

Journaling: a Treasure Map

By Joel Lind

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Introduction

This book is full of writing-exercises designed to help you know yourself better and hopefully get you to thrive in your life. When you know your past, understand where you want to go in the future, and appreciate the present... you will maximize your potential and live life to its fullest.

I will prompt you to write, draw, self-reflect, and think critically--I hope that you find these writing prompts interesting, exciting, and very meaningful.

Some of the writing prompts are very challenging--but very well worth the effort to gain self-knowledge that will help you explode with self-confidence in who you want to become. If the writing feels like "work" and isn't fun... then don't do it--because my intent is to not hand out "busy" work.

This book is full of my pondering over the past 20+ years. Most of the ideas found in this book are my own unique ideas where I've combined lists with other lists which has sparked new ideas (more lists). Over the years my joy for life has greatly increased, and I blame it on meaningful journaling--which has improved my social life--which has improved my overall life-satisfaction.

I personally love books that inspire me to create something, to think of something new, to explore my world--so enjoy! Please do your best to apply these writing-prompts into your own life.

Journaling: a Treasure Map

Chapter 1: Meaningful Journaling

Journals are a lot like a treasure map... something extremely valuable that you pass down to posterity--that contains the secrets *to your life*. Why not give your posterity the greatest treasure ever... *you*.

Journaling is also medicine--a way to keep your brain organized and stable.

Chapter 2: Values-Lists and Goals

What is a values-list? First we need to define what a value is. A value is something you consider to be *extremely* important. For example... I consider my family's happiness to be extremely important, my experiences, my dreams etc. So... a "values-list" is basically a *list of ideas* of something you value. There will be many examples throughout this book of what I mean by a "values-list".

Creating self-knowledge is powerful, because it can help you become more confident, be a better communicator, a better friend, a better partner, and understand yourself on a deeper level, and be more organized.

Goals

I believe goals are extremely important and powerful. When a person knows what they want to do with their life and creates a goal... the brain goes to work to make that dream become a reality.

Memories: Gold, Silver, Bronze, Platinum

Chapter 3: Core Memories, Highlights, Microsuccesses, Timeline

This is where the treasure of life is found. Core memories are specific events that are *extremely* meaningful--**this is more valuable than GOLD.**

One of my greatest core memories: I was skateboarding with friends at a middle school in Salt Lake City, UT. I was on fire that day... I pulled a 180 heel-flip to tailslide to fakie and got it on film. Later that day, I finally got to see myself skate for the first time in a really long time. The symbol I drew for that memory is a skateboarding trophy. Strengths associated with that core memory are, I have intense belief in myself. This is the greatest experience of my entire life.

Now it's your turn. What are your core memories? I have about 33 currently and I'm 38 years old. I have core memories that start when I was 11 years old, and I have experienced 1 so far in 2021.

- You might want to brainstorm and think about every possible meaningful experience you've ever had... just write a short sentence about the memory.

- Now organize the memories--*starting with your greatest core memories...* what are your top 15 to 20 greatest memories?
 - **Create a *symbol* for that core memory--it really makes that memory come to life**

Highlights: Silver

I keep a list of highlights as they happen on a totally separate sheet of paper. Highlights are like silver... less significant events that take place in your life that are *special enough to remember...* not a “core memory”. Core memories are exceptional experiences--highlights are like... going to a play, or a rock concert, or a special activity, they just aren't' extremely special.

Micro-Successes: Bronze

Micro-successes are like bronze... small events that have meaning and are worth remembering... like for example... overcoming painful emotions from a difficult conversation.

I have a lot of microsucceeds that happen on a regular weekly basis. Have a few highlights a month. And I have a few core memories a year.

All of these memories add up treasure to create a life that is positive, powerful, and focused on increasing life experiences--these are the treasures of life. Your journal is your very own personal treasure map.

Create a Timeline... this is like Platinum

In addition to this values-list, I want you to create a timeline with every year of your life going down on a piece of paper with separate columns...

- *Key important people* in your life--the year the relationship started
- Put the *core memories* in a different column
- Include powerful *vacations* you've gone on in a different column
- Include important *goals or accomplishments* in a different column

In my opinion, core memories, important people, goals/accomplishments, and significant vacations are some important treasures of the human experience. It's fun to see how these significant events play out in a time-line. **THESE MEMORIES ARE MORE VALUABLE THAN GOLD, SILVER, BRONZE, and PLATINUM.**

Exceptional Value Lists

Chapter 4: Wikipedia Profile

I thought of this values-list in 2013. Basically, the idea is... what would you want people to read about you online if a wikipedia profile was created? The question evolved and then became... “*what do you want to be remembered for when you pass away*”? Below are a few examples of what I came up with...

- I want to be remembered for that I maintained love for life
- That I was **fun** to be around
- That I genuinely wanted to help others find happiness

I went to a conference for work in 2020, and the speaker had an extremely insightful question that I added to this values-list that takes the wikipedia profile a step further, and the question is this... “*what will you have offered the world that will live on after you're gone*”? And here are a couple examples of what I came up with...

- That I was a great father to my children and had a great relationship with them
- That I helped my children prosper in their life

Now it's your turn, think critically and answer the following questions and create your very own wikipedia profile...

1. What do you want to be remembered for when you pass away?
2. What will you have offered the world that will live on after you're gone?

Chapter 5: Friendship Ranking

Relationships are extremely important--without people, we are left alone and not thriving. We all need people who we spend time with. I love going on vacation, I love the holidays, I love the weekends spending time with family, older friends, newer friends, neighbors, etc.

The people you spend the most time with... are probably the most valuable people in your life. I have historic friends... because of our history, they are valuable. I have new up-and-coming friends... because they are new... they are potentially valuable.

My most valuable friends/family... are my wife and kids and my brother. I rank my friendships from high, medium, to low. People who are high on my ranking, they are safe people, I can be myself, etc. People low on my ranking... they are important, but for reasons they are not that close to me, like a sister in law.

Consider ranking your relationships.

Chapter 6: Compliments

I love this particular values-list--anytime someone gives you a genuine compliment, you should record it. That compliment is a source of strength and can even put a smile on your face. I started this values-list in 2012. I will share a couple examples of impactful compliments that I've received.

Here is my list...

- Lavell Edwards (famous BYU football coach) in 2001 after listening to my church talk said this... "you are very sincere".
- In 2009, an Engineer at KAI (Korean Aeronautics Industries) told me... "you should be a college professor".
- In 2012... I was a tour guide for a Halloween haunted house... one of the teachers said.. "Over the course of 20 years, you were the best tour guide we've ever had".
- In 2019... a student told me that... "your everyone's favorite teacher".

Now it's your turn...

- Are there any compliments you can think of that you remember someone sharing? If not... from now on, try to record sincere compliments that people give you.

Chapter 7: Criticism

I believe criticism plays a special part in our lives. Criticism can be a sucker punch to the brain sometimes. I believe everyone who is alive has received criticism at some point in their lives. The question is... did the criticism help humble you... or did it make you bitter and angry?

The worst criticism I ever received was when I was age 17 working for a company that vetted people to see if they could be approved for an extension on credit. I was talking to a guy on the phone, and I put him on hold... I made a mistake and didn't actually put him on hold so I heard his conversation he was having with a customer. I accidentally heard him say... "this is the stupidest person I've ever talked to". Me being an insecure 17 year old teenager, this was a difficult trial to overcome. I was already struggling with self-doubt and stupid-ideation in my life; so to hear someone communicate something that I secretly already believed inside was ammunition for some self-hatred to resonate. Yeah I may not have been the best loan application information gatherer. I could let this criticism destroy my life or I could use it as gasoline to burn an inner fire inside me to prove this guy and everyone else who has criticized my intelligence wrong. Obviously I had a lot of growing to do and this guy unbeknownst

gave me a huge punch to my ego, but I learned and grew from that experience.

For your activity...

- What criticism have you received and what did you learn from it?
 - If you're still harboring ill feelings towards the person or the comment... what can you do to let it go and learn the lesson that you were meant to learn.

Chapter 8: Hard

I believe trials play a big role in the purpose of life. Overcoming trials, learning from them, being humbled by them, etc. I have a couple of values-lists in relation to trials... they are:

- “What is the Hard You’ve Come From” (or trials you’ve experienced)
- “Where Did that Trial Come From?”
- “Specifically How Did You Overcame It”
 - Consider listing your trials from hardest to less hard.

I’ll share an example... I would say *the hardest trial I ever experienced is...* not standing up for myself.

Where did it come from? I was skateboarding with my friend at a bank in East Provo by a convenient store in the year of 1999. This crazy lunatic high school kid came rolling up with his crew in their van. He got out and started staring at me. Then he started yelling at us saying, “Hey you! What you doing in my territory!?” Then he hops a fence and rushes and attacks me. I’d never been in a real fight before so I was a little caught off guard. I’m not going to go into a lot of detail, but let's just say, I didn’t win the fight. *I was humiliated.* As the months went on, I started to hate

myself for not defending myself well enough. And I believe this is where my self-hatred started for *not standing up for myself*.

Specifically, how did I overcome this trial? Well... I made a commitment to myself that I would literally rather die defending myself than be a coward and let someone abuse me. When I learned about self-affirmations a few years later, I made the self-affirmation that "I dare to stick up for myself in any situation".

It's pretty remarkable how one experience can alter the rest of your life. Fortunately for me, I decided to turn this tragedy into a victory.

For this activity... answer these questions...

- What is the hard you've come from?
- Where did it come from?
- How did you overcome it... if it is still bothering you... what is a plan to overcome it?
 - Try to list your trials from hardest to least hard

Chapter 9: Intelligence Argument

I thought of this values-list in 2016. I do believe this idea is universally applicable to most people. *Create a list of every intelligent thing you've ever done*--this is an *argument* as to why you're intelligent.

I made this list because I struggled with my own self-doubt and questioned my intelligence. I finally created a values-list and proof that I no longer needed to acknowledge anxiety or fight doubt about my intelligence. Here are some examples...

- I wrote a story in 3rd grade that was very interesting and my first indicator that I enjoyed writing and thinking
- I've written original poetry
- The day I decided to pursue pro status in skateboarding
- The day I decided to work hard and not give up on myself regardless if I were gifted or not

I have other examples, but that list gives you an idea of some things I consider intelligent and why I no longer needed to doubt my intelligence.

For your activity...

- Create a list of everything you've done intelligently.

Chapter 10: Bucket List

The bucket list is a very simple list--it's also like a "dream board". It can be powerful and a big motivator to be successful in a career/job/self-employment. I want to have amazing experiences with my wife and children and close friends. I want to travel the world and experience different cultures. Most people know what a bucket list is. For those who don't... it's basically a list of places you want to travel to, or things you want to experience in your lifetime.

Here's a couple places I want to travel to and experience...

- New York
- New Orleans
- Cancun Mexico
- Cruise to Alaska
- Cruise through the Mediterranean
- Thailand
- Miami
- Dubia
- Italy

Now it's your turn... where do you want to visit and travel to?

What kind of career and money do you need to make to have amazing experiences that you want to experience?

Chapter 11: Heroe's

I never considered having a “hero” till I was 28 years old in 2011. I’ve reflected on heroe's ever since then, and I’ve gained a lot of insight into myself and what I want to become. This might sound egotistical, but I do consider myself a hero. Here’s a list of my heroe’s and I’ll explain why..

1. Michael Rutter... he was my 11th and 12th grade English teacher. He lit the wick of my curiosity to explore poetry and literature. He showed me what true passion looks like for a *school* subject.
2. William Tyndall, Andrew Jackson, Louis McFadden... What do these 3 people have in common? They were all martyred for honoring the truth.
3. 5th grade camp leader... he shared his amazing personal story as to how he became successful despite the setbacks he had to overcome.
4. Tony Robbins... he truly cares and wants to help and inspire others to fulfill their God-given talents.
5. Jason Hewlitt... he is an entertainer who follows his heart regardless of the consequences.

6. Joel Lind... because of my quest for truth and knowledge, and my desire to share how to find happiness with others.

Now it's your turn...

- Who are your heroes and why?

Chapter 12: Gratitude

Being grateful is such an attractive quality to possess. I began my “gratitude journal” in 2010. As I evolve, I find that I’m grateful for different things--so I rewrite my gratitude journal.

I have organized my gratitude journal starting with my absolute greatest things I’m grateful for...

1. Friends and family
2. Experiences
3. Truth
4. Understanding
5. Money
6. Journaling
7. Good books
8. Forgiveness and mercy
9. My Career
10. Jesus Christ

Now it’s your turn... your list can be longer than mine, shorter... you decide what your gratitude journal will look like.

Chapter 13:Traditions

I believe traditions are important. What you do with your family and friends on an annual consistent basis is something to look forward to every year and brings joy and happiness. With my family, we have a tradition to do karaoke on Thanksgiving. We have a traditional Christmas experience. We go to the drive-in in the summer. We go camping in the summer. We celebrate birthday parties. We go sledding in the winter.

My wife and I have a list of dating ideas too. We play board games, we go to shows, movies, dinner, shopping, pickleball, dancing, karaoke, Lagoon, vacation, hiking, etc.

For your activity:

- What are your traditions?
- What new traditions would you like to adopt?

Chapter 14: The Perfect Day

The perfect day is all about describing the perfect day in your opinion (try to think in the future--something ideal you want to aim towards).

I'll describe mine... I wake up at 8 a.m. Eat breakfast, and go on a walk. Check my email. And then I would like to life-coach clients and help others learn to thrive in their lives for the next 3 to 4 hours. I believe that nothing brings more joy than helping others thrive. Then I'd eat lunch. In the afternoon, I would go spend time with close friends and family, skate, board games, read books, and comedy. Then dinner with my wife. After that, I would do something that's entertaining, a movie or social media. Read my Bible at night and go to bed at 9 p.m. That to me would be the perfect day that I could live and relive for eternity.

Graphs and Goals

Chapter 15: Graphs

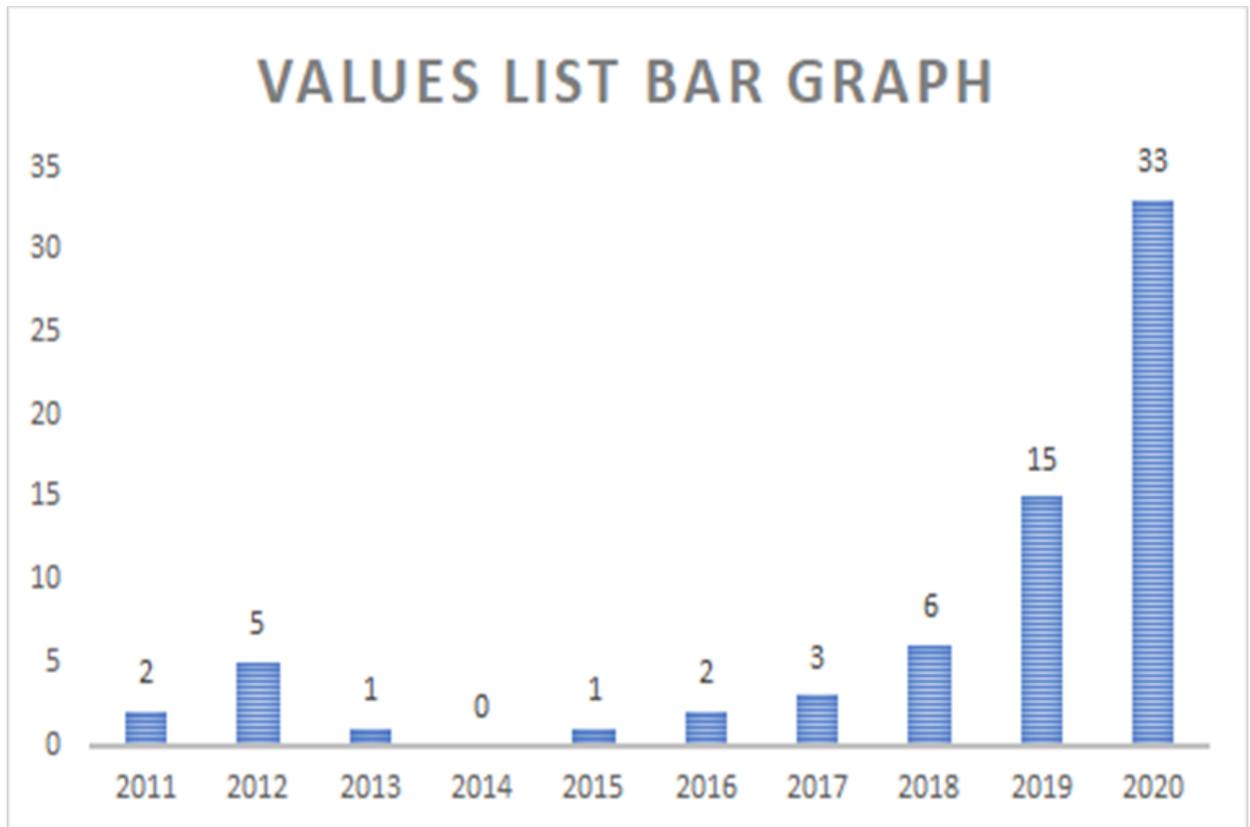
I keep graphs of progress in a couple areas of my life. Back in 2019 when I realized how significant values-lists were and I decided to create a “bar graph” that showed how many I created on a yearly/monthly basis.

Values-lists are one of the most significant measurements of success and happiness in my life.

I keep my Mood Maintenance Graph located in this section too. I also have a graph that tally’s all my “Highlighted Experiences” that I keep track of on a monthly basis. A lot of tally’s in a month is a pretty good indicator that that month was really amazing. If there’s no tally for a month... I probably didn’t like that month very much.

Your activity:

- Create meaningful bar graphs or line graphs, or any other kind of graphs you can think of... of things you care about...
- Below is an example of a Bar Graph of my Values Lists starting in the year 2011.



Chapter 16: Goals Analyzed

I would strongly recommend analyzing all your goals. If you don't have any, or have never recorded them and have forgotten about them.. then forget this recommendation.

There's two measurements I look at when analyzing a goal. On a scale of 1 to 5 I rate how difficult that goal was. On a scale of 6 to 10 I analyze how long it took to accomplish that goal. Then I combine those two numbers on a bar graph. On the bar graph, I shade in the difficult part of the graph to show the distinction between how difficult the goal was and how long..

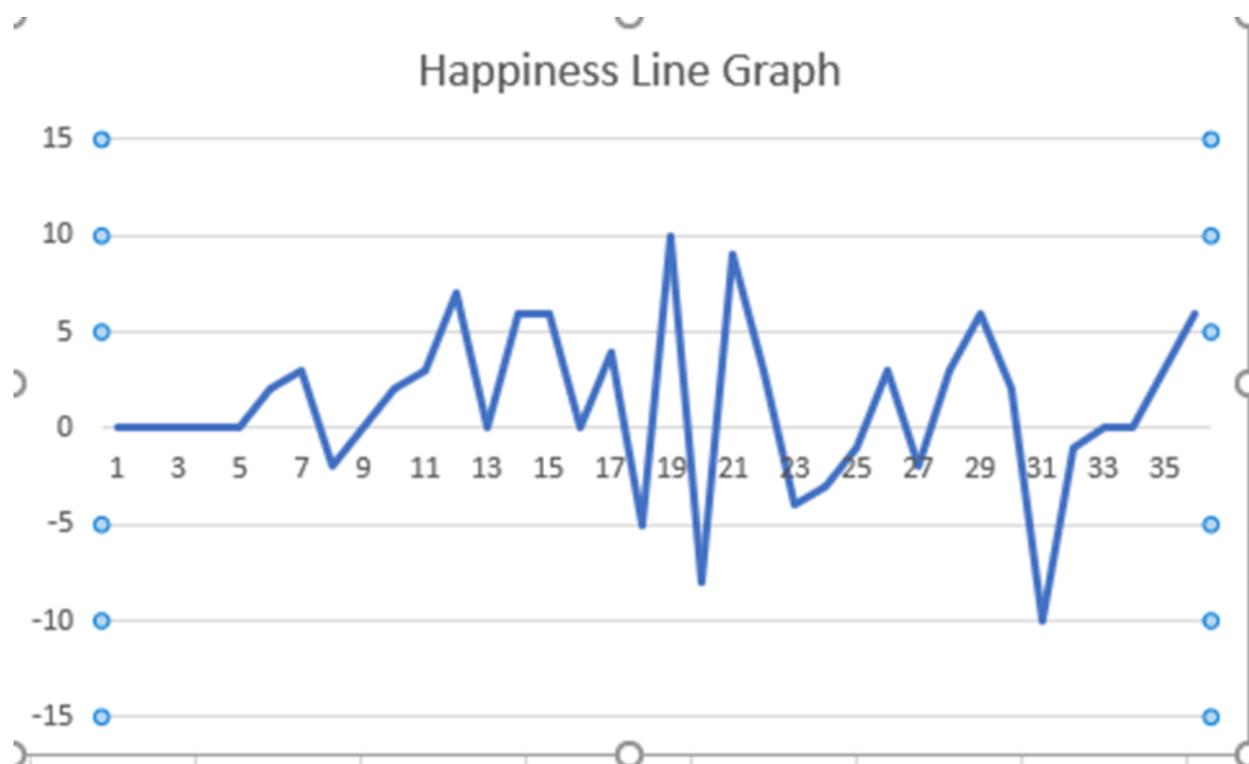
Your activity...

- If you have a record of goals you've done in the past, consider converting those goals into bar graphs. Consider rating how difficult the goal was, and how long it took. Then combine them together on a bar graph.

Some examples of goals that I've recorded are... earning a BS Degree in Business, reading the encyclopedia, earning a teaching certification, passing Praxis 1 and 2, creating a website, writing this book, etc

Chapter 17: Mood Maintenance

Another values-list/graph that I think is useful is what I call the “Mood Maintenance Line Graph”. It’s basically a line-graph that represents your happiness/unhappiness/neutrality over your life-span, on an x-axis. On a y-axis, it is a range from +10--being your most happy, to -10--being your most unhappy. Every year represents a data point beginning at age 0 to your current age where you quantify how happy you are on a graph. Then you’ll connect the data-points so you see a continuous line that goes from high to low depending on how happy you were. If you look at the graph below, from age 0 to 5, I was pretty neutral, meaning I was at 0, I wasn’t really all that happy, nor was I all that sad.



The graph above I created in Excel. But my actual graph is on filler paper. From age 0 to 11, I gave one data point for each year. From age 12 to 38, I gave a data point every 6 months. My memory of events is a little foggy below age 11.

On a separate sheet of paper I have a values list that I call "Mood Maintenance Line Data Support", where I explain each year why I gave the data point that I gave.

For me and my personality, I do not want to experience a "10" happiness--because of personal reasons. I want to be around an "8". Depending on your life situation, you will want to decide what range of +10

to -10 numbers mean for you when you create your own mood maintenance line graph.

Another example... I rate suicidal or homicidal ideation to be a -10. I don't think you can hit rock bottom lower than wanting to end your life--or someone else's life. If you look at my graph, around age 31, I rated myself a -10. I don't want to go into too much detail, but at that age, it was the most depressing time of my life.

For me to be consistently happy in my life and to continue to get a data point or rating of an "8" happiness score--this is what I need...

1. I need to be social to friends, family, neighbors, pretty much anyone and everyone
2. I need to journal
3. I need to be involved with social media
4. I need to read interesting books
5. I need to go through my goals regularly
6. Eve now and then I play board games with friends
7. I skateboard every now and then with friends

If I'm doing all these things, my happiness maintains around an "8" and I would consider myself to be the perfect amount of happiness.

I currently rate my happiness on a weekly basis whenever I want to reflect on my happiness.

I now recommend that you create your own mood maintenance line graph...

- On a sheet of paper, draw a line-graph that represents your happiness--the y-axis is a range of +10 to -10. The x-axis rate each data point for each year of your life starting from age 0 to your current age.

(Look at the graph above as a reference)

- On a second sheet of paper (Mood Maintenance Data Support) explain why you gave yourself the rating you gave for each year--after age 11 rate yourself every 6 months or as often as you'd like. Be creative, you can modify this writing exercise in any way to meet your specific needs.

Histories

Chapter 18: Histories/Stories

Every writing assignment I've given has been a suggestion. This next journal activity is merely a recommendation. I've received a lot of inspiration from writing out specific histories in my life. Most of the "histories" are a paragraph to 5 pages in length. I'll share some examples..

- **Histories I've written out....**

- History of my *wife*
- *South Korea* trip
- My *social life* development
- Evolution of my *brains* development
- How I've developed *love*
- *Mormonism* history
- *12 Steps* history
- Story about my daughter *Aspen*
- *Anxiety* evolution (where it came from and how it's evolved)
- *Drugs and alcohol* history
- *Skateboarding* history
- *Bi-polar* history

- *My suicide attempt*
- Stories of key people in my life... my ex wife, ex-girlfriends, my brother Dave, my mom, and key specific friends.

Your writing activity...

- Brainstorm what your “histories” are. Your histories are key people, key events, key people in your life. Write out those histories with a little more detail. My greatest history is my social life... because that is what is extremely important to me

Get To Know Yourself Better

Chapter 19: Finding Your Purpose

These next 4 questions are extremely helpful in identifying your purpose in life. The first question is “passion”... what do you love? The second question is “mission”... what does the world need? The third question is “profession”... what are you good at? And the last question is “vocation”... can you make money doing those things?

I truly believe these are some of the most powerful questions I’ve ever asked myself. I’ve used these questions to navigate my journey and path towards what I want to pursue in life



Your activity... answer these questions

1. Passion: What do you love?
2. Mission: What does the world need?
3. Profession: What are you good at?
4. Vocation: How can you make money doing that thing?

Chapter 20: Your Opinion about Yourself

My brain is obsessed with what I think about myself. I believe the opinion you subconsciously think about yourself is extremely important to introspect and think about. Because, what you think about yourself... there's a high chance that others think something very similar.

Here's a couple examples...

- I'm a very likable person...
- I'm fun
- I'm accepting
- I'm interested in others stories
- I like my personality
- I'm witty
- I am forgiving
- I'm a hard worker

Now it's your turn...

- What is your opinion about yourself?
- Give examples

Chapter 21: Life Themes

What is a life theme? A theme is an idea like war, tragedy, love, action, redemption, a meaningful event, etc. The year 2016, I dug into my past and gave myself a “life theme”, from age 0 to my current age.

I recommend you create a life theme from age 0 to your current age. For example,

Here are all my themes for my life:

- 0-5: Crawl, Walk, Talk, enjoy life, acquire compassion
- 6: Develop natural talents in sports
- 7: Learn to read and do math
- 8: Become self-aware
- 9: Move to Utah
- 10: Make friends
- 11: Acquire a sense of humor
- 12: Connect on a deeper level
- 13: Become a professional skateboarder
- 14: Become a legend
- 15: Fall in love
- 16: Take awesome trips
- 17: Gain a testimony of truth
- 18: Get good grades, Constantly be reading
- 19: Continue to progress in skateboarding
- 20: Acquire dream car

- 21: Transform life with self-affirmations
- 22: Decide to tell the truth forever
- 23: Finish bachelors degree
- 24: Glory in tribulation
- 25: Regain joy and fight for liberty
- 26: Begin the journey of healing
- 27: Master goal setting
- 28. Become optimistic
- 29: Every year gets better from here on out!
- 30: Progress in recovery
- 31: Treat my wife like a queen
- 32: Acquire a change of heart
- 33. Love becoming a teacher
- 34: Maintain my love for life!
- 35: Care what's in a person's heart
- 36: Become a master storyteller
- 37: Become politically aware

I come up with a new theme at the beginning of each year. Whatever direction you want to go in your life--that is your theme. I love the beginning of a new year because of this writing prompt--as it allows me to explore what I want to focus on for the coming year.

For this activity...

- Come up with a theme for every year of your entire life

Chapter 22: Conclusion

I began my journal when I was 16 years old in the year of 1999. I kept getting this feeling and impression that I needed to start a journal. I had this burning desire to write down my thoughts. That decision was 22 years ago. I had no idea that my journaling would transform into what it has.

I talked with a close friend who said he hated journaling because all he wanted to do was write negative thoughts. I can relate, I used to only write negative stuff. The great thing about journaling is that you can easily destroy anything you don't like. I hope that from reading this book, I've given you ideas to write about that are positive and uplifting. I know I've "assigned" a lot of work, but what a treasure trove you can uncover from the writing workshops I've suggested.

Because I had destroyed so many negative journal entries back in 2007, that was a huge shift in how I journaled. I realized I had wasted hours and hours writing negative stuff, that from then on out, I only wanted to write negativity intelligently. If I was going to write something negative, I was going to include a solution so I wasn't wasting my time. I've destroyed hundreds and hundreds of journal pages--but that's okay. Because most of

my journal entries are now pretty positive. If I have something negative to write, I'd better write down the lesson I'm supposed to learn from that experience. This is a way to learn intelligently from negativity.

I thoroughly enjoyed writing and editing this book. I hope you were able to get a few new ideas and able to implement them into your life.

Journaling is so much more than just writing in a diary everyday. Diaries are sometimes boring and disorganized. I believe that diaries are like treasure maps... *for you to find valuable information about yourself.*

I hope you unearthed new treasures about yourself and had fun creating and thinking with the prompts I suggested.

I hope you can discover the power, the self-insight, and meaning from implementing the journal recommendations found in this book.

This book was about self-exploration in your world. Journaling is a vehicle to get you to deeper and more meaningful self-knowledge and start to value your experiences more.

For where your treasure is... there your heart will be also.

What you think about, is the reality you create for yourself. Why not create a beautiful reality that is based on your values, your past, your future, your hopes and dreams.

About the Author

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