

Keeping a Journal

The rules of journal writing can be very simple. Here are mine:

- (1) Buy a journal that suits you – a simple spiral notebook or an elegant leather-bound version, whatever seems right. Put your name on the inside cover, along with your contact information, so in you lose it, someone will likely return it. (You can, of course, use a computer, but a paper journal is more portable and has an identity all its own.) Now you're ready to begin.
- (2) Note the date of each entry and write down whatever comes to mind – thoughts, feelings, sensations, stories, dreams, memories, opinions – and also whatever has recently happened to you that seems interesting, important, informative, or, for some reason that you don't yet understand, worth putting on the page.
- (3) Do it every day, even if you write only "I don't have anything to say."
- (4) Don't censor yourself. Write down whatever comes.
- (5) If you're feeling awkward, don't worry. Most people do. This is a new activity. Many of us are not used to expressing ourselves, let alone writing what we're feeling and thinking.
- (6) If you're feeling intimidated, that's not surprising either, either. Many of us carry images in our minds that inhibit us – our mother coming into our teenage room, opening our drawers, leafing through our diary; a critical teacher red penciling our papers.
- (7) Notice any fears and images that come up, acknowledge them, write them down, and let them go. This journal is for *you* and only you.