

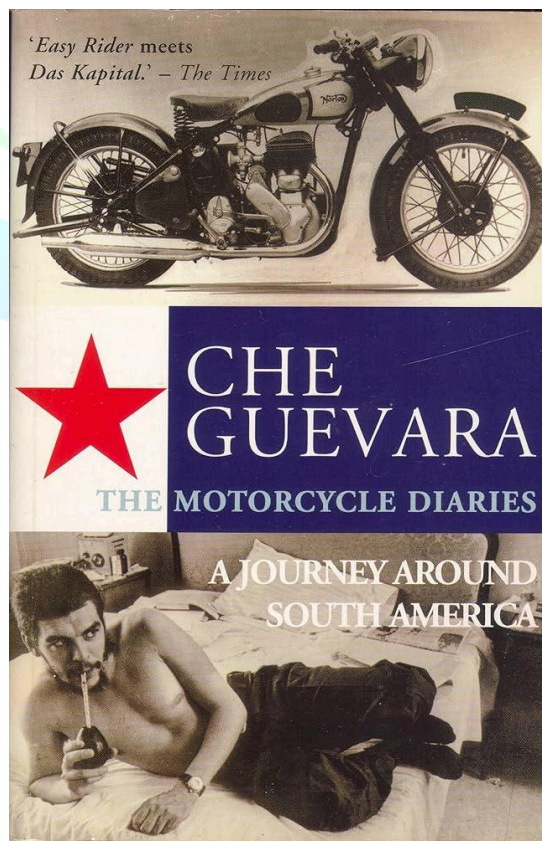


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### Why should you keep a journal?

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**Photo credit:**

<https://www.amazon.in/Motorcycle-Diaries-Journey-Around-America/dp/1859840663>



### SUMMARY

In this article I discuss the importance and multiple benefits of writing a diary or journal. As records of first hand experiences, diaries have always been given the status of authentic historical sources. Diaries serve as a connection with our ancestors as well as future generations. Furthermore it is also widely recommended as an effective therapy and counselling to treat depression, anxiety and PTSD. Writing a diary is useful to address our repressed fears, strengths and even unaccounted feelings. In a recently published article *Can writing a diary protect your mental health?* Julia Samuel, a psychotherapist and author of *Grief Works*, told BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme, "It's very well evidenced that when we write what we feel we release our emotions as we would when we talk. In fact, writing a journal is as effective as talking therapies - it helps regulate emotions, anxieties and stress, it even improves our immune system, our mood and it often problem-solves." (21 November 2023).





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### BACKGROUND

#### Introduction:

In the collection of essays, *Curiosities of Literature* (1791) Isaac D'Israeli, father of British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli, wrote, "We converse with the absent by Letters, and with ourselves by Diaries." A diary or a journal is a personal written record of daily events, appointments, observations, etc. It, most commonly, revolves around the writer's own experiences and understanding. In other words, diaries recount accounts of yore and take us back to the time long gone. Through the lens of the writer's first hand experiences they document real life events and people. Diary writing became widely popular across Europe, especially in England, Ireland and France in the seventeenth century when publication of diaries in the book format started. The most fascinating part of a diary is perhaps the dates of entries, substantiating the contents of the diary in their authentic historical context. Interestingly, diary writing nurtures both our freedom of expression and the art of storytelling. There is a sense of intimacy in the personal tone distinctive of the writer as narrates real life experiences. Although diaries have been considered as significant historical sources for their first person narrative style as valuable records, albeit subjective, of real events, at its inception it grew in the hands of the educated, elite class of the society. The accounts depicted in those journals held the spotlight on only the privileged sections of the society and their point of view. However it gradually changed with the dissemination of education among all

sections of the society, especially women. The most famous example would be, quoting from *Britannica* "*The Diary of a Young Girl*, journal by Anne Frank, a Jewish teenager who chronicled her family's two years (1942–44) in hiding during the German occupation of the Netherlands during World War II."



**Anne at her writing desk.**

**Photo credit:**

<https://www.dalemkushner.com/blog/anne-frank-and-my-birth-as-a-writer/>

#### Do people still write diaries?

Yes! In this tech savvy digital age diary writing or keeping a journal is still very popular. Even though most of them may never meet another reader or see the light of publication as they remain locked in the dusty corners of the writers' desks, they survive. In fact, it is often prescribed as therapeutic in the treatment of stress, anxiety, depression or post traumatic stress



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disorder (PTSD) etc. Today the proliferation of social media apps has been a major cause of our loneliness, our sense of despair and insecurity. The overwhelmingly immersive audio-visual technology is secluding us, day by day, from our surroundings, from nature, people around us and also from ourselves. We are kept blindfolded and trussed up by neverending contrivances of new gadgets, software and apps that are being manufactured everyday. Away from the glare of the public eye, views and comments, writing a diary is useful to address our repressed fears, strengths and even unaccounted feelings. In a recently published article *Can writing a diary protect your mental health?* Julia Samuel, a psychotherapist and author of *Grief Works*, told BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme, "It's very well evidenced that when we write what we feel we release our emotions as we would when we talk. In fact, writing a journal is as effective as talking therapies - it helps regulate emotions, anxieties and stress, it even improves our immune system, our mood and it often problem-solves." (21 November 2023).

For today's youth, a simple application with space to write, enter dates, insert photos may have replaced the pen and paper journaling but it has not become outdated. Hundred years from now, the writer's granddaughter may find the drive link and time travel to his times. Diarium, Day One, Grid Diary, Dabble Me are some of the most popular apps widely used by millions of users across the world. Despite being tech driven, they offer intimate alternatives to traditional pen and paper. Some even provide in-built templates.

### Case study:

Matua Tamuro, a twenty six year old boy who was a student of Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda, shared on his social media account, "When I got admitted to the college. I did not know how to cook. My mother gave me a journal dated back to the 1930s. It belonged to my grandmother who is no more with us. When she got married and had four children, she kept a diary to document easy recipes and simple cooking tricks she learnt from her friends and family. It taught me everything I needed to know about cooking. Interestingly she also mentioned the price of ingredients which I found fascinating!"



**Photo credit:**



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[https://www.freepik.com/free-photo/serious-young-african-american-man-drinking-coffee-while-sitting-desk-co-working-space-using-tablet-typing-reading-screen\\_11076400.htm#fromView=search&page=1&position=9&uuid=28e3bd05-6656-4cac-8ff7-0a222469c4e1](https://www.freepik.com/free-photo/serious-young-african-american-man-drinking-coffee-while-sitting-desk-co-working-space-using-tablet-typing-reading-screen_11076400.htm#fromView=search&page=1&position=9&uuid=28e3bd05-6656-4cac-8ff7-0a222469c4e1)

Let's hear from Garcia Alalo, a singer from Kira Town, Uganda. "Well I am a born singer. I never took formal training before starting my career in music. But I often wondered where I got the talent from since in my family no one else can sing. Not my parents, grandparents or uncles. I discovered last year that my maternal great grandparents were singers about whom I have only recently read in an

old journal retrieved from the garret of our old country house!"

### Why should you keep a diary?

I believe treating stress or not, keeping diaries to be passed onto future generations is an awesome idea! We can have diaries on several subjects depending on our interests, just like Matua's Granny. "A recipe journal" - how fascinating! Similarly, seemingly commonplace diary entries on weather updates, price of commodities, political news or personal viewpoints can reveal facts and figures about a distant past, with all its political, social, cultural and economic aspects, in a way that no history lesson can. Generations after your great granddaughter may find from your diary entries that she shares similar interests or talents, much like Garcia Alalo!



# AYPAD-TRUE-TALK PROJECT



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