

CONSCIOUS COLLECTIVE

001 | MAY 2019 | MENTAL HEALTH

JANIE EDWARDS
& company

JANIE EDWARDS
& Company

Equipping women to live a conscious life with
beauty, curation, and simplicity.

FORWARD

When I was thinking on a topic to start Conscious Collective, mental health was not the first on the list. However, I noticed May is mental health month, which prompted me to do a little research. In the midst of planning the content, I realized it couldn't be more perfect. When I was thinking about the many reasons why I journal, why I use the templates I created, and why I do the things I do on a regular basis, much of it is for my mental health. While I don't necessarily think I have struggled with mental illness, I'm human. Often, I find myself going down a path that could potentially lead to a place of darkness and destruction if I don't have tools to protect my heart, my mind, and my body; recognize and acknowledge my emotions; and honor the boundaries in my life.

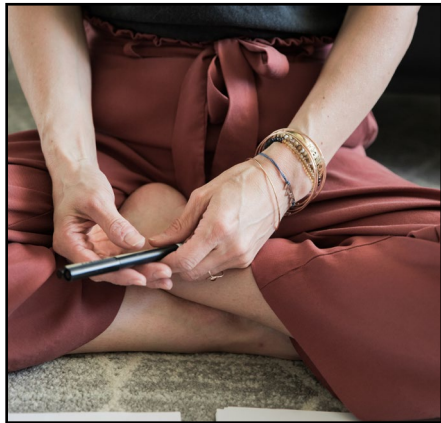
I want to challenge you to be real with yourself as you go through this Collective. What are your boundaries? What is your preferred environment? What is a realistic rhythm you can adopt to foster a healthy mind, body, and home?

It is my hope that this month's Collective will not only inspire you, but bring you hope and ways to take action. Here's to mental health and conscious living!

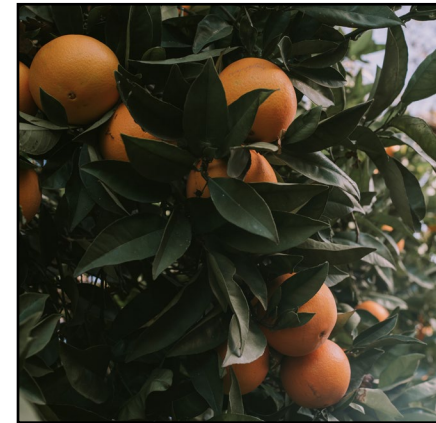
Janie Edwards



CONTENTS



HOW TO JOURNAL FOR
MENTAL HEALTH



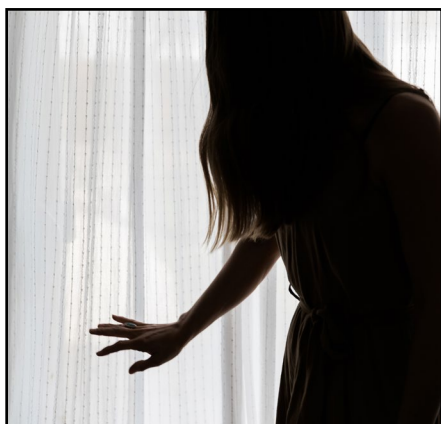
CONNECTION BETWEEN
DIET AND MIND



RHYTHM OVER ROUTINE



MAY'S TEMPLATES



CULTIVATING HEALTHY
BOUNDARIES



MAY'S ART PROJECT

HOW TO JOURNAL FOR MENTAL HEALTH

Journaling is a tool for self-expression, self-awareness, and self-improvement. It is an amazing way to let go of all your emotions, thoughts, feelings, and to track your triggers and stressors. Plus, it is a great for reflecting and planning. These things make journaling a wonderful habit for maintaining mental health.

There is increasing evidence to support the notion that journaling has a positive impact on physical well-being. Journaling can help you:

- Manage anxiety
- Reduce stress
- Cope with depression
- Track any symptoms day-to-day so that you can recognize triggers and learn ways to better control them
- Provide an opportunity for positive self-talk and identifying negative thoughts and behaviors

So, how do you use your journal for mental health?

- Write about anything and everything. Oftentimes, I



- write just a few words in my daily log, but if I have a lot I want to get out, I will print out a piece of graph paper and go to town.
- Have a conversation with yourself. Write as if you were talking to someone else. Answer your own questions and experiment. Use the prompts and templates to think, envision, write, and process.
- Write out a daily and weekly rhythm. A rhythm is a routine that creates a framework for your typical day. Planning a daily rhythm will help you connect with yourself and others, stay focused, get organized, keep your household running smoothly, and help you find the time to do the things you love.
- Track your habits. It will keep you accountable in self-care, mindful living, your eating and sleeping habits, and more.
- Record gratitude and affirmations.

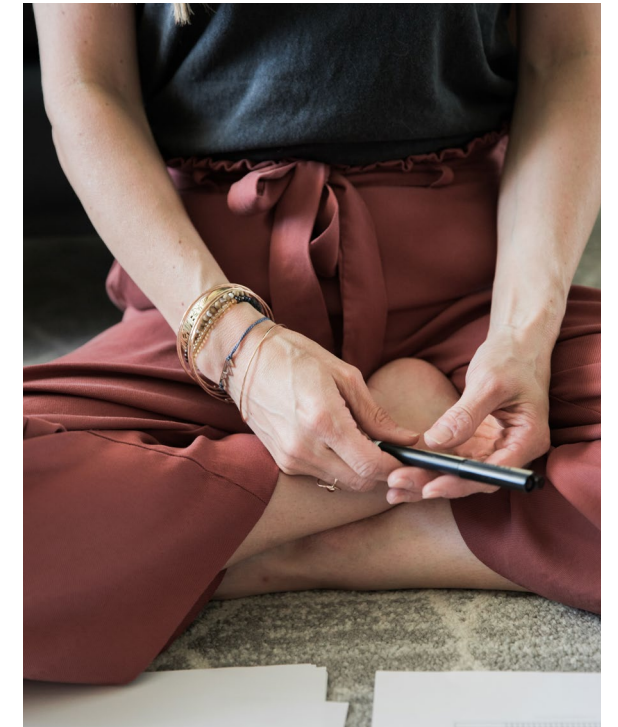
Tips on journaling:

- Don't make it complicated. The focus is on doing it. Get something on paper and go from there. You'll eventually find your groove and style.
- Be flexible and give yourself grace. You will go through different seasons

when you write more or less or have to change things up. That is perfectly fine and why I set this up as a "print-as-you-go" journal: flexibility.

- Add journaling to your daily rhythm and stick to it. This way it becomes a habit (that you look forward to!) and not a chore.
- When possible, create a relaxing environment for journaling to be still, listen, and let your thoughts flow.
- Use your journal as you see fit. If you don't want to share your journal with anyone, great! If you do want to share some of your thoughts with trusted friends and loved ones, great! If you want to share it with the world, great!
- This journal is about you, and it's for you. It really, truly should have your roots and soul, so don't put form over function. Besides, if you really screw up, you can always recycle that page and print a new one. If you get in a habit of not being real within your journal, it's not going to help you as much as it can.

I hope you look forward to your journaling time. Know that you're doing something good for your mind and body. Know that this is a worthwhile investment in yourself.



RHYTHM OVER ROUTINE

I can be the queen of all or none. I get really into my work and I neglect my house, health, and family. I get really into quality time with my family, and I neglect my work and other responsibilities. You get the point. Can you relate?

If I'm not intentional, these patterns turn into bad habits with severe consequences. One of the biggest consequences is a negative impact on my mental health and my family's mental health.

In the past, I've created schedules and routines. They always start off great, but when life happens and those schedules get broken, I find myself stressed and depressed.

Then I heard about rhythms.

A rhythm is like a schedule, but less detailed. There are anchor points, but not set times for each activity. There are daily rhythms, weekly rhythms, seasonal rhythms, and family rhythms.





A rhythm is an intentional flow to your days, a way to control your life without rigid agendas or instructions. It's the activities we do day in and day out, lifeblood of the day, the rituals that make up our family culture on a daily basis. It's a recognition of the way things tend to go for us in terms of activities and organizing life a bit around that.

There are many things which we should do day in and day out no matter what because they meet our family's basic needs (such as cooking, housework, eating meals, brushing teeth, and sleeping). But a daily rhythm should definitely include things that support a healthy mind, body, and spirit as well as connection and play.

A list of activities is not a rhythm. A daily rhythm is an intentional flow to the day, so the order in which you do things matters. This doesn't mean that every day looks exactly the same. A strong rhythm is -- conducive to the way you live your life.

Think about it—rhythm is like breathing, and breathing in is different from breathing out.

When we breathe in, we are gathering our resources, refueling, or making connections (think quieter activities such as sleep, alone time, reading, or meals). When we breathe out, we are engaging, exploring, learning new things, or communicating (think being active, social activities, or being in our community). Both aspects of breathing have a purpose and happen in rhythm. Think about your daily life.

Does it make more sense for you to work out right after you wake up since you're dragging and it would energize you? Or would it make more sense to start with a devotion or journaling, based on how you generally feel in the morning? Just go with your instinct and aim for alternating times of outwardly engaged activity and inwardly processing activity. When these parts feel right, everything fits into place.

What about at work or in other situations outside the home where you have less control? Even at work you may begin to recognize the best time for responding to emails or returning calls and the best time to step away for a break and the best time to schedule meetings. Start to establish your own rhythms within your

work day to reclaim your time.

Getting the flow just right can take some time and tweaking, so be patient with yourself. Here are a few guidelines for getting started with a rhythm:

DAILY

1. Start by writing down what is most important for your family. What are the things which have to happen every day? What are the things that help your family thrive, or you love so much you want them to happen every day? Is there anything you want to eliminate from your schedule to make your days more peaceful?
2. Decide which daily activities need to happen at approximately the same time each day. For many families, this includes meals, resting times, and morning and bedtime routines. Those are your anchor points, the activities which anchor your rhythm and provide the basic outline of your day.
3. Add in the rest of your daily activities. Try to alternate more active and more focused times of day.
4. Grab your "Daily Rhythm" template and plug these things in. Add it to your journal and/or hang it in a place



“How we spend our days is, of course, how we spend our lives.”
 ~ Annie Dillard

1. you can see it for reference.

WEEKLY

1. Think about what you tend to do already on a weekly basis. Can you assign activities to certain days to bring them into rhythm? Is there anything you would like to add into your week? Is there anything you can take away which doesn't match your priorities for yourself and your family?
2. Think about expression. What kind of practical, artistic, movement, or community activities will meet your needs and can you assign those to a

certain day of the week?

3. Think about the work you need to do each week in your home, your planning, and errands. Can these activities be brought into a weekly rhythm?
4. Feel this out for a while and get into a comfortable weekly rhythm yourself before you bring it into consciousness for your family. When you feel that your rhythm is running smoothly, you can start referring to each day of the week with its new special name (“Baking Day”, “Cleaning Day,” “Grocery Shopping Day,” etc.). Chances are your family already has sensed the rhythm of the week and they will enjoy having a name for it.
5. Grab your “The Weekly” template and plug these things in. Add it to your journal and/or hang it in a place you can see it for reference.

SEASONAL

1. Grab your “Seasonal” template. For each season, write down your favorite things about the season, favorite qualities, activities, or memories. Also write down any family traditions, festivals, or holidays for each season and

anything you would love to do with your loved ones.

2. Each time the seasons begin to shift, take time to consider your daily and weekly rhythms. What is supporting your family and what needs adjusting? What has changed since you started the current season? How can your rhythm best reflect the upcoming season?
3. Try to spend time outside every day, just noticing, being there, and allowing yourself to develop a relationship with the natural world.
4. Begin to build up traditions that are truly meaningful to you. Find things that are exciting, connecting, nourishing, and meaningful for your own family!

Above all, use rhythm as one of your tools for you and your family's overall health, especially your mental health. You aren't a robot or taskmaster standing there with a stopwatch or rushing through a schedule. You are a beautiful woman created with purpose, meant to live, laugh, and love (to name just a few). When you create a rhythm for you and your family, you are creating connection, peace, and freedom.



CULTIVATING HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

Merriam-Webster's definition of boundary is "something (such as a river, a fence, or an imaginary line) that shows where an area ends and another area begins." Proverbs 4:23 says, "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it." Personal boundaries relate to people and behavior. There are many reasons to be cognizant of personal boundaries. They can help you define who you are, practice self-care and respect, communicate your needs in a relationship, set healthy limits, and make time and space for healthy interactions.

There are many types of personal boundaries, including emotional, mental, physical, sexual, financial, social, and spiritual. It seems obvious that no one would want their boundaries crossed. So, why do we sometimes allow our boundaries to be crossed or cross others' boundaries? Or even worse, why don't we set healthy boundaries for ourselves and our family and communicate them clearly? A few reasons may be fear, guilt, confusion, and not being familiar with boundaries and communicating them.

Having to say "yes" or "no" can be a struggle. Experiencing other people's pain or problems is real. It can be hard to let people in your life (even yourself) know what you want, need, or how you feel.

Here are a few ways to create healthy boundaries:



- Realize you can't please everyone and don't compare. Get comfortable with the prospect of being met with some disapproval or "letting people down". Speak up for yourself in relationships so that you feel heard. Start asking yourself, "What am I feeling and why am I feeling this way? What does this have to do with boundaries?"
- Do you have a mission statement for yourself, your family, and/or your business? Do you have core values? If not, spend some time writing these down. (More on this in Conscious Collective 002, June 2019)
- Set your boundaries. Are you clear on your limits and non-negotiables? If not, spend some time identifying and defining them. What brings you happiness, joy, contentment, peace? What makes you angry, sad, depressed, or stressed? Also, be honest with yourself and look at your strengths and weaknesses so you can decide if the boundaries need to be hard or soft.
- Learn to say "no".- Being unable to say "no" can make you feel overwhelmed, exhausted, stressed, overcommitted, depressed, and generally frustrated. It could even be undermining any efforts you're making to improve your health. Learn to say "no" to certain commitments, to things that aren't good for you, and to toxic relationships to start applying this principle. Every "no" looks different. Learn to be okay with saying "no" without feeling like you have to explain or qualify your answer.

There are times when your boundaries will still get crossed. Here are a few tools to help you cope and respond that encourage mental health:

- Fill your space with words of affirmation, scriptures, quotes, words. Your space is your journal, your home, your car, wherever! There is power in thought, prayer, and tongue, so read them and speak them until you believe them. Catch yourself when you speak negatively and change it to something positive.
- Find a "pusher" and a "mentor" in your life. These are people who know you—the real you, the deep you. A pusher is someone who pushes you to be the best you can be. The pusher holds you accountable and doesn't sit quietly when you goof up. A mentor is someone who has already done what you are trying to do and is successful. S/he can guide you down the path letting you know what has worked and failed for him/her, helping you avoid any mistakes that might slow you down. This person is a reminder that you, too, can do amazing things. When you are feeling week, call these people to bring the darkness to the light and ask them to walk alongside you. (More on this in Conscious Collective 002, June 2019)
- Create a power playlist, one that is specific to your needs, a playlist that becomes your go-to, pick-me-up, motivational soundtrack to play when you need reminders or inspiration.

- Don't beat yourself if you break a boundary. Take some time to get an environment where you can think, reflect, pray. Think back to what was happening, triggers, or emotions that may have contributed to your breaking the boundary. Start writing, dumping it all out. Think through ways you may be able to change your rhythm or "take breaks" in the future to avoid breaking that boundary again.

To really affect lasting change, it's important that you change your perspective when it comes to setting boundaries. And, this involves creating behaviors to enable you to put your priorities where they need to be—for the sake of your health.





Stress is an indication that you're not honouring a boundary somewhere.

CONNECTION BETWEEN DIET & MIND

By Ali Michelle

Ever been through a bad breakup and find yourself knee-deep in a bag of chips or cake? Have you noticed the feelings of joy when you're eating something you love or used to eat as a child?

These things happen because food triggers emotional responses, whether they be negative or positive.

We tend not to think about what we are eating until it is too late, but there is a reason we tend to reach for the ice cream when things get rough or why we find comfort from pizza and beer after a hard day at work. Food comforts us. Once your brain realizes which foods provide you comfort, you learn to desire that food in times of stress.

Sadly though, when it comes to most foods, this habit needs to stop. When we reach for comfort food we are usually reaching for food that makes us feel good only in the moment. Unfortunately, the foods that make us feel good in the moment are usually not the foods that heal and nurture our bodies.

Believe it or not, there is a physical reason you crave certain comfort foods. In some cases, certain foods can achieve an increase in serotonin



levels. Here's where things get a bit interesting though. Foods themselves aren't what increases your serotonin—it is a chemical that is in the foods. Tryptophan, a chemical found in certain foods is believed to increase your serotonin levels. In other words, food can affect your serotonin, but food is not directly responsible for doing so.

Most of us have been to the gym and experienced a sense of peace and well-being after a good workout. That's because physical exercise increases our body's serotonin levels, allowing us to experience a sense of calmness and relaxation.

Basically serotonin, along with other neurotransmitters, are responsible for our overall positive mood and a lack of serotonin has been linked to those who suffer with depression.

Serotonin is primarily made within your digestive tract. In fact, your digestive tract can be responsible for roughly 80-90% of your serotonin levels.

Have you ever eaten an unhealthy meal, then felt bloated and tired afterwards? It is because your body is using the majority of its energy to digest as much of that food as it can. As you can imagine, this process takes time as your body is working very hard to 'clean' itself and it is putting the majority of its focus on doing so.

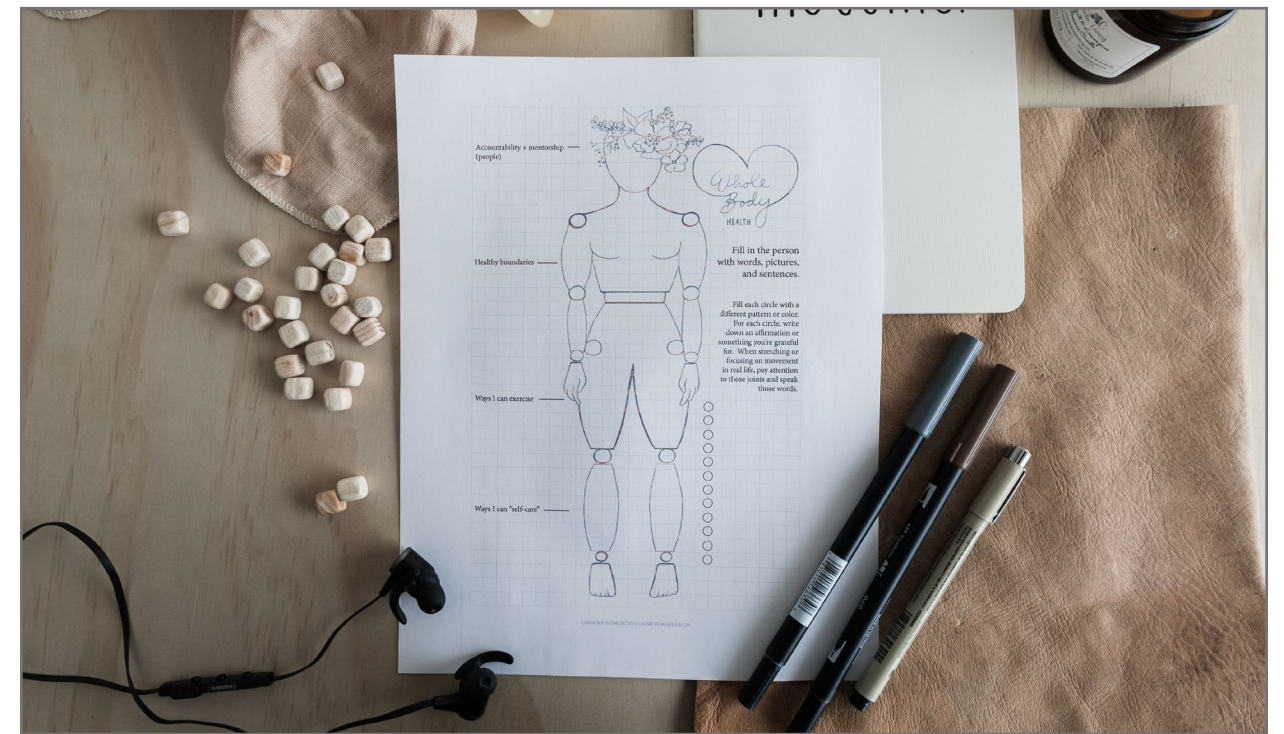
Our bodies were not made to digest sugars and processed foods. Yes, these foods might make it easier to whip up a quick dinner for your family, but that doesn't mean that your body won't pay the

price for it. For example, let's say that you had a busy day at the office and you ordered pizza for your family for dinner. That dinner choice might allow you to stay out of the kitchen for a night, but your body will have to work hard to push that pizza through your system. And the majority of that work will be done while you are sleeping, as that is when your body goes into full 'cleaning mode'.

This can cause a nasty cycle. Because your body had to work so hard during the night, it is likely to be tired the next day. This means that you will be more likely to wake up tired and you will very likely go through your entire day with that tired feeling. As you can imagine, this is likely to cause you to make some unconscious eating choices just so that you can get through your day. Health and how your foods will affect your body are very likely the last things you will be thinking about.

The foods we eat can play a big part in our bodies overall well-being. Once we're educated, it can be easier to figure out what foods we shouldn't be eating, but what should we be eating?

There is a way that our bodies were made to eat. Whole foods work naturally with the way our bodies were designed. One of the biggest things whole foods can offer is their natural relationship with our body's digestion. When we are eating whole, we are avoiding the processed foods, sugars, and other unhealthy ingredients found in many foods. Whole foods in their most natural state, can



be absorbed by your body quickly.

So let's say that you just ate a meal comprised of whole foods. Your body will be able to take that food, grab its nutrients, and easily digest anything that it can't use. Even better, now that your body doesn't have to spend as much time digesting new foods, it can work hard on doing other things like:

Removing old waste

Clearing up skin

Using the nutrients it is absorbing to heal itself from common ailments

Experiencing more restful sleep

Giving you more energy during the day

As you can imagine, all of this will also make it easier for your gut to produce serotonin, allowing your mood and concentration to increase dramatically. While there are other factors at play when it comes to your body being able to produce serotonin, that entire process will not work as efficiently if your digestion is not running smoothly.

If we aren't eating the right whole foods, then we won't be able to fully experience the mood-enhancing benefit that only natural foods have to offer. While some people will start to feel better just by making the switch to whole foods, those people who struggle with depression will want to be a bit more focused. It won't be as easy as simply eating differently because depression will generally require a much bigger 'boost' for you to feel good.

Depression is like a pit and it will take a great amount of effort to get out of that pit.

That doesn't mean it's impossible, In fact, it is very possible to find some relief from depression with the foods we eat. It just means we want to know exactly what we should be eating for maximum benefits.

Tryptophan is found in certain foods and it can be directly linked to an increase in serotonin levels. This is why it is so important that you make it a point to eat foods that contain tryptophan as much as possible. Some of these whole foods include:

Seeds and nuts

Pineapple

Eggs

Salmon

Turkey

It is also important to look for foods that speed digestion. The reason for this is so our bodies can focus on other important processes needed for our overall health. When our digestion is slow, toxins and inflammation are allowed to build up, paving the way for many sicknesses. Some of the whole foods that speed up digestion include:

Broccoli

Apples

Pears

Fish oil

It might seem a little confusing at first, but you will

get the hang of it. If you have any questions, consult a dietitian or nutritionist.

The connection between food and mood is a powerful one, and it's one that cannot be ignored. Eating the right foods cannot only help to increase your serotonin levels, but also speed up digestion and clean out your gut. This will go a long way in boosting your overall mood and sense of well-being.

Note: Nothing is a substitute for a doctor's guidance when you are dealing with depression. Additionally, any medications or therapy that is recommended is not something to be taken lightly and should be followed exactly as recommended. You cannot risk putting your health or safety at risk. Healing yourself with whole foods is not meant to be done in place of the treatment plan prescribed to you; rather it should be done in conjunction with that plan.

(More on health + wellness in Conscious Collective 004, August 2019)

ABOUT THE WRITER



Ali Michelle is the founder of Simply Living and resides in Florida. She's lived with depression and anxiety for 20+ years and is devoted to helping others learn to manage the realities of mental illness, while transforming themselves and building a happy, fulfilling life. She's also a big fan of naps, sarcasm, laughter—and cake!

MAY'S TEMPLATES

You will find these templates in May's Collective. These templates are specifically designed to assist you in your mental health journey.

Daily Rhythm, The Weekly, Seasonal Rhythm, Cultivating Healthy Boundaries, Set Your Boundaries, and Whole Body Health

Other templates available in the Conscious Collective resource library that may be helpful this month are:

Daily Journal, Action Tracker, Quotes I Love, Movies I Want To Watch, Books I Want To Read, Things I Want To Learn, Prayers + Praises + Words, Grateful, Brain Dump, Health + Fitness Logs





This month's project is available in a step-by-step video tutorial, line art download, and watercolor art download.
Log-in to your account to access.

NEXT MONTH'S COLLECTIVE



002 | JUNE 2019 | RELATIONSHIPS

Contact us at hello@janieedwards.com if you'd like to submit an article.

UNTIL NEXT TIME...

live well

CONSCIOUS COLLECTIVE

JANIE EDWARDS
& company