

# Diary Keeping.

**Relevant to:** Depression:  Anxiety:  Irritability/Anger:  General emotional control: 

**All the biggest and best people have kept diaries over the years – everybody from Samuel Pepys to Alan Clarke and Tony Benn. As the saying goes: “If you keep a diary when you are young, it will keep you when you are old.”**

Sadly, that saying only holds true if you happen to be somebody famous, somebody whose diary will be bought by millions of people hoping to get to know snippets of gossip about the rich and famous. Yet more people keep diaries than read the diaries of others, so just what is it that drives people to do this? What are the substantial benefits of diary keeping that have stood the test of time so impressively?

## The benefits are immense.

The benefits that many people report are staggering: “It helps me make sense of my life”, “It helps me get a proper night’s sleep”, “It just sorts me out” are examples of the things that people say.

## How it works is no mystery.

People write things in their diaries that they wouldn’t say to anybody – not even to themselves! And the act of writing makes us process our thoughts; we can have all sorts of jumbled words and thoughts in our minds but that simply won’t do when it comes to putting them down on paper. They have to make some sort of sense.

And that is much more than “nice”. The reason that people report having a better night’s sleep when they keep a diary is that much of the work that would normally get tackled by the sleeping mind has been done – consciously – while you write the diary. Leaving you free to get a good night’s sleep and feel rested and fresh the next day.



## Write in the evening.

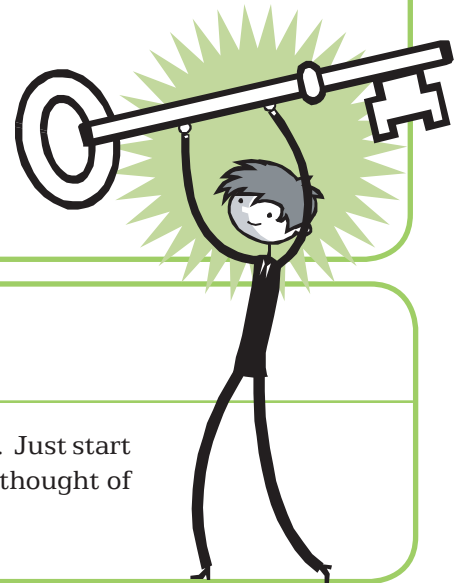
Clearly, if one of the major benefits of diary keeping is to process the events of the day then the best time to write it is towards the end of the day. Maybe not at the very end, just before going to bed, because we also like a ‘wind down routine’ where we gradually ‘wind down’ ready for bed.

## Write about what's happened, what you think of it, and what's going to happen tomorrow.

A diary is, after all, above all a record of what has happened. So be sure to record the major events of the day. Not just like an objective newspaper reporter, ensure also that you record what you think about the events of the day; your opinion. And be completely honest; it is unlikely that anybody else is going to read your diary so you can afford to be absolutely honest. But also include any thoughts that are in your mind about what is coming up the next day. In fact you will find that this produces a pleasing sense of continuity in your diary, linking from one day to the next.

## Keep it secure.

The point about having a diary is that it is your own private document, for your benefit only. Whatever you do, don't write it for the benefit of anybody else, don't write it hoping that somebody else will find it, and keep it absolutely secure so it is your's and your's alone. One of the easiest ways of doing this is to write it on the computer and to save it using a password that only you know.



## Just Start Writing.

Don't worry about how well or badly you write, that's not the point of a diary. Just start writing, just write down the first thing that happened today and what you thought of it, and carry on from there.

## In-session discussion.

What experience have you had of keeping a diary? Do you keep a diary now? If you once did and don't any longer, why not? How does the diary you kept compare with what is described on this sheet? How do these kind of diaries compare with the published diaries of famous people?

## Project for the week.

Needless to say, your project for the week is to keep a diary along the lines of what is described here. Buy yourself a book especially for the purpose and describe where you're going to keep it safely. Alternatively open a password protected document on your computer.

This is an important project so the group leader will ask how you got on next time. Keep notes if you want to.

## Mythbuster:

**There's no point in keeping a diary unless you've got something important to say.**

**Not true.** The whole point of keeping a diary is entirely for your own benefit. It both soothes and develops the mind. Millions of people keep diaries and very few of them are read even by the authors. The benefit is entirely from the writing not the reading.