



JANICE THOMPSON, AUTHOR

Jump-Start Journaling

 0 Comments



To Journal, or not to Journal... That is the Question.

I have four daughters (all grown). One of them has always loved to write. This first

became evident when she was in her mid-teens, when she began keeping a daily journal. I always admired her ability to write consistently, day in and day out. The journal gave her a place to pour out her frustrations, joys, anxieties, emotions and pent-up anger. It was her "private place" and she totally depended on it! Now that she's a new bride, the journal has been pressed aside for a season. But I have no doubt she'll pick it back up again.

- **Do you keep a daily journal?**
- **How does journaling benefit you?**
- **Do you write about your day, or is there more to your journaling than that?**
- **Would you be comfortable with someone else reading your journal?**
- **Why, or why not?**

To be honest, I don't keep a daily journal. Oh, I have a weblog, and try to update it as frequently as possible, but it just doesn't "feel" the same. (Some would argue that a weblog is actually easier than writing in a journal because the hosting sites make them so much fun and so accessible. For more information on creating or updating a weblog, please contact Out There for web assistance.)

- **How do you feel about keeping a blog (weblog)?**
- **Is privacy an issue for you?**

Enjoy the Process!

Regardless of "where" you write your thoughts (on the web or in an actual journal), the process of putting your most intimate thoughts down is both terrifying and exciting at the same time. Still, journal-writers are passionate people, who depend on the daily "release" that journaling offers. And for many people of faith, the journal

is “another way” to pray, and to heal from life’s trials.

- **Have you ever used your journaling as a “spiritual” experience?**
- **How can a journal help you heal?**
- **Have you gone back and read your entries from a particularly difficult season in your life?**
- **How do those types of entries make you feel now?**

A journal can be a best friend and confidante, a place to deposit your inner-most thoughts. And in some cases, (like the one mentioned below), a journal can offer a true life-line in time of crisis.

I hope you enjoy the following excerpts from Anne’s personal diary...

• **Anne Frank’s first diary entry, June 12, 1942**

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

• **Anne Frank, 1942**

“A diary is a really strange experience for someone like me. It seems to me that later on neither I nor anyone else will be interested in the musings of a 13 year old school girl”

• **Anne Frank, 15, 1944**

“I hear the approaching thunder that, one day, will destroy us too, I feel the suffering

of millions. And yet, when I look up at the sky, I somehow feel that this cruelty too shall end, that peace and tranquility will return once more"

• **Anne Frank, 15, 1944**

"In spite of everything, I still believe that people are really good at heart."

- **In what ways did the diary of this young girl change the world?**
- **Do you believe that your daily scribblings might be capable of the same power?**

The following testimony is quite inspiring. I hope you enjoy it.

Keeping a Journal When Words Fail

by Kay Marie Porterfield

I'd been keeping a journal for nearly twenty years, so it seemed natural for me to continue when my elderly father suffered a major stroke. Writing in my journal kept me going for the five years I cared for him and witnessed the relentless progress of his dementia. My daily entries provided me with perspective when he was diagnosed with cancer and sustained me as I remained by his side through a series of medical crises that, by necessity, became the main focus of my own life.

Finally the day came when I sat alone in his nursing home room with the body that had once contained my Dad. Waiting for the funeral people to arrive, I wrote, "Death is clawed and yellow thing," before I closed the composition book that had served as my journal.

Immediately I plunged into making funeral arrangements, cleaning out his room in the nursing home, and coping with social security and the insurance companies. I was too busy to write in my journal, I told myself when I returned home from the funeral. I was too exhausted to do anything, let alone pick up a pen.

I knew journal writing would be good for me. After all, I'd been facilitating journaling workshops for fifteen years. I'd read all the research about its power to reduce stress and strengthen the immune system, but as the days wore on I couldn't bring myself to practice what I preached. I was a professional writer. Now words deserted me.

http://www.kporterfield.com/journal/visual_grief.html

- **How does this testimony make you feel?**
- **Can you see yourself in her shoes?**
- **What kind of things would you write in your journal in such a situation?**
- **Would you be able to write anything?**
- **Would you find the experience of writing down your thoughts helpful?**

In this dear lady's case, she was able to eventually create what she called a "bereavement" journal (a collage of photos, etc.) and found it quite healing/helpful

Journal Ideas

Choose one and write for five minutes without stopping

- **How I feel about my alarm clock**

- **My Dream School/Job**
- **My Dream Teacher/Spouse**
- **What I would like to change about myself.**
- **What I REALLY enjoy doing.**
- **My worst fear is.....**
- **A miserable feeling is when.....**
- **What color do you think love is? Explain your answer.**
- **What color do you think hate is? Explain your answer.**
- **How do you think rain sounds when it falls?**
- **If I could fly, I would...**

FROM JOURNALING TO BOOKS:

Now let's talk about how we can take our notes from our journal and use them for book ideas. We'll start with non-fiction first.

Go back through your journal to see if there are any common themes in your writing. You might have to lay personal issues/thoughts aside and look at the journal with fresh eyes, as if you were reading it for the first time as a total stranger. What "tough themes" would you see? Struggles with fear? Health-related issues? Concerns about

children? Marital issues? Financial stuff? Now look at the positive themes. Does your heart for worship come shining through? Do you find that you've been spending a lot of time writing about your pursuit of God? Has prayer been a driving force in your life? If so, then these themes are worthy of sharing with other.

Likely, your journal is loaded with themes that are such an everyday part of your life that you might overlook them. These themes are the very things that you should be writing about. If, for example, you find that you're writing a lot about marital issues (or step-parenting, or something along those lines), consider writing several magazine articles on the subject first. Then, as the Lord leads, turn those articles into books.

- **What "themes" do you see in your journal?**
- **How could the "themes" of your life be written as magazine articles?**
- **How could you take those articles together and form non-fiction books?**
What topics come to mind?

If you're more interested in fiction, take a close look at the themes and see how you might write a fictional story using one of them. For example, if your journal is filled with ponderings about chronic health-related issues, why not craft a novel where one of the characters deals with that very thing. Who better than you to write about it, after all? You've been journaling about it for years, anyway. And think of how real/relevant the novel will be. You can pull from your most personal thoughts, giving those thoughts/words/dialogue bits to your character. He/she will jump off of the page.

- **How can the themes of your journal be incorporated into a character's life?**
- **What are some of the tougher subjects (from your journal) you could share**

through the life of a character?

- **What are some of the more light-hearted subjects (from your journal) you could share?**

A FINAL THOUGHT ON JOURNALING:

Of course, the real purpose for journaling isn't to be published, but to grow closer to the Lord. Even if you never jump-start a book from your journal entries, you can spend time with the Lord, pouring out your heart and learning to trust Him more.

I want to leave you with a piece I wrote about ten years ago. May it motivate you as you write for Him!

By JThompson

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Creative Writing Lessons, Non-Fiction Lessons

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