing from the public school curriculum. Block printing has survived because it prepares children for reading and using a keyboard. The move to discontinue instruction in cursive script is unfortunate because research shows that certain parts of the brain will not develop in the absence of cursive writing. Doing away with cursive writing has a negative psychological impact, according to handwriting analysts and graphotherapists I have talked to. Graphotherapists help individuals change negative traits and patterns by changing their cursive handwriting. I have personally seen the benefits of this work. The ability to connect with self and others is fostered when we connect letters to each other in the repeated act of forming cursive script. Block-printing separate letters does not call for the movement of connecting letters as cursive writing does. With so much bullying and violence in our world, we need to cultivate connectedness more than ever. *The Creative Journal* is a place to use cursive script and develop parts of the brain and personality that are fostered with this kind of letter form.

Writing with the Nondominant Hand

There are a few journal prompts in this book that call for writing with the nondominant hand, defined as *the hand you don't normally write with*. This technique has become one of the distinguishing characteristics of my work. Questions often arise about how and why this works. My research shows that writing with the nondominant hand helps access centers of the right brain and limbic system involved in emotional health, creativity, and intuition. Nondominant handwriting appears to help connect the two brain hemispheres, with emotional and intuitive content coming through the right brain and words coming through language centers in the left brain. It doesn't matter whether you are right- or left-handed or if you are ambidextrous regarding activities besides writing. This method yields the same results. (For more about my research see the Applications section.) In the case of stroke and brain damage survivors, we now know that the brain's neuroplasticity enables undamaged parts to compensate, so it is difficult to know exactly which part of the brain is being accessed. In the last analysis, when individuals write with their nondominant hand, we see the results: ready access to emotions, an Inner Child state, intuition, and creativity.

Drawing with the Nondominant Hand

After publishing *The Creative Journal*, I thoroughly investigated with thousands of students, clients, and readers what happens when we *draw* with the nondominant hand. Regardless of which hand is used, the act of drawing

relies heavily on visual, spatial, tactile, and emotional functions associated with the right brain. Drawing with the nondominant hand appears to put people in touch with these right-brain functions much more rapidly. Years ago, while working for Walt Disney Imagineering, I met the late Herbie Ryman, art director on the original *Fantasia* and other Disney classics. He told me he had held workshops for staff artists to loosen them up and get their creative juices flowing. He had them draw with their nondominant hand, and it worked wonders. He was doing this long before I discovered this technique and used it for therapeutic purposes. Herbie applauded the publication of my second book, *The Power of Your Other Hand: A Course in Channeling the Inner Wisdom of the Right Brain*. In the section below you will find some alternative ways to do prompts in *The Creative Journal* using the nondominant hand for drawing.

Enhancing Your Creative Journal Experience

Try a little experiment while following the journal prompts in this book.

If drawing is called for, try doing it first with your dominant hand as suggested in the journal prompt.

Next, try drawing from the same prompt using your *nondominant hand*.

See if there is any difference. How does it feel *physically* to draw with your nondominant hand? How does it feel *emotionally*? Are there different insights or discoveries? Using your dominant hand, write about any differences you observed.

By trying it both ways, you can choose which hand you would rather draw with for any particular journal prompt. If you prefer to do all the drawings with your dominant hand, as indicated in the book, that's fine. Doing some or all of the drawing with your nondominant hand will work, too. It's up to you. Either way, the method works.

As for the writing prompts, please follow the suggestions in the book. Use your dominant hand for writing and your nondominant hand only in the few places where it is indicated in the journal prompt.

Other Art Options

You can do some of the art prompts in *The Creative Journal* with collage. For that you will need magazines, colored paper, scissors, and glue. You can also combine collage and drawing. I recommend that you do *most* of the art prompts with drawing as indicated in the book. Drawing seems to be a

xvi more direct medium for expressing feelings, especially strong ones that need release.



If questions come to mind, feel free to visit my website and contact me at luciac.com.

May your Creative Journal become a trusted confidante, a safe place to express feelings, wishes, and dreams. I wish you the very best in your journey inward to honor your Creative Self.

With love,

Lucia Capacchione, PhD, ATR

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Copyright © 2020 The Creative Journal. Back to site. Online Store by Big Cartel. Carly from The Creative Journal will also be providing a lunchtime demonstration on how to make chocolate covered oeros and decorate them too “ because there is always room for more sugary goodness right?! There are only a few seats left (we keep them small to make sure you get all the loving attention you need!) so pop over to our online store to book your ticket or to find out more. Creative Journal. 26 Followers. 85 Following. www.creativejournal.ru. | www.creativejournal.ru | Movies, fashion, music, photo, people, art, every day. Creative Journal's best boards. Photography. Creative Journal 15 Pins. Tim Burton and Vincent Price on the set of Edward Scissorhands. Creative Journal Photography.