



GENTLE STEPS TO HEALTH

COVID
RECOVERY
JOURNAL

Love is patient, love is kind

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Learning to love and listen to your body

Covid recovery is very different from recovering from a cold or flu. It may be unlike anything you have experienced before which means that you need to learn new ways of caring for yourself. This journal is your guide.

You will try out new ways to support your body's healing abilities. You will record what helps you and what doesn't, building up a set of practices that work for you and your body.

This journal will teach you to slow down and enjoy the view.

How to use this journal

Ideally you will fill this journal in every evening. The best way to remember is to tie it onto an existing habit. For example, fill it in right after dinner or just before you brush your teeth.

Occasionally you will forget because you are only human. Don't worry about it and don't beat yourself up. Just fill in as much as you remember, when you realise. Forgive yourself and keep going.

Decide when you will journal and write it down below:

I _____ intend to fill out this journal each day right before/after I

Once a week, you will set aside a bit more time so that you can reflect on the past week and plan for the coming week.

I will reflect and plan for the week on _____ day at _____.

At the back of this journal is space to record your medical appointments, changes in symptoms and resources.

Week 1

A place to grow from

This week is about simplicity. You will cut out everything you don't need, to create time for healing. Practice saying 'not yet'.

What social activities will you say 'not yet' to?

What unhealthy food and drink will wait?

What work or house chores will you say 'not yet' to?

Goals and motivation

Life isn't all about denying yourself. Write down ten things which you can still enjoy while you are recovering.

And the three things you are most looking forward to doing again once you recover.

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Week 2

Trial and learn

Last week you noticed how your body responded to doing less. This week you will change one thing and notice what effect that has. To work out what is helping and what is not, avoid making lots of changes at once (unless your doctor recommends them). Pick one thing and do it consistently for a week.

You can use one of the ideas on the next page or come up with your own.

What one change will you try this week?

What result do you hope for?

Do you need to prepare, for example by buying equipment?

Menu of options

Here is a list of things you can try which may help you manage your covid symptoms. Not all suggestions will be right for you. If in any doubt about which are suitable, consult your doctor.

Experiment	Date	Result
Breathing exercises		
Meditation		
Probiotics		
Perrin Technique		
Yoga		
Diet changes		
Screen detox		
Food supplements		
Walking		
Other exercise		
Other		

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Week 3

Reflect and choose

Over the last week you committed to one change. If you stuck to your commitment for the full week then congratulations! I hope your change gave you the result you hoped for. Whether or not you feel any better, you have demonstrated to yourself that you are committed to your healing. That mindset will produce change eventually.

If you were not able to keep up with your change last week, then please be kind and forgiving towards yourself. You have a choice. Do you want to try the same change again this week, or pick something different?

Did you stick to your change for a week?

What result did you see?

Do you plan to continue this change?

What new change will you make this week?

Gratitude

Being ill is hard, it's important to look after your mental health as well as your physical wellbeing. Keeping a gratitude journal is a simple yet powerful way to support your mental health.

if that isn't enough, there is evidence that gratitude practices improve happiness, physical health and sleep quality. Finally, we remember what we focus on and what we write down. This season of your life will pass and when you look back on it you will remember the good moments if you record them.

If you feel you have nothing to be grateful for, look back at your list of ten enjoyable things from week one and start doing them.

Where will you keep your gratitude journal?

When will you fill it out each day?

What three things are you grateful for today?

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Week 4

Acceptance

"Accept what is, let go of what was, and have faith in what will be."

Worrying and hiding from your situation are understandable, but they take energy and can't change where you are in your recovery journey.

What do you find hard to accept about your illness?

Imagine that you did accept these things. What would you do differently?

What scares you about doing what you just wrote?

Could these changes be worth the fear?

Weekly reflections

Did you stick to your plan last week?

What was the result, will you continue?

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What new change will you try this week?

What result do you hope for?

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Week 5

Variety

Being ill for a long time can be very monotonous, even boring. Even in your illness it's possible for you to have new experiences and notice new things about yourself and the world around you. Variety is a beautiful thing and you shouldn't wait until you are well to enjoy it.

This week, change your environment and notice the changes happening in the natural world around you.

How will you change your environment, for example, use a different room or put up a poster?

Go outside (or watch from a window or webcam). What do you see that wasn't there last week?

What new food will you try this week?

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Week 6

Celebration

Celebrating milestones and small successes releases dopamine, one of the 'happiness chemicals', in your brain. It's understandable if you don't feel like celebrating, but even in difficult times there are things to celebrate.

Perhaps a friend has a birthday or anniversary coming up? Think creatively about how you can celebrate, even if you can't be there in person. Can send a card? Print photos from a special memory? Tell them 3 reasons why you are glad to have them in your life?

What celebration is coming up?

How will you mark it?

What achievement can you be proud of? Don't compare your wins to what others can do or what you used to do. Simply think of something that is an achievement for you now. It could be preparing yourself a simple meal, showering or getting out of bed. Whatever it is, celebrate it!

What win deserves to be celebrated?

How will you celebrate?

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Week 7

Reaching out

It can be hard to admit when we need help and even harder to ask for it. Wonderfully, asking for help is a great way to strengthen relationships. If someone admitted their weakness to you and trusted you enough to ask you for help, would you respect them more or less?

Do you ever hide or down play your illness?

What are you afraid might happen if you shared how you feel?

What could you gain if you asked for help more often?

Who will you be more open with this week?

Weekly reflections

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Week 8

Community

Last week you reached out and asked for support. You may have had different reactions from different people. Some of the responses may have surprised you.

This week, you will create a supportive community. Think about who has been most supportive of you during this illness. As you move forward, spend time with people who love you. These are the people who are patient and kind to you.

Who is patient and kind to you?

How will you ensure you see them often?

Who is not being loving to you?

What boundaries will you put around time with them?

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Week 9

Reflection

Over the last 8 weeks you tried out lots of things to help you in your recovery. Before you close this journal for the last time, take a moment to reflect on what you have discovered and what you would like to continue in the next stages of your recovery journey.

What practises from this journal will you continue in the next stage of your life?

Look back at week one, are you able to do any of the things you've missed?

Completing this journal is a milestone, how will you celebrate it?

Thank you for coming on this journey with me. I wish you peace, health and happiness. Wherever you are in your recovery, I hope you are being patient and kind to yourself. Many of you will still have symptoms, you are welcome to photocopy the daily and weekly pages to continue your journey.

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Symptom tracker

Symptom	First seen	End date

Medical appointments

[illegible]

Resources

Name	Address
Perrin technique	https://youtu.be/8ESXf9PL0_Q
Loving someone with ME	https://solvecfs.org/loving-someone-with-me-cfs/