



# Ink & Insights Journaling Class

Tuesday Nights @ 7:00 p.m.  
Upstairs Conference Room



# INK & INSIGHTS

## WEEK II

### OBJECTS & COLLECTIONS: HOW ITEMS CAN SPARK MEMORY AND STORIES

## INTRODUCTION

From cherished keepsakes to prized collections, our attachment to these items reveals layers of personal meaning and psychological significance. Let's delve into why we hold on to certain objects, when to release them, and how they can enrich our self-discovery.

## OBJECTIVES

By exploring attachment to objects and the motivations behind collecting, we will gain deeper self-awareness regarding our own emotional connections to possessions and the role of objects in shaping personal narratives. We will reflect on the significance of specific objects in our lives, identifying memories, emotions, and values associated with these items.

Through interactive activities like journaling and storytelling with objects, we will develop creative expression skills and therapeutic techniques for processing emotions and experiences. We will engage in creative writing and reflective practices using personal objects as prompts, fostering emotional exploration and storytelling.

**TO BELIEVE IN THE THINGS WE CARRY IS TO BELIEVE  
WE ARE NOT POWERLESS TO INFLUENCE OUR FATE.**

~ DALE M. KUSHNER

## THE THINGS WE CARRY

- Many people keep things that are meaningful to them. Saving remnants of our past in material things is emotionally satisfying throughout every stage of life.
- Sentimental objects may serve as reminders of loved ones, important events, or personal milestones. They provide comfort, nostalgia, or a sense of continuity amidst life's changes.
- People save things associated with bad as well as good experiences, and the emotions things elicit can differ as life circumstances change.



## DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES OF ATTACHMENT TO OBJECTS

- Children often form strong attachments to comfort objects like stuffed animals or blankets, which provide emotional security.
- Teenagers may attach sentimental value to objects that represent identity or social connections, like music memorabilia or jewelry.
- Adults develop attachments to objects that carry memories or represent achievements, such as family heirlooms, souvenirs, or gifts.

### CHILDHOOD (EARLY YEARS)

- In childhood, sentimental object attachment often involves security objects such as blankets, stuffed animals, or toys that provide comfort and reassurance.
- These objects serve as transitional objects that help children cope with separation anxiety and navigate developmental milestones.

### ADOLESCENCE & YOUNG ADULthood

- Sentimental attachments may shift to items that represent identity and personal significance.
- Sentimental objects in this stage often include mementos from friendships, hobbies, achievements, or significant life events, such as photographs, letters, or keepsakes.

### ADULTHOOD & MIDDLE AGE

- Sentimental object attachment can deepen as we accumulate possessions that symbolize relationships, family history, and personal memories.
- Family heirlooms, sentimental gifts, and nostalgic items become more meaningful as we reflect on our life experiences and connections.

### LATER LIFE & AGING

- Sentimental object attachment may take on a new dimension, representing continuity, legacy, and reminiscence.
- Older adults often cherish objects that connect them to past relationships, experiences, and life accomplishments, providing a sense of continuity and identity.

## PROMPT

Look around your home. What objects stand out for you? Which do you return to? Do they have a value other than utilitarian?





**JUST AS A GREAT POEM CANNOT NECESSARILY  
BE PARSED OR REDUCED TO A SINGLE IDEA,**  
so too with symbols. They are shape-shifters, opening up to us  
aspects of Self, which in our daily lives often remain hidden.

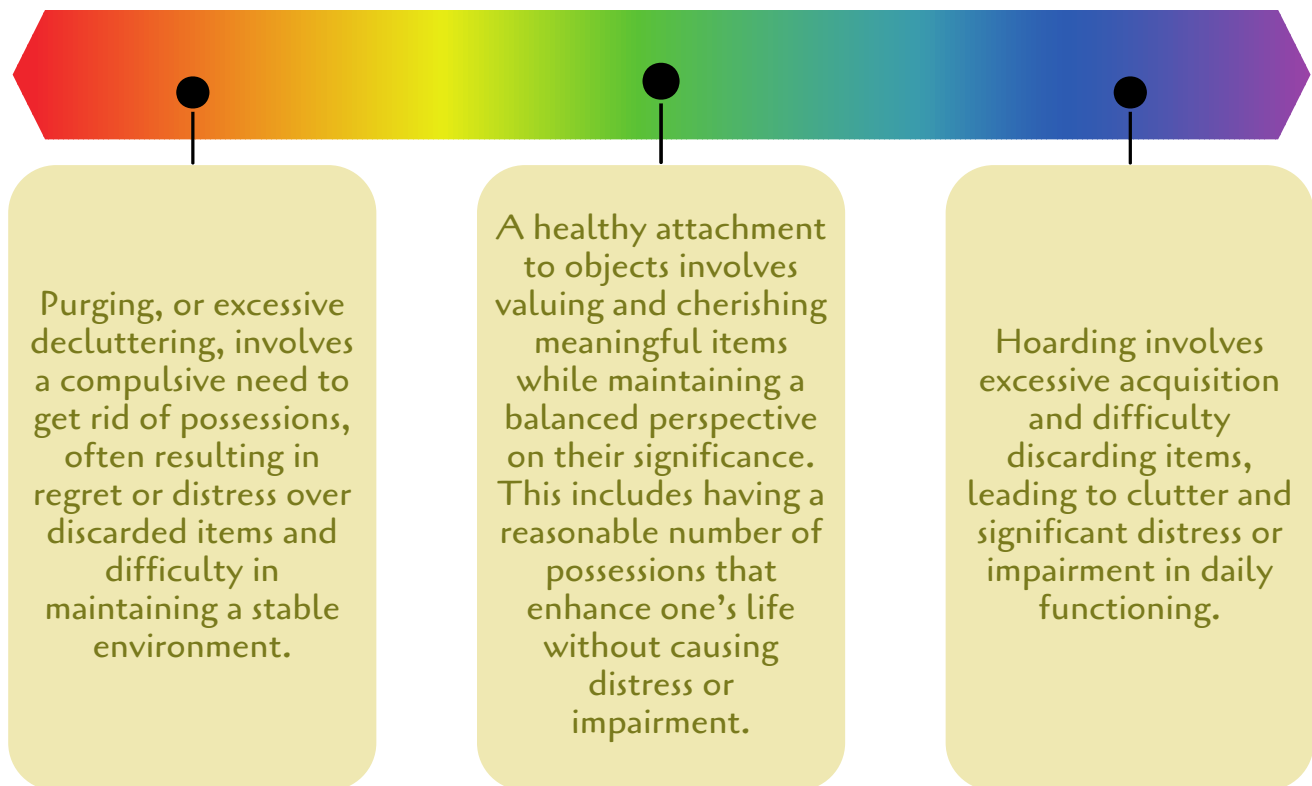
~ DALE M. KUSHNER

## THE EMOTIONAL SIGNIFICANCE OF SENTIMENTAL OBJECTS

- Sentimental objects may serve as reminders of loved ones, important events, or personal milestones.
- They provide comfort, nostalgia, or a sense of continuity amidst life's changes.

## BALANCING ATTACHMENT

There are varying levels of attachment we may experience in regards to objects. It is important to learn about and recognize these types of attachments and their influence on our behavior.





## TIPS & TRICKS FOR HEALTHY ATTACHMENT

Achieving a healthy balance in our attachment to objects involves mindful practices. Here are three practical tips:

### MINDFUL EVALUATION

- Regularly assess your possessions to determine their value and relevance in your life. Ask yourself if each item contributes positively to your well-being or if it's just clutter. This evaluation can help you prioritize what to keep and what to let go of.

### SET LIMITS

- Establish boundaries for acquiring new items. Consider implementing a “one in, one out” rule where you only acquire a new possession if you’re willing to part with another. This approach can prevent accumulation and encourage thoughtful consumption.

### EMOTIONAL AWARENESS

- Pay attention to your emotional responses to possessions. Identify items that evoke strong feelings or memories and acknowledge their significance. At the same time, be mindful of excessive attachment that might lead to clutter or distress. Strive for a balanced perspective where possessions enrich your life without overwhelming it.

If you or someone you know is experiencing challenges related to hoarding that are impacting daily life, please seek support from qualified professionals. See additional resources at the end of today’s prompts.

## PROMPT

Think about the objects you are drawn to in your home. In what way might they define your inner life? Do any of these objects transport you to another time or place? What feelings are evoked there?

**ONE CANNOT COLLECT ALL THE  
BEAUTIFUL SHELLS ON THE BEACH.**

One can collect only a few, and they are more beautiful if they are few.

~ ANNE MORROW LINDBERGH



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## BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES OF COLLECTING

- “Around 33 to 40 percent of the American population collects one thing or another. Yet little is known about the mysterious factors that motivate these often-passionate individuals to collect.” ~ Shirley M. Mueller
- Collecting can give us a sense of security, fulfillment, pride, a sense of identity, social connection, and intellectual stimulation.
- On the other hand, collecting can also lead to challenges like obsessive behavior, financial strain, and even social isolation in extreme cases, like hoarding.

## MOTIVATIONS BEHIND COLLECTING

“There also are reinforcing contributors that make [collecting] worthwhile and pleasurable for which we now know the scientific basis.” ~ Shirley M. Mueller

- **RARITY & UNIQUENESS:** The thrill of acquiring rare or valuable items.
- **PRIDE & ACCOMPLISHMENT:** Displaying a curated collection that reflects personal taste or expertise.
- **HISTORICAL CONNECTION:** Collecting artifacts or antiques to feel a connection to the past.
- **INTELLECTUAL SATISFACTION:** Engaging in systematic acquisition based on knowledge and appreciation.
- **SOCIAL INTERACTIONS:** Building relationships and communities around shared interests.

## PROMPT

Think about a collection you have or one you admire. What drives your interest in this collection? How does it enhance your life or connect you with others?

**REMEMBER, YOUR MEMORIES ARE NOT  
STORED IN THE OBJECT; THE MEMORIES  
ARE IN YOU.**

~ JOSHUA BECKER



## THERAPEUTIC ASPECTS OF ENGAGING WITH OBJECTS

- **SELF-AWARENESS:** Objects can reveal hidden aspects of identity, values, or unresolved emotions.
- **EMOTIONAL PROCESSING:** Reflecting on objects can facilitate healing, acceptance, or closure related to past experiences.

## TRIGGERS FOR MEMORY & STORYTELLING

- Objects serve as tangible triggers, activating specific memories or emotions tied to past experiences.
- They can prompt reflection and introspection, revealing personal narratives and life themes.

## TECHNIQUES & EXERCISES FOR JOURNALING & CREATIVE EXPRESSION

Our attachments to objects can enhance journaling and creative expression by providing tangible prompts and triggers for memories, emotions, and stories. When we reflect on the significance of these objects in our lives, they can serve as inspiration for introspective writing, helping us explore our experiences and connections in deeper, more meaningful ways. Here are three practical ways to use objects to inspire your own writing:

### OBJECT-BASED PROMPTS

- Describe, sketch, or photograph meaningful objects to explore associated memories or emotions.

### A “THINGS YOU CARRY” JOURNAL

- List or take pictures of significant objects and record the feelings, images, memories, insights they inspire.

### STORYTELLING EXERCISES

- Write narratives inspired by objects, focusing on themes of identity, growth, or relationships.

## PROMPT

Choose an object that holds a significant memory for you. Write about the story behind this object. What emotions or insights does it reveal about your life journey?



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### PROMPTS

Remember that these prompts are suggestions to get you thinking. You may write about whatever feels right to you.

- Look around at your belongings until you find something that sparks a strong memory (a family heirloom, a phone that delivered unexpected news, a piece of clothing that you purchased for a special night). Tell the story.
- Is there an important object from your past that you don't have anymore? What memories does it trigger?
- What was your most prized possession as a kid? Why did you love it?
- What is your most prized possession now? Why is it so special?
- If your residence were on fire, what would you make sure not to leave behind?
- What objects do you use to enhance your life (maybe you use an antique teacup instead of a plain old mug, or have a collection of your favorite books, or perhaps a travel memento)? What is it about the object that makes it special? How does it make you feel?
- Attempt to write a short essay from a special objects point of view. What is that item's life story?

### LIGHTHEARTED PROMPTS

Let's take a load off! After exploring some intense writing prompts, let's take a breather and delve into some lighter ones. These prompts are meant to be fun and creative, so feel free to let your imagination run wild and enjoy the process of writing.

- Is minimalism something for you?
- How do people close to you define you?
- How do you feel when you have to speak to a large audience?
- Who do you see when you look into the mirror?
- Is the glass half empty or half full?
- What's the first thing you do when you wake up?
- How hard/easy is it for you to express your feelings?
- Name one of your skills you'd like to teach others.
- Do you procrastinate on a regular basis?
- Do you sleep more or fewer hours on the weekends?
- What's your Super Power?
- The last time you wrote a thought on gratitude.
- Email or a phone call.
- How do you feel when you can't tick off everything on your to-do list?
- What's your number one priority for today?





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## RESOURCES FOR FURTHER STUDY

If you'd like to delve more into the psychology behind object attachment, consider studying the following resources:

### BOOKS

- [The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up: The Japanese Art of Decluttering and Organizing](#) by Marie Kondo
- [The Sentimental Person's Guide to Decluttering](#) by Claire Middleton
- [Stuffocation: Why We've Had Enough of Stuff and Need Experience More Than Ever](#) by James Wallman

### PSYCHOLOGY TODAY ARTICLES

- [The Things We Carry: What Objects Have Meaning for You?](#) by Dale M. Kushner
- [Why We Keep Things That Matter—and Some That Don't](#) by Krystine I. Batcho Ph.D.
- [Collecting: An Urge That's Hard to Resist](#) by Shirley M. Mueller M.D.

### WEBSITES AND BLOGS

- [Becoming Minimalist](#): Offers insights into minimalist living and the emotional benefits of decluttering.
- [Unclutterer](#): Provides practical tips on organization, decluttering, and simplifying life.
- [Zen Habits](#): Focuses on mindfulness, simplicity, and living with intention.

### PODCASTS

- [The Minimalists Podcast](#): Discusses minimalism, decluttering, and intentional living.
- [Happier with Gretchen Rubin](#): Explores happiness, habits, and strategies for a more fulfilling life.

### DOCUMENTARIES AND FILMS

- [Minimalism: A Documentary About the Important Things](#) (available on various streaming platforms): Examines the growing movement toward minimalist lifestyles and the benefits of owning less.
- [Tidying Up with Marie Kondo](#) (Netflix series): Follows Marie Kondo as she helps individuals declutter their homes and transform their lives through the KonMari method.



## RESOURCES FOR HOARDING DISORDER

If you or someone you know is experiencing challenges related to hoarding that are impacting daily life, please seek support from qualified professionals. The following organizations can help connect you with trained experts who understand these concerns and can provide guidance and support.

### ORGANIZATIONS

- The International OCD Foundation provides information for families, mental health professionals, and community responders and maintains a resource directory to locate therapists, treatment programs, clinics, and support groups.
- Hoarding Cleanup, (800) 462-7337, provides a nationwide directory of (fee-for-service) hoarding cleanup services and mental health providers specializing in hoarding behavior. Visit their website for information about webinars, and other resources.
- For those looking to get organized, the National Association of Productivity & Organizing Professionals offers a “Find a Professional” directory for (fee-for-service) organizers who specialize in serving those with hoarding disorder.

### BOOKS

- Overcoming Compulsive Hoarding: Why You Save and How You Can Stop, by Fugen Neziroglu, Jerome Bubrick, and Jose A. Yaryura-Tobias. This book provides practical advice and self-help strategies for overcoming compulsive hoarding.
- Buried in Treasures: Help for Compulsive Acquiring, Saving, and Hoarding by David F. Tolin, Randy O. Frost, and Gail Steketee. This book offers practical strategies and cognitive-behavioral techniques to overcome hoarding behaviors.
- Stuff: Compulsive Hoarding and the Meaning of Things by Randy O. Frost and Gail Steketee. This book delves into the psychology behind hoarding and provides compassionate insights into how to address this challenging issue.
- The Hoarder in You: How to Live a Happier, Healthier, Uncluttered Life, by Dr. Robin Zasio. This book provides practical advice for decluttering and organizing, including how to tame the emotional pull of acquiring additional things, make order out of chaos by getting a handle on clutter, and create an organizational system that reduces stress and anxiety.



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- The New Messies Manual: The Procrastinators Guide to Good Housekeeping, by Sandra Felton, who was a hoarder herself and understands how hoarders think. Her book not only provides specific ways to clean up; it helps to evaluate your thought processes as you attempt to clean, recognize those that aren't doing you any good, and come up with ways to overcome them.
- Speed Cleaning, by Jeff Campbell. This book is not a book of "tips" or "strategies" on how to clean your house. It's a bona fide set of step-by-step instructions, from the tools you need to how to physically clean each part of the house.
- Clutter Control, by Jeff Campbell. Like Speed Cleaning, this book is a specific guide on what things to keep and what to get rid of. For example, there's a guide on page 137 giving information on how long to keep certain kinds of documents.
- The Hoarding Handbook: A Guide for Human Service Professionals by Christiana Bratiotis, Cristina Sorrentino Schmalisch, and Gail Steketee. Geared towards professionals but also valuable for individuals struggling with hoarding, this handbook offers evidence-based strategies and interventions.

These books provide valuable insights into the challenges of hoarding and offer effective approaches for managing and overcoming these behaviors. It's important to remember that seeking professional help from therapists or counselors experienced in treating hoarding disorders can also greatly assist in addressing these issues.