

# YOUR NEW JOURNAL COMMUNITY



photo credit: Jamaal McKenzie

with Lola Russell

**L**ola Russell is a clinical therapist with 16 years of experience. She is the founder and CEO of Inspiring & Empowering Change, LLC, a private practice located in Baltimore, MD. In addition to seeing clients in her private practice, she also works with adults, children, families, couples and groups across a variety of settings, including an educational institution, outpatient mental health clinics, and nonprofits. She became a therapist because she cares about people and she is intrigued about the nature of self-awareness, self-healing, and the exploration of strategies for mental wellness. Her goal is to provide individuals with clinical support and guidance for managing their emotions and symptoms and acquiring the skills necessary to obtain social, emotional and mental stability.

She attended Morgan State University, Baltimore, MD, where she received her bachelor's degree in Psychology and she attended University of Maryland, Baltimore School of Social Work and obtained her Master of Social Work Degree. She is a licensed certified social worker clinical and she attends yearly educational training to

strengthen and broaden her skills and knowledge base.

She works extensively with clients across their life spans in the areas of suicide and risk assessment, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and bipolar disorder, self-confidence issues, intimate partner violence, children and adults with special needs, those suffering with grief and loss, anxiety disorder, anger and stress management, trauma, couples disputes, family conflict and child and adolescent behavioral issues. She identifies and applies treatment modalities that are conducive to each client's specific needs. She and the client then work collaboratively to establish goals to achieve maximum wellness.

**HL: What do you find difficult for people when it comes to journaling consistently?**

**LR:** One of the main difficulties people seem to have is writer's block. Sometimes individuals can communicate verbally how they feel, but it is challenging to illustrate this on paper as they may not know where to start; as a result, they become frustrated and overwhelmed. Feeling overwhelmed and frustrated oftentimes results in

procrastination and feeling as though they want to give up.

**HL: How often would you say one should journal in order for it to be effective? Should there be a routine why or why not?**

**LR:** It is important to keep in mind that journaling can be considered a part of an individual's self-care. When one is practicing self-care, it is important to have a routine so one is consistent. In order to develop a routine for journaling, one can consider scheduling a time once a day for 10 to 15 minutes to journal. Establishing a consistent routine will help with writer's block as well as overall confidence with journaling various feelings and emotions. Scheduling small increments of time is good too so one does not feel all their time is consumed with journaling. As one is journaling daily, one may find that she has more to write than the previous week because she is in the flow of writing. If one does not have a routine in place, one may not prioritize journaling as part of one's self-care routine. One should not view journaling as a task because journaling is a tool that can support positive emotional health.



**HL: Some people have multiple journals. Is it okay to do that or should there be one consistent journal someone should use?**

**LR:** In the beginning stages of the journaling process, one may have multiple journals because one cannot find the right fit. It is recommended that the individual writes down everything they want in a journal. For example, one may want a journal that has journaling prompts, or one may want a journal that has no prompts so they can write freely. It is recommended that people identify one journal that works best for them. Individuals can consider exploring various journal options but should narrow it down to one journal that works best for them.

**HL: What are some things you would advise those who previously had a hard time getting started writing in their journal?**

**LR:** I recommend that each individual journal about topics that make them feel good or happy. This could be traveling, going shopping, spending time with family and friends, setting personal and professional goals. Journaling does not always consist of starting with the problem. It will be easier if they can start from journaling about their interests. Once individuals begin journaling, it becomes a routine that they enjoy and they will find themselves journaling about anything.

**HL: How important is it for people to join a journaling community when it comes to mental health and wellness?**

**LR:** As mentioned earlier, journaling can be a challenge for several different reasons. However, if people are part of a community of those who are new to journaling, they will not feel alone in the process. They will be able to learn from others who face the same or similar life challenges. Individuals will also get the opportunity to learn from expert techniques and strategies on how to begin a journaling path.

**HL: How can joining a journaling community be beneficial for people who are seeking support for their mental health?**

**LR:** This journaling community does not provide therapy nor is it a substitute for therapy; instead, it is a safe space where people can come together and share life experiences and learn ways to overcome challenges through journaling. Women will learn various strategies through journaling on how to manage life's challenges, which will support emotional health.

**HL: What can be expected in joining your community?**

**LR:** If anyone is interested in being a part of the Empowered Women's Journaling Network, they can expect to meet with a clinical expert on a weekly basis to learn journaling techniques and strategies. I created a self-care journaling workbook that individuals will work from while participating in the journaling community. The Self-Care Wellness Journal provides women with 52 thought-provoking journal prompt statements that start each page and align with the corresponding 52 positive affirmations. The goal is to journal every day for a year on a weekly basis. The Empowered Women's Journaling Network was created as a platform for women to receive inspiration, empowerment, education, and network opportunities.

Women will get the opportunity to attend master classes hosted by various co-hosts and experts. If women have expertise within a particular industry, they will be offered the opportunity to facilitate a master class to women within the community. Women will attend weekly journaling support sessions to guide them through the workbook. We will have quarterly in-person or virtual retreats where women will have the opportunity to set personal and professional goals. Women will also have the occasion to connect and network with

other professional women. Within the community, there will be subgroups that women can join, such as a group for authors, a travelers groups, a group for entrepreneurs, a wellness group and more. Within these subgroups women will get the chance to meet other women who have experience or would like to gain experience within that particular subgroup topic. Women will have a safe, supportive and comfortable space to share and develop their expertise, share resources, advice, discuss relevant topics and grow together.

**HL: How can they sign up, and learn more?**

**LR:** If anyone is interested, they can go to <https://www.iandexchange.com/journaling> to learn more about the community and pre-register to enroll in the community as well as order a journal.

**Mental Moment:** This platform was established to provide inspiration and empowerment to women to support their wellness and emotional health through journaling.

**About Lola Russell:**



In her spare time, Lola Russell participates in community service activities. She believes it is vital to volunteer her time to help an individual or group and donate to others in need. She feels fulfilled when she can empower and inspire others through acts of kindness, resources and services. Her care for her clients compelled her to begin the process of establishing her own nonprofit, Cultivating & Embracing Change, Inc., which will be focused on offering no cost to minimal cost for therapy and wellness services.

She recently established another product and service to provide therapeutic support via journaling and an Empowered Women's Journaling Network. To connect you can follow Lola on her website or social media platforms:

- website: <https://www.iandexchange.com>
- Instagram: @iandexchange
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/iandexchange>
- Linkedin: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/lola-russell-lcsw-c-19772020b>