

# Journaling

Anne D.



Through this installation, I seek to showcase the subconscious mind, and allow the viewer to consider the benefits of journaling to discover more about ourselves, soothe troubled thoughts, and improve memory. The subconscious and unconscious comprise more than half the mind, but it is often the least considered and noticed. Through research, I learned that many of the ideas a person enters into the subconscious are forgotten. Our subconscious is such a prominent part of what makes us who we are, but the bulk of it cannot be remembered.

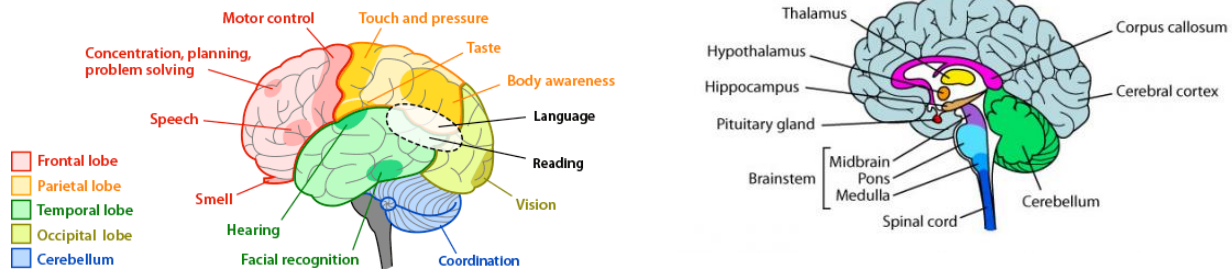
In September, I was tasked with a weekend experiment: alter something in my life that comprises who I am, allowing for the possibility of interesting results. I decided to carry around small memo notebooks to record every thought and feeling. I found that writing down my thoughts and emotions was extremely beneficial. I felt like it improved my sense of self, my memory, and made it easier to evaluate the daily good and bad. I was so affected by this experiment that I decided to carry it on, even after the allotted time passed. I continued to buy notebooks, filling them with my thoughts each day. I have since filled 14 journals in three months, and I have used their contents here in this installation.

These tiny thoughts allow me to be more aware of what goes on in my mind, making me realize so much about myself. This journaling process has been extremely beneficial, and I highly recommend it for an increased sense of self and surroundings.

Anne D.  
New York

## The Brain

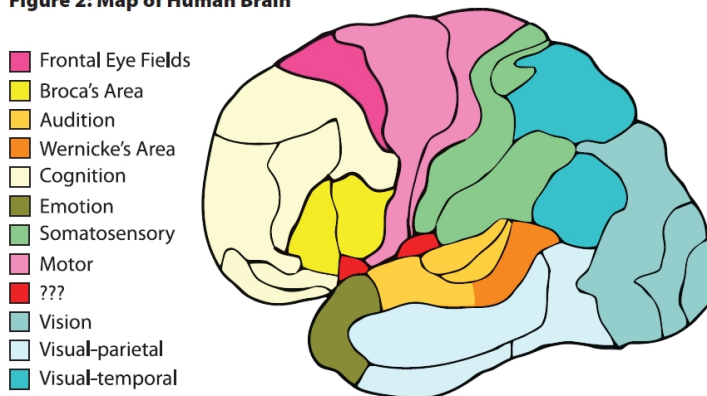
The brain is a three pound organ in our head “that consists of some 100 billion cells.”<sup>1</sup> Many experts say that even our brain is too complex to understand, our mind is even more intricate. The subconscious and unconscious make up more than half our mind, but is the least considered and noticed. “Our brain is the most complex organ in a vertebrates body”<sup>2</sup>, it controls most activities of the body such as integrating, processing, and coordinating information given. The brain is made up of the cerebrum, cerebellum, and brainstem. Every part of one’s brain, works together to make us who we are.



## How the Brain Works

“Our brain uses electrical and chemical processes to take in, organize, interpret, store, and use information.”<sup>3</sup> We have neurons that are, “tiny decision making devices”<sup>4</sup>. The neurons contain dendrite fibers (receive messages) and Axon Fibers ( send out messages to other neurons). These messages are known as “action potentials.” The cerebellum helps discriminate sounds and texture, judge time, and control emotions. The cerebral Hemispheres are the two sides of the brain and the limbic system is the border between the two halves: it contains the amygdala, which processes emotional memories and perception of anger and fear; the hippocampus, which processes conscious memories; and the hypothalamus.

**Figure 2: Map of Human Brain**



## The Subconscious

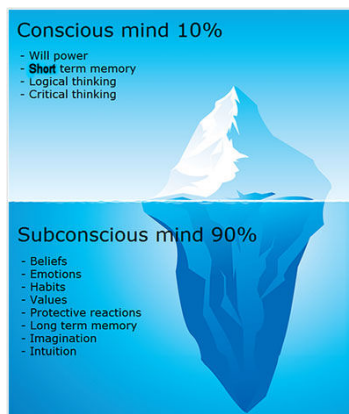
Every idea that we ever have goes into our subconscious, but is often forgotten. Our subconscious is such a large part of what makes us who we are but we cant even remember most of it. Our subconscious is difficult to research because, “in the field of psychology,

<sup>1</sup> Pink, Daniel H. *A Whole New Mind: How to Thrive in the New Conceptual Age*. Cyan, 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Brain.” *InnerBody*, [www.innerbody.com/image/nerv02.html](http://www.innerbody.com/image/nerv02.html).

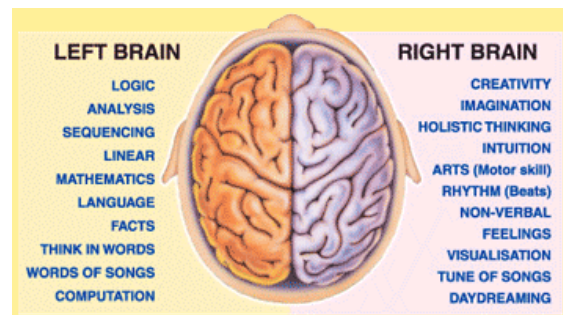
<sup>3</sup>[www.bing.com/cr?IG=61F8AB0F89CC4E54916E18BD7BBE2816&CID=0685DB81AFE46D3521D5D0C9AEE26CDB&rd=1&h=f1vNviT46MDqvBBOKnUPOZJkQXA875ZCFA5nli8foQ&v=1&r=https%3a%2f%2fwww.amazon.com%2fPsychology-Everyday-Life-David-Myers%2fdp%2f1319013732&p=DevEx,5078.1](http://www.bing.com/cr?IG=61F8AB0F89CC4E54916E18BD7BBE2816&CID=0685DB81AFE46D3521D5D0C9AEE26CDB&rd=1&h=f1vNviT46MDqvBBOKnUPOZJkQXA875ZCFA5nli8foQ&v=1&r=https%3a%2f%2fwww.amazon.com%2fPsychology-Everyday-Life-David-Myers%2fdp%2f1319013732&p=DevEx,5078.1).

the subconscious refers to that part of consciousness that we are unaware of. It is information that we are not actively aware of in the moment...such as things that are heard, seen or remembered. The unconscious mind...[referred] to a part of the mind that cannot be known by the conscious mind, and includes socially unacceptable ideas, wishes and desires, traumatic memories and painful emotions that have been repressed.”<sup>5</sup> I discovered that, “ten percent of our mind is conscious, 55 percent is subconscious, and 35 percent is conscious.”<sup>6</sup> Our conscious holds short term memory, will power, logic and critical thinking. The subconscious mind, “controls our beliefs, emotions, habits, values, protective reactions, long term memory, imagination, and intuition.”<sup>7</sup> And the unconscious has our feelings, thoughts, urges, and memories that’s outside of our conscious awareness. How can we truly articulate and understand what we are thinking? Our subconscious is a jumble of thoughts and ideas; it's impossible to comprehend it all at once. One way to reveal our subconscious mind, is by journaling. Having the ability to clearly see our emotions, thoughts, and ideas, written out gives us a crystal clear image of what's going on inside our mind. I want to find the truths of how journaling can reveal our minds by experimenting with my own personal journals.



### Identity Development

Identity development, “is the development of the distinct personality of an individual regarded as a persisting entity (known as personal continuity) in a particular stage of life in which individual characteristics are possessed and by which a person is recognized or known (such as the establishment of a reputation).” One man named Erik Erikson established the theory that our ego develops through crises. He claims that there are



eight stages from when we are born to adulthood in which, “the person experiences a psychosocial crisis which could have a positive or negative outcome for personality development.”<sup>9</sup> Erikson extended his idea off of a man named Sigmund Freud, who believed that, “when we explain our behavior to ourselves or others (conscious mental activity), we rarely give a true account of our motivation.”<sup>9</sup> We are never deliberately lying to someone about ourselves, it's just self deception. A good way to see who we really are is through journaling and writing about our thoughts. We can see the type of person we are just through small thoughts.

<sup>5</sup> “Brain.” *InnerBody*, [www.innerbody.com/image/nerv02.html](http://www.innerbody.com/image/nerv02.html).

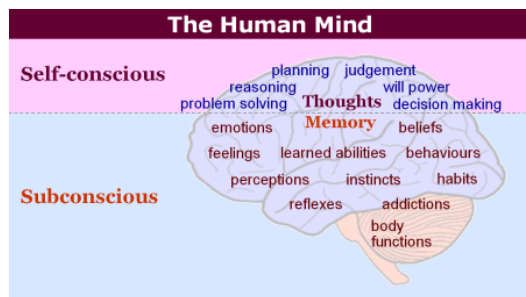
<sup>6</sup>

<sup>7</sup>

Stage	Psychosocial Crisis	Basic Virtue	Age
1	Trust vs. mistrust	Hope	Infancy ( 0 to 1 ½)
2	Autonomy vs. shame	Will	Early Childhood ( 1 ½ to 3)
3	Initiative vs. guilt	Purpose	Play Age ( 3 to 5)
4	Industry vs. inferiority	Competency	School Age ( 5 to 12)
5	Ego identity vs. Role Confusion	Fidelity	Adolescence (12 to 18)
6	Intimacy vs. isolation	Love	Young Adult ( 18 to 40)
7	Generativity vs. stagnation	Care	Adult hood( 40 to 65)
8	Ego integrity vs. despair	Wisdom	Maturity ( 65+)

### **Role of Journaling and how it relates to Identity Development**

When I began to research journaling and its benefits, I also looked into different techniques. I was writing down just random reminders, notes, or how I was feeling. Our emotions can change so much throughout the day, and I was able to see that by writing the time down along with how I was feeling in that moment. I always wanted to fully understand what was going on in my mind, and now, I have a source to go back to and re-read. Most of the time, I



forget about a small thought that I had earlier that day. Having the ability write small thoughts down was extremely beneficial, because I could reconstruct each event in my day. I had an easy time detaching from the past because I could reflect on past experience strengthen the sense of myself. Having all my thoughts, ideas, and even reminders in a small notebook, that I could keep in my back pocket, increased my focused, and reduced scatter. It gave me a different perspective in life, because I had all my

thoughts separated and sprawled out on paper; it blatantly showed me harmful patterns that I needed to cut out. I wanted to have the ability to physically see my subconscious through these notebook. In the essay, *Why I Write*, Joan Didion states, “I write entirely to find out what I'm thinking, what I'm looking at, what I see and what it means. What I want and what I fear.”<sup>11</sup> We keep so much of our thoughts and emotions bottled up, in fact, “many experts claim we only [express] ten percent of our subconscious mind... some believe most of us use three percent.”<sup>8</sup> Carpenter claims that, “our subconscious contains the software for [our] involuntary functions, emotions, and habits.”<sup>9</sup> Journaling, whether it be a diary, sketchbook, or a notebook filled with ideas and thoughts, has countless amounts of benefits. For starters, “it reduces the amount of

<sup>8</sup> Carpenter, Harry W. *The Genie within: Your Subconscious Mind--How It Works and How to Use It*. Harry Carpenter Pub., 2011.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.simplypsychology.org/Erik-Erikson.html>

scatter in your life, increases focus, memory, and balance.”<sup>10</sup> Before I came to Oxbow, I never really journaled. But since day one I started to record my day, every night. I was three thousand miles away from home, living independently, and through journaling, I could release my thoughts and emotions. Around a month into documenting everyday, I could look back and allow myself to experience the event with a different, older mind. It helped me reveal cycles and patterns that if I let go of, could help me. Then, for an English project, we were told to do an experiment, something different for the weekend. I decide to buy a pack of small memo notebooks, and I write down the time of day with a short not of my thoughts and ideas. I was going through a hard change in my life revolving my family, and the ability to write down my emotions and thoughts felt almost like therapy. After the three day experiment I decided to buy more of the small books and continue this experiment. In three months I filled 14 notebooks.

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### **My Journals**

My journals are a documentation of myself and my time at oxbow. Here are some quotes:

10/2/17 7:46pm

“I hate hairless cats”

10/2/17 11:29pm

“I wish I drew more”

10/3/17 8:31am

“I hate when people talk on the phone with speaker in a public place”

10/3/17 11:40am

“Ferrets are spaghetti cats”

10/3/17 5:14pm

“I am hungry and tired”

10/4/17 11:15 pm

“I take peoples actions/words too seriously even though they probably don't mean it in a negative way. Then I just think about it too much and make myself upset”

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<sup>10</sup> Hardy, Benjamin P. “Why Keeping a Daily Journal Could Change Your Life – The Mission – Medium.” *Medium*, The Mission, 26 June 2017, <sup>11</sup>[medium.com/the-mission/why-keeping-a-daily-journal-could-change-your-life-9a4c11f1a475](https://medium.com/the-mission/why-keeping-a-daily-journal-could-change-your-life-9a4c11f1a475).  
<http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/uploadedFiles/schools/whitmanhs/academics/english/Why%20I%20Write%20Didion.pdf>