



Light the Light.

Write a prayer for yourself.

Look into your heart and choose your own words of protection, acceptance, healing, and love. Ask for exactly what you need. For example, if I'm worried about opening a painful memory as I write or if I'm exposing my feelings in a group, I might pray:

Oh, God, please help me. These wounds still hurt, and I'm afraid to open them up again. Hold me close. I need your comfort and love. Amen

There are also silent, wordless prayers as in centering or contemplative prayer. Sometimes, movement becomes my prayer. It's the doing or being of the prayer that's important; prayer doesn't need words. Whichever form you prefer, use prayer in this journal experience when you feel vulnerable. You may want to try it as you begin or end each session.

Some suggestions:

- *Keep it simple*
- *Use your own words*
- *Remember it's just for you*
- *Ask for what you need*
- *Try silence*
- *Remember a childhood prayer*
- *Consider whom you're addressing – God, Holy Spirit, Great Spirit, Higher Power, Jesus, Goddess, Buddha, unnamed source of wisdom and life*
- *Pray as if you know how if praying is new to you or as if you believe if you doubt*

I remember when I was very young I prayed...

My own prayer of protection and comfort is...

Search for the words.



Journaling tools

It's the tools you *aren't* going to use that are most important – penmanship, spelling, punctuation, accuracy, neatness, sentence form, or any other writing skill that makes you pause to examine your words. Allow yourself to let go of your inner editor and judge. You've already made your journal safe; no one else is going to read it. Start writing and don't reread until later.

Honesty, courage, and humor are powerful journaling tools. I seek privacy, quiet, and comfort as I write. A regular allotted time helps make journaling a habit, even a ritual. While grieving my husband's death, the ten minutes I spent with my journal each night was often the best part of my day.

"Hot penning" is one way to get started. If you are feeling stuck or overwhelmed, this method may help release thoughts and feelings from the heart. Move from your head into your heart. Don't plan what you are going to write, these words are feelings.

To begin hot penning, put your pen to paper and start moving it. You may want to use the blank sheets in the back of this journal or doodle on separate pages to get started. You could draw loops (like the Palmer Method practice) or write "blah blah blah blah" – whatever flows out of your pen. For 20 minutes, continue to move your pen, don't stop, don't take your pen off the paper. The words will begin to flow: a heartstream.