

CRAFT YOUR DAY AS A DANCE

DAILY REFLECTION TO ENRICH YOUR LIFE



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Printed in Australia, 2019.

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Cover Image by Image by Myriam Zilles from Pixabay

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SUMMARY SHEET

A	Awareness	• Meditate before journaling • Identify patterns / thoughts to bring awareness to for that day
D	Desires / Dreams	• Big 3
A	Appreciation	• Gratitude • Appreciation of Others • Celebration
N	Needs	• Self-Care
C	Contribution	• How can I / have I served?
E	Extend	• Lessons Learned • Integration through Action

THE POWER OF JOURNALING

I've often liked the idea of regular journaling, and found it useful in the moments when I have engaged in it, but I've never managed to make it a consistent practice, until now.

I used to find that I didn't really know what to journal about, or it felt too daunting or unwieldy. Journaling just about my day in general felt aimless to me and I wasn't sure how to have a daily practice that would connect me in with the kind of value that one-off journaling on a specific question tended to bring. Perhaps you can relate to some or all of this?

Then, through a course of study to further my coaching skills, I started to coalesce a number of concepts into daily journaling. Tweaks were made, insights were gained, a regular practice was established, and crafting days as A DANCE was born.

In this quick guide you'll discover:

- Why each of these components are powerful daily reflections,
- What each component consists of, and
- How to approach your reflection and enrich your days

WHEN TO JOURNAL

Personally I journal a little on each component in the morning, and then come back to it in the evening for further reflection and to add additional information. You could also choose to split it up so that you journal on some components in the morning (for example Awareness, Dreams / Desires, and Needs) and some components in the evening (for example Appreciation, Contribution, and Extend).

There is no right or wrong so embrace playfulness and curiosity and see what works best for you. The only thing I would suggest is to do it at the same time each day and make it a consistent daily practice as reducing variability in our habits helps them to stick.

AWARENESS

Awareness always comes first. We can't reflect, make changes, or take action on something that we have no awareness of so developing this is key.

Meditation

You may choose to use this prompt to remind you to meditate before you journal, which can aid you in many ways. Here's what Jonathan Haidt, one of the worlds leading scientists studying well-being, says:

"Suppose you read about a pill that you could take once a day to reduce anxiety and increase your contentment. Would you take it? Suppose further that the pill has a great variety of side effects, all of them good: increased self-esteem, empathy, and trust; it even improves memory. Suppose, finally, that the pill is all natural and costs nothing. Now would you take it?"

These are just some of the benefits that you'll get from practicing meditation every day. Furthermore, Stanford scientific research suggests that you'll fall asleep twice as fast and have a deeper sleep if you meditate daily. This doesn't have to be a long meditation. You may choose for it to be as simple as taking a few conscious slow deep breaths.

What do I want to bring greater awareness to today?

This can be the first question that you ask yourself as part of your morning journaling. Like each of these components, there is no limit to what you may choose to focus on. I've listed some ideas below simply to get you started:

- No complaining, criticising, or gossiping –you'll likely be shocked at how often you complain, criticise, and gossip, but remain patient with yourself and you'll be amazed at how reducing these increases your sense of empowerment and your ability to move from a victim mindset to that of a creator. (Refer to Will Bowen's book 'A Complaint Free World' for more on this)
- Resistance to what is –Notice when there's resistance / contraction within your body and thoughts. Notice when you're arguing with your reality by saying things 'should' be a different way. How can you bring a little more allowance into your day?
- Honouring boundaries – what are your boundaries? How do you communicate these? Notice when you're boundaries have been crossed. How do you respond?
- Emotions – How often do you actually check in with how you're feeling? Is this only when emotions reach a critical level and start overflowing in reactivity? Perhaps today you could bring more awareness to what emotions arise for you throughout the day, what sensations you experience in your body, and how you respond.
- Movement – "Sitting is the new smoking" is a statement that's often used these days, but what is the optimal way to combat that? Katy Bowman talks about how it's more than a one-off block of exercise each day, we need to ensure we're moving regularly all throughout the day. Every 30 minutes is ideal (even if that's simply to stand up, shake the body, and sit back down again). Then every 90 minutes we should take a longer (10 minute) break, which is another great time to move.
- Distractions / Avoidance – consider the ways you distract or avoid throughout your day. What thoughts / feelings / situations commonly trigger you to engage distraction techniques? What are your common techniques (T.V., social media, busyness, information gathering, alcohol, food)?

DREAMS / DESIRES

As Stephen Convey says in his best selling book 'The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People', we want to begin with the end in mind. If we don't have any clarity around our vision, our goals, our dreams then how are we going to take aim to move towards them? That would be like trying to hit a target by shooting an arrow into the sky and hoping it comes down in the right place. Probably not the most effective strategy. It's likely more effective if we can at least see the target and take aim in its general direction. Do you think that might increase our chances of hitting it? Do you know what your target is? Are you aiming at it each day?

There is a lot I could cover in this section and so many ways to go about approaching this. In the interests of simplicity I'll share the main way I journal daily, 'The Big 3'. If you'd like more assistance with clarifying your purpose and aiming towards your target, please do get in touch with me and we can discuss how I might best support you.

Big 3 – Carpe Diem

Stephen Covey, Tony Robbins, and Freud all talk about the value of getting clear on the different roles or identities that we embody throughout the course of our day, and how we can bring greater awareness to what we want to create within these roles. To make this more manageable, I use the structure one of my mentors, Brian Johnson, created which focuses on the 3 key areas of Energy, Work, and Love.

Within these 3 key areas we can reflect on what might be an inspiring Identity, what Virtues or Characteristics we choose to cultivate and embody, and what our No1 action is for the day. For example:

	ENERGY	WORK	LOVE
IDENTITY	Athlete	Leader	Partner
VIRTUES	Energised, Active, Committed, Persistent, Focused, Consistent	Encouraging, Insightful, Inspiring, Engaged, Curious, Professional	Caring, Present, Honest, Compassionate, Affectionate, Playful
NO. 1	Maintain Daily Health Rituals	Meet with team to discuss vision	Take a few deep breaths in the car when I get home to let go of the work day so I can be present to my partner when I walk in the door.

Note: When we consider our identity within the realm of 'Love' this can include many dimensions. It can include self-love, romantic love, love within the realm of family / friends / community, and also those micro-moments of love that we can have with the store clerk, the Uber driver, the guy or girl sitting next to us on the train, etc.

You may find that your Identities and Virtues change from day to day or you may find they remain fairly consistent for a period of time. Either way, by reflecting on them each day we remain connected to who we want to be, how we want to show up. You might say this becomes a 'To Be' List with a 'To Do' component rather than focusing entirely on 'To Do's'.

APPRECIATION

What are 5 things I'm grateful for today?

What do I appreciate about my loved ones?

How can I express my appreciation today?

What's great about me?

What challenges did I lean into and actions did I take that I can celebrate?

Did you know that it's impossible to be in a state of appreciation and a state of depression at the same time? And that research shows that writing down 5 things you're grateful for, even just once a week, can boost your happiness by up to 25%! Why would we keep that to once a week? Let's do it every day!

Gratitude

You can start by simply looking around you right now in this moment. Right now as I gaze around the room I'm grateful for my water bottle with a filter that gives me ready access to pure clean water. I'm grateful for the beautiful sound of the birds singing outside. I'm grateful for my computer that's enabling me to create this resource for you right now. I'm grateful for the chair that's supporting me. I'm grateful for my cosy jumper that's keeping me warm. I'm grateful for my hands enabling me to type, my eyes enabling me to read, my ears enabling me to hear the sound of the keys. The list goes on and on. Take a moment to pause in your reading and check in with what's around you right now that you can immediately appreciate.

"The word appreciate has two meanings. The first meaning is 'to be thankful,' the opposite of taking something for granted. The second meaning is 'to increase in value' (as money appreciates in the bank). Combined, these two meanings point to a truth that has been proved repeatedly in research on gratitude: when we appreciate the good in our lives, the good grows and we have more of it."

(Tal Ben-Shahar)

Appreciation for Others

Take a moment to bring your thoughts to a loved one. What do you appreciate and celebrate about them? If you're journaling in the morning, how might you express that appreciation to them today? If you're journaling in the evening, maybe take a note to express your appreciation tomorrow.

We can also extend this from our loved ones to everyone we come into contact with. Make it into a game and see if you can find one thing to appreciate about every single person you engage with today. Maybe the store clerk has a nice smile, perhaps your boss gave you some feedback that will help you grow, maybe a friend remembered to call you to see how that big meeting went.

As we practice doing this, it also opens up our awareness of how we can express our appreciation through deeds as well as words. That friend who remembered your big meeting was expressing their appreciation for you and your friendship as much as you were when you let them know you appreciated their thoughtfulness.

"We must learn to express our feelings now, not when it is too late. None of us ever know when it will be too late. Tell people you love them. Tell them you appreciate them. If they can't accept your honesty or react in a different way to how you hoped, it doesn't matter. What matters is you have told them."

(quoting Jude from Bronnie Ware's book 'The Top Five Regrets of the Dying')

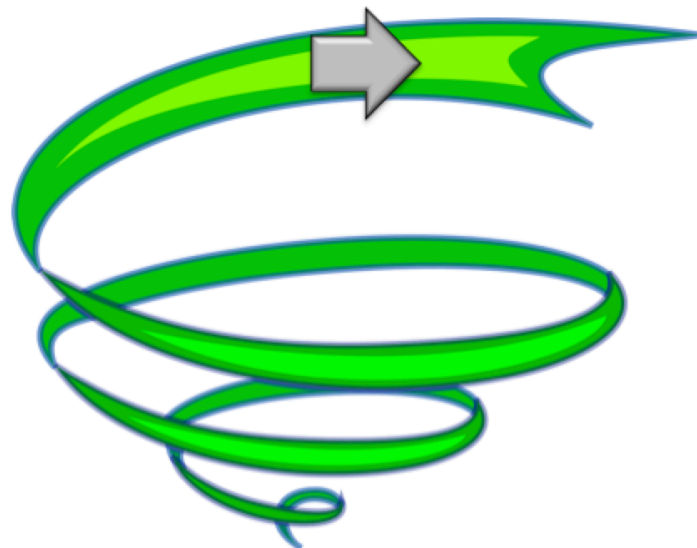
Celebrating our WINs

We can extend the same level of appreciation to ourselves which helps us to build both our self-esteem and our motivation / commitment to taking further action.

There's a concept called the 'Success Spiral' (I couldn't find who it was that first spoke about this to attribute it). Basically this concept is that when we take a small action and take the time to celebrate this action, it inspires us to take another action. As we continue identifying the next action, doing it, and celebrating it, we work our way up the spiral.

So take a moment to reflect and celebrate each day:

- What's great about you?
- What actions did you take today?
- What challenges did you lean into? What can you celebrate?



NEEDS

How will I honour my own needs today?

How are you honouring your needs for sleep, movement, rest, nutrition, hydration, connection, fulfilment, playfulness, adventure, love, etc? Are you clear on what your needs actually are? Do you know which ones are absolutely non-negotiable for you as they have the biggest impact on your wellbeing? Do you know how to meet these yourself or are you dependant on others?

A common phrase you may have heard is that if we don't fill our own cup we can't fill anyone else's. By identifying, honouring, and learning to meet our own needs, we fuel ourselves to bring forward our greatest gifts and contributions.

As someone who has been on a journey with chronic illness for 7 years, I'm intimately acquainted with this concept and have experienced first hand how critically important looking after our own needs actually is. I can't encourage you emphatically enough to learn how to honour your own needs now before depletion becomes such a systemic pattern that you start to notice the dramatic impacts as I have.

In addition, our core needs are a driver of our behaviour and decision-making. Our needs can drive us unconsciously, leading us to grasp for things externally or rely on unresourceful means of addressing our needs that can actually undermine what we wish to create in our lives. Alternatively, we can choose to bring a greater level of awareness, choice, and responsibility to how we engage with our needs, supporting ourselves to move forward more resourcefully.

If you'd like to know more about needs, identify which needs are your top 2 drivers, and explore how these are playing out in your life, contact me and we can discuss doing a core needs elicitation.

"Bottom line: If you don't mindfully give yourself Permission to prioritize time for your own self-care, no one else will."

(Michelle Segar)

CONTRIBUTION

How will I contribute / serve / help today?

When we focus on how we can serve / contribute, a number of amazing things happen:

1. Our fear / anxiety tends to reduce as our focus is on others not on ourselves
2. We experience a greater level of fulfilment as we feel we've added something of value
3. We open ourselves to a greater sense of abundance and as a result often get taken care of ourselves

"The quality of your life will be determined by the quality of your contribution. When you work to improve the lives of others, your life improves automatically."

(Kurek Ashley)

Take a moment to ask yourself: How will I contribute / serve / help today? (Or how have I already).

In addition to obvious contributions like perhaps a project at work you've brought your skills to, consider the seemingly 'small' contributions that can have far larger impacts than we sometimes realise. Perhaps you held the elevator door for someone, noticed someone's new haircut, added value through your comments on someone's Facebook post, gave a smile or a hug to someone having a challenging day.

Start to notice all of the opportunities for contribution that surround us every day and bring more awareness to where you could be leaning into these opportunities even more fully.

"Only those who have learned the power of sincere and selfless contribution experience life's deepest joy: true fulfilment."

(Tony Robbins)

EXTEND

What are the key lessons I've learned today?

How can I implement / take action on something I've learned today to further my growth?

Here we contemplate our areas for improvement. It's important that we approach this reflection with curiosity rather than criticism. We're not beating up on ourselves for not being 'perfect' as this is impossible. Instead, we're embracing the learning and growth; knowing, and excited by the fact, that this continues forever and is all part of the journey. To paraphrase George Leonard from his book 'Mastery', the master is focused on the path rather than the rewards he gains along the way. For every mile the master moves along the path, he hopes that his destination moves two miles further away.

"One of the wishes that I always have for my students is that they should fail more often (although they are understandably not thrilled to hear me tell them so). If they fail frequently, it means that they try frequently, that they put themselves on the line and challenge themselves. It is only from the experience of challenging ourselves that we learn and grow, and we often develop and mature much more from our failures than from our successes. Moreover, when we put ourselves on the line, when we fall down and get up again, we become stronger and more resilient."

(Tal Ben-Shahar)

One of my mentors Brian Johnson uses the metaphor of a movie director to illustrate how to approach extending ourselves. The movie director doesn't expect to shoot the whole movie in one continuous shot. They know there will be multiple mis-takes and that this is all a natural part of the process. We too can be like the movie director, viewing mis-takes as a natural part of the process, reflecting with curiosity on the results, viewing these learnings as precious, applying them and repeating the process.

The trick here of course is not to simply stop at reflection but to actually look for what action you can take immediately (or the very next day) to somehow integrate and implement those key lessons learned. Perhaps you mark down one of your lessons as the thing you'll bring more awareness to the following day. Perhaps you've learnt a new tool, approach or concept that you can take immediate action on by teaching it to someone else. Perhaps you repeat the task, approaching it now from a slightly different angle.

These small actions on our learnings are how we incrementally improve, and these incremental gains compound over time in quite an astonishing way. We've already mentioned the idea of Success Spirals, but to illustrate this point further let's consider the physics of dominoes. A domino can knock over another domino that's 1.5 times larger. So imagine we start our chain of dominoes with a domino that's 5mm high. This can then knock over one that's 7.5mm high. If we continue in this vein, then the 15th domino in the chain will be approximately 1.5 metres!

NEXT STEPS...

By now, you'll have a good grasp on why each of the components are important daily considerations and how to approach journaling on each. So now it's time to put them to good use.

- Print out the summary sheet on Page 1 and put it up somewhere as a daily reminder
- Start a journal that you'll use specifically for these daily reflections (or print out the blank template I've included at the end of this document)
- Determine what time of day you'll consistently engage in the practice of journaling to craft your day as A DANCE
- Commit to doing the journaling practice every day for the next two weeks and then reflect on the changes you've noticed which, I'm betting, will then motivate you to continue this practice indefinitely.

I've attached as an Appendix a sample of how this journaling of crafting your day as A DANCE might look, and also a blank sheet that you can use yourself.

NOTE:

To add even more power to these exercises clarify your dreams and desires, learn about your core needs, and learn about your core values. These can then all be integrated into crafting your day as A DANCE.

Email me me at debbieamos@pepandverve.com to arrange a free chat.

APPENDIX 1 – SAMPLE

Awareness

☒ Meditation

Movement – Set Fitbit silent alarms for every 30 minutes from 10am – 6pm.

Desires / Dreams

	ENERGY	WORK	LOVE
Identity	Gentle Warrior	Exemplar Author Actualised Coach	Self-Carer Daughter Friend
Virtues	Consistency, Persistence, Allowance, Embodied, Calm	Focused, Passionate, Grounded, Curious, Attentive	Present, Engaged, Considerate, Loving, Encouraging
No. 1	Maintain daily rituals	Coaching Session Research for book	Increase focus on movement Dinner with Mum Drop flowers off to friend

Appreciation

Grateful For:

- Sound of rain
- Trees
- Movement
- Books
- Colours and textures

Expressed to others:

- Mum for all that she does to support me
- My best friend for calling to connect on her way home from work
- The person who helped me fix my computer issue via live chat

Celebration:

- No. 1s completed
- Extra movement added (including time in nature)
- Leaned into computer challenges and navigated through

Needs

- Oscillation throughout the day between movement and deep rest
- Time in nature
- Maintain health rituals
- Digital Sunset

Contribution

- Coaching client
- Facebook post / comments
- Flowers to friend
- Picked up apples for Mum

Extend

- Review learnings from book research and incorporate those into my notes
- Incorporate the new model I've read about into my next coaching session
- Continue to track movement throughout the day

DATE:

Awareness

☐ Meditation

Focus for the Day:

Desires / Dreams

	ENERGY	WORK	LOVE
Identity			
Virtues			
No. 1			

Appreciation

Grateful For:

Expressed to others:

Celebration:

Needs

Contribution

Extend