

Progoff's Intensive Journal® Process

Writing is a way of loving the world.

--Natalie Goldberg, *Writing Down the Bones*

Each person needs then early on to go inside, far enough inside to water the plants, awaken the animals, become friends with the desires and sense what

Machado calls "the living pulse of the spirit."

--Robert Bly, *News of the Universe*

The Progoff Intensive Journal® is one of the forms of compassionate self-study introduced in Mindfulness Centered Therapies. It is compassionate, non-judging self-study that is a useful practice in Mindfulness Centered Therapies. It is not a traditional diary or method of journal keeping but instead a unique tool for self-balancing, creativity and personal growth. By design it is non-analytical, non-judgmental and self empowering and assists in self discovery and integration. Developed by Dr. Ira Progoff, it was the outcome of years of research in the dynamic psychology of creative and spiritual experience in the 1960's. As Director of the Institute for Research in Depth Psychology at Drew University and a therapist and workshop leader following his studies with Carl Jung, he studied the lives of creative people with a focus on the common threads, themes and dynamics of creativity and growth. His own clarity and creativity were imminently apparent in his construction of this integrating tool. He was also, in an age of gurus, a refreshingly humble man, a compassionate listener who trusted a deeper process. There is a quality of balance, gentle humor and wholeness immediately

apparent in his work.

The Intensive Journal originally created in 1966 has helped over hundreds of thousands of people explore their own depths and find the inner movement of their lives. The book, At A Journal workshop published in 1975, and revised in 1992 has been hailed as “the best book on psychological self-care.” The processes in the work borrow from Lao Tzu, Buddha, St Augustine, St Francis of Assisi, Dostoevsky, Carl Jung, D.T. Suzuki and Martin Buber. The principles of mindfulness: non judging awareness in the present moment, a quiet spacious atmosphere, a trust in organicity and depth, an awareness of unity and the body’s wisdom in the presence of Self are inherent in its practice.

At the core of this work are the “Dialogues” and the practice of “Journal Feedback.” The intention of the practice is to develop an awareness of the ongoing process of one’s inner life, and, in the presence of compassionate curiosity and awareness, to allow one’s life to move forward. This fosters a naturally occurring integration.

In a workshop setting, the process begins with participants recording personal information about their lives in four dimensions: Life Time, Dialogues, Depth and Meaning. These include life experiences, persons, works, dreams, images, society, the body, events and spiritual experiences. Participants receive a simple three-ring binder with many specific subject dividers to begin the process. One’s life experiences both inner and outer are then easily accessible and can be re-entered and non-judgmentally explored at any time, clarifying one’s history, and providing a sense of continuity and connection.

This atmosphere of the workshop is created by the quality of presence in the journal consultant conveyed by calmness of voice, appropriate timing, gentle

introduction of the material, clarity of structure, respect for inner process and depth and the intentional quiet that pervades the workshop. It is non-conversational and provides a quality of privacy, despite the presence of others. Each person is working in their own life. There is no intrusion. Once a client has taken a workshop or the series, therapy proceeds more easily as one has a process for working independently within its structure.

The Life Integration workshop introduces journal feedback which is a non-analytical organic cross-referencing that generates energy and movement. Once a participant has recorded life data in most of the sections of the journal, the key question is: "To what aspect of my life does this entry call my attention, or where in the journal does this lead me?" Wherever we are drawn: to a memory, a moment of transition, a person we haven't seen in years, an image or a dream, there is a place and a process for working with it. Whatever we write, we read and then record our reaction or response and follow it forward.

All these notations begin to form a thread, and as they overlap, the internal fabric begins to emerge. We are able to see from a different vantage point and moved by the process from fragmentation and separateness toward seeing the wholeness, order and strength of the life fabric. As a result of this organic, accepting, compassionate curiosity process, a pattern becomes more visible.

This process enlarges the scope of one's questions outside the boundaries of "problem" and instead accesses that which is transpersonal and connected. It is not that judgment is wrong, for that's another judgment, there's just no room for it in the movement forward. Instead of paralysis, there is attention, trust, movement and energy. In this exploration we gradually discover that our life has been going somewhere and that we can understand where it wants to go next.

As in mindfulness and Hakomi, there is no forcing in the journal. If there's no experience or if there is a resistance or reaction to something, we do our best not to judge and quietly record what is happening. This quality of spaciousness is at the heart of the work; it is a quality of love in its greatest sense. The Intensive Journal is not a substitute for life but rather is about living one's life attentively. It is not even about writing, nor is any writing experience necessary. Language is the medium through which we understand experience. As Progoff said, "Every human being has at least one great creative project, a life."

Joseph Campbell, the world's foremost authority on mythology said, "The Intensive Journal is one of the greatest inventions of our time." Anais Nin said, "One cannot help but be amazed by what emerges from this skillful inner journey. All the elements we attribute to the poet, the artist become available to everyone at all levels of society."

Author: Carol Ladas-Gaskin, an Intensive Journal consultant, certified counselor, Hakomi therapist, teacher and trainer, www.seattlehakomi.com, author of *Untangling the Knot: The Art of Honoring Ancestors*, www.carolladasgaskin.com, co-author of *Mindfulness Centered Therapies, an integrative approach*, www.mindfulnessbooks.com and author of *Unfurling*, a collection of poems.

For more information about Intensive Journal workshops in the Seattle area, please email Carol at clgaskin@frontier.com.