

WTNS Radio OSU Extension Update for February 21, 2022
Healthy People. Healthy Finances. Healthy Relationships.

On today's OSU Extension update for Healthy People, Healthy Finances, & Healthy Relationships we'll talk about the benefits of journaling, and as always look at some upcoming programs from OSU Extension.

Early in my 4-H years, I took a Creative Writing project. I still have the poems I wrote, printed out on dot matrix paper. Then in Jr. High School, I was part of a creative writing team. We traveled to other schools for competitions called "Power of the Pen" where we were given prompts to write short stories or essays.

In one way or another, I feel like I've been writing most of my life. Yet I am the only one who has read most of what I've written. I have a small shelf full of journals that I've been completing since I was in college. Sometimes I was faithful at writing daily. That was especially true the year I served as a National FFA Officer. I didn't want to forget one thing about that life-changing experience. Other time periods, I did not write as often. It was usually during the most stressful or uncertain times that journaling helped me the most.

Writing out paragraphs of thoughts and feelings may sound utterly terrifying to some people, or at the very least completely unappealing. According to University of Illinois Extension Educator, Emily Schoenfelder, there are several types of journals besides a "diary" type approach. These include:

- a gratitude journal to keep lists of things you're thankful for
- an art journal to express your thoughts visually
- a bullet journal that is part diary, part to-do list- this journal can help keep you organized and on track
- a fitness journal to keep track of workouts, eating habits, and general well-being.

Michigan State University Extension says that journaling provides clarity, helps with problem solving, and provides perspective. There are many research studies that support the usefulness and benefits of journaling.

Journaling can help improve physical health. A 2018 study published in the Journal of Medical Internet Research found that patients struggling with a chronic illness who kept a journal about their thoughts experienced fewer physical symptoms than patients who did not journal. This included reduced mental distress, anxiety, and perceived stress; greater perceived personal resilience and social integration; and fewer days on which pain inhibited usual activities.

Research has shown that writing about what stresses us improves our mood and even boosts the immune system. My OSU Extension colleagues have written about journaling a few times for the Live Healthy Live Well Blog (livehealthyosu.com). OSU Extension educator, Lisa Barlage, suggests journaling your stressors and how you react.

Journal your stress for a one-week time frame. Track what causes you stress and what you do. When you find out about a big project that is due, do you head to the cupboard for a snack or do you stop eating all together? Do you take a walk to clear your head or do you head to bed early? Once you know your current reactions, you may be able to choose some healthier choices as coping techniques to get through the next crisis.

When I was a senior in high school, I was given a personal prayer journal from my Nellie Chapel United Methodist Church family. The authors, Catherine Marshall and Leonard LeSourd, opened a new world for me of intentional time with the Lord and a focus on observing and remembering his faithfulness.

There is great power in the tongue and there is also power in the pen. Writing or drawing your thoughts may be just the thing that could bring clarity and help solve a problem you are facing.

And now let's look at some upcoming programs from OSU Extension. Have you ever thought about making food in your home to sell directly from your home or maybe at the Farmers Market or another retail location? I will be teaching a Cottage Foods Rules and Labeling class on March 15 from 6:30-8:00 pm. You can find details about this program and future programs related to financial wellness, food preservation, diabetes, and more at our website coshocton.osu.edu.

In closing, at OSU Extension, we are proud to work for Coshocton County to help educate and improve our families, farms, and businesses. Please feel free to contact OSU Extension for more information at 740-622-2265 or visit our website at coshocton.osu.edu. Make it a healthy day!