



The Athena Wellness Podcast
Episode 078 – Emptying the Cup – Autumn Journaling
October 6, 2021

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Welcome to the Athena Wellness podcast, the show that invites you to take a seat around the community fire and listen to stories that inspire. I'm your host, Kathy Robinson, author, coach and founder of Athena Wellness, a company that's dedicated to supporting you on your journey to live more wholeheartedly.

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Hello and welcome to Episode 78. Thanks so much for joining me for the shortened Wellness Wednesday episode, a little midweek boost to help keep your Warrior Vibe high.

I was recently reminded of a story about a Japanese Zen master from the 19th century. A university professor came to visit the master to learn about Zen. As the master served his esteemed guest some tea, he poured the cup until it was filled to the top and then kept going, resulting in overflow.

The master kept pouring until the professor exclaimed, "It's overfilled, no more will go in!"

To which the master replied, "You are full of your own opinions and speculations. How can I show you Zen unless you first empty your cup?"

That's what I'd like to speak to today.

Autumn is a time when we can feel like we're overflowing and that can be wonderful. It can signify a wonderful harvest and a season of celebration. And the time will come when we're overfilled and there's no more room and we need to empty our cup.

The best way I know how to empty my cup is through journaling. It's a wonderful way to explore and enjoy our inner harvest of the autumn season.



I'll briefly outline a few suggestions for journaling if you don't currently have a practice, and then provide a number of journaling prompts in the form of questions. And if you'd like a list of those prompts, you can download the transcript for this episode through the link in the show notes.

So let's start with a basic structure. The only imperative I have for myself is that I write the date, time and location in the top right hand corner of the page when I begin. This has become a useful reference point for me over the years. It helps me determine what I wrote or didn't write, and where I was at the time.

When I first started journaling decades ago, the decision on what, when and how to write all felt overwhelming. So if this is new for you, I completely understand. Your writing will develop over time, but here are three guidelines to give yourself permission to give it a try.

1. **Make your notebook your judgment free zone.** Journaling has nothing to do with how well you write or what you say. This is about the practice. Which leads me to guideline two.
2. **Be consistent.** Ten minutes three times a week is better than a two hour burst once a month. And that's because you're developing muscle and habit by doing it at specific times throughout your week, the more often the better. And that leads me to guideline three.
3. **Take it with you.** You can write during your lunch hour, on planes, in cafes, on road trips. My notebook comes with me wherever I go. It's the alternative to mindless phone scrolling.

Wherever you may be in your journey, working with questions is a great option. **I keep a running list of interesting questions in the back of my notebook.** And I love this method for a number of reasons:

- I always have a **starting point**, so I don't have to worry about facing a blank page.
- They **focus** me on a topic that's important to me.
- They allow me to **explore** all kinds of new territory.

Most importantly, they lend themselves to seasonal shifts. **Here's some of my favorite questions to journal about in autumn.** I have them categorized as a warm up that you can do any time as well as five thematic categories - perfect for emptying the cup.



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We'll start with the **warm up**. This is not season specific. You can do it at any time and you can swap out the questions for anything that you'd like.

In the morning, I love to focus on intention:

- How am I feeling?
- What do I need?
- What's my intention for the day?

At the end of the day, I like to focus on reflection:

- What happened during the day?
- How did I show up?
- What did I contribute?

And **gratitude** is great for any time of the day. I think about or I write about what I'm grateful for in the morning, a wonderful way to wake up, midday if I need a break, or at the end of the day, which is a really nice way to go to sleep.

Now let's move on to the themes, which are groups of questions that seem to have a garden-type motif of planting, tending and harvesting running through them.

The first theme is **autumn**, or **the spirit of the season**:

- What memories does autumn bring up?
- What do I love most in autumn?
- What am I grieving as summer ends?
- What am I welcoming as fall begins?
- If I could be anywhere in the world to connect with the season, where would it be and why?
- How can I bring that spirit of place into my home today?

The next theme is **celebrate**:

- What did I enjoy tending and creating this year?
- What am I harvesting now that I planted this past spring?
- Who and what contributed to this bounty?



- How can I share my harvest with others?
- Among my many blessings, what is the one I'm most grateful for and why?

The next theme is **release**:

- Did I plant any seeds this year that didn't grow? If so, why didn't they sprout?
- Do I plan to plant them again next year?
- What was the most difficult part of the year so far? Is there something related to that that I need to let go of? And if so, why am I holding on to it?
- What thoughts, beliefs or stories have I outgrown?
- Is there an unhealthy pattern or habit that I can release?

The next theme is **change**:

- What has changed since last autumn?
- Where do I think I'll be next year at this time? What about that scares me? What about that thrills me?
- Where have I been putting off a life change? How can I safely explore my options?
- Do I need to put better boundaries in place? Do I need to start saying no to someone or something?
- How do I want to navigate the holiday season in a way that's better aligned with my values? How can I begin to make those changes now?

The last theme is **inspire** – this is more of an invitation:

- What about this season inspires me?
- How can I bring that feeling into my space?
- What can I plan and prepare for now to help me feel more encouraged about winter?
- How can I best nurture and care for myself throughout the cold months?
- What kind of seeds would I like to explore so they can incubate over the winter and be ready for planting next spring? How can I prepare the garden for these new seeds to take root?

I'd like to leave you with a quote from writer Christina Baldwin, who has said, "Journal writing is a voyage to the interior." I can't think of a better way to spend the colder months. May you find your journal pages filling as your cup empties.



09:25

Thank you so much for joining me today. I know there are many ways you can spend your time. Thank you for choosing to spend it with me. Until our paths cross again, be kind to yourself and show your Warrior Spirit some love.

If you know anyone who could benefit from today's episode, please pass it on. And many thanks for supporting the show by subscribing and leaving a review. It means a lot and it helps others find their way to our circle.

If you'd like to access the show notes, have a question you'd like addressed on a future episode, or would like a transcript of this episode, visit www.AthenaWellness.com/podcast.

Until next time, be well!