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## The Soul of Journaling

**I**t is important to understand from the start that a journal is not a diary. Well, it can be, but to be most effective, it is not. It is not about recording your deepest, darkest fears; the ones you don't want anyone (especially someone you love) to read. It is not about judgment in the sense of: "Am I a good writer?" "Am I a bad writer?"

It can take a lot of practice, but if you are willing to listen, your soul is calling to you. You can write down those whispers, those incantations, those petals of wisdom. Journaling from the soul is a matter of respecting the process, of allowing the entire cosmos to speak through you. It is true that you are unique in the universe and what you have to say, the filters that

you use to sift meaning, are completely one of a kind. Journaling is a sacred practice, and you have to be willing to strap on your Teflon panties to do it right. You have to be as brave as Joan of Arc and write fearlessly, to express your soul. This is what you do: write. Write for fifteen minutes every day, no matter what. Even if you just write, “I have nothing to say today.” Even if you just fill the page up with gibberish. Write knowing that your journal is not about you. Do you get that? Your journal isn’t about you. No offense, and as important as you are, your journal is not an extension of you. Rather, it is like a Polaroid camera that you aim



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at everything around you and with which you snap a photo. This cafe. That conversation. That wide, beautiful coastline with clouds hovering over the water like cotton candy and the smell of the surf pushing spring toward the desert on a mission from God. It is a recording. It is a gift from the universe. How is it a gift? It is a gift because no one, not a soul who has ever been or will be, has the power of observation from your perspective, with your history, with your love of crossword puzzles or mahjong or Thai noodles with peanut sauce. You are a dazzling flower on the furthest branch of the tree of life and what you see around you is a devotion in the truest sense.

So write about the hamburger you ate for lunch. Write about the girl who brought it to you whose shoes seemed unnaturally worn maybe because she’s work-

ing her way through art school and she deserves a little extra tip so maybe she can sleep in tomorrow and dream of painting a watercolor that will turn the world on its collective ear. Your journal is not about you. It is a gift to the world.

My ex-husband's grandmother kept a journal every day of her married life. When Grandma died at 93, my father-in-law gave a journal to each of the grandkids. You could say that there was nothing extraordinary about it, but there was something precious in the grocery lists she made in her spidery hand. There was a door into the life of a woman who made a family so big that galaxies were created just to contain the love she had for them. The laundry lists, the shoes to be taken to the repair man, the small concerns, were a door into a world none of us had seen before. This was a picture of a woman not as we knew her, but a woman who when she wrote the journal, was younger than we who were reading it, and it was astonishing.

So write your journal, and don't worry about being brilliant. Kill the editor in your head. You know, the one that says, "Who cares what you think? You know you're never going to write anything worth reading anyway; why bother?" Kill the editor. The editor is only your insecurities with carte blanche and the power to stop you in your tracks before you even uncap your pen.

Just write. Just do it, knowing whatever you say is sacred, in a context you can't even imagine.

**Creative Challenge:** Light a candle and set your intention to write for 15 minutes (no cheating!). Answer this question: what is your dream? You can be literal if you want; what experience or idea lights you up? Write about that. Or, you can be descriptive and use the question as a jumping off place. Dreams tell stories in pictures. What story in your dream life is trying to break through? Write about your dreams.