

Journaling and the CELO Leadership Academy

What is journaling? Journaling:

- Provides a tool for processing experiences and emotions
- Chronicles one's journey – where you've been and where you're going

A professional journal is different from a diary because it focuses on work-related activities and relationships versus all aspects of life.

What are the benefits of journaling?

When made a habit and used as a tool for personal and professional reflection, journaling can:

- Offer insight into your thinking and behaviors.
- Increase awareness of thoughts swirling in your head.
- Help “write your way to understanding” something you're trying to figure out
- Crystalize knowledge being gained from efforts
- Help ensure that knowledge previously gained is carried forward
- Provide an archive of ideas
- Help consolidate new knowledge and its use in your work and/or development
- Highlight mistakes in judgment or decision-making.
- Promote questioning of taken-for-granted assumptions
- Reveal trends
- Help you see where you're making a difference

Your journal is for your reflective purposes – it is being used as a professional development tool and is private to you. So you can feel free to make the journal your confidante. NO CELO faculty, coaches, or staff should ask to see your journal entries.

What suggestions about journaling might help me?

Time will be made available during each Academy session. It can also occur when back in your work environment. *Journaling need not be a lengthy time commitment – just one that is routine.*

- There are no “should haves.”
- Do date your entries, though, so you can track the evolution of your thinking.
- Avoid editing yourself when first getting started.
- It's okay to record snippets of ideas and information for possible future use or reflection.
- Document small wins that might otherwise get lost in memory.
- Write down goals and track their progress.
- Record what feels like recurring minor or major setbacks and try to identify inhibitors impeding your progress.

If “trying on” new leadership skills, consider documenting their use and the results, as well as what you learned and might want to do next time.

Be truthful about your experiences – try to separate what happened from the “story” you’ve possibly created about what happened.

If there’s something you’re struggling with or an event that’s disturbing for you, consider writing about it in the third person. This approach can give you distance from the incident and allow you to step back and gain perspective.

If it’s been a particularly stressful day, writing down several things for which you’re grateful, e.g., your health, family, friends, skills, can help put things back into perspective.

If writing about stressful events, you might:

- Describe what happened
- Indicate how it made you feel
- Observe the feelings to see what you can learn from them about you and how you respond to these kinds of events
- Over time, look for patterns and potential triggers

Write an after-action review, debriefing on what did and didn’t work in relationship to a particular interaction.

Keep long-term goals in mind.

Potential Facilitative Questions

- Write about where you are in your life at this moment in your career.
- Write down questions and concerns you are having about your leadership and/or your project.
- Why am I thinking about X this way?
- What was particularly energizing or inspiring for me today?
- Does my entry include any taken-for-granted assumptions that might be reconsidered?
- How am I feeling? How do I want to be feeling?
- Where have I been? Where am I going? Where do I want to be going? How far have I come?
- What am I learning about myself and conditions that promote and/or impede my effectiveness?
Do I see patterns in your reactions or behaviors?
- How can I use new concepts or insights in my work? As part of my project?
- If I could repeat a recent event, what would I do differently and why?