

Tips on Keeping a Journal

Journal writing can be a valuable tool to help you manage your weight loss and diet plan, get control of emotional and physical well-being, examine your life and learn from it, develop an internal feedback system, express your emotions and increase your self-awareness.

A journal is a record or account of various things of importance in our lives. By journaling on a regular basis, you can begin to discover your habits, become more aware of what and when you eat, and make the connection between food and mood.

Here's how to start:

1. **Record meals** during or soon after eating so that you become more aware of what you've eaten, how long it took you to eat and how hungry you were at the time.
2. **Be yourself.** Write in the style that you feel most comfortable with — in your own words.
3. **Be creative.** Journals do not just have to be for writing — you can include sketches, drawings or quotes that reflect your mood at that time.
4. **Emotional highs and lows:** At the end of each day, write down your high and low emotional points for the day and expand upon how each affected your eating. You can connect your emotional states to your degree of hunger by also rating your degree of hunger on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = Not Hungry and 5 = Extremely Hungry. You may eventually see some patterns that may be quite helpful to you in changing your dietary habits.

After you've kept your journal for several days, examine your entries for any patterns that have emerged.

1. Review your journal entries and note the issues or patterns that appear. For example, are you always eating a candy bar at 3 p.m. on days you've skipped a meal or eaten very little? Here's your opportunity to examine your behavior and begin to make more conscious choices.

2. What are the conditions affecting these repeated patterns? What are you doing while you're eating, who are you with and how are you feeling?
3. Think about the patterns and your emotions and understand how you are handling issues, situations and events. Try to make healthier choices when these situations occur in the future.

By recognizing issues or repeated patterns, you can begin to move forward and discover new ways for coping with everyday stress. You have nothing to lose, and everything to gain, so start a journal today!

