A glowing oil lamp sits on a wooden table, casting a warm light. In the foreground, an open journal with a pen lies on the table. The background is dark, making the lamp and the journal stand out.

the authentic self

Journaling Your Joys, Griefs and
Everything in Between

199 Life Themes To Help You Discover Who You Really Are

SHERY RUSS

THE AUTHENTIC SELF
Journaling Your Joys, Grievs and Everything in Between
199 Life Themes to Help You Discover Who You Really Are

SHERY RUSS

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Published by iMuse Publishing

ISBN 978-0-6151-5562-3

Also by Shery Russ

Weekly Writes: 52 Weeks of Writing Bliss
www.weeklywrites.com

Journal Sparks: 300 Questions to Journal About
www.journalsparks.com

Journaling Kit
www.journalingkit.com

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AUTHENTICITY

How authentically are you living your life right now? Is there synergy between your inner world (your feelings, values, beliefs, needs, passions) and outer world (relationships, job, home)?

When you live your life authentically, there is congruence between these two worlds. You close the gap between who you are, what you do and what you want others to get about you. Others get the real you when you speak from the heart and walk your talk.

Authenticity and personal power go hand in hand. The more you live authentically, the more personal power you possess. Even though you may have more conflicts, problems or fears by choosing to live authentically, these things can no longer control you and mess up your life. You are able to choose how you respond and deal with them.

Choosing to live authentically requires honesty and a willingness to accept what you know to be true for you in every situation. It means not succumbing to the pressures to do what society views "right" or "acceptable." It involves self-trust and a deep conviction.

* * *

Make a list of words that describe your Authentic Self. Are the words in your list the words that others think of you or know of you?

How do you practice authenticity in your life? For instance, you practice authentic living when you speak up for something you're passionate about at the risk of not being liked by some. Grow a list of personal ways to be authentic.

What creative gifts do you possess? Do other people know about your gifts or have you been hiding them? Do you only manifest these gifts to a select few, perhaps to one person with whom you are most comfortable?

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HOPE

Do you dare to hope for the future? Do you understand the creative power of hope to make a change? You may feel that the word sounds vague and a little trite. You might say that you ‘hope’ to win the lottery, or ‘hope’ you remember to put the cat out. The true meaning of hope has been sucked out of our everyday usage of the word. When you have hope, you look forward to the future, optimistic and excited. When you truly hope for a goal or a dream, you begin to build the reality from the plan in your mind’s eye.

Imagine that you’re in charge on the construction site of a skyscraper. Let’s say that you decide to begin the job without a plan. You tell your workers that they can attach girders and metal wherever they like. The result will be ugly, unstable, and probably won’t be much taller than a single story. Builders know the value of an architect who can draw them an accurate plan.

A plan shows you how the foundation needs to be laid. It shows you how to go ahead at each stage of the project. Even if your ‘skyscraper’ looks strange when it’s half-built, you can proceed with confidence, because it’s part of the plan. In the same way, hope enables you to see the steps to your future. Hope is the architect of your mind, providing you with a blueprint for the construction of your dreams. Hope is what gives you vision.

* * *

What do you hope for in the future? Is your hope vague? Do you feel that your dreams have much substance? Why, or why not?

What is your most important dream? What makes it so important to you?

Visualize your dream coming to pass. Write down what you see in your mind’s eye.

What needs to happen to bring your dream about? What do you need to do to help you along the way? For instance, if you dream of owning your home outright in twenty years, what will need to happen in ten years? How about five years, or fifteen years?

We live in an instant culture. Vast amounts of information and entertainment are available on the Internet. A large part of the world's population is only a phone call away. We demand fast food in a restaurant, speedy service when shopping and immediate answers to questions. Have you come to expect the same instantaneous 'service' from your loved ones, from your career or in your home life?

Good things take time. For example, examine your relationships with others. Even with all the recent advances in communication, you may have more to learn from an oak tree than your e-mail program. The oak takes many decades to grow from an acorn to its enormous size, first supporting itself with a huge root structure deep underground. We cannot expect new friendships to have instant strength and depth. A friendship requires trust, sincerity, and plenty of time to mature. You may wish for a better house, a better job, nicer clothes or a new gadget, and struggle and strive to make this happen immediately. Reaching for a better life is positive, but don't make the mistake of trying to make everything happen at once. When you have patience, you can relax and enjoy the things that you have *now*.

Time will go at the same pace no matter how you urge it on. Choosing to have patience means that you are not straining, impossibly, to make the future come faster. Patience means finding satisfaction and joy in your present environment, possessions and relationships.

* * *

Are you impatient with people in your life? Have you expressed your impatience to them? Do you silently brood on it? How has this affected your relationship with them?

Are you impatient with your life situation? What things do you feel you cannot wait for? What makes you impatient for them? How can you take the focus away from them, to the present?

What can you see to enjoy about your life right now? What brings you joy in the present?

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SINCERITY

Do you approach other people with sincerity? Many people hold the belief that small deceptions are required every hour of the day. Insincerity is said to help society. Perhaps your employer has instructed you to lie to a client about some overdue work. Perhaps a friend has asked your opinion on some new clothes and you feel under pressure not to hurt her feelings. Perhaps you're simply embarrassed at being late for an event and feel you must concoct an excuse.

We're all designed to detect even mild insincerity. If you tell half-truths and white lies, you risk coming off as creepy and someone to avoid. Deep insincerity is bad even for yourself. It means having to remember and recite a series of untruths for fear of exposing the actual situation.

Being sincere often means swallowing your pride, looking like a fool or hurting someone's feelings for a short time, but it's the substance of any meaningful relationship. It's the key to lasting connections with others, as well as a clear head. Everyone craves sincerity.

* * *

Think about the different 'spheres' in your life -- your job, school, friends, family. Which sphere contains the most sincerity? Which are most in need of sincerity?

Do you value sincerity? Think of a situation where you were insincere. What do you think would have happened if you had been sincere? What would be the short-term and the long-term consequences?

Can you think of a situation where sincerity paid off? Was it your sincerity or someone else's? What good has come out of it?

Has insincerity come into a previously honest relationship? Do you need to have a difficult but truthful conversation with someone?

Harvey Peakar, author of the autobiographical comic *American Splendor*, learned tolerance the hard way. Just after getting married, Harvey lost his voice almost completely. Weeks later, his voice still hadn't returned. Harvey loved to talk, and fell into a depression at his inability to communicate. He was examined by a doctor, and told that he had a nodule on his vocal chords. By his own admission, Harvey had been intolerant of any perceived fault, slowness or stupidity in anyone else. The doctor explained that Harvey's constant, angry shouting had aggravated his voice box to the point where it had given out. Happily, Harvey did recover his voice, but not for many months. Of his experience, he says, "*It made me a calmer, more restrained person. I used to shout and yell at the drop of a hat, but since I got my voice back I want to keep it, so I don't raise it nearly as much*".

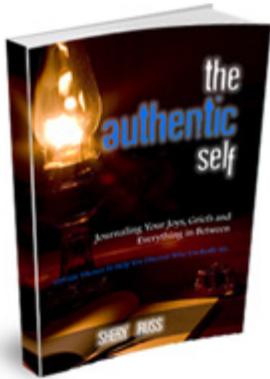
If you're intolerant, you may not lose the ability to speak. However, the clarity of your thoughts will be worn away by your aggravation at others. If you're highly intolerant, you may suffer deep psychological stress because so much of your time is given to anger and frustration. Perhaps you see an acquaintance as being stupid, backward, mistaken or at fault. Do you want to feel good after an encounter with him or her? Approach the person with an attitude of tolerance. Treat him or her as you would want to be treated. You may be surprised at how much he or she has to offer.

* * *

Who makes you angry or frustrated? What is it about that person that irks you? Make a quick, brief list. Can you think of good points about that person? Think of at least as many good points as the bad points you noted.

How has intolerance affected your relationships? How have anger and frustration affected your thought life?

Make a list of personal ways to act more tolerantly. It may help to think in practical, small steps. You might decide to help your annoying housemate with the dishes, or to say hello to an irksome co-worker.



Are you living an authentic life?

How authentically are you living your life right now? Is there synergy between your inner world (your feelings, values, beliefs, needs, passions) and outer world (your relationships, job, home)?

When you live your life authentically, there is congruence between these two worlds. You close the gap between who you are, what you do and what you want others to get about you. Others get the real you when you speak from the heart and walk your talk.

The Authentic Self: Journaling Your Joys, Grievs and Everything in Between by Shery Arrieta-Russ (ISBN 978-0-6151-5562-3; paperback, 212 pages, October 2007) can help you realize your Authentic Self. Start journaling your joys, grieves and all the other life themes in between, and you'll discover who you really are.

Journaling: A Liberating Activity

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ISBN 10: 0615155626

ISBN 13: 978-0615155623

212 pages, paperback



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