

Self-Reflective Writing Exercises

"Life is self-overcoming."
- Nietzsche

Compiled in this document is a list of short self-reflective writing exercises.

Although these topics are somewhat deeper than your average writing prompt, they can be used as such. However, it is beneficial to spend more time reflecting on and working through the topics in these exercises.

Life satisfaction

- How do you currently rate your life on a 1-10 scale?
- If it is not a 10, why so?
- What would help you move closer to a 10?

Alternatively:

- When will I be satisfied?
- I will be satisfied when.....
- Why?

Lying awake at night

According to James Pennebaker, the emotional upheaval bothering you the most and keeping you awake at night is a good place to start writing.

- What keeps you lying awake at night?
- Or in the words of the Stoics, what is disturbing your tranquility?

Avoidance

- What don't I want to talk about? Why not?
- What don't I admit to myself? Why not?

Naikan

Naikan is a Japanese method that aims at providing a more realistic picture of reality through genuine self-reflection.

The Naikan method consists of the following three questions:

- What have I received from (someone)?
- What have I given to (someone)?
- What troubles and difficulties have I caused to (someone)?

Undesirable events

If we want our life to go well, Epictetus says, we should - rather than wanting events to conform to our desires - make our desires conform to events.

What “undesirable” events, people or things in your life can you learn to “desire” and look at or treat with more empathy?

Freedom

Real freedom isn't the freedom to come and go as you want in life, to be financially independent and to be free from any or all responsibilities.

- Real freedom is the freedom from fear.
- What are you afraid of?

Hypothetically, if you were to be free from fear, what would you be doing differently?