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[This Month](#)

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[My Drift](#)

[As I See It](#)

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[Promotions](#)

[Nuts & Bolts](#)

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Doing the Write thing in 2005



Buzz Kolbe is a personal coach and enthusiastic advocate of journaling.

Logging the milestones of a lifetime

A new year. A blank page. What is to be written on the pages of your life story in 2005? You can only guess where life's road will take you, but with a journal in hand, you can log the important milestones that help shape your destination.

Business and Personal Coach Buzz Kolbe, CPBA, is an enthusiastic advocate of journaling. Why? "For the purpose of personal growth. It's that simple," he answered.

"It's about learning who you are in a deeper way than just keeping a diary. The distinction between a diary and a journal is the information you include. A diary might record just one-day events or listing of events, whereas a journal will get more into who you are."

That is a lofty goal that will only be obtained by getting down and dirty with the truth. Journaling is not about looking good on paper – although there should be some of that – but rather about facing tough issues and challenges with unflinching honesty.

If keeping a journal this year is your goal, here are some ideas to help you make the

But I'm not a writer Yes, you are! Everyone has ideas, thoughts, emotions, hopes and dreams. As Buzz says, you just have to give yourself permission to write.

"We are all writers," he says. "You might think, 'I'm a bad writer because I flunked English.' It doesn't matter. The intent of a journal is not to write as though you hope to win a Pulitzer Prize, it is to write from your heart. You're not writing for your parents, your spouse, your boss, your kids ... you are writing for you."

A picture is worth a thousand words You can include a myriad of things in your journal. Attach a fun photograph or sketch a special scene. Trace your child's hand on a page or attach clippings from a first haircut.

Buzz shared that he began a journal after his mother died in 1992 to help process his grief while celebrating her life. Pressed among the pages of that journal is a single flower, one that he took from her funeral service. A moment in time is captured in that faded flower. It is a real, tangible part of shared history.

Types of journals

Journals can address all aspects of life. You

most of your experience.

Getting started

The obvious first step is buying your journal. Buzz advises, "The most important thing about buying a book is finding one you like; one that is easy to write in and easy to read from. If you use it for a while and decide you don't like it, get another one."

Curl up with a good journal Once you've purchased a journal (and a pen) you like, find a place where you'll enjoy spending time alone with your thoughts. Be comfortable and away from distractions. Plan to spend about 15 minutes a day with your journal for 21 days, which is the length of time an action becomes a habit, according to Buzz. The length of time you spend writing in your journal will likely increase as you engage in this meaningful pursuit.

A book of blank pages

Nothing is more intimidating than a blank page ... except a book full of them! Buzz recommends two books that can help you get started: *The Right to Write* by Julia Cameron and *Journaling for Joy* by Joyce Chapman.

WritersDigest.com offers "20 Ways to Fill Page One." Among her suggestions, writer Lori Ritchie suggests greeting your journal, personify it, begin a friendship with it. Perhaps you want to begin with a dedication to someone important in your life. Or, tell the story of how you acquired this journal. Was it a gift? Did an event occur that prompted your need to journal?

You can write down goals for the coming year; write a personal mission statement concerning priorities in your life and the beliefs that anchor you; begin with a scripture, a passage from a beloved book, lyrics to a song, a poem.

You might even want to leave the first few pages blank and come back to them later. You may want to pen something special on that page when your journal is complete or make practical use of it and write a Table of Contents page for quick reference to your journal entries.

can devote an entire journal to one significant event, or you can fill the pages of one with daily thoughts and activities. A particular favorite for many people is a gratitude journal. This type of journal is great for both individuals and families. It's a great way to begin a family meal or end the evening at bedtime.

Buzz shared this story. "I had a client who had difficulty finding the right job and was often unemployed. His spouse worked at Target from midnight to eight o'clock in the morning. Plus, they were raising two children. They really didn't feel like they had anything to be grateful for, but I recommended that they start keeping a gratitude journal. They wrote down what they were grateful for every night. It really had an impact on their lives."

You might consider using "correspondence" journals to convey special messages to the members of your family. Place separate journals for each family member in one location, like a fireplace mantel or a bookshelf, and use the journals to write a note of thanks, a word of encouragement or words of wisdom.

The benefits of journaling

Random thoughts constantly dart through your mind like fireflies on a summer night. By journaling, you can focus your thoughts on a single concern, a hope, or an event. You can consider all aspects of it, gain clarity and produce insight. Journaling also allows you to "say the unsaid." It reveals your pattern of thoughts, feelings and behavior. It allows you to ask the tough questions like, "What is it I fear about going into this meeting?" or "Why do I feel resentment toward this person?"

Bottom line, Buzz believes journaling is about BEING: behavior, emotion, integrity, narration and growth. It's about lessons learned and life lived. It's about truth. It is discovering who you are and who you want to become. It is your story.