

Journal Prompts for a New Diagnosis

Categories and prompts to help focus your thinking and self-discovery as you process this new situation in your life:

Your Questions

- Empty: Make a list of all of the questions that are coming to mind at this moment. Include anything that feels even remotely significant about your diagnosis, relationships, circumstances, feelings. This can be done on paper, a phone app, or even post-it notes with one question per page.
- Space: Put the list away for up to a day to allow space to think about it.
- Categorize: Read through your list again, add anything that is missing or that has come up since you initially made the list, and begin to categorize it (e.g. relationship, medical, professional, etc). Within each category, which questions are the most important to you? Which are the most pressing / urgent? Which ones can you do something about?
- Action: Start brainstorming what you can do. 1) Where can you find answers? 2) Who can help you? 3) What do you want to do with open questions if they don't have a clear or obvious answer?

Your Feelings

- What are you feeling right now?
- In what ways are you expressing those feelings? In what ways are you holding back from expressing them?
- What are you telling yourself about the way you feel?
- What would help you navigate these emotions?

Your Relationships

- Who do you consider part of your community? Family, friends, neighbors, colleagues, others?
- How do you imagine this diagnosis will impact your communities?
- How do you want it to impact them in the near term and in the long term?
- Who comes to mind that could support you well at this time?
- How could people best support you right now? If someone asked, what would you say?
- How do you want to communicate about this with the various people and groups in your life? Conversation, text, video, in person, or some combination of these?
- How can you prepare yourself mentally and emotionally for these conversations?

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Your Concerns

- Empty: What are you concerned about right now? Sit down and write a "What if" list. Include every realistic concern as well as every wild, outlandish fear you've been considering. Get it all out of your system in one sitting, if you can.
- Space: Take some deep breaths. Set this list aside for a while and come back to it later. Take a walk or get in some other movement, if you are able.
- Check In: When you re-read this list, what stands out to you? Are there particular themes? What are you noticing about the way you are thinking about this situation?
- Categorize: Create columns such as Most Likely / Least Likely, Most Scary / Least Scary. Reorder your list according to these columns.
- Action: What does this tell you? What parts of this can you control, and which parts do you need to release? What would be helpful to you right now to put some of these fears to rest and give you some peace?

Your Hopes

- What are you hoping for right now?
- What can help you to maintain hope in the face of shifting circumstances?

Your Options

Brainstorm different ways you can approach the major areas in your life that this new diagnosis can impact. Try to come with 3 - 5 options for each area.

How could you approach this diagnosis in terms of:

- Your daily health habits
- Your relationships
- Your responsibilities and commitments

What's True

Sometimes it's helpful to remember what is true and good in the midst of uncertainty and change, as it can anchor us in reality instead of focusing on negativity or fear.

- Make a list -- what is true right now, about you, your body, your relationships, your circumstances? What is good right now? What is steady?
- Add to and reflect on this list in the weeks ahead. Strive to think of as many positive aspects of your life as negative / concerning ones.