



INSTRUCTIONS FOR YOUR TREATMENT JOURNAL

The Assessment and Clinical Management of Suicidal Clients **M. David Rudd, Ph.D., ABPP**

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USM Wishcamper, Portland, ME

Journals have been demonstrated to be a useful intervention in treatment, particularly to improve self-awareness, understanding of change over time and as tool for relapse prevention. Your journal will provide an easy and ready reference for what you've done in treatment, identifying what's worked and what has not, with an emphasis on becoming more efficient and effective in problem solving, regardless of the situation. Here are the ground rules for keeping your journal:

1. Journal for 15-30 minutes per day. Try to do it at the same time each day, it's important to make this part of your daily routine. I want you to write only as much as I can reasonably read and cover with you in treatment. This is particularly important early in the treatment process. I'll make copies of your journal to keep and review.
2. For the first month I'd like for you to journal about things that are important to you. That is, what's on your mind? What's upsetting you? How are you feeling about yourself? How are you feeling about other people? When you write about these things, please try to identify specifically what the problem is so that we can target it in treatment. We'll talk about a specific approach to problem solving.
3. If you write about suicidal thoughts, feelings and plans, we'll target these directly in treatment. If you write about reasons for dying, I'm going to ask you to always include your reasons for living. If you have trouble identifying them, I'll help you.
4. Within the first couple of weeks, I'm going to ask you to identify the problem specifically when you write, generate and write about alternative responses, practice implementing

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the alternatives (we'll role play these to help you), evaluate whether or not it's working, and if it's not, identify a new one and try again.

5. Finally, I'm going to ask you to always close your writing each day by adding a single sentence about what your hopeful about in treatment and life.