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**Keeping a Love Journal**

**By Catherine Franz**

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Do you love someone very deeply? A spouse, son, daughter, or maybe a group of people. February 14 is Valentine's Day. This unofficial holiday is a day card companies started to increase their business and has evolved into more over the years. It is a day of reflection, a day to show someone else you care, a day to see the love we have for ourselves as well.

A separate journal devoted strictly to people, places and things, that you love, may seem like a waste of space at first. Why not just toss it in our regular journal. You might be thinking, "How can I fill up a whole book?" I shared this sentiment for years. After making the choice, one pre-Valentine day ten years ago in a bookstore, it became easy. A richer life began emerging because of it over time.

As all things, it begins by purchasing a journal for that specific purpose. This is the perfect time of the year to buy that such journal. Book and gift stores provide a stack of choices this time of year. When I sat down and opened my new love journal, the cover, with its typical red cover and hearts, changed my voice but the pages were still stark white. For days, I sat staring at those blank pages every evening and occasionally a few mornings. This was a strange sensation since it's harder for me to end than to begin.

My original thought, why I purchased this teenage-like journal, was to honor my mother's memories. She passed, at

the time ten years earlier, and our memories were waning. Many times it took pictures to see her face again. Here are some ways that I learned over the years to fill my love journals. What once started with a cautionary purchase turned into a regular yearly purchase. Of course, this time of year because of the wide selection in the stores.

### Let Me Count the Ways

Lists are a great way to begin when the sentences or thought seems vague. Lists suggest expansiveness and release the pressure of saying it just right. Focus on one person and

make a list of a particular moment. It doesn't matter whether it is recent or somewhere in the past. Memory triggering is a trained skill and takes practice.

### Love Letters

"Love letters fulfill a need to confide, to testify and to articulate what is ordinarily left unspoken," says Cathy Davidson in, "The Book of Love: Writers and Their Love Letters." Expressing your love, whether shared or not, fulfills an internal need, a desire of a deep connection. Whether the love is only one way, a fantasy, or just a dream. Memorable writing, whether it is a list, letter, poem, story or essay, comes deeply from the soul of the writer. It is their way of having their say.

Writing a love letter doesn't always need to be to or about someone else. When we are working on our self-esteem and self-worth, it is important to write love letters to us. This may seem selfish or uncomfortable at the start but the experience blossoms into a deeper learning about who we are, what we want, what we need, and what we can give. For those of us who have difficulty knowing our own needs or putting our health first, writing love letters can be a valuable bridge that expands into a deeper understanding and knowledge about us or about our path.

### Possible Memorable Items to Include

Here are a few items that can help expand your love writing.. Of course, these items will transition with your intention, style, and voice.

## Keeping a Love Journal

1. Start by acknowledging the event. The place, day and time.
2. What was your emotional state at the time? Did you feel sad, say so. Angry, shocked, or confused, say so. Even love letters and journals have more than one emotion. Were you grieving at the time?
3. Describe any qualities — physical, emotional, professional or social. Tell what you admired about them (or yourself). Is there something you miss? Are they or were they a great teacher, storyteller, devoted father, mother, aunt, uncle?
4. Remember the little things. The small stuff does count. Was there a particular smell you remember? What were they wearing, or not.
5. Have you had this experience before. If so, when? How are they different? How are they the same?
6. Did a book, quote, musical piece, photograph, or song lyrics provide comfort or expand the experience?
7. Who else was involved? Did they build with the experience or take from it?
8. What makes this love different? Or the same? And if the same, the same to what?
9. Was this an everyday event that turned extraordinary? Why?

Whether a love letter is your intention or to begin with a list, don't forget to love yourself and to add yourself to the menu of a love-writing experience. Most of the time we look for love in other places when it truly needs to be recognized from within first. Take the time, find the magic you hold inside you, find the love that you hold for relationships, for what you have accomplished, or desire to accomplish, or what type of love affair you want to have with the world while you are still in it.

Love is a gift, whether presented only in a journal or

expanded into something wrapped and bowed. The expense is only that of pen and paper but its cost is time and thought. Place love on your calendar this week. It is as much a gift to you as it is for everyone else in your life, past or present.

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Catherine Franz, 20 year international journaling instructor, including several US Presidents and First Ladies, and author of two booklets on hundreds of tips and techniques. Visit the store at: <http://www.AbundanceCenter.com>

### **The Art of Keeping a Journal**

**By Janice Hoffmann**

#### **The Art of Keeping a Journal by Janice Hoffmann**

Journal keeping is basically without rules. It is an uncensored invitation to cut & paste, sketch & chart, and to visualize and unravel every great and small thought. At its most basic it is a decision that your life has value.

Just listing your experiences and endeavors can reveal incredible things and encourage you to work for the nearly impossible, the rigorous, and the unseen. Recently, during a course on INQUIRY, I was asked to make a list of one hundred things I didn't know. Here a simple list became a prospect for the unknown and an introduction to something new. As Henry Miller states, "Writing, like life itself, is a voyage of discovery."

I have also discovered that journal keeping is a great way to zero in. For instance, if you were preparing to run a marathon and wanted to improve your performance as a runner. You might put together a book that included:

- Diet & Nutrition
- Speed & Strength
- Warm up & Cool down
- Visualization & Meditation
- Cross training
- Profiles of great athletes
- And perhaps a section reserved for ideas and challenges yet to come.

It has been noted that elite athletes keep meticulous journals on their training and competition, not only to advance and validate their hard work and progress, but to mentally prepare them for athletic mastery.

Journals are wonderful for developing projects or keeping to a theme such as wealth building and

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spiritual practice. It can be used as a restorative retreat or a creative landscape. – A playground of sorts for your professional goals and a keepsake for travel, weddings and anniversaries.

- Try personalizing your own journal by creating an arrangement that is both practical and natural.
- Ask questions and dialogue with the world.
- Use it with regularity and see if this kindles some sort of journey.

Above all enjoy the adventure! WRITE UPSIDE DOWN, USE DIFFERENT COLORS OF PENS, collect inspiring song lyrics & meaningful quotes, or start on the last page and see where it takes you.

The basic nutrition for a journal differs. Yet the more you nourish it, the more confident and the more willing your imagination & intelligence will be.

Janice Hoffmann is CEO and Founder of Success Is Sweetest [www.successissweetest.com](http://www.successissweetest.com) A New York City based career and lifestyle coaching boutique.



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