

THE ALETHEIA PROJECT

your health, in your words

Self-Advocacy *Journal*

A guide to keeping track of your health journey and
preparing for future appointments.

THIS JOURNAL BELONGS TO

STARTED ON





*Understanding your
health is not a reward you
have to earn; **it is an
inherent right.***

— The Aletheia Project



what's inside

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start here

I How to use this journal

This journal is an interactive, working tool to help you understand what you're experiencing.

It will help you recognise any ongoing or new symptoms, prepare for upcoming appointments, and keep a record of your health journey.

There's no right or wrong way to use it. Fill in what you want to record and leave out anything you don't need. Bring it with you to appointments, or take photos of the filled-in pages on your phone. Use it once, or use it every time: whatever's useful for your situation.

1

Notice

Track what's happening in the tracker and log

2

Prepare

Fill in "Before your appointment" and bring it along

3

Follow up

Record what you were told and your next steps

a note to consider:

This journal helps you keep track of your health journey. It is not for professional diagnosis.

MY DETAILS, HANDY FOR APPOINTMENTS

Medicare no.:

Date of birth:

My GP / clinic:

Phone:

Allergies:

Emergency contact:

I · HOW TO USE

II · ADVOCATING

III · TRACKER

IV · BEFORE

V · AFTER

VI · LOG

VII · KEY NOTES

VIII · CLOSING

what it really looks like

II Advocating for your health

Self-advocacy in your appointments doesn't mean confronting your clinician about your health. Most of the time, it looks much smaller than that:

- 1** Writing down notes beforehand, so you don't forget anything in the moment
- 2** Asking questions, even a simple one
- 3** Asking for an explanation when you're confused
- 4** Simply saying, "I don't understand"
- 5** Saying that you're still unsure, or that your question hasn't been resolved

small steps still count as speaking up.

unsure how to begin?

II Conversation starters

Try one of these. Circle the ones that feel like you.

"Sorry, can you explain that again? I didn't quite follow."

"I don't think this feels resolved. Can we talk about what's next?"

"I wrote a few notes down so I don't forget. Is it okay if I go through them?"

"I'm not sure how to describe this, but something feels different."

"Could you please explain that in a different way? I'm not quite sure I understand."

 **Write your own starter**

notice what's going on

III Symptom & experience tracker

Use these pages to track your current health and bring them to appointments.

DATE

TRACKING FOR

1 What am I experiencing?

Describe it in your own words. There are no wrong answers.

2 When did it start?

A date, or roughly: "around exams", "since I started a new medication".

3 How often does it happen?

☐ Once

☐ A few times

☐ Weekly

☐ Daily

☐ All the time

☐ It comes and goes

4 How severe is it?

☐ Mild

☐ Moderate

☐ Severe

Or rate it: ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

Describe it:

5 What makes it better or worse?

6 How is it affecting my everyday life?

☐ School
 ☐ Sleep
 ☐ Relationships
 ☐ Sport
 ☐ Eating
 ☐ Mood

☐ Work
 ☐ Everyday tasks

7 What have I already tried?

8 What medications or treatments have I used?

NAME	HOW MUCH / HOW OFTEN	WHEN	DID IT HELP?

a few minutes of prep

IV Before your appointment...

Spend some time answering these before you walk in. It can make the whole appointment easier.

DATE & TIME

WHERE

WHO I'M SEEING

1 What do I want to ask?

Put the most important question first.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

2 What am I worried about?

3 What would I like to leave this appointment understanding?

BRING WITH ME

- ☐ Medicare card and ID
- ☐ This journal
- ☐ List of medications
- ☐ Test results or letters
- ☐ A support person (optional)

REMEMBER

You can ask for a longer appointment when you book, and you can ask the clinician to write things down for you.

you've got this.

while it's fresh

V After your appointment...

Answer these straight after your appointment, while it's still fresh in your mind.

1 What did the clinician tell me?

2 What are my next steps?

☐

☐

☐

☐

☐

☐

☐

☐

☐

☐

I · HOW TO USE

II · ADVOCATING

III · TRACKER

IV • BEFORE

V · AFTER

(○ Dismissed)

VI · LOG

VII • KEY NOTES

VIII • CLOSING

little and often

VI Ongoing log

For quick entries between appointments: a running record of what you're noticing over time.

DATE	WHAT I NOTICED	SEVERITY	WHAT HELPED

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keep these close

VII Key notes

Always remember: when you attend appointments, you are allowed to...

- ✓ Ask for more time in an appointment
- ✓ Bring someone with you, or ask to be seen alone
- ✓ Say "I don't understand" and ask for clarification as many times as you need
- ✓ Ask what happens if you do nothing
- ✓ Ask for a second opinion
- ✓ Say that something doesn't feel resolved
- ✓ Ask to change clinicians or clinics if the fit isn't right for you
- ✓ ...and to take up space in the room.

FINAL NOTE

This journal is a tool to help you prepare and clearly describe your symptoms or health concerns to your clinician. It is not a confirmation or proof of a diagnosis.

VIII · closing

You don't need perfect words. You only need the willingness to say, "this matters to me."

Every page you fill in is a record of you taking your health seriously. Keep going: bring this journal back every time, and add to it as your story changes.

EMERGENCY

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TALK TO SOMEONE

Kids Helpline **1800 55 1800**

Lifeline **13 11 14**



THE ALETHEIA PROJECT

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Health education, not medical advice. We acknowledge the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people of the Kulin Nation, where Aletheia was founded.

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