



Lisa Kahn: How Journaling Helped Me Be More Calm, Mindful And Resilient

An Interview With Heidi Sander



Heidi Sander [Follow](#)

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Journaling is a powerful tool to gain clarity and insight especially during challenging times of loss and uncertainty. Writing can cultivate a deeper connection with yourself and provide an outlet for calmness, resilience and mindfulness. When my mom passed on, I found writing to be cathartic. When I read through my journal years later, there were thoughts that I developed into poems, and others that simply provided a deeper insight into myself. In this series I'm speaking with people who use journaling to become more mindful and resilient.

As a part of this series, I had the distinct pleasure of interviewing Lisa Kahn.

Lisa Kahn is the CEO of Lisa Kahn Designs, an interior design firm in Naples, Florida, and the founder of the Finding Sanctuary movement; both pursuits are decidedly intertwined. Lisa believes that creating peace in the environment around us inspires peace inside us. That idea is the basis of Finding Sanctuary and her interior design business which focuses on designing spaces of sanctuary where we can relax, refresh, and recalibrate along with spaces that physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually support our health and wellness. Lisa thinks that we need sanctuary spaces more now than ever!

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Thank you so much for joining us in this interview series! We really appreciate the courage it takes to publicly share your story of healing. Before we start, our readers would love to “get to know you” a bit better. Can you tell us a bit about your background and your childhood backstory?

Before my life's challenges set me on the path to Finding Sanctuary, I found living in the moment was often maddening. The noise in my head screamed reminders of all that was wrong, all that had gone wrong, and all that would go wrong. Being me wasn't easy. One day when I felt at a loss on how I would move forward, the word “sanctuary” whispered in my mind and captured my imagination. From that moment, it grew to become the heart-center of my work as an interior designer and into the Finding Sanctuary movement.

To support this movement, I write Finding Sanctuary, a weekly blog where I explore the various aspects of creating sanctuary spaces and developing a daily sanctuary practice within that space — in so many ways, from the quiet to the loud, the sweet to the sharp, and the big to the miniscule (but not unimportant), we benefit from our sanctuaries as we use them.

I also host the Sanctuary Collective Facebook group, where followers can show me their spaces, share their ideas, and ask questions. In addition, I am so excited about the Finding Sanctuary At Home collection that I designed, which is launching in fall of 2022. The

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furniture, lighting, accessories, and artwork in this collection will support the activities involved in a daily sanctuary practice — for example, writing desks for journaling.

Finally, I designed and printed my own Finding Sanctuary journal, which was more gratifying than I could have imagined. In it I share my watercolor artwork and significant sanctuary quotes. I also love thinking that someone might be sitting there, using it...writing and writing and writing and then experiencing little moments of delight as the paintings and quotes are revealed with each turn of the page.

My childhood backstory starts with two women: my mother and Alexandra Stoddard, whose books my mom read and shared with me. Alexandra wrote about how journaling was important to living a life full of elegance, order, beauty, and joy. From that point, I started keeping a journal myself. I also remember having a small journal when I was a little girl, the kind that had a little metal clasp enclosure and came with its own small key. Seemingly, the added security of a lock kept the world away from it, but I doubt it did any good, in fact, I'm sure you could have jimmied it open in about 3 seconds, but there was something reassuring about that little key, nonetheless. I wrote to my hearts and minds content. Journaling has been an ongoing support system for me through the years, and has helped me through many life events, both good and bad. It is an important part of my own daily sanctuary practice.

Let's now shift to the main part of our discussion about journaling. Have you been writing in your journal for a long time or was there a challenging situation that prompted you to start journal writing? If you feel comfortable sharing the situation with us, it could help other readers.

The truth is I've had a journal most of my life. Have I written in it every day? No. But that changed when I was around 40 years old. It was then that a friend suggested a book that changed my life — *The Artist's Way* by Julia Cameron. I was going through a difficult time with a divorce, a special needs child, and burnout at work. Julia's suggestion to write three pages, longhand, every morning helped me to process the fears and frustrations I was experiencing.

How did journaling help you heal, mentally, emotionally and spiritually?

I think journaling did help me heal in all those ways. First, it's a contemplative practice...there's a meditative aspect to it and it requires a look within. When I focus on what's inside of me, I'm led to a greater sense of harmony and balance. But I think there are other aspects of it too. Journaling is a great place to vent. It allows me room to release things that no longer serve me. Sometimes it provides me with a revelation — some direction or answer I've been seeking. And so, it's become a tool for healthy mental processing. It's where I clarify emotions, experiences, and thoughts.

Julia Cameron says it so well, when she suggests that we “show up to the page to rest.” To me, it's a break from the internal (and incessant) internal dialogue I experience all day long. When I sit down to write, I

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give voice to my thoughts and examine them, there's an element of rest to that experience.

Perhaps it's why I view journaling as so important and why I look forward to my writing time.

**Did journaling help you find more self-compassion and gratitude?
Can you share a story about that?**

Sometimes when I'm frustrated or even when I'm struggling to find something to write about, I'll start with a Gratitude List, which contains all the things I'm thankful for. Of course, what's on that list depends on the day, but it could be gratitude for the cup of coffee I'm drinking, for my two dogs, the pen I love using, and it could expand to clients I'm working with, trees I've walked under, and more and more. That "more and more" is always a remarkable part of the process, because as I write one thing, some naturally expansive aspect kicks into my journaling list; like adding water to a sponge, it just soaks it up and grows.

What kind of content goes into your journal? For example, do you free-write, write poems, doodle?

There are a lot of things that go into my journal. Stream of consciousness writing is probably the most significant. But I love to create little (or not so little!) lists for myself in my journal. The Gratitude List I mentioned, a list of notes I need to/want to write, a list of things I need to do.

I use my journal to unpack things; it's how I unload what is clogging up my brain. To be creative in my design work and in solving problems, I need a mind that is clear. Journaling is a good way for me to de-clutter my brain — *daily*. I don't use it to doodle, but I would imagine that to be quite restful!

How did you gain a different perspective on life and your emotions while writing in your journal? Can you please share a story about what you mean?

I think the mere act of sitting down and being open to what's in my brain and allowing it to flow out onto the paper is the first step in gaining perspective. My eyes invariably wander back over what I've just written, and that reflective state allows for a different, or new, or broader perspective.

Sometimes I'll find myself working out conversations that I want to have with people or other times I might write a letter in my journal to someone, both allow me the capacity to clear out my head. Once I arrive at the bottom of that conversation or letter, first of all, I simply feel better, but beyond that, phrases come to me that seem to capture the whole issue. I'll take those and use them in an email or a conversation. It opens the way for me to move past my hurt, frustration, or anger (which is not how I want to show up in the world) and into a space where I can respond with kindness, compassion, and empathy. With all of that, I'm more able to handle a difficult conversation or person and resolve a situation.



In my own journal writing, I ended up creating poems from some of the ideas and one of them won an award. Do you have plans with your journal content?

During Covid lockdown, I wrote my hand off! What came to me about sanctuary and sacred spaces was so rich and powerful. I think there is the start to a book hiding in there. Many times, in the past, my journal writing has also provided the fertile soil I use for my weekly blog post.

Fantastic. Here is our main question. In my journaling program, I have found that journaling can help people to become more calm, mindful and resilient. Based on your experience and research, can you please share with our readers “five ways that journaling can help you to be more calm, mindful and resilient”?

I have five ways that journaling helps me become more clam, mindful and resilient. Recently, I've started referring to them as “The 5 Rs of Journal Writing”:

1. Ranting — This is where it starts, “what’s bothering me” often comes up when I start writing.
2. Release — This is where I let stuff go. I get it out of my mind and onto the paper.
3. Reflection — This is where I consider different points of views, the actions of myself and others, it’s where I go deeper and examine things.
4. Revelation — This is where I have a breakthrough of some sort, a new perspective, an idea of how things tie together and how I can solve a situation and move to the next stage.
5. Resolution — This is where I map out a new way to move forward and solve what I thought was a problem.

You are a person of great influence. If you could inspire a movement that would bring the most amount of peace to the greatest amount of people, what would that be?

It would be a movement of the ultimate expression of self-love: creating sacred, sanctuary spaces for ourselves and others. We would all act and speak out of a place of LOVE, LOVE, LOVE. It is the most important message that we can share. It is where everything begins and where everything and everyone can find rest and resolution.

We are very blessed that some very prominent names in Business, VC funding, Sports and Entertainment read this column. Is there a person in the world, or in the US with whom you would love to have a private breakfast or lunch, and why? He or she might just see this if we tag them. :-)

I would love to meet Anne Lamott — she is one of the most authentic, witty, fabulous women I know of. I admire her writing and her life philosophy endlessly, and I would love to create a sanctuary for her and her family. As with all of us, she truly deserves one. I also would love to sit with Elizabeth Gilbert. She is another incredible woman with a beautiful brain, deep humility, and mad wisdom. I’ve always thought that Jewel would be an interesting person to meet, as a musician, as a poet and as a woman doing interesting things in her own way in this world. And then, there’s Oprah; I feel a kindred spirit in her. I love her

work and her Soul Sunday interviews so much. She has a way of finding the most interesting people who are all working hard to change the world in meaningful ways. She is a magnet for great people with memorable stories — I would like to hear hers.

How can our readers further follow your work online?

Lisa Kahn Designs — <https://lisakahndesigns.com/>

Finding Sanctuary — <https://findingsanctuary.com/>

Finding Sanctuary Facebook — <https://www.facebook.com/findingsanctuary.lk/>

Finding Sanctuary Collective Facebook — <https://www.facebook.com/groups/235116667885847>

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