

GUIDE TO YOUR REFLECTIVE JOURNAL

The aim

Gaining access to your own insight isn't difficult, it simply involves a commitment to reflecting on a daily basis.

1. **Buy a journal.** Writing online doesn't provide the same benefits as writing by hand. So buy a paper journal that gives you free reign to be creative. You can include your own thoughts, drawings, pictures, post-its, different colours - in fact any way you wish to personalise your journal and make it interesting.
2. **Commit to reflecting for 15 minutes a day.** By far the most difficult step, so, if 15 minutes initially seems impossible then start with five minutes, but start somewhere.
3. **Find a quiet place.** Somewhere you won't be interrupted.
4. **Choose the right time.** Preferably the same time each day when you won't be disturbed. The start or end of each day provide the best opportunities for reflection, but pick a time that works for you.

Keep those 15 minutes carefully guarded in your agenda as an appointment with yourself.

5. **Write whatever comes to mind.** A journal's blank pages invite you to hold an honest conversation with yourself every day. In the journal you can say anything, so, give yourself permission to follow your stream of consciousness without judging, censoring, or trying to direct where your thoughts might take you.

Use pictures, drawings, colours, diagrams. Don't worry about grammar or spelling, however you express yourself is fine.

6. **Don't share your journal with anyone.** Your reflections are yours and they are not for anyone else. They bring you what any number of experts, advisers, and executive coaches can't offer you - your own unique perspective.

The questions

If you find yourself not knowing how to begin when you're facing the journal's blank pages, here are some questions to get you started:

- **What significant things happened to me at work today?** A brief description of the incidents and who was involved.

- **What did I achieve today?** Be specific not vague.
- **What did I learn at work?** Answers can range from interpersonal, “I learned how to say no to an unreasonable deadline”, to skill-based, “I learned how to use a Gantt chart”. Try to be specific and the more thorough you are here, the more you can learn from it.
- **How am I feeling right now?** This is an opportunity to be vulnerable, to let your guard down, to be open without worrying how others may react. If you feel positive or a sense of achievement, record this too.
- **How could I have made today better?** Many of us, when dissatisfied with our day, prefer to forget it or to move past it as quickly and quietly as possible. But, by asking yourself how you could have made the day better you’re forcing your brain to look for improvements. Your day may have been stressful, but don’t write it off until you’ve learned something from it. Look for one thing you can do, either to prevent it from happening again or to help you deal with it more effectively.
- **What are the 2 biggest things happening outside of my immediate work group at present?** This could be elsewhere in your business or in the industry generally. It helps you focus on the wider world of work and beyond, and not just your own team.
- **What are my immediate priorities at work today or tomorrow?**