

# Seven Steps to keeping a journal

**Michele Semerit Strachan**

As a pediatrician, I am often amazed by the interest and enthusiasm demonstrated by parents over the monitoring of growth and development of their babies in the first year of life. In fact, quite often, they can't get enough books and discussion beginning with what to expect and how to go through pregnancy in the healthiest way possible, to baby's health, baby's developmental milestones, keeping track in a baby journal, and books and more books on what each stage of development means, what is normal, and what are deviations and variations.

What is actually surprising is not what I've written so far, but the fact that the intense interest seems to vanish by the end of the second year. It is as if whatever hold the mystery of human enfoldment held for the new parents gets lost to the pressures and mundane nature of everyday life. How sad! The truth of life is that we are all always unfolding and the mystery of what makes a 50-something rethink and reshape her life is as tantalizing if not more so than what causes a one year old to brave gravity and venture forth on his first step.

Why keep a journal? In my practice, I highly recommend journal writing because the act of writing keeps us open to the mysteries of who we are, and what life is. Life goes by so fast, we are missing its treasures, is something many people lament. If nothing else, keeping a journal helps us take notice. But while my patients and/or their parents have no trouble agreeing with me on the value of the practice of keeping a journal, many of them feel stymied, bored or incapable of adopting the practice with any consistency.

**Here are seven steps I recommend if you find yourself wanting to write daily but procrastinating or making excuses why you aren't:**

1. Have both a nice journal and a 39cent cheap notebook available to record whatever thoughts may rise to consciousness. An esthetically pleasing book can inspire or intimidate us depending on the day. The trusty beat up notebook can be a familiar friend to whom you can tell anything.
2. Have notebooks small enough to always be with you: your best journal writing might be while sitting in traffic or at a red light.
3. Expect and allow yourself to be bored by your writing; allow yourself bad writing: boring content, bad grammar, creative spelling, no or elaborate formatting.
4. Experiment with writing in a circle, upside down or sideways across the page, inside a square or other shape of your choice.

5. Draw and doodle on days when words are few or non-existent. Illustrate the day's or previous day's entries.

6. Have a question, problem, mystery or two that you want to ponder on for the week or the month. And write about insights or inner discoveries about the question rather than always seeking to write about yourself or your day.

7. Have a series of quotes, verses, proverbs that can help you get started by reacting to the saying.

Remember above all, to read your journal. You may be surprised to find yourself growing and developing, finding answers to pesky problems or situations, or discovering obvious guidance and instructions as you face tough decisions all from the silent treasure chest within your own heart. And only visible and accessible because you took the trouble to write it all down.

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Resources to consider: [www.earthenvesselcollections.com](http://www.earthenvesselcollections.com)

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