

# Process Journaling for Everyone

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## Process Journaling is:

- Using a journal to process your life. It's a therapeutic tool to work through struggles and difficult concepts.
- It's different from a traditional diary in that it doesn't focus on historical documentation or a strict format.
- It relies on using a variety of creative and analytic techniques – developing a toolbox over time.

## Creating a Journal:

- Can be made from any notebook. I prefer the inexpensive composition books because it gives me permission to make mistakes but is well-bound enough to last a while.
- Can be done with just a basic pen or pencil, but I recommend colored pencils as well. Markers would work also but they tend to bleed through and make it difficult when working on two sides.
- Other suggested supplies:
  - Glue
  - Scissors
  - Magazines
  - Washi Tape

## The Rules:

- There are no rules
- Keep it simple
- Make mistakes
- Play
- Cross out whole pages
- White space can be as powerful as filled space

## Technique Toolbox:

One key to process journaling is building a toolbox of techniques and being open to new techniques.

- Using Quotes and Poetry as prompts
  - Cut out quotes/images from magazines

- Write quotes you have found
- Find poetry that others have written
- Write your own poetry (see portrait poems examples in this handout)
- Freewriting, Lists, and Prompts
  - Brain Dump – write what’s on your mind with no filter
  - Begin describing where you are... “Right now I am...”
    - Include the senses, emotions,
  - Make lists (see list of prompts in this handout)
  - Use prompts available online (links available in this handout)
- Pictures and Diagrams
  - Draw pictures, make art
  - Use Diagrams and Graphic Organizers
    - Concept Mapping (see example in this handout)
    - Venn Diagram
    - Pros and Cons T-Chart
    - Pie Chart (see examples in this handout)
    - Timelines

## Toolbox Ideas

### *Lists*

Making lists is an easy way to get your thoughts on paper. It can be as simple as just writing words or as challenging as drawing pictures for your items (as I call them, Doodle Lists).

A few list prompts:

- Delight
- Memories
- Favorites
- Goals/Wishes
- People You Love / Who Love You
- Things You Are Proud Of
- Things You Want to Work On

List Idea Resources:

- [My Lists Pinterest Board](#)
- [A Chuck-it List](#)
- [List Love: 101 List Prompts For Your Art Journals - ArtJournalist](#)
- [The Ultimate Collection of List Journal Ideas - Living a Sunshine Life](#)

### *Prompts*

There are many resources on the web for writing prompts for all purposes.

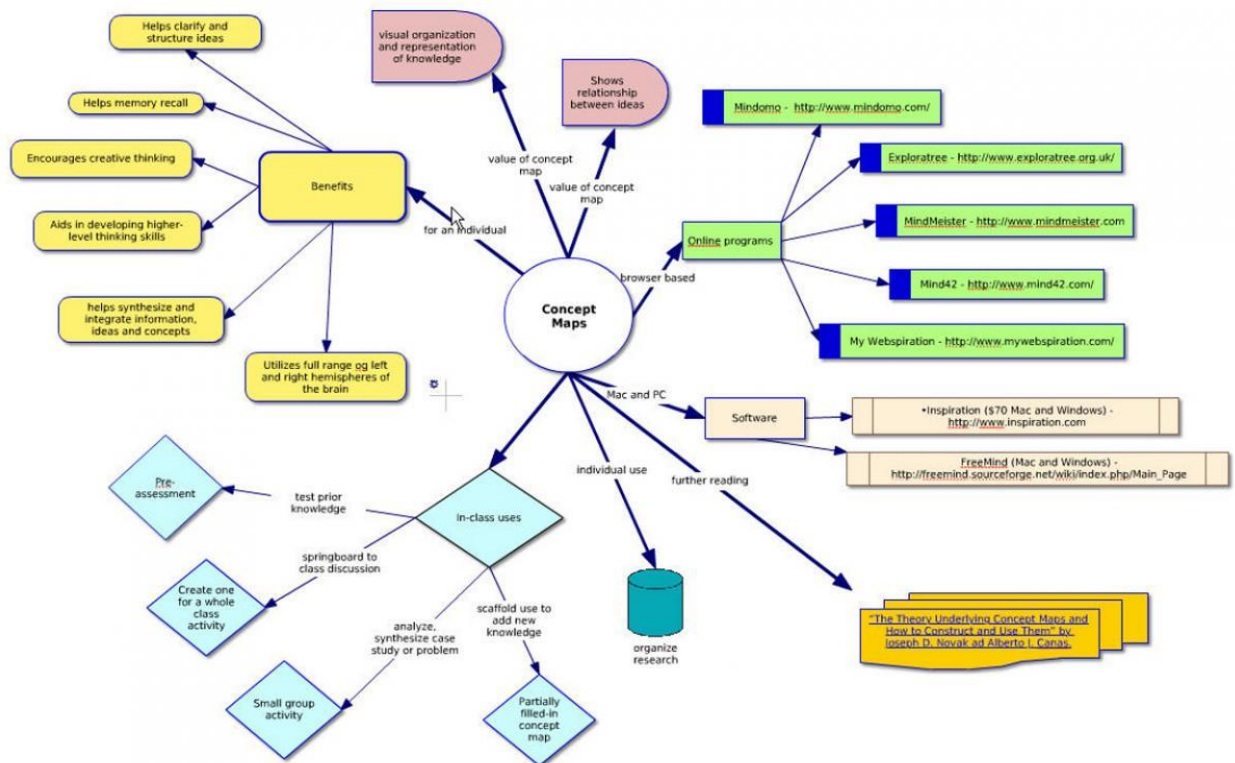
Some examples are:

- [My Prompts Pinterest Board](#)
- [119 Journal Prompts \(Includes Lists\) - Daring to Live Fully](#)
- [Ready, Set, Journal! 64 Journaling Prompts for Self-Discovery - PsychCentral](#)
- [90 journaling prompts to spark new personal insights - Ness Labs](#)

## Concept Mapping

“A concept map is a visual organization and representation of knowledge. It shows concepts and ideas and the relationships among them. You create a concept map by writing key words (sometimes enclosed in shapes such as circles, boxes, triangles, etc.) and then drawing arrows between the ideas that are related. Then you add a short explanation by the arrow to explain how the concepts are related.”

[Source: BYU Center for Teaching and Learning](#)



In Process Journaling, a concept map can be a graphic way to organize jumbled thoughts when working through something. It can also be a fun way to make a bucket list, explore goals and plans, or map out relationships.

Some suggested topics for concept mapping are:

- How you spend your time
- Interests to pursue
- Life list / goals
- Habits - Good/Bad/Neutral
- What's Working / What's Not Working

- Career Plans
- Exploring Undiscovered Biases

## Pie Charts

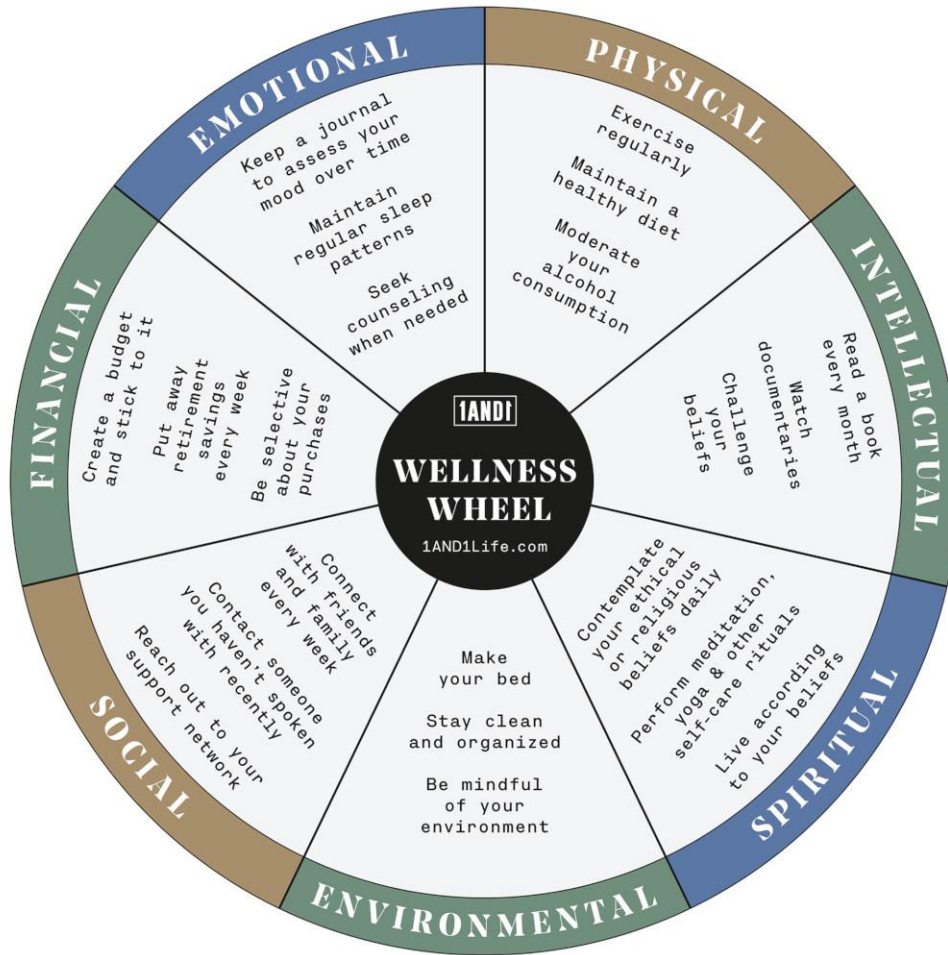
Pie charts aren't just for math; they're a great way to explore relationships between concepts as well.

You can make your own pie chart with a quick sketch. Unlike math, the accuracy isn't important - the value is in seeing relative sizes.

You can create your own pie charts for any topic. One of my favorite pie charts to create is an analysis of life balance. To do this, I create separate sections for things like Work, Family, Spiritual, and Physical.

While not strictly pie charts, I also like to find things like Wellness Wheels online and print them. Then you glue them into your journal and color or otherwise interact with them. I've used [a wheel like the one below](#) several times. For example, once I colored each section to represent how much I felt it applied to me. I've also found similar wheels and highlighted the self-care examples to assess what I could do more of. Another, more in-depth example [can be found here](#).





## Poetry

Poetry is a great way to express difficult things - whether written by you or someone else.

If you choose something written by someone else there are many things you can do. Copy the poem into your journal by hand (or print and paste) and interact with it:

- Highlight words and phrases that jump out at you
- Use it as a writing prompt
- Illustrate it with drawings/doodles
- Create a magazine collage inspired by it
- Write your own poem with it as inspiration

If you choose to write your own, try a variety of techniques. Remember this is private and there is no risk from sharing, so just write from your heart.

I often just write free verse poetry - trusting the words from my heart to come out in a way that appeals to me. You can also use templates and formal structures.

The key is to let go of judgment and use it as a tool. I like to go back to my poems either immediately or sometimes much later and do additional processing as suggested above with others' poems.

Some examples of structures or templates you might use:

- [Portrait/Autobiography Poems](#)
  - These can be free verse or structured. You may remember them from an elementary or high school assignment. They are a great way to explore identity.
- [Haiku](#)
  - I like Haiku when I really want to get to the essence of what I'm processing. It forces me to prioritize and distill my thoughts into three lines.
- [Acrostic](#)
  - Acrostic is a favorite technique when I'm trying to process a particular term and how it applies to my life. Some suggested words you might try are:
    - Your name or someone else's name
    - A role you have - Teacher, Parent, Friend, Spouse
    - A descriptor - Badass, Unique, Talented, Capable
    - A concept - Self-Care, Restoration, Growth
- [More Examples at Poets.org](#)