

The Idea Behind AOYL Facilitator's Guide

Teaching journal writing is both fun and challenging. There are several steps that have to be addressed to be successful. The old adage of “foresight and planning” rules here, having a plan that is sequenced to achieve the goal of the workshop. The AOYL Facilitators Guide serves as an initial framework to guide a successful series of outcomes in the AOYL journaling process.

The workshop has an underlying premise to empower the attendees to open and explore their core values, to get them in touch with reality to achieve life goals, as well as to offer them a safe system to process life events that may be hindering a clear mind and an unfettered life.

In this guide we touch on fundamentals to having a rewarding and fulfilling experience for both the facilitator and the workshop attendee.

The AOYL framework is built on several premises that without them will not unlock the attendees potential and enlighten them to a new world of life awareness. We refer these premises, in part as Rules for the workshop, as well as notions (things to consider) along the way. These are spelled out in the procedures as the “true point of beginning” for each workshop, whether it is the first, or 20th group workshop.

The principles guiding AOYL framework are to:

- Create a safe and nurturing environment for people to openly express themselves without feeling judged, but at the same time encouraging feedback.
- Open mind's door to the many closets that life's experience has brought in for the attendees, leading them to where they are today emotionally and physically.
- Set the stage for your success as a facilitator, and the attendee to garner optimum benefits of attending.

Journal Writing is a form of therapy, but we as facilitators are not therapists, but as the word suggests, “Facilitate” refers to the attendees' journey of self-exploration. The guide, is exactly that, intended to move along the group in a sequence of building blocks that enable the attendee to open their awareness of themselves and sort out things that do not serve them in attaining their personal empowerment in life.

Logistics: Finding A Location

Journal writing workshops can be taught in a lot of different places. The initial AOYL workshops were given at ecumenical churches such as Unity or other New Thought ministries. Much of the curriculum of AOYL comes from the premises and notions within these institutions, but is kept intentionally “non-religious”.

There are several types of workshops that span a range of three day intensives, that start on Friday night, go for 8 to 10 hours on Saturday, and 4 hours on Sunday afternoon. The group is then ready to meet periodically once or twice a month, or bi-monthly to Sheppard the attendees to a “self help group”, as a support to enacting what they have discovered for themselves in the

workshop. There are weekly meetings that have been successful that are outlined in the “carousel” format, of personal support that meet for an hour as a luncheon meeting.

Each group that attends the intensive workshop, chooses their own level of commitment to continue the work they started. When there is a common core of people that meet once a week, they are able to drop in and use the group dynamic to pick up and continue their writing at their own pace and selected venue. The subsequent meetings are covered in the facilitator’s guide.

Although the initial workshops were given at the churches, there are many other venues that work as well. Churches have a base of people that are there for spiritual enlightenment, and many are ready to experience and transcend their spiritual awareness to a conscious personal experience and exploration.

In offering the AOYL workshop, in soliciting people to join, there are several ways to promote and get the word out. You will find, after people that have attended the workshop, will involve their friends to attend, which is the best affirmation of success in the workshops.

If you have a friendly local bookstore that has the space, talk to the owner/manager there and see if you can teach your class there. Generally, it is welcome and at some level every attendee will see themselves giving a book signing at the books store at some point. Many of the journal writers find that the AOYL programs encourages them to publish their own book at some point, and uses the group as support in completing the work.

Most bookstores will welcome the AOYL group, as it provides them a expanding customer base, and most have some events already in process that are aligned with the AOYL premise.

Some other options include a local library, community center or school. If you have the right amount of experience and you believe you could get enough participants, you might also check into teaching AOYL as a night class at a local community college.

Class Size

When you are teaching a high participation class such as AOYL journal writing, class size matters. While you may have some experience to draw upon in that regard, the rule of thumb is to keep your class to somewhere between ten and twenty participants. If you are going to have more students than that, you will want to divide the class into groups for some of your exercises, as this is sometimes the only way to make sure that everyone’s voice is going to be heard.

When and What to Charge

Generally, the AOYL workshops are given on a “Love Offering”, but note that things for free are never valued as much as things that are given at a cost. The parameters of your location will usually dictate how you are able to charge for your services or not. Your time, and particularly the personal commitment to support the community in this important work should be recognized as having value that at some level you are being compensated for. Community colleges, for as an example, will usually charge a class fee, and pay their teachers, while some bookstores or

community centers may not. In either case you would do well to keep in mind that although this may not be your main source of income, you should be compensated for your work. Often it is best done as a labor of love, but make sure you cover your expenses. Many of the AOYL facilitators, enjoy traveling and spending time in places giving the workshop, meeting new people that share the values and interest.

In all, you are perfectly within your rights to ask for a little bit of recompense for your time and materials. Sometimes, donations will be enough, sometimes you may have to charge a small fee to your students. Another thing to keep in mind is that people tend to value what they pay for, and devalue that which is free.

Teaching and Guiding

In journal writing, often the idea is to get your students to write as freely as possible. And while it would seem that the notion of writing in such a way would free your students up, it often has the opposite effect. It is best, then to provide some guidance such as a weekly theme for your students to expound upon. Some ideas include: gratitude, first memories, writing about what they saw on the way to class, dream journaling, etc.

As far as your own training goes, give a little bit of time to studying the workbook as well as some of your favorite memoir writers and bring some of their methods into your lessons.

Create an Anthology (Publishing a collection of your pieces)

While journals are meant to be private documents, there are always some students who are willing and able to share their writing with the world. For those students, you can help them compile a book of their writings. Several of the workshops, actually publish selected writing and make them available to the class. They give them away or charge for the copies, regardless the copies have intrinsic value. You never know that one will aspire to being a notable writer, and their contribution would turn out to be something of great value.

Special Note: Purchasing the AOYL workbook is not a requirement for taking the workshop. The workbooks are available wholesale by the case, and the workshop leader can make profit by selling the workbooks.