

**DREAM**

**Up**

**NOW**

**THE**  
**Teen Journal**  
**FOR CREATIVE**  
**Self-Discovery**

**Rayne Lacko**

with community outreach  
advisor Lesley Holmes

# DREAM Up Now

**THE**  
Teen Journal  
**FOR CREATIVE**  
Self-Discovery

Rayne Lacko  
with community outreach advisor Lesley Holmes

free spirit  
PUBLISHING®



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9850 51st Avenue North, Suite 100

Minneapolis, MN 55442

(612) 338-2068

[help4kids@freespirit.com](mailto:help4kids@freespirit.com)

[freespirit.com](https://freespirit.com)

# DEDICATION

My gratitude to all the young people who've trusted me with their words and art, especially my own children. For all those who dare to create, may you find much more than you thought possible within you.

—R. L.

For Sienna and Nya, may your creativity continue to make you soar!

—L. H.

## Gratitude to the Experts

Just as every young person has his/her/their own path to self-expression, the many successful and creative adults who contributed to this guided journal have each found a way to employ creativity to resolve difficult emotions and harness the power of positive emotions to build a beautiful life. We are indebted to these kind-hearted people: Korum Bischoff, Sara Bourland, Melissa Dinwiddie, Tanesha “Ksyn” Cason, Antonio Manuel Chavira, Angie Godfrey, André Hardy, Lauryn J. Hunter, Shelley Klammer, Lisa Manterfield, Ryan “Bodhi” Marcus, MaLee Muse, Courtney Oliver, Rich Redmond, Gem Seddon, Stacie Shewmake, Kristin Tollefson, Sann Wilder, and VH1 Save the Music Foundation.

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To download additional bonus pages and a leadership guide, visit [freespirit.com/dream](http://freespirit.com/dream).



# Foreword

by Sann Wilder

I am no stranger to loss. For years, that numb hollowness was a closer companion to me than my own family. However, I am fortunate enough to be able to use the past tense when talking about those times.

When I was 10 years old, my family suffered a house fire. We lost nearly everything we owned, and our two cats and dogs were killed in the inferno. Two weeks later, we moved halfway across the country, and I lost any support I might have had. I could have turned to my parents, of course, but they were suffering just as much as I was. So I turned to the arts.

The ability to use art to give shape to your emotions, to describe them, to place them somewhere outside so they are not contained in the mind—that might be the greatest power a person can have. If I could look at my writing and my art, at my thoughts given form, then I knew my grief was real and I could begin to heal. I wrote down things I hadn't even realized I was feeling. By transcribing my loss, I was able to move past it. And I discovered something I'd never truly known: peace.

The world is so beautiful. We have towering forests and delicate, lace-like flowers and freshly painted skies. We have kind people with bright eyes and dazzling smiles that sparkle like stars. The arts help me remember that no emotion is permanent, and knowing that grief is not permanent helps me get through it. The journal in your hands is filled with creative activities that can help you understand and deal with whatever you're feeling. It helped me, and I hope it will help you too.

—Sann Wilder, 16

# Introduction

by Lauryn J. Hunter

As an art therapist working with teens, I integrate art, music, and dance to help release tension or stress in the body. A creative outlet can be a safe and easy way to open a conversation and learn more about a person's physical, mental, and emotional well-being. As a specialist in human development, I focus on repairing broken attachments in relationships, such as grief, adoption, addiction, trauma, and divorce of parents. In my 15 years' experience working in community mental health and facilitating art therapy groups, the one thing I have noticed most is the resiliency of young people, especially when you're enjoying feelings of safety, trust, love, support, and acceptance.

Feelings related to fear and stress may cause a person to feel physically sick, depressed, or anxious. Social media and cyberbullying can cause many teens to feel pressure to be or act a certain way. Subliminal messages about identity, body image, and self-expression sometimes leave out celebrating what makes people unique and special. It is natural to struggle with the concept of *Who am I in this big world?* What you see and experience at home, at school, and in your community impacts your personal identity, self-esteem, and social skills.

Managing and sorting through the many feelings you have throughout the day can sometimes feel very uncomfortable in the body. Some teens try to regulate these feelings with impulsive behavior, self-harm, or substance abuse. *Dream Up Now* can provide huge relief for anyone struggling with their feelings and thoughts. This journal is full of safe activities you can do on your own, wherever you feel safe to open up and explore your feelings in privacy. Through the guided activities, you will learn the importance of asking for help and that it's perfectly normal to have more than one feeling at a time. These activities can even help you find ways to improve your grades, friendships, and self-image.

This journal is a great way to build your self-awareness by keeping track of your feelings and how negative or positive feelings impact your behavior. What makes *Dream Up Now* unique is its collaborative approach. Trustworthy, caring adults who have found success through their own creativity provide you with tools and activities to help you figure out what's going on right now and use your natural, inborn talents to express yourself. By exploring your feelings in your *Dream Up Now*

creative journal, you'll begin your journey of self-discovery. The most valuable part of this journal, and the part that creates healing, comes from you being honest with yourself. No one has to see what you've created—unless you choose to share it. Each activity focuses on a different identified feeling. By journaling, drawing, listening to music, and creating, you'll learn how to take time for yourself, practice self-care, and self-regulate in the moment to feel more comfortable in your body. The activities ignite self-awareness, helping you realize that you are part of a greater community, you are not alone, and you can make a difference when you find ways to collaborate with others and become a community leader.

My favorite message throughout *Dream Up Now* is this: there is no “wrong” way to be creative. As long as you allow yourself to *try*, to experience the process, and to move through challenging feelings, you will feel better.

—Lauryn J. Hunter, L.M.F.T., A.T.R., is an award-winning art therapist offering powerful ways to improve one's physical, mental, and emotional well-being.

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# A Note to You

## From the Author

**R**ight now, at this very moment, you have feelings about many things: your life, your family, your friends, your school, your body, your home, your future, your food, your music . . . the list may seem endless. One emotion may be stronger than the rest, or you might be feeling 10 different emotions all at once.

Or maybe you were feeling super chill and zen, and then a crappy memory popped into your thoughts and now you find yourself replaying that scene over and over in your head. I understand that you have feelings about that scene. But what do you *do* with them?

*Dream Up Now* has creative solutions to help you deal with the darkest lows. Even better, it shows you how to use the power of a good day to make your life go the way you want. I believe that if you're experiencing feelings of happiness, of confidence, and of power, then you're in the perfect state of mind to begin building the life you want to live.

You might be wondering: *Isn't feeling happy good enough?* That's a fair question. Feeling happy *is* good. But happiness isn't the be-all, end-all destination. It's what you *do* with these positive feelings that brings real change.

Lucky for you, you've found *Dream Up Now*. This guided journal offers plenty of ideas for getting the things you want in life.

My friend Lesley Holmes and I work with many teens, and what we've noticed is that making art alleviates pain, whether you see yourself as an artist or not. It also can bond you with others, because if you dare to share your art, you give people an opportunity to care about you. Writing, drawing, and listening to music help you realize what is going on inside, *really* going on—the truth. Lesley and I wanted to give teens more opportunities to explore their inner worlds, and that's how this guided journal came to be.

When Lesley and I first met in 2015, music united us. (If you've ever bonded with someone over your favorite songs, you know what I'm talking about.) Lesley represented a music therapy nonprofit, and I was writing books and magazine articles about how music, especially when shared among friends, can truly heal. The first inklings of *Dream Up Now* were centered in resolving emotional struggles using music therapy methods. But we recognized that each person has an individual

approach to self-expression. Music is universal, the cornerstone of every culture and age—but so are creative writing, drawing, and movement. As a teen, you have so much to say, and you have the power to express yourself. We believe you have the right and privilege to dream up your own art—now.

*Dream Up Now* was created because your feelings are valuable. All your feelings—the light ones, the dark ones, the weird ones, the dangerous ones, the so-happy-you-might-explode ones, the please-put-me-out-of-my-misery ones—make up who you are.

Lesley and I have read the research about the power of art and alternative therapies, and we work directly with teens and with educators and therapists from a variety of fields. We know about all the benefits of leading a creative life.\*

But beyond its benefits, I believe that art was born of the very human need to express who you are. Art gives you the words you may find impossible to say. It gives you a language all humans can understand. Art allows you to play, and play is how you first navigated the big, unknown world before you could put a name to your feelings, let alone explore them.

Art gives you an opportunity to take a painful memory and pluck it out of your head and stick it on the page (or in a song, or a drawing, or even blow it away with your breath). Once that scene is out, and all the emotions tied to it come out as well, it loses its power to hurt you.

Art gives you freedom to use your hands, and hands are always looking for something meaningful to do. Creating something that represents a portion of your inner world is probably the most rewarding thing you can do with them.

*You are an artist.* You are. Go ahead and put that on your college application, your résumé, or your social media profile, because it's true. You were born to *create*. Your daydreams, your deepest wishes, your choice of clothes to wear, and songs to listen to, and preferred routes to walk from one place to another—these are all tiny revelations of yourself as an artist.

If you've ever thought about how you wish your bedroom looked, or how you would design or choreograph a music video, or what song you wish you'd written or could perform, or if you have a favorite dance move, or a preference for wearing a certain color, or a character you like to doodle, know that those thoughts are evidence of your self-expression. You are yourself a unique creation. There is no one quite like you.

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\*In fact, according to a 2014 study from the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, high school students involved in the arts are four times more likely to be recognized for academic achievement, yet many schools are cutting the arts. If you want to find out more about how you can start an arts club or music program at your school, see the online leadership guide. Visit [freespirit.com/dream](http://freespirit.com/dream) to download.

The creative activities you'll find in this journal were designed by successful adults who have dealt with the same emotions you're experiencing now and who used various artistic means to deal with the struggles common to teen life.

You will find that these writers care about you and your well-being. And no, they don't know you. Neither do I. But we are sharing the workings of our hearts, the secret hurts of our pasts, and the advice we wish someone had given us, because we want to help you create the life you want to live. You are not alone.

Your creativity is your ticket to making your life go the way you want. And there's a good chance you'll enjoy the process along the way.

—Rayne Lacko

# How to Use This Creative Journal

The journal in your hands is easy to explain, and even easier to use. How do you feel right now? Flip through the book and find the emotion that best fits your current feeling. Or browse the emotions listed in the contents if you need some help choosing where to begin. If you're feeling something people might describe as "dark" or "bad" or "negative," please know that your feelings are safe here. Or maybe you've had "bad" feelings in the past and are ready to sort them out today.

Relief comes with the realization that every dark emotion has a companion, a "light" emotion. Both are normal and can happen any time to anyone. Once you've faced your darkness, you can drag it out into the light and use art to change it in whatever way best serves you. This guided journal is your creative tool to turn your darkness(es) into light.

Use your *Dream Up Now* journal whenever you want—or need—to sort out what's going on in your world. It's here for you on your best days. And it's here for you in your most difficult times. *Dream Up Now* can help you create the life you want to live.

Explore the sets of light and dark emotions as needed—or make a plan to focus on specific pairs of feelings if you feel ready to take control.

In each emotion section, you'll find a short introduction about the contributing writer. Then, you'll hear from the writer themselves. They might share about an experience with the emotion or tell you about the role creativity plays in their life. Finally, they share an activity where you'll use your own creativity to work through the emotion and learn more about yourself.

Write or doodle in the margins. Underline sentences you want to remember. This journal belongs to you, so make it your own.

Emotions change, sometimes unexpectedly. Once you complete a dark emotion activity, you are welcome to move right into the light emotion that is paired with it. Keep in mind that sometimes resolving one dark emotion uncovers another one. Move through your *Dream Up Now* guided journal by tuning into your feelings. Do the

activities in whatever order feels right to you. The good news is that whatever difficulty you are going through, there is a corresponding light emotion available to you. Try to keep exploring the emotions until you can complete a light emotion activity. Always go from darkness into light.

Some of what you'll find in *Dream Up Now* is not, at first glance, an art project. You may find an activity about getting organized or about figuring out how to get a good night's sleep. You might wonder, *Is this art?* The answer is yes, it is. It's art because it requires your creativity. It's art because you are designing your life to go the way you want it to go. You are taking control of your emotions to make your life better, more playful, happier.

*Dream Up Now* can even help you find friends. Making art and mindfully creating the kind of life you want builds authenticity. When you're honest about who you are, you naturally attract your kind of people. Sharing your art helps you learn the lifelong skill of opening yourself to others and establishing trust—a solid start for any relationship. Art builds community. You can share your art @dreamupnowjournal #dreamupnow.

Here's a tip for working in *Dream Up Now*: watch for repeats. As you complete activities, what topics, people, or events do you keep mentioning? What words do you tend to use the most? Which emotions trigger the most discomfort, and which are you working the hardest to feel more often?

Emotion sets can be read and completed one time—or 100 times. As your circumstances change, your feelings change. If you land on a page that you've already completed, take a moment to review it. Is it still true?

Reflect on the answers you gave and make changes as needed. When you redo an activity, you may get a completely different outcome. As you begin using art to manage your emotions, you'll gain wisdom. Need more space to create? Take your creativity outside this journal and into a notebook or sketchbook. Expand on or repeat an activity, elaborate on a writing prompt, make plans for the future, doodle, or create more pieces of art.

Every day, you're growing, learning, and changing. This means that however you feel, right this instant, is impermanent. It's absolutely going to change, and changing emotions are okay because every emotion is valuable.

You are invited to create, to transform your darkest hours into the life you want to live. Begin now. How do you feel?

# I FEEL . . . TIRED

mental numbness / wishing for comfort / inability to focus / loss of motivation

## Meet Courtney Oliver

Trying to balance being who you want to be and fitting in is tough. “It is important to give yourself time to figure out who you are,” Courtney says. “There can be a lot of trial and error.” It is also difficult when parents, family members, and friends want you to be a certain way even though sometimes you want to be different. Feeling tired, she says, affects our decision-making and mood. She finds it helpful to use the acronym HALT before making a decision—checking in with herself to see if she is hungry, angry, lonely, or tired. If she can say yes to any of these, Courtney knows it is probably not the best time to make a decision and will try to resolve her feelings first.

Courtney has worked with teens as a counselor for over 12 years. She currently works directly with teens at Bainbridge Youth Services (BYS) as a licensed mental health counselor and chemical dependency professional. Through her work, Courtney helps teens struggling with depression, anxiety, and relationship issues develop a positive self-image and create a life they love and deserve. Learn more about Courtney at [askbys.org](http://askbys.org).

## Courtney Shares

Lack of sleep affects everyone. It can change our mood and our focus and can create mental numbness and loss of interest in life. Lack of sleep also plays with our brain. Thinking things are worse than they are, we can become overwhelmed by the small things. As life happens, it is easy to get distracted by deadlines, stress, and/or excitement, which can cause us not to get to bed on time or to create unhealthy bedtime routines.

## DREAM UP NOW

This activity helps you create a nighttime routine and set yourself up for a good night’s sleep. Having a bedtime routine and a restful environment is important because it tells your brain it is time to go to bed.

When creating a bedtime routine, remember this acronym: *Nighttime is the SLOWEST part of the day.*

**S—Scribbling/journaling.** Journaling or scribbling in a notebook can help your brain unwind and relax. Search for “night journaling prompts” online to find ideas. Examples of prompts include making a gratitude list or writing about what brought you joy for the day. Make sure you place items such as a notebook and pencils you like by your bed for easy access.

**L—List (to-do list for the next day).** It is hard to sleep if you are thinking about all the things you need to do tomorrow. Make a to-do list to get it off your mind. You can either write your list on paper or email it to yourself. Start making your list *at least one hour before bed* and make sure you give yourself at least five minutes of devoted time to write everything.

**O—Off (screens off).** Experts say it is beneficial to be off all screens for at least 30 minutes to one hour before bed, but the more time, the better.\* Start by staying off screens for 30 minutes before going to sleep. If you are a person who enjoys bingeing on streaming TV or scrolling through the internet before bed, try listening to music or meditating instead. Or you can read a book or magazine (not school-related) that is not on an electronic device. Make sure the room is completely dark for the deepest sleep.

**W—Wash/hygiene.** If you don’t already have a bathroom routine, get one! It helps tell your body it is time to go to sleep. Washing your face can represent washing off the day and can help transition your mind to thoughts of bed. Brushing your teeth can symbolize the end of eating for the day, which helps your body understand the day is done.

**E—Extensions (Pilates and stretching).** Taking time to stretch before bed reduces stress and helps improve sleep. Moving your body around can ease any aches or tightness that might have occurred during the day, so pain will not go to bed with you.

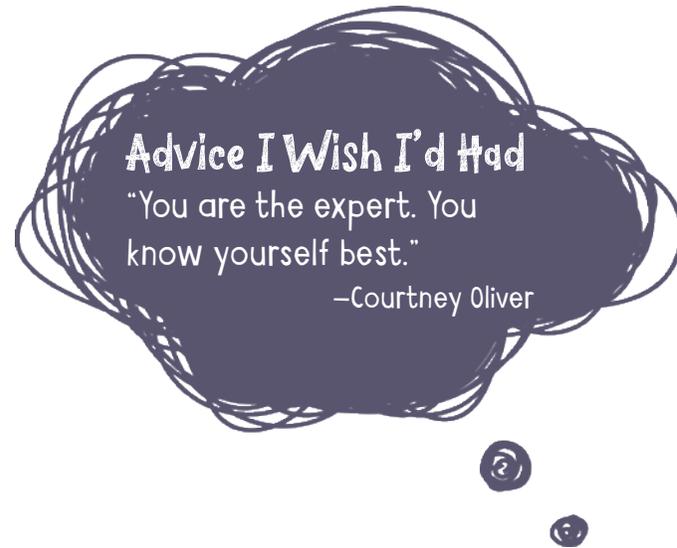
**S—Silence/meditation.** Spending some time being silent or meditating before bed can help you relax and feel connected to your body and can distract you from thoughts that disrupt sleep. A great breathing exercise to help with sleep and overall mental health is called 4-7-8 Breathing:

1. Exhale completely through your mouth while making a *whoosh* sound.
2. Close your mouth and inhale quietly through your nose to a mental count of four.

\*According to the National Sleep Foundation. For more information about sleep, visit [sleepfoundation.org](http://sleepfoundation.org).

3. Now hold your breath for a count of seven.
4. Exhale completely through your mouth, making another whoosh sound, for eight seconds.
5. Repeat the cycle three more times.

**T—Temperature.** Figure out what temperature feels comfortable for you. Create a log of days you sleep better and see if there are any patterns in temperature, what you were wearing, or how many blankets or covers you had.



## I Feel . . . Tired

Personalize Courtney's *Nighttime is the SLOWEST part of the day* plan for your room, your rest, and your life. How can you make it your own?

**S—Scribbling/journaling.** Choose a few writing prompts to get started.

**L—List (to-do list for the next day).** What do you need to do tomorrow?

**O—Off (screens off).** Where will you put your devices so you won't be tempted? How long before bedtime will you try to stay off screens?

**W—Wash/hygiene.** What is your plan for a nighttime bathroom routine?

**E—Extensions (Pilates and stretching).** Write your favorite stretches.

**S—Silence/meditation.** Write down any intentions, questions, or concerns, just to get them out of your head.

**T—Temperature.** What's your preferred temperature for sleeping?

Share your art  
@dreamupnowjournal  
#dreamupnow.