

## Structured Journaling – An experiment

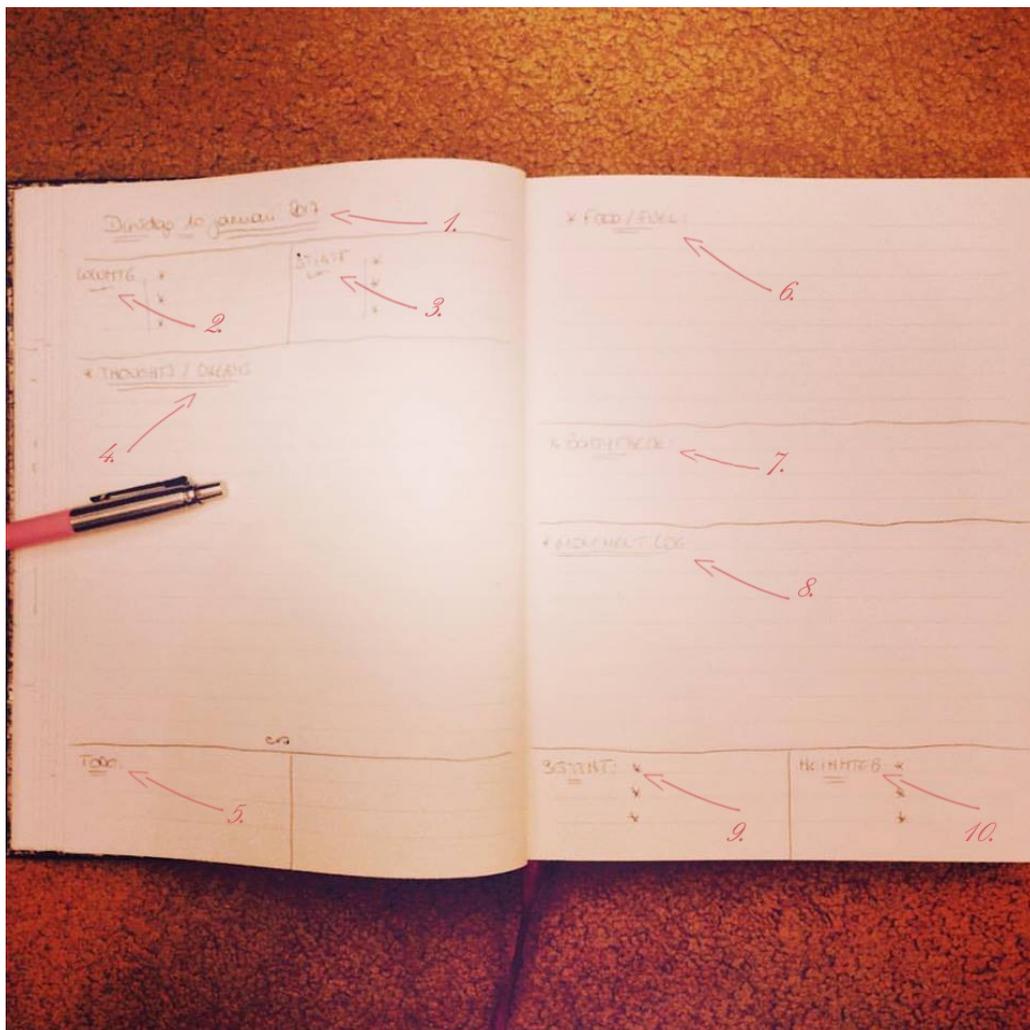
Hello there :) Another blog post today, about 'structured journaling'. This one is about something that I have been experimenting with since 1st of January 2017, after reading about the benefits of daily affirmations (see my recent blog post on that here) and trying out various (dance and life) journaling methods over the years.

The format is partially inspired by the 5-minute journal (as recommended by Tim Ferris in one of his awesome [podcasts](#)), mixed with inspiration from the 'Morning Pages' practice which Julia Cameron mentions in '[The Artists' Way](#)' (one of my favorite books for inspiration), plus my own daily note-taking habits.

It looks like a lot, but in reality it only takes me a few minutes each day to write down something in each section. I take about 5 minutes for the morning portion, and 5 minutes for the evening notes, the rest of it (top of right page) are lines I note down here and there throughout the day, which only takes a few seconds.

Every evening I prepare the page for the following day, and I make sure my (lucky!) pen is at the ready, too - It helps to make journaling in the mornings as easy and accessible as possible.

It looks something like this:



I currently use a Paperblanks lined journal, format 'ultra' (180 x 230 mm) - but whichever format you like to use for journaling will do.

The points I fill out over the course of the day are the following:

### **1. Date and time**

I fill out the date the evening beforehand, and the time once I start journaling.

### **2. WWMTG - 'What would make today great?'**

3 Things that would make me happy if they happened on that day. This could be anything (eg. receive a booking, sell a DVD, enjoy a great workout/dance practice session or class, go for a walk, etc..)

### **3. 3TIATF - '3 Things I am thankful for'**

These things can be very simple (eg. the pen I am writing with, fresh coffee, a bird you hear singing outside), or more abstract (a person you are happy to know, something you look forward to doing that day, your health, etc..)

*Note: This section (2 and 3) is borrowed from the 5-minute journal, and they help prime you to think about the 'bigger picture' of your day and feel grateful for small and bigger things in your life, both of which will help set a positive mood and bring focus to your mind before any input (eg email, etc..) has the chance to redirect your attention for the day.*

### **4. THOUGHTS/DREAMS**

The biggest space on the left page is for this section, but on days where I am inspired to write more, I just continue on the back of the page 2 where I add the date and 'MORE THOUGHTS'

As long as I only prepare one 'Journal Day' at a time I can be flexible with the space in the rest of the journal.

*- If I remember anything I dreamt that night, I start with writing that down, including any thoughts/memories/insights it might trigger. I have noticed that making space to note dreams for the past 9 days (it's January 9th today) has already helped me recall more of them, with more and more detail.*

*- If not, I just jot down a stream of thoughts, things I remember from the previous day that I have not written about yet, things that occupy my mind at the moment, anything that comes up is fine. This section is to 'get it on the page', so your mind is free and 'open' for the rest of the day. If, on occasion, interesting, new or fresh ideas come out of this, I make sure to note them down in a separate 'Ideas journal' (I have many journals) to use for later on.*

### **5. TODO**

This section is self-explanatory. After some experimentation I have settled on a maximum of 6

Todo-items per day - 3 work-related ones, and 3 personal ones, inspired by the [Passion Planner](#) to-do list setup, to make sure I prioritize for the day.

*Note: I have CONSCIOUSLY made this section as small as possible, because otherwise it just becomes a repeated and ever-growing list of items. I do make a 'Master TODO'-list for each month at the beginning of the month, with one main focus per week, so the 'best' (ie most effective) daily Todos can be easily deduced from that.*

## **6. FOOD/FUEL**

I note what I eat and drink during the day in this section. It might feel a bit hokey at first, but adding the word 'fuel' helps to see food as what it is: something that helps your body (and mind!) work and keeps it running happily. Water is also fuel!

## **7. BODYCHECK**

I've added this one because it sounds badass :) Also because checking in with how my body feels helps me get grounded and can give me inspiration/direction for the following section, which is:

## **8. MOVEMENT LOG:**

Planning/noting down what I do, physically, movement-wise per day. This is an attempt to work in more healthy movement-habits throughout the day.

*Note: You can write down 'structured' movement in here (ie. a dance practice session or movement class, a workout, etc..) but in reality every bit of movement counts (ie taking the stairs, walking, doing a few TKD kicks in the hallway while you wait for your coffee, elevator shimmies, hanging from a doorway, a ghetto stretch while waiting in line, breathing deeply, etc.. etc..)*

*Writing these down consciously will magically motivate you to do more, and it will help you think of new ways to sneak in healthy movement throughout your day.*

## **9. 3GTTHT - '3 Great things that happened today'**

Here I note 3 things that made me happy in the course of the day. They can be anything, big or small.

## **10. HCIHMTEB - 'How could I have made today even better'**

In this section I write down 3 ideas on how I could have had/made an even better day. Simple, but very powerful.

*Note: This section (9 and 10) is also inspired by the 5-minute journal, they help put the happenings of the day in a positive perspective, and the last question might even inspired ideas 'in the background' while you sleep! After filling out this final section I prepare the journal for the next day, and repeat the process the following morning.*

So.. that's it. My 'structured journaling' experiment in a nutshell.

If you decide to try it out for yourself, please let me know how it works for you. And/or if you have any journaling habits/tips you'd like to share with me in the comments, please do! I would love to learn more about your own journaling processes/experiences.

### **Bonus note: A year-end review**

Again, inspired by Mr. Tim Ferris, but this time his '[Tools of Titans](#)' book (which I highly, highly recommend), I have used the following writing prompts for a 'year end review' of 2016 at the end of my previous journal, right before starting this daily journal for 2017.

At the top of the page/journal, I wrote down the following questions:

- What did I do?
- What did I learn?
- Who did I meet?
- What did I make/create?

I filled out the answer to each of these questions for every month of the year 2016. It took me about 30-45 minutes in total (spaced out over 2 days), and it has already given me some surprisingly deep insights, as well as an innate motivation to 'make more' in 2017, including this blog post :)

I know the year has started already, but there is still value in looking back to look forward nonetheless. Maybe even more so right before diving into a 'daily journaling experiment'. If you want, try it out and.. let me know what you think!

xx K.

[www.khalidadance.com](http://www.khalidadance.com)

[www.inspirationnation.de](http://www.inspirationnation.de)