

Journal to success with this step-by-step e-book.

Quick Start to Personal Journaling

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LESSON ONE

Introduction

Be the main character in your own book. Journaling is a way to start a new and exciting chapter – a way to live by choice and recreate your life.

Journaling celebrates and preserves joyful moments. It helps us overcome challenges like difficult relationships, disappointment, loss, financial stress and illness. It's a way to grow spiritually. Journaling teaches us how to exceed goals and be better people.

I really don't know how people make it through life without taking notes!

You may be wondering how the simple act of writing something down is going to change your life. Let me assure you that there is immense power in this simple act. I've taught students how to journal to the perfect job, their ideal weight, financial security, better relationships, physical and mental wellness and more.

You can reach any goal if you journal about it.

Is it magic? No, not at all. But if you give yourself some time to get into the habit of journaling consistently, you will begin to subconsciously position yourself to meet your goals, and it will feel like magic. Writing something down gives it permanence. As you reflect on your written words, you will begin to form ideas about how you will make them come true.

And, of course, there is more to gain from journaling than the benefits associated with the act of writing. You will also be creating a book about your life . . . a legacy for future generations.

You will begin this lesson by learning a little bit about historical journals. We are also going to explore Weblogs (Blogs). Blogs are online journals that have gained popularity in recent years.

During Lesson Two, you're going to get some basic training. You will learn how to pick the right journal, how to form the journaling habit and how to organize your journals. You will also learn how to protect your privacy.

Lessons Three and Four will explore different types of journals: lists and logs, dream journals, the writer's journal as well as journals that focus on memoirs, physical and mental wellness and spirituality.

Each person who reads this e-book will have a different reason for using a journal. Whatever your reason, you will have an opportunity to fulfill your

personal needs and leave a written legacy for future generations. Journaling is an exciting way to take your experience into the future.

Journaling is a popular activity, but it is not a new one. It helps to look at some other journalers and identify their purposes. The next section explores some historical journals.

Historical Journals

Let's begin by examining some historical journals and why they were written.

Lewis and Clark

In 1804, the Lewis and Clark expedition set out to find an overland route from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean. President Jefferson chose 28-year-old Meriwether Lewis to lead the group he called the Corps of Discovery. Lewis picked 32-year-old William Clark to be his co-leader. The expedition began May 14, 1804 when the group left Camp Wood River (Illinois). The expedition returned to St. Louis on September 23, 1806. Members of the Corps kept several journals. Here is an excerpt from Captain Lewis' journal:

The party with me killed a female brown bear. She was but meager, and appeared to have suckled young very recently. Captain Clark narrowly escaped being bitten by a rattlesnake in the course of his walk. The party killed one this evening at our encampment which, he informed me, was similar to that he had seen. This snake is smaller than those common to the Middle Atlantic States, being about 2 feet 6 inches long. It is of a yellowish-brown color on the back and sides, variegated with one row of oval spots of a dark-brown color lying transversely over the back from the neck to the tail, and two other rows of small circular spots of the same color which garnish the sides along the edge of the scuta. Its belly contains 176 scuta on the belly and 17 on the tail.

Captain Lewis, 17 May 1805.

Florentine Films compiled excerpts from the journals of Captains Lewis and Clark, as well as four other members of the Corps in preparation for the PBS film "Lewis and Clark: The Journey of the Corps of Discovery." You can read them at the companion web site for Ken Burns' documentary movie at:

http://www.pbs.org/lewisandclark/archive/idx_jou.html

In this example, journals kept by men on the expedition became valuable records of American history. Notice the detail Captain Lewis included in his written description of the rattlesnake. The snake must have left a big impression! Imagine the details of the journey we would miss if the members of the Corps didn't keep journals. We would only know the story from word of mouth, not from the written word.

Remember the childhood game, Telephone? Several children sit in a circle, and one person whispers a little story to the person next to her, then that person whispers what she thought she heard to the person next to her, and so on. By the time the story gets around the circle, it is nothing like it was in the beginning! Writing down observations is a smart way to keep the facts straight and to preserve important details.

Maybe the president won't ask you to take an important journey, but the next time you go on a trip, consider packing your journal along with your camera. You will enjoy reading about the trip years later, and so will your grandchildren!

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) was well known for delivering his ideas eloquently and poetically. He is also known for his influence over other well-known American writers, like Henry David Thoreau and Walt Whitman. He often worked out of his large collection of personal journals when preparing the essays, poems and orations that made him a legend.

In a journal entry after the death of his five-year-old son, he wrote:

The chrysalis which he brought in with care & tenderness & gave to his Mother to keep is still alive & he most beautiful of the children of men is not here.

The poetry he wrote during this difficult time was wrought with emotion, but Emerson had already experienced his share of loss. When he was only 8-years-old, his father died. All of his brothers died, (Emerson was a middle child), and his first wife died at age 20.

Even so, Emerson confessed that he had a naturally optimistic nature and even admitted to occasional bouts of silliness. His cheerful philosophy shines through in this quote:

Finish each day and be done with it. You have done what you could; some blunders and absurdities have crept in; forget them as soon as you can. Tomorrow is a new day; you shall begin it serenely and with too high a spirit to be encumbered with your old nonsense.

Like Emerson, you may choose to journal as a way to "practice," in writing, words that you will someday speak to an audience. You may want to create a storehouse of ideas from which you can create new written works.

Maybe you need an opportunity to express your grief. Perhaps you just want to find the deeper meaning of life, as Emerson hinted when he said, "It is not the length of life but depth of life."

Anne Frank

At age 13, Anne Frank hid from the Nazis during the Holocaust in the back of an Amsterdam warehouse. During her two years of hiding, she kept several diaries. She also wrote short stories.

In this journal entry, Anne tried to make sense of her world:

... we often ask ourselves here despairingly: "What, oh, what is the use of the war? Why can't people live peacefully together? Why all this destruction?" The question is very understandable, but no one has found a satisfactory answer to it so far. Yes, why do they make still more gigantic planes, still heavier bombs and, at the same time, prefabricated houses for reconstruction? Why should millions be spent daily on the war and yet there's not a penny available for medical services, artists, or for poor people?... Oh, why are people so crazy?

Diary of a Young Girl, entry dated May 3, 1944.

Toward the end of the hiding period, Anne rewrote her diary notebooks with the intention to make a book from them to be published after the war ended; however, Anne and the others hidden with her were arrested and deported to concentration camps in 1944. Anne died there in 1945. In the following journal entry, we see the hopes and dreams of this remarkable girl:

I can shake off everything if I write; my sorrows disappear, my courage is reborn. But, and that is the great question, will I ever be able to write anything great, will I ever become a journalist or a writer? I hope so, oh, I hope so very much, for I can recapture everything when I write, my thoughts, my ideals and my fantasies.

Diary of a Young Girl, entry dated April 4, 1944

Anne Frank's hopes came true. In 1947, Otto Frank had the diaries of his deceased daughter published. "The Diary of Anne Frank" is one of the most widely read books in the world.

Anne loved her diary. She had no friends except for those in hiding with her. She named her diary "Kitty" and wrote on the inside cover:

I hope I will be able to confide everything to you, as I have never been able to confide in anyone, and I hope that you will be a great source of comfort and support.

If you are looking for a confidant, your journal will give you great satisfaction. Your thoughts and feelings will be accepted, and in return, your journal will offer you a chance to reflect on and sort through your emotions.

Blogging

What about those internet Web logs ("Blogs")? Bloggers by the millions are logging on to their online diaries to create daily journal entries. Teenagers make up the largest group of bloggers.

For teens, blogging is about peer-to-peer communication. Emily Nussbaum spent time talking to America's suburban teen bloggers. She wrote:

A result of all this self-chronicling is that the private experience of adolescence - - a period traditionally marked by seizures of self-consciousness and personal confessions wrapped in layers and hidden in a sock drawer - - has been made public. Peer into an online journal, and you find the operatic texture of teenage life with its fits of romantic misery, quick-change moods and sardonic inside jokes.

"My So-Called Blog," *New York Times*, January 11, 2004

A study by Perseus Development Corporation released in October 2003 revealed 10 million blogs are expected to be on the internet by the end of 2004. Many sites host free blogs and offer authoring tools. You can start your own personal blog in a matter of minutes.

Are blogs true journals or not? Some say no, believing blogs are written for an audience who can provide feedback by typing in comments after the blogger's entry. Others say yes, blogs are daily journal entries and are not written with an audience in mind. What do you think?

My personal blog is hosted by Xanga.com. When I first started posting, my daughter Kristin, 22, poked fun at me. "Mom, aren't most bloggers, like, 15 years old?" But something about my blog grabbed her interest. In fact, a week later, she joined my weblog community.

Her first blog post was a little tentative:

What's the saying? Don't knock it 'til you rock it (or something to that effect). So here goes...hmm.....this is hard...Because I am a little skeptical of who may be reading this I'll just start out simple.

I can relate!

The first week that I blogged, I edited myself to death because I was worried about what people would think about my "real" life. To further add to my paranoia, others started posting comments to my entries, so I knew people were out there . . . reading.

So, are blogs true journals or not?

My first thought was "no." Blogging seemed more like a conversation with friends than personal journaling. After all, personal journaling is all about recording private thoughts and blogs are public.

However, my thoughts about blogging are changing. A little at a time, I reveal who I am through my blog. My blog posts are evolving into thoughts and observations about life that I no longer self-edit. It's been a liberating experience.

In my personal journal, I write things that I know to be true about myself that I'm unable to reveal for one reason or another. Once I'm done journaling, I tuck the journal in a drawer, put on my mask and go out into the world.

Not being true to who I really am causes all kinds of problems in my relationships. Further, if my behavior doesn't line up with my values, it keeps me from meeting important goals, growing spiritually and compromises my physical and mental health.

It's important to keep a personal journal for my eyes only – I always will. But integrating some of the thoughts I record in my journal with my public blog is peeling away layers of self-consciousness and tentativeness.

I knew I was a true blogger when I re-read a blog post and, instead of editing it, I thought, "This is who I am, and, hey, I'm okay!"

My new philosophy as a blogger is: The closer I can get to integrating my true self into my public self, the better off I am. And, of course, "Don't knock it 'til you rock it!"

Journaling: What's In It For You?

Plenty.

If you've tried journaling before, but just couldn't keep up with it, I'm really glad you decided to read this e-book. You probably felt like journaling was just another chore to add to your day. Or maybe you felt like your words were just not interesting or important enough to record. I will show you how to get over that hump.

I understand completely how busy life can be and how adding one thing to your schedule can throw you over the edge, especially when it seems like a waste of precious time.

For example, my daughter Makenna loves going to the park to swing. When we moved to Tennessee, it didn't take her long to discover the neighborhood park, and she wanted to swing every day. She'd beg everyone in the family to take her. I was so busy when we first moved, I'd hold my breath, waiting for someone to volunteer, but it usually ended up being me.

So, I'd stop what I was doing, and we'd head off. All the way there, I'd make mental lists of all the things I needed to get done that day that weren't going to get done because of an impromptu trip to the park. That is, until the day I really paid attention to Makenna's face when I was pushing her. Pure, sweet joy!

Shortly afterward, I noticed how she would kick her little feet in the air when I pushed her really high and how nice it was to hear her sing "Raindrops Keep Falling On My Head" and other songs I'd taught her when she was still in diapers.

One day the ground was wet with the rain from the night before, and every time she kicked her legs back, I would get smattered with mud. By then, I had "learned" how to push her, so it was fine with me.

I learned how much I enjoyed the sun on my face and the chance to sing along with her. Now I sit in the swing beside her and we have contests to see who can swing the highest. Sometimes we play a game and every time she swings back to me I say something affirming to her like, "You're fun," "You have cute toes," or "You make me happy," and she flashes me the most incredible smile that I want to weep. She doesn't have to beg to go to the park anymore; I usually ask her first.

I didn't need someone to teach me how to push her on the swings, I just needed to understand the importance of doing it until I began to receive the benefits associated with it. It's the same for journaling. After you experience the rewards of keeping a personal journal, you will understand its incredible value.

It's all about writing an end goal in your heart. You wouldn't jump on a bus without knowing where you want to go, would you? Think of your journal as your roadmap. A vague, poorly written map will frustrate you and get you lost. A well-written map will help you arrive in record time. Focused, realistic goals take you to your destination.

I want to see you succeed, my friend. The whole reason I'm in this journaling business is because I love people and nothing will make me happier than to see you thrive and be happy.

So, what goals are written in your heart? Don't worry, you don't have to answer that today. At this point, you may have a good idea, but most beginning journalers need time to look at the options.

The fun thing about a personal journal is that it can be whatever you want it to be. It's your book. You may begin with one idea and end with another. I just want you to begin thinking about what you'd like to achieve in your life.

In the next lesson, I'll help you get started on your journey! You don't have to be in any special place in life to get started. You can be where you are now to get where you are going.

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