

The Journey is the Destination: A Dan Eldon Journal Project

ABOUT DAN ELDON

Dan Eldon, who was a photojournalist, changemaker, and artist, kept journals to document his journey through life and process his emotions. This activity invites students to explore their own inner and outer worlds by creating a multimedia journal page that supports reflection and emotional awareness.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Explore personal experiences and emotions through multimedia visual journaling.
- Identify healthy coping strategies and sources of resilience in their lives.
- Connect Dan Eldon's philosophy "The Journey is the Destination," to their own life experiences.
- Practice creative self-expression as a tool for mental health and well-being.

Materials Needed

- [The Art of Life: Dan Eldon in Africa](#)
- Blank journals, sketchbooks, or cardstock/heavy paper (one per student)
- Old magazines for cutting (variety of images/topics)
- Scissors and glue sticks
- Markers, colored pencils, crayons
- Printed quotes about resilience, hope, and journey
- Natural objects (leaves, flowers, feathers) - optional
- Students' own photos/memorabilia - optional
- Sticky notes for gallery walk
- Computer/projector to show Dan Eldon examples
- Handout with mental health resources

Period 1: Introduction & Creation | 45-60 minutes

Opening | 10 minutes

Show [Dan Eldon's journal pages](#) and explain how he used layered, multimedia collages to process his experiences as a young activist and adventurer. Share his motto: "The Journey is the Destination", emphasizing that life's meaning comes from the process, not just outcomes.

If time allows, show [The Art of Life: Dan Eldon in Africa](#), a short film about Dan Eldon and his journals, or use it as a reference resource for yourself.

The Activity

Prompt & Introduction | 10 minutes

Explain to students that they will create 1–2 journal spreads (two facing pages count as one spread) that explore themes connected to mental health, emotions, and personal well-being. Emphasize that the focus is on expression, not artistic perfection, and that students may interpret the themes in ways that feel comfortable to them.

Possible theme prompts include:

- **“The Journey Is the Destination”** – moments, lessons, or growth that mattered along the way, not just final goals
- **“What Brings Me Peace”** – calming activities, coping strategies, people, or places that help students feel grounded
- **“Storms I’ve Weathered”** – challenges faced, resilience, strength, and personal growth

Students may choose from these prompts or adapt them in ways that feel meaningful and appropriate for them.



Creation Time | 30 minutes

Provide a variety of materials such as magazines, colored paper, markers, glue sticks, photographs, natural objects (leaves, twine, textured paper), and printed quotes or words. Students create layered collage-style spreads by combining images, words, drawings, textures, and symbols.

Encourage students to:

- Work in the style of Dan Eldon (layered, expressive, mixed media) or develop their own artistic style
- Focus on visual storytelling rather than written explanation
- Include as much or as little personal detail as they feel comfortable sharing

Remind students that this is a reflective space and there are no “right” or “wrong” responses.

Reflection | 10 minutes

Students respond in writing to the prompt:

“What did creating this reveal to you about yourself?”

They may write in their journal, on a separate reflection sheet, or digitally, depending on the classroom setup. Writing can be brief and private.

Period 2 (Optional): Sharing & Resources

Because this is a mental health–focused activity, students should never be required to share their work or personal reflections with others. Teachers may choose one or more of the following options based on the classroom's readiness and students' comfort.

Gallery Walk | 20 minutes

Students who feel comfortable place their journals on their desks. Classmates quietly walk around and leave positive, supportive sticky notes (no critiques). An anonymous participation option should be available for both displaying work and leaving notes.

Discussion | 15 minutes

Facilitate a whole-class discussion using guiding questions such as:

- How can creative expression support mental health and emotional well-being?
- Why might art feel safer or easier than talking at times?
- What tools or supports help when someone is struggling?

Close by encouraging students to continue journaling at home.

Submit to #CreateConnectCare

From January through March, Creative Visions invites young people aged 11–18 to submit creative works that explore their perspectives on mental health and well-being. Teachers are welcome to lead this as a class activity; however, certificates and cash awards are reserved for individual student entries. Whether students choose to share their work publicly or keep their reflections private, the challenge reminds every participant that creative expression is a powerful act of courage, connection, and care.

Visit www.createconnectcare.org/submit.

Academic Standards Met:

National Core Arts Standards (Visual Arts):

- VA:Cr1.1.HS: Use multiple approaches to begin creative endeavors
- VA:Cr2.1.HS: Engage in making works of art that explore the relationship between personal experiences and the broader world
- VA:Re.7.1.HS: Hypothesize ways in which art influences perception and understanding of human experiences

CASEL Social-Emotional Learning Competencies:

- Self-Awareness: Recognizing emotions, identifying personal strengths and sources of support
- Self-Management: Developing coping strategies and stress management skills
- Social Awareness: Understanding broader perspectives through exposure to humanitarian work

National Health Education Standards:

- Standard 7: Students will demonstrate the ability to practice health-enhancing behaviors and avoid or reduce health risks (mental health self-care)