The Undeniable Benefits of Keeping an Asthma Journal

by BRENDA VANTA

Your Asthma Journal

Do you want to improve the function of your lungs and better control asthma symptoms? Here is a simple solution: keep an asthma journal! Journaling is more effective that you may think, according to scientists.

Research

A randomized controlled trial published in 1999 in The Journal of the American Medical Association assessed the benefits of recording stressful life events in 112 patients (61 diagnosed with asthma, and 51 participants with rheumatoid arthritis) over one year. The effects of journaling were more evident after four months, leading to significant improvement in the symptoms. On average, the subjects with asthma who recorded the most stressful events had a 19% improvement in a specific measure of lung function (forced expiratory volume in 1 second or FEV_1) while the asthma sufferers in the control group showed no changes .

Why Journaling Works

Dr. James Pennebaker, psychologist and researcher from University of Texas indicates that keeping a journal where you record stressful events can help you resolve them and decrease the impact of these stressors on your health.

Journaling helps remove mental blocks and use your brain to better understand yourself, and others. Your thoughts and feelings become clearer as you right them down. Writing will help you better understand yourself because you'll learn what makes you happy and confident, including feelings about the people who are around you (are they helping you, or are they toxic?). Journaling can help relieve stress because writing down about negative emotions such as anger or sadness will decrease their intensity, and you will feel better, more centered and more relaxed. When you write about your problems, you may also find solutions quicker, because writing involves the use of your right brain, which deals with creativity and intuition. Rather than arguing with a person directly, you may want to write down about this situation - in this process you will understand the other person's point of view and maybe come up with a solution.

It's worth reviewing your notes periodically. It will help you to see patterns and trends in your thoughts, the way you grow and improve over time.

How to Start Your Journal

You may want to keep the journal simple, and just record stressful events, along with your feelings and emotions. Make sure you keep the journal in a private place, because you want to write without a censor. For best results, you should write every day for about 20 minutes. Do not worry about spelling or punctuation; just write down quickly, everything that comes in your mine. You may want to choose a topic i.e. writing about your peace of mind or anger or frustration. Remember that the journal is your best friend, will never judge you and will always be

available if you want to write more.

As you get more comfortable, you could include other notes in your journal - for example notes about your asthma symptoms, your diet, exercise, and sleep. You can also set up goals and make plans to achieve them.