



Journaling - "Dear Diary"

By Dr. Linda Hancock

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Hancock has written a regular weekly column entitled "All Psyched Up" for newspapers in two Canadian provinces for more than a dozen years. Over the years, her readers and clients have said that they have benefited from her common-sense solutions, wisdom, and sense of humour. Dr. Linda Hancock, the author of "Life is An Adventure...every step of the way" and "Open for Business Success" is a Registered Psychologist who has a private practice in Medicine Hat. She can be reached at 403-529-6877 or through email office@drlindahancock.com

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Thoughts go around and around and around in your head but when you write them on paper, they have a beginning and an end. My Aunt Eleanor kept a daily diary and whenever we wondered about the details of an event or circumstance, she could fill in the missing information by merely looking it up. I always thought that she was very disciplined and amazing but never followed her example other than when I travel. I always take a journal with me on trips to document my "adventures", gather autographs and record my personal feelings and thoughts.

As a therapist I recommend that clients keep a journal and carry it with them. This allows them to keep track of the dates when they meet with professionals, medications prescribed, or names of books and resources recommended. It also provides a place where homework assignments can be written and completed. Keeping a journal during a difficult time of life provides a historical recording of the personal growth that the client experiences. It helps them to realize where they began and how far they have come in their situation.

Sometimes clients are surprised when they come to my office stating that "everything is going wrong". We begin writing down the problems and find that there are usually only six (or less). That puts things into perspective!

Journals do not have to be written to Pulitzer Prize standards. This is your journal, and you can use it in any manner you wish. In fact, I often use abbreviations or partial sentences in order to keep up with my thoughts. It really doesn't matter how you write things - what matters is that you do it - especially when you are upset. Journals provide an excellent tool for recording dates, feelings and experiences. They allow you to relieve your mind of the burden of trying to remember things and force you to put your thoughts into words that can then form a foundation for change.

A journal can even act as your therapist. When you are facing a problem, try writing it down in a sentence. Under that, write down at least six things you MIGHT do to resolve the problem. You will be surprised because often the solution you are looking for appears right before your eyes!

Sometimes it will help you to develop insight. At other times, you might notice that the tone of your writings almost takes on a spiritual tone or resemble a prayer. When you find that you are stressed, lonely or confused, try taking out a pen and begin writing in your journal. I think you will be pleasantly surprised with the effect that this has on you and your situation.

Are you ready to begin? Okay, here we go...

Dear Diary....