

## Be:still

*With your journal*

Journaling can be whatever you want it to be. It is for **YOU** and only **YOU** and for that reason, we can let go of it being perfect. Perfectly written, perfectly presented, perfectly composed isn't needed (not going to lie, the school teacher in me struggled to be messy and grammatically incorrect for a while!). The practice of journal writing can add true value to our everyday life when we let go of all that we 'should' write and instead see it as a way to shift some of the clutter, noise and thoughts from the mind to the paper.

I began a journal when I was travelling in my 20's mainly to collect ideas, wonderings and plans because I was constantly inspired by all I was experiencing and I didn't want to miss those sparkly moments of clarity or those questions to delve into later. Life gets hard: we fall down, we lose people, experiences end, love is lost and oh how the tears can fall. I fell out with my journal often and like a sulky teenager (as Mum can confirm I once was) would push it away/throw it across the room vowing it was pointless. I always, always went back! This was usually when my mind had become overrun with overwhelm and it was clear that my daily practice of writing something in my journal, was indeed a way of taking care of myself and I missed it.

**Dear diary**

**Today**

**Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> December 2019**

So, once we find or buy a new notebook, grab a pen (or pencil if you a neat person – hello type A personality!) how do we **start** once of these journal things?

### **Just START**

Actually, a couple of things to **create** before you go and put pen/pencil to paper.

- ✓ **Create** some time and set it aside as a non-negotiable part of your day. "Create time? If only," I hear you cry. I get this response, I lived and breathed this response. We all have the same number of hours in the day and we choose how we spend, invest or waste them. We have the same number of hours as Beyonce and Oprah, the Dalai Lama and that person that YOU admire so much. I have dedicated journal time in the evening as part of my 'goodnight day' routine (more on that in week 4) but I carry my journal around with me during the day too.
- ✓ **Create** an environment that supports YOU and your writing. REDUCE noise, PHONE to DND (Do NOT Disturb), be comfy.
- ✓ **Create** ease. Make it **easy**. Begin with just ONE word, thought or moment. Draw pictures or icons (I'm a heart and star kinda doodler) to make it more visual (colours, stickers, stamps and glitter = optional).

## A tiny (science) bit about habit forming

Want to do it --- Do it every day --- over time --- A habit is formed

We tell ourselves stories about what we're like. Mine stories that used to spin round often were: I'm useless at cooking, I have a terrible evening cereal addiction (Weetabix bites are like my kryptonite), I'm destined to stay single forEVER and I just can't do a headstand. I mean, the list went on but I'll stop there! We can place so much importance on an end goal (never eating cereal again, becoming an epic cook, getting a boyfriend, doing a headstand) but we underestimate the value of making small improvements on a daily basis. We can think massive success means massive action is required for some earth-shattering improvement that we can share with the world. How about instead focusing on the [systems](#) we use along the way rather than that big end goal. Improving by 1% might not be noticeable, it will probably be frustrating, annoying and sloooooow but it IS meaningful and makes all the difference to long lasting habits that impact and improve your life. Don't forget about your goals BUT focus more on the systems that create progress instead. Breakthrough moments (being wholeheartedly in a relationship, floating up into a headstand, cooking a delicious meal from scratch) are often the result of many, many small actions that came before that big noticeable one. Those 1%, atomic small, unnoticeable actions (working on my self-worth in relationships, practicing poses that will lead me to balancing on my head, attempts to fuse flavours in my cooking) make the difference, create the progress and steps forward. Time frame for habit forming? Oh I wish it was 21days fits all BUT it really depends on the difficulty of the habit you're wanting to form. Meditating for 5 minutes every day with an app? Maybe a month. Running 5k after work every day? Possibly 8 months. The flip side of course is that bad habits are formed in the same way and (as we all find out) are a really pain to break. Keep repeating a tiny negative action every day... it will form a hard to break habit [#worthremembering](#). Understanding the importance of tiny actions is the key to forming positive habits that STICK.

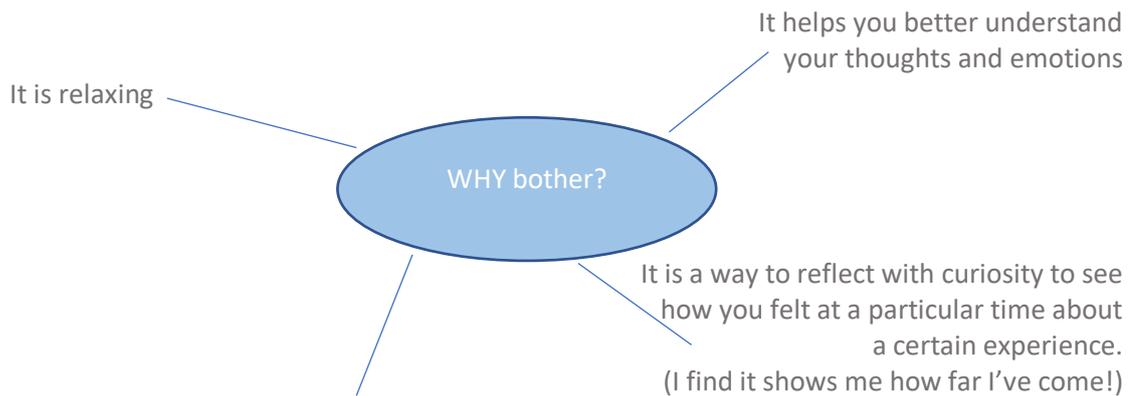
*Thank you to James Clear and his book, [Atomic Habits](#) for helping me to understand the habit-forming process and to [Suzi Smith](#) for buying me the book for Christmas because she knew I needed a rocket up my behind to start writing this course!*

## Me and a blank page – some tips to start

It can be pretty daunting to be faced with a full mind and an empty page. So, keep things simple and achievable. This 'journal time' can be for HOWever long you like... 1 minute, 10 minutes, 20 minutes and you can do it WHENever you like. You get to choose. Can you find a time that works for you in your every day life that is the same? Creating a habit is far, far easier if you do the same thing at the same time of day. Every day.

- ✓ Try and make your writing LESS reactive. Initially, I made the mistake (over and over) of journaling only when it popped into my head and I remembered to actually do it. If I was feeling happy and like I had it all figured out, I wrote positively about my goals and dreams. However, when I felt sad or lonely (usually it was my single mum status that would catch me off guard) a negative spiral of emotions would tumble onto the page consuming me and do nothing for my state of mind or perspective about a certain issue I may have been having or wanting to gain clarity about – it all got even more foggy.
- ✓ Learn something NEW each day. Read an article, practice another language (thanks to a friend of mine, I have an app for that and speak some Spanish words every day for 5 minutes – it feels so good!) or listen to an inspiring podcast for a few minutes... and write about it.

*"The magic to true change and contentment lies in the habitual things we do every day." Me*



During times of high stress, our bodies shift into a flight/fight/freeze mode and because of today's overstimulated modern world, we can get stuck here (cue shallow breathing, a speedy heartbeat, an inability to cope and a general frazzled feeling). Putting those thoughts and emotions down onto a page makes them more manageable and gives back some perspective, creating a signal to our tired and over pumped nervous system, to calm down.

#### More Little Hints...

- ✓ Write a 'don't forget to journal' reminder card (have another look in the 'daily reminders' section of be:still).
- ✓ Writing by **hand** is RELAXING and stimulates the brain's reticular activating system, which (in my language) means it brings the thought to the forefront of your mind so you can FOCUS on it.
- ✓ Keep your journal **private**. Whether you mind someone else reading your words or not, it will edit (and maybe censor) your writing if there is a chance someone will read it. To journal freely knowing it's just for you, will make the whole experience more authentic, cathartic and honest.
- ✓ Date it! It's super quick and easy to add and it makes each entry that little bit more important. Because your thoughts, goals and musings ARE important, YOU are important. For me, it's a moment that prepares me for writing and makes it simple to look back to find something.



## I am SO ready, let's just do it!

We are all different, we can feel different from one day to the next and so our journal style (which, remember is just a notebook that we have added importance to) can reflect this. Here are some ways I use to journal:

- ✓ Bullet-style list of tasks, thoughts or goals
- ✓ Write and write without stopping. A brain dump of all that stuff. Setting yourself a time or page limit will help to add a safe container around time (maybe 5 minutes or 3 pages then take a breather and read it over).
- ✓ Create a mind map (old school spider diagram) to help organise your thoughts. EXTRA TIP – grab a highlighter and mark the 3 most important items in amongst it all. This helps to prioritise your thoughts, tasks, jobs.
- ✓ Practice gratitude for 5 minutes, writing about all the good things in your life to develop a positive mindset and enhance a feeling of contentment. Even if your life is far from easy, we still have SO much to be THANKFUL for and to appreciate. Family, friends, loved ones, natural beauty. The ordinary, every-day things that are there for you to be noticed.



## Final words on journaling

. This might be a really great way to get to know yourself. I know, I know that may sound on a, 'who am I?' level of deep but you'll appreciate your own honesty and the feeling of putting yourself out there.

What you write is **LIMITLESS**. Go for it, the sky really is the limit. End mid-sentence if you like, scribble if you need to, tear a page out if it makes sense to, draw love hearts, colour them in and write a total of zero words if that's what **YOU** fancy doing that day (I've done all of the above!).

Totally at a loss as to what to write? I hear you. Jot down your very first thought as you open up your book. It is usually the most important thing to you in that moment. Don't push it away or think you 'should' write about something more profound/intelligent or meaningful. Write that.

If something in particular is proving to be a puzzle to you and you find yourself going back and forth talking yourself into one decision and then quickly doing a 180, get all the angles out and explore the details. If in doubt, breathe and ask yourself this super enlightening question: What would Beyonce do!?

Want to continue to be inspired, learn a bit more and feel even more empowered to journal?

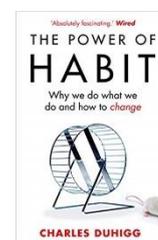
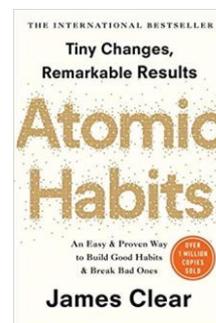
Yes! Of course you do - because you're here! Check out some of these tried, read, tested and watched (by me!) sources of information. Remember that the information we absorb becomes just as much a part of us as the food and fluid we absorb. It all matters:



### Watch these



### Read (dip in and out)



### Shop



THE JOURNAL SHOP

