



Note to Self: On Keeping a Journal and Other Dangerous Pursuits

Samara O'Shea

Download now

Read Online ➔

Note to Self: On Keeping a Journal and Other Dangerous Pursuits

Samara O'Shea

Note to Self: On Keeping a Journal and Other Dangerous Pursuits Samara O'Shea

Keeping a journal is easy. Keeping a life-altering, soul-enlightening journal, however, is not. At its best, journaling can be among the most transformative of experiences, but you can only get there by learning how to express yourself fully and openly. Enter Samara O'Shea.

O'Shea charmed readers with her elegant and witty *For the Love of Letters*. Now, in *Note to Self*, she's back to guide us through the fun, effective, and revelatory process of journaling. Along the way, selections from O'Shea's own journals demonstrate what a journal should be: a tool to access inner strengths, uncover unknown passions, face uncertain realities, and get to the center of self. To help create an effective journal, O'Shea provides multiple suggestions and exercises, including:

Write in a stream of consciousness: Forget everything you ever learned about writing and just write. Let it all out: the good, bad, mad, angry, boring, and ugly.

Ask yourself questions: What do I want to change about myself? What would I never change about myself?

Copy quotes: Other people's words can help you figure out where you are in life, or where you'd like to be.

It takes time: Don't lose faith if you don't immediately feel better after writing in your journal. Think of each entry as part of a collection that will eventually reveal its meaning to you.

O'Shea's own journal entries reveal alternately moving, edgy, and hilarious stories from throughout her life, as she hits the party scene in New York, poses naked as an aspiring model, stands by as her boyfriend discovers an infidelity by (you guessed it) reading her journal, and more. There are also fascinating journal entries of notorious diarists, such as John Wilkes Booth, Anais Nin, and Sylvia Plath.

A tribute to the healing and reflective power of the written word, *Note to Self* demonstrates that sometimes being completely honest with yourself is the most dangerous and rewarding pursuit of all.

Note to Self: On Keeping a Journal and Other Dangerous Pursuits Details

Date : Published July 22nd 2008 by William Morrow

ISBN : 9780061494154

Author : Samara O'Shea

Format : Hardcover 192 pages

Genre : Language, Writing, Nonfiction, Diary, Journaling, Autobiography, Memoir, Self Help, Journal



[Download Note to Self: On Keeping a Journal and Other Dangerous ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online](#) Note to Self: On Keeping a Journal and Other Dangerou ...pdf

Download and Read Free Online Note to Self: On Keeping a Journal and Other Dangerous Pursuits
Samara O'Shea

From Reader Review Note to Self: On Keeping a Journal and Other Dangerous Pursuits for online ebook

James says

Great book loaded with plenty of advice on journal writing. I enjoy her style of writing as well so that helps.

Borum says

Note to Self

With the disappointment from Melissa Burch's book put aside, I was a little wary of picking up this book. Maybe the reception of this book was more favorable due to its comparison with the former, but unlike Melissa Burch's book which boasts of how she wrote all these great books by these four fabulous methods of journal writing, Samara O'Shea's book doesn't give you the magic formula for journal writing and tells the readers that these are just suggestions and that we don't necessarily have to follow any rules, except be honest with ourselves and write about anything (and by that, she meant 'brutally honest' and 'ANY oddball thing: whether fact or fantasy. conscious, subconscious, semiconscious (as in a drug-induced state), original or just other peoples' words)

Most of her suggestions are pretty much what I already have tried before, but what makes them interesting is excerpts and examples from her own (and even her families') diaries and letters. Sure, they can become very sappy and sometimes I get the feeling of getting too much of glimpse at her soap-drama/chick-lit life, but hey, what can be more interesting than stealing into someone else's diary (or life)? She spices up each end of her chapters with excerpts from journals of famous authors. These diaries are not edited or censored, so they are not as skillfully written as the 'completed' works of these authors but these raw, imperfect and unhindered writings reveal so much more into their lives and psyche. I personally prefer Sylvia Plath's journal to The Bell Jar, and even if Anne Frank survived and lived on to become a wonderful writer, none of her works could have been as powerful as her diaries.

Although a lot could be desired from Samara's own life, she made a good argument about writing about everything by showing how she sublimated those growing pains and found her writing spark. As a big fan of honest journal writing (not pretentious memoirs) who's going through a dry spell in writing my own journal, I hope to find that spark among some of the ashes of my life.

Sherry (sethurner) says

I have kept journals and diaries on and off my whole life, so when I saw this little volume at my local library I decided to see what it had to say. In the end it didn't have much to say to me, though a younger reader might find it useful. There are some quotes I liked, like this one: "We write to taste life twice, in the moment and in retrospection." -- Anais Nin. I liked that, and I was interested in her comments on other writers who

also kept journals or notebooks, like Anne Frank, Samuel Pepys, Tennessee Williams, Lewis Carroll, Thomas Paine, Louisa May Alcott, and the previously mentioned Nin. Other than those bits I wasn't particularly interested in her suggestions for journaling topics or the excerpts from her journals, which mostly dealt with her love life.

Ashley says

I really enjoyed this one. O' Shea writes in a beautiful yet conversational voice, and I feel as though I just had a long discussion about journaling with a kindred spirit. Although I like to think I could have written this book, I would not have been able to write it without first reading this one. Grateful for the inspiration to journal more.

Ciara says

i wanted to like this book. i have been keeping diaries since i was about five. i enjoy reading published diaries from famous diarists. i actually kind of enjoy weird self-help-style books, especially when they are about "finding yourself through writing" (even though they are all so repetitive, i pretty much never actually learn anything from them). but this was not what i expected.

the author is about my age. in fact, i think she is just a hair younger. so i wasn't really expecting the kind of insight that is gleaned from many years of lived experience, but i was anticipating a fresh, sassy voice. what i got was a stilted journalism major who wrote the entire book as a diary of her career path to date & unfortunate love life. um, that's not what i came for. thank god i got this book at the library & didn't actually pay money for it. oh, & all the god/religion stuff...i wanted to gouge my eyes out. she has religion, that's awesome for her, & kudos to other religious diarists who choose to document their relationships with their deities. but it's a really tedious read, just so you know.

the worst part about this book was imagining her ex-boyfriends reading it. dear god. each chapter is about some specific aspect of what you might journal about--finding you vocational path, coming to grips with your spirituality, exploring your sexuality, etc. & somehow she managed to filter almost all of it through her trials & tribulations with men. the star of the show was some poor bastard named tyler. the author dated him for a whopping two months, & yet he makes appearance after appearance in the diary entries she includes as real-life examples, & the actual book writing in between exhaustively documents their brief time together & its profound effect on her...as if anyone cares! it was so uncomfortable to read! i mean, we have all been there (probably)--everyone has that one person they dated for like six weeks who affected them way above & beyond the time they spent together. OR SO IT FEELS AT THE TIME. then eventually you grow the eff up, get into a real adult relationship that isn't built on cotton candy dreams of all the hot sex you'd be having if only he'd answer his damn phone, & you realize that all the fantastical feelings you were having for this dude were a product of hormones & emotional immaturity. then you put the guy out of your mind & you DO NOT write a book exposing your ridiculous fantasies for all the world to see. ugh!

the author reminded me of every awkward lunch date i have ever had with a friend who just couldn't grasp the fact that her "boyfriend" wasn't really her boyfriend & wasn't going to be returning her calls unless he was drunk & horny one night. you know, the conversations where you just want to shake some sense into your friend & compel her to stop airing her dirty laundry to everyone within a ten-foot radius over a platter of samosas, but you bite your tongue & try to be quietly supportive instead. at least my friends were just giving the other diners a peek into their sordid personal lives & not writing books about their misadventures

disguised as innocent, possibly intriguing books about keeping a diary. god. it's going to take a while to cleanse my mind of this book's noxious memory.

Sabrina Bullock says

Absolutely loved this book. Many examples of journal entries, including several historic ones. Gives a multitude of ideas for topics to write about in a journal.

Nicole Kapise-Perkins says

Along with offering useable tips for keeping a journal, Samara O'Shea's writing style is fluent and funny. A great read for anyone interested in journals and diaries, both reading published ones, and keeping your own.

Elaine D says

Throughout my affair with this book, I found myself tripping over poignance, clarity, and refreshing honesty at every turn. Samara O'Shea brings to life the venture of journal authorship to anyone willing to sit down with a cup of coffee and listen. I picked up this and a few other writing books at the library after making a calculated decision to develop my own writing. This volume may very well have made it into my list of the most inspiring and motivating books I've read. Reading it was sitting down chatting with a kindred spirit.

When thinking about what I "learned" from the material, I can't pinpoint any exact techniques or prompts that were new to me. I've been keeping steady journals for well over a decade, so I'm quite seasoned. I suppose I took away the most from her forthright honesty with herself. Her honesty was downright startling at first (I wouldn't want my parents and grandparents knowing 90% of the things she admitted to in those pages). Although it bordered on purely autobiographical at times, her use of her own journal entries of former selves was incredible. O'Shea is terribly honest, vulnerable, & to that end, relatable. I've already seen a difference in my own journal entries in the 3 days I've spent studying her words. This book will without a doubt require a second reading someday!

Kirsten Hivon says

Finished a while ago actually, but computer is misbehaving so this is the first chance i've gotten to write a review. Really good at giving idea's on how to start and keep a journal going. Good for me considering I haven't written in mine for 7 years. I loved the journal entries in it both hers and others, but I still don't think I have the courage to be as bold as the author in my entries, I always feel like I'm being watched. Definately worth a read if you wish to start your own journal or Blog (which is covered as well).

Chris says

Only made it to page 32 before I gave up. It just felt obnoxiously self-absorbed to me, in a way I couldn't

relate to at all.

Angela says

I really liked the book. If you're looking for a step by step teaching tool, this isn't it. She's just telling us about her experiences and how writing helped her. I can relate to the way she reasons with herself, so enjoyed reading it. I just didn't particularly want to know details about her sexual escapades.

Jessica says

O'Shea takes the topic of journaling and creates a hybrid memoir/textbook-ish book. The essential thesis is that journaling honestly can be a kind of self-therapy. It can help you learn from your mistakes, to set goals, and to evaluate where you are now. The book is divided topically into sections like "Romance on Record," "Hearts that Hurt," "While You Were Sleeping," and "A Day in the Life." There's even a section on blogging as journaling - "All the News that's Fit to Blog." In each section, O'Shea gives tips about how to explore and journal about the subject honestly and then gives examples from her own journals.

This method is highly effective. O'Shea assumes that you know how to purchase a journal and a pen (or a computer), and she just jumps right into how to make your journal personal, enlightening, and rewarding. The two primary "take-away" things I learned from this book are related: (1) repeal all "rules" you've inflicted upon yourself about journal writing and (2) write honestly. O'Shea says:

A journal is one of the only places where no one can judge you, and it should also be a place where you are not judging yourself. It's difficult to do that when you're already criticizing yourself for falling short of the process, so I invite you to dismiss everything you think a journal should be from your mind. Your journal is an extension of you, and therefore it can be whatever you want it to be.

According to the book, if you are brutally honest in your journal, you'll be able to use your entries in a variety of ways. I loved O'Shea's interpretation of prior journal entries as remnants of our "prior selves." Keeping a journal is a good way to keep a semblance of your 16-year-old self and your college-freshman self and your newly-married self, etc. I love this idea, and it inspires me to put more of me on paper.

In all, I really enjoyed this short, honest, and personal look at journaling. I must say that each night I read a little of this book, I was compelled to also spend a little time with my journal. Now that is the best praise I can give this gem of a book.

Chad says

A young woman's thoughts on the how's and why's of keeping a journal or diary, with thoughts and examples.

I read this because I always had trouble keeping a journal and wanted to see how it was done by someone who finds it a rewarding experience.

The tips and tricks probably could have been boiled down to a blog post. Most of the book was taken up with

examples from her personal journals and her reminiscing about her life, explaining the context of those excerpts.

Things I learned:

1. It doesn't have to be a daily record of what happened.
2. Be brutally honest with yourself. Writing your thoughts down is an excellent way to know who you are.

It was a good, quick read. I was astonished by her courage and willingness to share her private thoughts and life. Not mind blowing, but I would recommend to anyone feeling the pull to keep a journal but uncertain about how to start or what others find satisfying about it.

Bakari says

I bought the Kindle version of this book because it's only \$3.95. I thought it would read like many other books on journaling, but it turned out to be better than I thought.

O'Shea takes journal writing pretty seriously, but her book is not just about using the journaling for spiritual and healing purposes. It's more about using the journal as your personal friend, your mental processor, and your personal confessor.

I appreciate how she shares entries from her own journals, and addresses taboo subjects (sex and adultery) that are typically not addressed in other journaling books or workshops. Part of her book's content is based on her experiences as a teen and young woman in her twenties learning about herself and using her journal similarly to how other more famous journal keepers (like Anne Frank, Tennessee Williams, Joyce Carol Oats, and Annis Nin, who wrote honestly and frankly about her sexual affairs and life) have. O'Shea includes sample entries from these journal keepers, but it's difficult to tell if she read them as she was growing up, or if she read and referenced their books for purposes of writing her own book. Nevertheless, some of the excerpts from published journals are good models for journal writing.

O'Shea recommends for her readers to "Pull out your journal and be brutally, painfully, overwhelmingly, and cathartically honest with yourself." Her advice is similar to what Nin wrote about keeping her journal: "I'm going to write the absolute truth in my journal because reality deserves to be described in the vilest terms."

Some readers will find O'Shea's journal entries about her sex life a bit titillating, and it is, but I think what she shares is a good example how important it is to use your journal for writing honestly about what's going in your life, and to confess to yourself thoughts and experiences that you might not share with anyone else. That's how personal journaling can be most useful and better than what you write in your public blog. O'Shea says it best: "Writing makes everything real without putting your actions on paper it's easier to live in denial."

Much of what O'Shea says about journaling has also been addressed in other similar books, but what also sets her book apart is her writing skills. Her use of metaphor, irony, and analogies make her writing entertaining to read. O'Shea has the voice of a professional magazine writer and blogger. She takes her craft seriously and she writes about topics and issues that many writers avoid, at least in mainstream media. I would like to make more use of analogy in my writing, which I think would make it more interesting to read.

I don't share a lot of experiences with O'Shea, but I do appreciate how she has learned the power of writing and using it as a form of expression.

Jesse says

So as a devoted journal writer I knew the moment I spotted it on the library shelf that I would be really annoyed by what it had to say. Chalk it up to morbid curiosity, and now I almost feel bad rating this book because it was just what I expected but I made the decision to go ahead and read it anyway. So I'll be charitable and say that I'm not *at all* part of the target audience for this book, as I don't need tips on motivating myself to write, topics to record my thoughts on, etc, etc. But more than that I had a lot of issues with O'Shea's writing itself—it has a calculated "creative writing major" style that seems really popular these days but I find difficult to sift through (examples: the "irony" of the title, predictable sprinklings of pop culture references—Lindsay Lohan!—that were already dated at the moment of publishing, etc). To give credit where credit is due, O'Shea selects a number of really terrific dairies and journals to quote at length (Oates, Plath, Nin, Anne Frank) but that's kind of my problem—I've found that my own adventures in journaling have been most profoundly influenced and inspired by simply reading actual journals of these caliber instead of bothering with "self help" motivators. But hey, that's just me.
