



HOW TO USE A JOURNAL

Based on Jim Rohn's *How to Use a Journal* audio presentation.

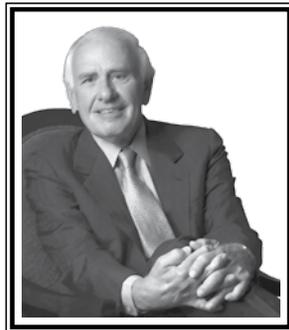
JIM ROHN

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JIM ROHN

For more than 40 years, Jim Rohn honed his craft like a skilled artist, helping people all over the world sculpt life strategies that expanded their imagination of what is possible. Jim set the standard for those who seek to teach and inspire others. He possessed the unique ability to bring extraordinary insights to ordinary principles and events. Those who had the privilege of hearing him speak can attest to the elegance and common sense in his material. It is no coincidence, then, that he is widely regarded as one of the most influential thinkers of our time and a national treasure. Jim authored numerous books and audio and video programs, and he helped motivate and shape an entire generation of personal-development trainers and hundreds of executives from America's top corporations.

For additional information or to shop for Jim Rohn's best-selling books, CDs, DVDs and more, go to store.SUCCESS.com.



“It is challenging to be a student of your own life, your own future, your own destiny. Don’t trust your memory. When you listen to something valuable, write it down. When you come across something important, write it down. Take the time to keep notes and to keep a journal.”

—*Jim Rohn*

HOW TO USE A JOURNAL

Over the years I have repeatedly encouraged people in search of the good life to make use of a journal. Invariably at the conclusion of a seminar a number of people are sufficiently inspired by learning of the effect journals have had on my life to start using one of their own.

Unfortunately, inspiration and enthusiasm quickly fade in the face of all those blank pages. Instead of finding new answers to life, the journal seems to open a new floodgate of questions such as: What am I supposed to write? Should I only write about business events? How often should I be writing? What kind of journal is best? Does spelling count?

My purpose here is not only to explore the incredible value of recording your life's experiences but also to examine the endless uses and methods of keeping a journal. Hopefully, by the conclusion of this article, your questions will have been answered and you will be confidently embarking on a new adventure in achievement, with the vehicle of pen and paper.

FIND A JOURNAL THAT FITS YOUR NEEDS

The first thing to understand about a journal is that it's your book, and because it is yours you must be the one to select the size and style you feel most fits your needs and personal preferences.

Like a favorite armchair, a journal must be comfortable enough that you will want to go to it often.

Like a favorite armchair, a journal must be comfortable enough that you will want to go to it often. You may in fact find yourself experimenting with a variety of journals over the years as your needs and tastes change. During the past 25 years I'd be willing to bet that I've tried almost every conceivable system of capturing ideas on paper, from loose-leaf binders and file cards to dime store notebooks and hardbound volumes. I've had big journals and little journals, journals with lined pages and journals with blank pages, all of which met a certain need at a certain period in my life. And, believe me, you too will undoubtedly go through half a dozen different methods over the years, and that's to be expected.

As you continue to grow and develop, you will soon discover that last year's systems won't likely meet this year's needs. You see, one of the keys to success is flexibility. We must always be on the search for more effective methods to facilitate and accommodate new ideas.

YOUR JOURNAL SHOULD BE ABLE TO GO WHERE YOU GO

In the beginning the only thing that matters is that you develop the journal habit. Start with whatever you've got. You will not only start developing the journal habit, but you will also discover in the process what you like or do not like about it. Then when you've finished, you can always look for a journal that is more tailored to suit your specific needs. And I would suggest that when you go to buy your second journal that you take the time to get just the right one.

Remember, the use anything receives will always be in direct proportion to how it makes you feel when you use it. The color and material of the binding, the texture of the paper, the width of the lines or the absence of lines are important considerations. If you feel lines tend to restrict your creative flow, then go with blank pages. If you feel uncomfortable with blank pages, then choose lined pages. Hey, it's your book. Make sure it reflects what you are.

Just one bit of advice, however: bear in mind that a journal should be capable of going wherever you go. A journal that requires more space than your briefcase permits or more room than your desktop allows for you, more often than not will be left at home gathering dust instead of thoughts, and cobwebs instead of observations.

WHY USE A JOURNAL?

Let's get to the heart of the matter. Buying a journal is the easy part. The real challenge lies in filling it up, and that's what we want to deal with now: what should go into a journal if it is to have meaning and value in your life.

Perhaps the best way to answer this question is to consider the purposes and functions of a journal. Once the matter of why we should write is clear, then what we should write will become immediately apparent.

There are so many functions performed by a journal that I could conceivably spend hours discussing them. But since getting busy actually using your journal

is more important than my reasons for why you should be keeping a journal, I'll try to limit the list and merely highlight some of the majors.

SOLVING A PROBLEM

One of the unique characteristics of a journal is that it offers you an effective way to figure it all out, to figure out life, to figure out people, to figure out business dilemmas, and most important of all to figure out yourself.

WRITE IT DOWN TO FIGURE IT ALL OUT

There is something magical about writing down a problem. It is almost as though in the very act of writing what is wrong you start to discover ways of making it right. Perhaps the source of this magic lies in the objective perspective that writing affords you. Even though you are describing your problem, your challenge, your life, your uncertainty and your indecision, the fact that you are writing about it as opposed to mentally pondering it creates a space between you and the problem. It is within this space that solutions have room to grow.

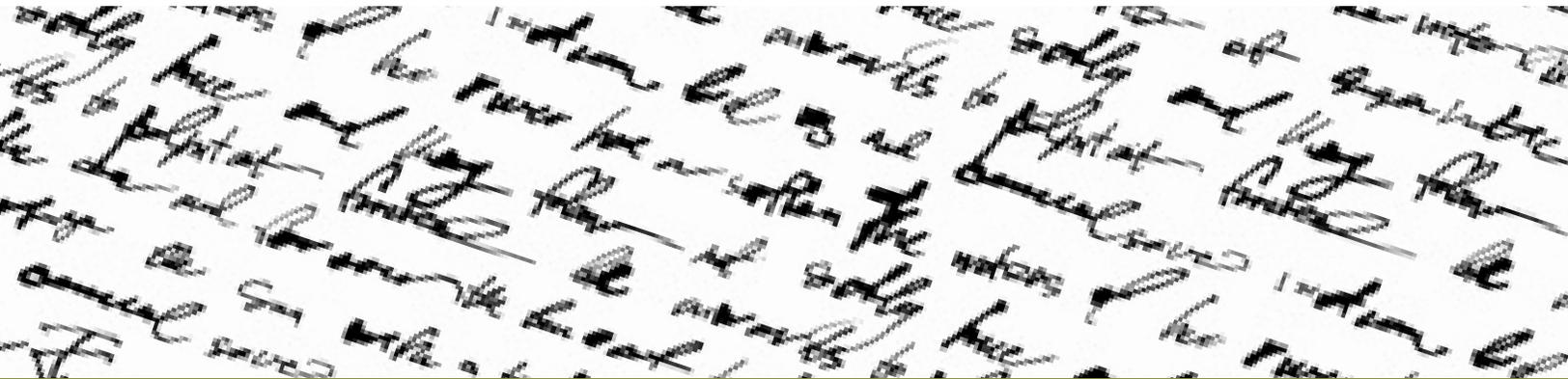
You see, writing about events and circumstances that occur helps you to clarify exactly what is happening. When we describe life to ourselves only in our minds, our imaginations tend to feed false or distorted information about how things are, positive or negative. When we describe a situation in writing, however, we become more factual, more accurate, and certainly more realistic. Then as we reread what we have written, we create a new picture in our minds to replace the distorted picture we have been working with, and once we finally see things as they are rather than as we think they are, we can then see our way clear to make them better.

When you're done reading here, you might in fact want to use this process to get your journal started. Write about a current dilemma you are facing. Perhaps it is a personal problem, a business matter, a family issue or a financial problem. Whatever it is, take the time to capture it on paper the way it really is.

ANALYZE WHAT YOU HAVE WRITTEN

Remember, writing out the problem is only the first step to creative problem solving and effective decision making. The next step is to carefully analyze what you have written.

Essentially, you must learn to view your problems like a scientist who puts tiny organisms on a slide. Examine your circumstances through the lens of the microscope of truth to see their real nature, their real perimeters and their real composition.



MAKE A COMMITMENT TO START JOURNALING

Many people will read these suggestions, agree that they sound like a good idea to try, and even go so far as to mentally agree to do it . . . sometime. And therein lies the problem, that nebulous word “sometime.” We all know what happens to the promise we make to do something tomorrow or next week or as soon as we have a chance. Somehow we never quite get around to doing it.

My advice is that if you think a suggestion has merit and that it’s worth trying, that you promise yourself you will do it. Make a firm commitment now that you will choose one of my suggestions here, and that you will not do another thing until you have opened your journal and written at least one page. Otherwise, to be perfectly honest, you might as well stop now and give the journal to a friend, for surely if you lack the discipline to start a journal it is highly unlikely that you will ever have the discipline to continue to use one.

WHEN ANALYZING, HERE ARE SOME OF THE KEY THINGS TO LOOK FOR:

EXAGGERATIONS OR DISTORTIONS OF THE TRUTH —

Are you really telling it like it is? Take another look. Perhaps your concern is making it seem worse than it is, or your enthusiasm is making it seem better than it is.

ASSIGNING BLAME —

Look for a tendency to blame circumstances or someone else for your problem instead of seeing yourself as the cause. You see, most of our difficulties are the result of either failing to do what we could have done, or in doing in haste what we should never have done.

EXPECTING CHANGE —

Watch for a tendency to expect circumstances or other people to change in order for your problem to be solved. Let me remind you one more time that things get better when you get better. Passive hope never has and never will improve human circumstances.

WEAKNESSES —

Look closely for weak points in the obstacle, where you might attack to bring that obstacle to its knees. Remember, David slew Goliath with but one small stone. It usually doesn't take much more than a few minor adjustments in either our attitude or our action plan to solve a major problem.

RECORD YOUR OBSERVATIONS

As you examine your problem, do as any scientist would do: record your observations. You see, as you continue to refine your statement of the problem, of the way it really is, you will begin to move closer to the solution.

And speaking of solutions, be sure to record the ultimate conclusion to your dilemma. If it worked well, then it is worth remembering. And if it didn't work as well as you had hoped it would, then it is even more essential to record the outcome, lest you should find yourself repeating mistakes instead of learning from them.

So, the first step in getting accustomed to using your journal is writing down problems that you encounter, and recording all the steps you can take or did take to solve them, as well as their eventual outcomes.

CAPTURING GOOD IDEAS

How many times as we go through the day do we come across a good idea, a unique quote, an interesting piece of information, or even a significant personal discovery, and each time we do we mentally say to ourselves, “I must remember that”?

DON'T TRUST YOUR MEMORY

Now I'm willing to admit here that the human mind is a remarkable thing, but I also know from experience that the human memory leaves a lot to be desired.

I think Ralph Waldo Emerson captured it best when he made this statement:

“I suppose that every old scholar has had the experience of reading something in a book which has significance to him but which he could never find again. Sure he is that he read it there, but no one else ever read it, nor can he find it again, though he buy the book and ransack every page.”

How true. What we do not somehow capture today is lost forever. There are a lot of things in life that we can trust, but my experience has taught me that the human memory is most definitely not one of them.

GOOD IDEAS ARE ALL AROUND

There are so many sources of insight and inspiration all around us. Good ideas flow in abundance from sermons and lectures, from books and magazines, television documentaries, business meetings and conversations. Obviously, for you to capture the ideas, it is essential, as I mentioned earlier, that your journal always be at your side.

I remember one time attending a church service in Carmel, California. The sermon that Sunday morning was excellent, so I opened my journal and started

taking notes. But out of the 400 people in attendance that day, guess how many of the others were taking notes? Not one.

So there I was taking notes in my journal from this sermon and pretty soon the people around me were starting to give me strange looks. Out of the corner of my eye I could see them nudging one another and whispering. I could almost hear them saying, “He’s going to get out of here with some of this stuff.” And, sure enough, I did. I got the stuff.

What I’m suggesting is that you get in there and get out with some of the stuff. Let other people sit there thinking they can remember it all, let other people treat opportunity casually, but not you. I would ask you to treat it seriously. Life always rewards the serious students for their labors.

CAPTURE THEM NOW

Since we all know that it’s nearly impossible for most of us to remember the exact phrasing of an inspiring line or the specific details of a business conference over an extended period of time, we’ve got to get serious about capturing them now.

Generally, if we wait until the end of the day to describe events and happenings and conversations in our journals, the specific details have already escaped us. At best we are left with scattered fragments, and it’s hard to build an exciting future from mere bits and pieces of the past and present.

I encourage you to get it all down as it comes your way: financial ideas, personal development ideas, time management ideas, family ideas, business ideas, everything you have the good fortune to come across. If an idea is worth listening to, worth reading, worth remembering, then it is also worth capturing in your journal.

ETCH IDEAS IN YOUR MIND

There are many reasons for making the effort to capture good ideas, not the least of which is the fact that the simple act of writing something on paper helps to etch the idea more firmly in our conscious minds. To hear it or see it or read it is one thing; to take the time and make the mental effort to capture it with paper and pen is so much more.

EVERY IDEA HAS ITS TIME AND PLACE

Victor Hugo once wrote, “There is one thing stronger than all the armies in the world, and that is an idea whose time has come.”

Perhaps the ideas you capture today will not have any specific meaning or purpose in your life at this moment, but ultimately at some future point in time when you march into battle, the armory of ideas you have carefully and conscientiously assembled over the years will serve you well.

The successful human being is one who has learned to diversify his instructions and gather knowledge from a variety of sources.

ONE IDEA LEADS TO ANOTHER

Here’s another interesting phenomenon about ideas: as we collect a variety of thoughts on any given theme or subject, there is a tendency for these individual ideas to come together and form themselves into a whole new idea, much as the single flakes of snow when gathered together can be formed into snowballs, and snowballs into snowmen.

Or perhaps a more graphic example would be that of the igloo, which is a dwelling built entirely of tiny snowflakes that have been compressed by their weight and frozen together over a period of time, such that whole blocks of them may be cut out to build a structure.

The successful human being is one who has learned to diversify his instructions and gather knowledge from a variety of sources. Gather enough good ideas in one area of life and you will form a solid block. Gather enough solid blocks together and you can construct a whole new life.

A FILING SYSTEM

Alas, the mental storage bank of good ideas is very much like the bottom drawer of our desks or the extra drawer in the kitchen that holds a collection of valuable items gathered over the years, none of which can ever be found when we go to look for them again because of the chaotic manner in which they were stored. We pour information into our mental computers much like we dump old letters and store coupons into the extra drawer: helter-skelter, and thence irretrievable.

One of the first things we attend to when setting up a new business is the development of a filing system for records, so that we can easily locate information whenever needed. When we move into a new home, we carefully pack all of our possessions in clearly labeled boxes so that we can find something again in a hurry if needed.

But when it comes to facts, to ideas, to observations, we have no system, as though they are incidental rather than essential to our better future. Your journal then provides you with a means of logically assembling and storing the pieces of information that come your way.

ORGANIZING YOUR JOURNAL

Now, there are many ways to assemble the data in your journal for easy reference. For example, you might find it helpful to keep an index at the back of each volume so that you merely list the highlights of your entries so that your index might read like this: Financial ideas, pages 5, 53, 96 and 104. Or Ideas for Increasing Company Efficiency, pages 46, 82 and 111.

At one time I used to keep three journals, one for personal observations, one for business notations and a third for creative ideas for a book I was writing. Of course, it didn't take me long to discard that system. Carrying three journals around the world is not an easy task. Then I tried using three colors of ink in the same journal, so that at a glance I could focus on any one of the three areas. While it was certainly easier carrying three pens than three journals, it was still somewhat of a cumbersome system. When the ideas are flowing fast and furious, you don't always have the time to search for a red, a green or a blue pen.

The method I finally settled on was setting aside certain sections of my journal for specific uses. For example, at the back of my journals I have a separate section for recording my goals, for listing interesting quotes and for thoughts on new speech material. Perhaps you may want to set aside part of your journal for specific ongoing projects or interests that you feel might warrant a section of their own.

Remember, failure more often than not is attributable to lack of information about how to succeed.

Choose one of these methods, or devise a new one, but make sure you set up some kind of system. Remember, failure more often than not is attributable to lack of information about how to succeed. Each of us has the capacity to seek out the information we require to achieve our goals. Unfortunately, we do not all have the discipline required to gather the data systematically so that the raw material is easily accessible and ready to be put into practical use the moment opportunity presents itself.

REVIEW WHAT YOU'VE WRITTEN

By taking the time to capture and assemble information in our journals, we now have the added benefit of being able to review these ideas whenever we wish. You don't have to run back to the library to reread the book you borrowed last year or call a friend on the phone and try to reconstruct the conversation you had last month. If you've captured the essence of the conversation or the highlights of the book in your journal, it will always be there for you to refer to.

And here is the key point: for your journals to have their greatest value, they must be frequently reviewed. You see, writing in journals is merely a way of capturing information, but it is by rereading our journals that we begin the process of translating information into practical knowledge about ourselves, our environment, our relationships, our businesses, our financial affairs, our dreams and our own better future.

I strongly urge you to set aside a day each week, or at the very least each month, to review your recent entries. And then once a year take all of your journals off the shelf and read them from cover to cover. What you read will probably make an incredible story of personal growth.

JOURNAL REVELATIONS

More than anything else a journal is a place to document the development of your own life. It is a textbook of self-discovery and self-awareness.

In the pages of a journal our innermost feelings and dreams are revealed, as are our strengths, our weaknesses, our positive attributes and our negative habits and characteristics. If not in the words themselves, then at least between the lines of what we have written are the shadows of self-doubt, pride, envy, jealousy and anger. Just as actions speak louder than words, so too will journals often say more than what we have written.

RECORD OBSERVATIONS AND REACTIONS

A journal should also capture your observations and reactions, for somewhere between what we see and what we do will be revealed what we are. Capture on paper the events, the circumstances and happenings of your life. Describe the near miss you had while driving to work on the freeway, outline your observations of people's behavior at the office party, paint the picture of your day at the beach—the pounding surf, the soaring gulls, the distant sails.

And then when you have written about what your eyes have perceived and your ears have heard, go one step further and describe your feelings, your emotional responses to life. Describe your feelings when you learned that John got the promotion that you felt was rightfully yours, or when you learned that Sally is getting married next month to your ex-husband.

Describe it all. Don't miss any of the events of your life. Capture the joy of your victories as well as the agony of your defeats. And remember, it doesn't have to be a monumental occurrence to be worth capturing. Truly, most human lives consist of and revolve around minor happenings, so even a minor event and your response to it can have a major impact on how your life turns out.

You see, part of the human experience, perhaps the most important part, lies in learning to translate these events which occur outside of us into words and emotions within our inner worlds. The better we become at describing what goes on around us, the better we will be able to understand some of the conflicts and turmoils which take place within us. Cause and effect always go hand in hand. Trying to understand or deal with the effects without a clear picture of the cause is a rather hopeless situation to be in. Remember that all human emotions are effects which can be traced back to particular events or causes. A better understanding of events will always give us a clearer picture of the effects we may be experiencing.

SAY IT ALL

You will find as you begin to open up and really tell it like it is that your journal becomes an excellent empathetic friend, one who will listen to all you have to say about your joys, your pain, your fears or your concerns. And I would strongly urge you to get these emotions out of your head and onto the page, for powerful negative emotions are diminished by writing, and powerful positive emotions

become explosive. You see, writing about your fear reduces its strength, and capturing your excitement magnifies its power.

And feel free to say it all. These are your private collections, your personal recollections. They are not going to be read aloud at the next staff meeting, used in court against you, or published in *The New York Times*. Write freely, and don't let anything inhibit the flow of your thoughts. Write in half sentences, and break all the rules of grammar and punctuation if you choose. Draw pictures, make diagrams. Anything goes. Neatness doesn't count and neither does spelling. This is one place where you should feel free to say it all and say it as you wish.

ADD OTHER STUFF

By the way, if you feel uncomfortable abandoning the rules of your 8th grade English teacher, then this too should tell you something about yourself. Hey, you are even free to do the worst thing of all: use somebody else's words. Glue in newspaper articles, cartoons, quotes, whatever you wish. No one is going to give you an F for plagiarism in your journal.

Describe it all. Don't miss any of the events of your life. Capture the joy of your victories as well as the agony of your defeats. And remember, it doesn't have to be a monumental occurrence to be worth capturing.

There is only one suggestion I would offer concerning the format of your journal, and that is to record the date, time and location of each entry. Not only will this provide you with a means of measuring your progress, your growth trends, the different phases of your life and your changing attitudes, but where and when you write can in themselves provide interesting revelations.

Your journal becomes like a photograph album, capturing moments in your life. The only difference is that a photograph album kept for many years reveals physical changes in yourself and your environment, while journals over a period of time reflect mental changes within yourself and about your environment.

TALK TO YOURSELF

Perhaps the most important function your journal performs lies in the area of communications. First and foremost, your journal gives you a chance to talk to yourself and to hear what you are saying about your life, your future, your relationships and your goals.

As you begin to develop the habit of writing down your problems, recording your observations, emotions and reactions to life's events, you will undoubtedly find yourself both posing and responding to a whole new set of questions about your past, present and future: Why did I say that? Why does he always make me feel that way? If I follow this course, where will I be five years from now?

Your journal becomes like a photograph album, capturing moments in your life.

As you begin to both ask and answer yourself on paper, you will be amazed at the incredible leaps in personal understanding and self-awareness you will experience. And remember, any positive change which occurs within you will ultimately manifest itself in a positive result outside of you, in your social or professional world, your attitude, your bank account, your habits, and even your appearance.

DEVELOP COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS

Writing in your journal is one of the best ways I know of to develop more effective communication skills. As you become better at describing life to yourself, you will find that you become better at describing yourself to life. Put into more practical terms, as you become better at saying what you really want and how you really feel to yourself, you will be able to better express yourself and your feelings to others, and in return, better able to understand what others are really feeling and really saying to you.

Communicating with people our own age or who have similar educational backgrounds, incomes, professions or beliefs is a relatively easy process. But what about the two people who are to all outward appearances radically different: a teenager and a 40-year-old father, a high-school dropout and a college professor, a successful lawyer and an unemployed auto worker. Now the

real challenges of communication begin to manifest themselves, but they are challenges that using a journal can help us overcome.

Regardless of the differences in our outer worlds, inside human beings are all basically alike. We've all known sorrow—maybe not from the same event, but we've all experienced the emotion. We've all known the joy of achievement, perhaps in different circumstances but certainly the same feeling. Regardless of our outward differences, those basic human needs and emotions will always provide a common ground or build a bridge for effective human communications.

A TEXTBOOK FOR LIFE

You see, by the time we have reached adulthood, most of us have experienced almost every aspect of the human drama in one form or another. The problem is that most of the experiences have gone right on by us. We have never taken the time to capture them, to ponder them, to analyze how we felt at that time, how we responded to others while we were in those circumstances, or what our priorities and needs were during that period in our lives.

Suppose, however, that you took the time to capture the events and happenings of your life on purpose with paper and pen, so that you always had a wealth of experiences from which to draw. Imagine now what an incredible impact this awareness could have on your life, how it could help to bridge the gap between you and your children, your clients, your associates, your neighbors.

If you will but take the time to capture how it is for you at any given point in your life, then you will always be in a position to relate to how it might be for someone else at this moment in their lives. The situations might be different but the basic needs and emotions never are. We don't have to dress alike or go to the same schools or be the same age or sex to feel the same way.

Use your journal as a textbook for life. Use it to capture the full range of human emotions that you continuously gather from your experiences. I promise you that if you will take just a little time to capture your experiences, the end result will more than repay you for the time you invest.

HOW OFTEN SHOULD YOU WRITE?

Now here's another question frequently posed about using a journal. The question is: how often should I be writing? The answer to that is simple: as often as you wish, and as often as you need.

There are two extremes to avoid: never writing in your journal, and constantly writing in your journal. In the first instance you will be participating in life without capturing it, and in the latter case you will be capturing life without participating in it. Life should be a delicate blend of both observation and action.

And let me stress again that the first discipline to be mastered in using a journal is to develop the habit of always having it with you. If you do not open it for weeks at a time, that's okay, just get into the habit of carrying it. Without much effort on your part, plenty of opportunities for putting it to use will present themselves. Also, the simple act of carrying your journal speaks to the world. It says, "I am a conscious observer and participant in life's events."

When you present yourself to life as a serious student, life will respond by providing you with an endless opportunity to learn and grow and develop, and enhance any and all aspects of your life.

THE BEST BEGINNING FOR YOUR JOURNAL

In the final analysis, whether you decide to start a journal, and still more important whether you exercise the discipline to use it, the decision and the action must come from inside you. No wise counsel from any source will ever replace the intensity that comes from a personal commitment to excellence.

It is often said that reality is the best beginning, and perhaps it might also be the best beginning for your journal. One of the first entries you will want to consider making is a complete account of how it is for you right at this moment in your life: What's got you turned on, what's got you turned off? How is it going at home, at work? Are you happy, frustrated, excited, perplexed, worried, doubtful, or any or all of the above? You may want to write a brief description of how it's going in each area of your life, and honestly tell it like it is.

Perhaps in your writings you will uncover a particular void in your life that needs to be filled, or a major obstacle that must be tackled if things are to work out for you as you want them to. Use your journal to then chart out a course of action

to eliminate whatever is standing between you and your better future. Examine your progress, outline the steps you've taken or could still take. By the time you've dealt with these issues your journal will have already become invaluable.

If you find that you are still having difficulty getting anything on paper, one of the first entries you might consider making is an explanation of why you bought the journal in the first place. If you will but pause to consider what you hope to achieve by using a journal, then what to put into its pages will be obvious. If, for example, you bought a journal to record your feelings, then write about your feelings. If you bought it to keep track of business developments then write about your meetings, your clients and the ideas you have about improving the products or services of your company.

Use your journal to then chart out a course of action to eliminate whatever is standing between you and your better future.

YOUR JOURNAL AND YOUR LIFE

A journal should be used in response to a specific need, a need to express, to analyze, to ponder, to explain, to record, to consider or to examine some or all of the elements and aspects of your life.

And remember, there is no correct set of procedures for keeping your journal. Journals are as unlimited in possibilities as are the individuals who use them.

Journals and life share one unique characteristic: both provide you with a space to fill as you wish. And for those who are not yet sure how they wish to fill life's spaces, a journal offers you a chance to paint mental pictures of the limitless paths you could travel.

In a novel, an author places imaginary characters in imaginary circumstances and then predicts their behavior and responses to these events. So be the author of your own life. Create a set of circumstances on paper, and then place yourself in the middle of them: How would you feel about doing that? What would it be like to live in that city? How would you feel having those responsibilities or those freedoms? Pick a direction, and travel with your imagination to new environments, to new positions, to new opportunities. Create on paper an ideal job, describe an ideal relationship, state an ideal income, outline an ideal code of personal behavior, design an ideal lifestyle.

PAINT MENTAL PICTURES

Take your dreams and transfer them into written goals with priorities and deadlines. List the specific steps you must take in order to achieve them, and then write out a detailed plan of action. Take your dreams from your mind to the page, and then take them from the pages of your journal and make them happen in your life.

Learn to paint these mental pictures, and then like an artist create something of substance on the canvas of your life, using all of your available resources. Add new color, new depths, new dimensions, new meanings to where and who you currently are by exploring where and who you still can be.

Set yourself free and explore the possibilities of life with paper and pen. There's no risk involved; you cannot fail. Stretch yourself mentally, expand your inner horizons, and you will find that life will respond in kind by presenting you with new opportunities and associations, new experiences from which to grow and learn, and new circumstances in which you will become more than you had previously dreamed possible.

Remember the advice of Napoleon Hill who wrote, "Whatever the human mind can conceive and believe it can also achieve." Ponder also the biblical suggestion that "As a man thinketh, so he becomes." And know without the shadow of all doubt that whatever you create on the pages of your journal, you can with enough belief, commitment, discipline and desire create in your life.

THE LEGACY YOU LEAVE BEHIND

In closing, I would like to share with you the following thoughts from Will and Ariel Durant's 100-page masterpiece, *The Lessons of History*.

"Civilization," they wrote, "is not inherited. It has to be learned and earned by each generation anew. Consider education not as the painful accumulation of facts and dates, nor merely the necessary preparation of the individual to earn his keep in the world, but as the transmission of our mental, moral, technical, and aesthetic heritage, as fully as possible to as many as possible, for the enlargement of man's understanding, control, embellishment and enjoyment of life. If a man is fortunate, he will before he dies gather up as much as he can of his civilized heritage and transmit it to his children, and to his final breath he will be grateful for this inexhaustible legacy, knowing that it is our nourishing mother and our lasting life."

So, gather up all you can: the hopes, the sorrows, the lessons, the friendships, the achievements and the disappointments. Gather it all, that it may teach you, and in turn that the lessons you have learned may become perhaps part of the legacy that you leave behind for your children, and indeed the world at large.

Let your journals capture your personal history, and in doing so they add to the history of all mankind and to our collective heritage. Truly, the most valuable treasure anyone can leave behind is the knowledge they have acquired in their one lifetime.

It has been suggested that what we are, a unique creation of unlimited possibilities and potential, is God's gift to us, and that what we do with all that we are, the works we do, the lives we enrich and the contributions we make, are our gifts to God.

May your life be devoted to becoming all that you can become, and may your journals capture every moment of the adventure.

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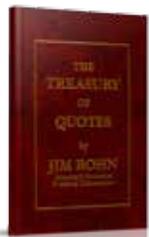
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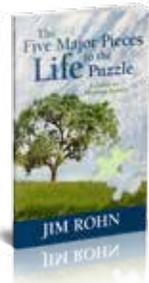
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