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To cite this article: David Bryson (2021): Continuing professional development and journaling, Journal of Visual Communication in Medicine, DOI: [10.1080/17453054.2021.1974292](https://doi.org/10.1080/17453054.2021.1974292)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17453054.2021.1974292>



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Published online: 13 Sep 2021.



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Continuing professional development and journaling

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ABSTRACT

This professional development paper looks at CPD and journaling which will help you discover how journaling can support your professional practice, mental health and continuing professional development.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 24 August 2021
Accepted 26 August 2021

KEYWORDS

CPD; journaling;
professional development;
learning; education;
social networking

What is journaling?

As a definition, 'journaling is the practice of keeping a journal or diary, especially in order to express one's thoughts'. It is termed by Chapman, Dempsey, and Warren-Forward (2009) as a workplace diary, they go on to discuss the role of reflective practice, as well as defining concepts central to reflective journaling or workplace diaries. A key feature is the adding of dates and the regularity of writing compared to notetaking. What has become different recently is the use of journals designed specifically to promote and help users organise their thoughts (Miller, 2017); for example, dotted rather than blank pages see Figure 1.

Regular journaling evokes mindfulness and helps writers remain present while keeping their lives in perspective. Journaling presents an opportunity for emotional catharsis and helps the brain regulate emotions. As Maple suggests (2021), journaling provides a greater sense of confidence and self-identity.

There are also health benefits as described by Kasee Bailey in her blog post 'five good-for-you virtues of journaling' in 2018:

1. Reduces Stress.
2. Improves Immune Function.
3. Keeps Memory Sharp.
4. Boosts Mood.
5. Strengthens Emotional Functions.

The benefits of journaling have also been recognised by Dimitroff, Sliwoski, O'Brien, and Nichols


(2017) for registered nurses who expressed the value of journaling to them as 'helping me to articulate and understand my feelings concretely' Dimitroff et al., 2017, p. 95. Dimitroff also found that 'The journaling technique was therapeutic for nurses, increasing awareness to focus on the real issues, and express thoughts and feelings through writing. Journaling helped the nurses make their thoughts and feelings black and white' (Dimitroff et al., 2017, p. 95).

A key aspect of developing your CPD is reflection, and regular journaling can help as it supports everyday practice and captures experiences for further analysis and reflection on changes or developments in practice. For example, Stefani's paper (2005) reviews the literature on reflective practice and frameworks for reflective journaling in allied health and nursing and provides a guide for reflective journaling or workplace diaries for radiation therapists by discussing the role of reflective practice, as well as defining concepts central to reflective journaling or workplace diaries. Finally, the paper offers practical advice to increase staff knowledge and skills in the use of reflective workplace diaries.

However, the challenges in journaling and reflection have been recognised for example (Hayman, Wilkes, & Jackson, 2012).

Activity: do you do it already?

If you don't already use journaling start out by reading some of the following resources, which aim to

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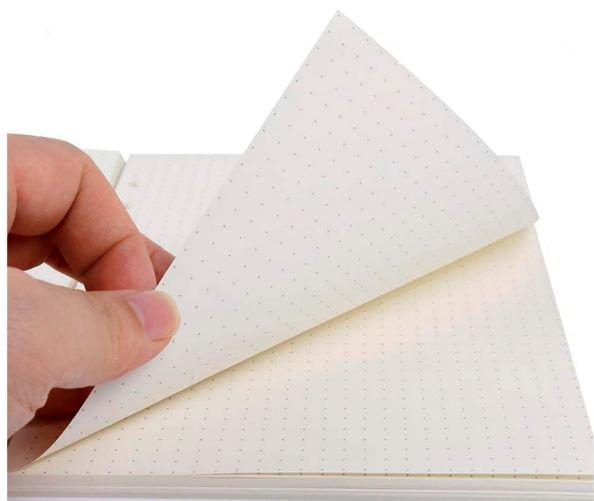


Figure 1. Example of dotted journaling paper.

support journaling including (Ahlin, 2018; Korzonek, 2021; Ragnarson, 2019) and books including free access if you have a subscription to kindle books on amazon (Maple, 2021; Miller, 2017).

There are also prompts for reflection papers in this journal including the reflective activities in Patient Privacy (Bryson, 2004) and other professional development papers.

Activity: starting your regular journal or workplace diary

Try to use your journal to write freely about your work and personal experiences. If unsure try not to overthink the process and take the advice available for example, the blog post '11 ways to actually make journaling a part of your everyday routine' by Ahlin (2018) or if you like youtube search for journaling prompts for useful videos for example <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VkDpZatLulc> (Lavendaire, 2021) and the strategies suggested in Hayman et al., 2012 for example rather than adding large amounts of information just add small amounts of information frequently. This can also be linked to the reflection needed as a mentee, see the August IMI Newsletter how to get advice and support by working with a mentor.

Another good guide to get you started is journaling for beginners (Cardinal, 2020) which is a step-by-step guide that provides you with everything you need to know about starting the journal writing habit from scratch. In this book you will discover not only the different methods of journaling, and which one is right for you, but also how to write a more effective journal and how to implement journal writing as a daily habit. This Kindle e-book also has a lot of useful references and weblinks to additional online resources.

Activity: from journaling to CPD audit

How can journaling support your CPD?

One of the additional benefits of regular journaling is that it makes providing information for your CPD audit far easier. Remember that it is essential to undertake and keep a record of your Continuing Professional Development activity, which is ultimately for the benefit and safety of all patients and the public. More information on requirements for your CPD and audit is available via the Academy for Healthcare Sciences Website (Continuing Professional Development – The Academy for Healthcare Science, 2021) and the Institute of Medical Illustrators website (<https://www.imi.org.uk/resources/education-cpd/continuing-professional-development/>).

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