

Life Writing: Exploring the Art of Journaling

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Group Reading

I think we are well advised to keep on nodding terms with the people we used to be, whether we find them attractive company or not. Otherwise they turn up unannounced and surprise us, come hammering on the mind's door at 4 a.m. of a bad night and demand to know who deserted them, who betrayed them, who is going to make amends. We forget all too soon the things we thought we could never forget. We forget the loves and the betrayals alike, forget what we whispered and what we screamed, forget who we were.

[...]

It is a good idea, then, to keep in touch, and I suppose that keeping in touch is what notebooks are all about. And we are all on our own when it comes to keeping those lines open to ourselves: your notebook will never help me, nor mine you.

-From "On Keeping a Notebook," Joan Didion.

Immersion Activity

The Basics of Journal Writing

Writing Techniques

- ◆ Write in the form of a letter (To a friend? to your older self? To your children? To a fictional audience?)
- ◆ Draw (Hannah Hinchman) or doodle (Lynda Berry)
- ◆ Paste in tiny artifacts and write about them.
- ◆ Use lists (Lynda Barry's Quick Diary observations: I Saw, Heard Did).
- ◆ Use Open Free Writing: write without stopping for a set time, with no topic.
- ◆ Use Focused Free Writing: Explore an idea or a solution, or reflect on an aspect of your life, such as challenges, or gratitude.
- ◆ Explore a memory in narrative form (use guided imagery as your base).
- ◆ Write poetry (use guided imagery as your base).
- ◆ Mapping. Draw a metaphorical map of your life, or a literal map of a place.
- ◆ Chronicle your life (today I...)

Writing Activity

Choose a technique and write for 15 minutes.

Further Reading

- ◇ *Syllabus: Notes from an Accidental Professor*, by Lynda Berry
- ◇ *A Life in Hand: Creating the Illuminated Journal*, by Hannah Hinchman

Links:

- ◇ <https://science.sciencemag.org/content/331/6014/211.abstract>
- ◇ <https://www.rewireme.com/wellness/art-journaling/>
- ◇ <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/25/style/journaling-benefits.html>
- ◇ <https://www.theodysseyonline.com/journal-prompts-anxiety>

Questions/Concerns?

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