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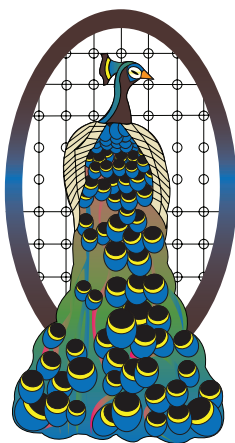
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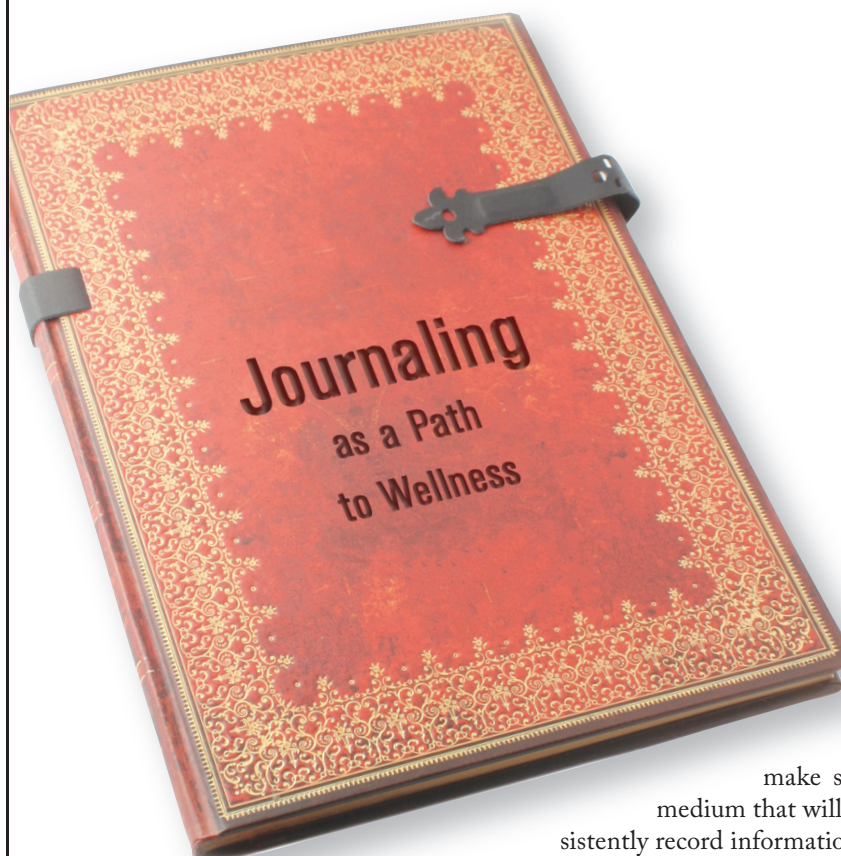
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make sure you choose a medium that will allow you to consistently record information.

The other suggestion is to set aside time each day to input information. Most people find that it's easiest to do this at the same time each day – or if you are recording your food intake, it is most advisable to record this information as you consume (so you don't forget what you ate) and then note your emotions and feelings surrounding your snacks and meals. Many people are emotional eaters and tackling this problem can greatly facilitate weight loss.

The Why

Journaling can be a wonderful way to outline your goals and then take steps to attain them. As a tool to achieve health and fitness goals, a journal will allow you to record your daily food intake, and focus on how you were feeling when you ate those meals – and afterwards. The objective here is to realize patterns of eating behavior that are not only unhealthy but detrimental to your stated fitness goals. Journaling can also be a means to record your fitness routine – outlining not only your actual activities, but how you were feeling before you exercised and after, as well as how you felt when you didn't take the time to exercise. Journaling can help you figure out what is holding you back from accomplishing your wellness goals.

We make time for things that are truly important to us. While exercise and eating nutritious and wholesome foods may not be a priority, journaling can help you figure out why you have not been willing to take better care of your body. The act of writing down your goals

BY ALICIA ROBINSON-MORGAN

Journaling is the art of keeping a diary that explores feelings surrounding the activities and events in one's life. Journaling is not only a useful tool for stress management and self-exploration, but it has the potential to lead to significant progress in attempting to achieve weight loss and fitness goals. Health and wellness is especially critical in our society given the alarming rise in obesity in the United States. The beginning of the year is typically a time when people reflect on their lives and possibly set goals, and inevitably at least one of those "resolutions" is focused on wellness – whether it means losing weight, exercising more diligently, getting fit, eating healthier or some combination of these objectives.

The How

While journaling may not be a panacea for our nation's health crisis, it may at least help a few motivated and diligent people achieve better health and allow them to have fun in the process. To get started you only need a basic notebook or blank book if you prefer to handwrite. A fancy notebook might be more motivating for you to diligently record, in which case you should go ahead and indulge yourself. If you prefer to use your computer to record information and thoughts, that also works well. The main point is to

and exploring your thoughts and feelings behind achieving them can be empowering. The simple act of writing with expectation can allow you to gain vision and truth over your situation. Journaling is undoubtedly a self-exploration tool.

Being able to track your progress is an important aspect of journaling. In reviewing your progress, you can celebrate your success because you are accomplishing your objectives, or perhaps it is time to reevaluate your goals because they are still too far from your reach. Because you can go back in time and reflect upon your journal submissions, you can truly determine if the goals you set for yourself were realistic or if you are not challenging yourself to dig deep and work hard. A simple written log does not allow you to do this form of self-reflection, while journaling does.

The Where. It is easy and simple enough to take up journaling on your own; after all, you only need a notebook and a pen or a computer. However, many people find that it is fun and motivating to combine a relaxing vacation with learning a new skill or hobby. Several destination spas offer a memorable way to learn about and practice journaling, while enjoying a beautiful setting, award-winning food and countless activities. If you are ready and willing to splurge, here are some primo locations to practice the fine art of journaling: Miraval – Life in Balance (Catalina, Ariz.) offers a “Journaling Workshop”; Canyon Ranch Resort & Spa (Tucson, Ariz.) offers lectures on journal writing; Lake Austin Spa Resort (Austin, Tex.) provides a program on “Joy of Journaling”; and Rancho La Puerta (Tecate, Mexico) has a presentation on “Self Discovery through Journal Writing.”

Written by Alicia Robinson-Morgan, founder and owner of AHA! A Holistic Approach – a health and fitness company located on Capitol Hill (www.abolisticapproach.com). ■

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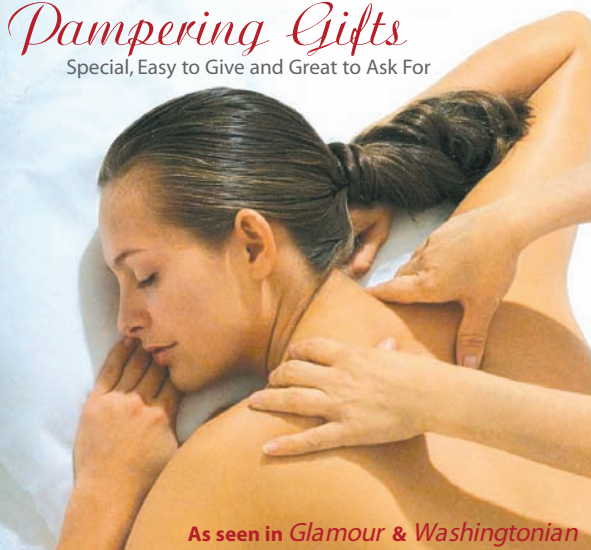
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