



CAPTURING LIFE

How Journaling Lends Meaning to Our Days

I've always been a big fan of pen and paper. I've written in the past about the value I place on sending handwritten birthday cards to loved ones. Growing up and into my early 20s, I've also kept journals of different kinds.

Pandemic Progress

My journaling habit began in earnest a little before the pandemic in 2020. Life back then sometimes felt like being stuck in the movie "Groundhog Day," living the same day over and over and over again at home. So many things felt out of control. As writing became part of my daily cadence, journaling provided proof that time was actually progressing. Sitting down to write first thing in the morning helped me get started on my day.

I have no magical pen or special way of choosing a topic. I just write about whatever is on my mind at the moment. Sometimes, the entry is literally, "Here's what we did yesterday." I might write about a dream I had. Other times, I might notice a topic online and think, "I should journal on this," make a note on my phone, and pick it up the next time I sit down to write.

Perspectives on Time

I write in three different journals every day. One is a 5-Minute Journal, where I record three things in the morning I'm grateful for, and three things in the evening that went well. That gratitude journal was definitely helpful during the pandemic. Even if I'd had a really bad day, I could usually find three things that went well.

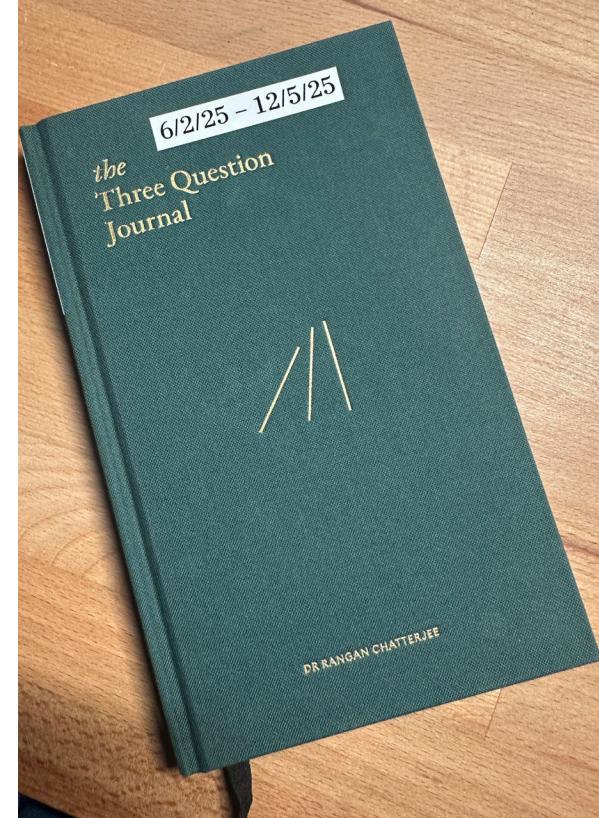
I also write longer daily entries in a traditional journal. I just sit down, open my notebook, write the date at the top of the page, and begin recording what happened that day. I sometimes flip back through my journal, grab a page at random, and look through it to see what was going on that day.

In addition, I keep a 5-Year Journal. Every page accommodates a total of five entries from the same date in five successive years. I started this one after the pandemic began, writing on "fun things to do with the kids." As I've kept that journal going, it's been interesting to look back day by day and remember the life events we experienced on the same date in previous years.

Looking back, I wish I had been even more consistent in my journaling. In many periods of my life, I would start a new journal, but the habit wouldn't stick. I'm annoyed about that now. I wish I had journals from certain times, such as Sept. 11, 2001, when I was in New York City during the terrorist attacks. I'd like to revisit entries from extraordinary times like that.

A Valuable Record

I took my journal with me on a cruise down the Alaskan coast last fall with my dad and my older son. I would wake up early each morning, go to the coffee bar, and



spend time journaling, glancing out through the window as I wrote. Those entries were a lot more factual than usual: "Here's what happened on this day, and it worked out well."

The details of that trip may fade in my memory, but they will remain permanently within reach in my journal. I am conserving all my journals in a steel storage box in my closet. Maybe someday, after I'm long gone, my son will grab my old journal from 2025 and find stories he can tell his own kids about what their grandfather said and did. (Of course, I could also see people throwing out all of Dad's old notebooks!)

Regardless of the outcome, I plan to keep journaling at the same cadence in the years ahead. For whatever value my entries might have, I'll enjoy creating a record of my days.

- Andrew M. Ayers

Silver Screen Speed

SECRETS OF THE SILENT FILM AGE

Contrary to what the surviving films may suggest, people didn't move faster during the earliest years of cinema.

If you watch an old silent film from decades past, it may appear as though someone's holding down the "fast-forward" button. Movements seem exaggerated and hyper-fast, bombarding our eyes with visuals that are as surreal as they are comical. However, nothing is wrong with your senses. These films were created this way, and the reasons behind their quicker momentum are an intriguing mix of technology, commerce, and the inventive minds of maverick film directors.

Fleeting Frames of Fantasy

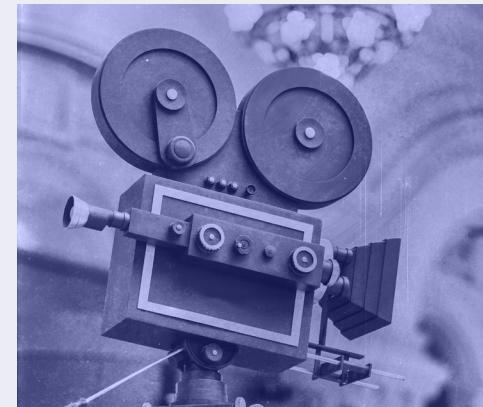
Here's a fun fact: Whether we watch a film from a century ago or one released last week, we're *not actually* seeing real movement on screen. Instead, we're viewing a succession of images presented rapidly enough to give us the impression that

someone (or something) is in motion. This technique is called *frames per second* (fps).

One of the earliest pioneers in film, the legendary inventor Thomas Edison, determined that movies ideally needed to be shot at 46 fps or more to produce convincing on-screen movement. However, early filmmakers often faced financial restraints with film stock, causing them to shoot many movies at 12 or 16 fps. As technology advanced over the years, the speed of these primitive films increased considerably when played on more modern equipment.

The Cinematic Cranking Craze

While most view it today as a retired relic of a bygone era, the Bell and Howell 2709 movie camera was all the rage in the 1920s. Considered revolutionary at the time, the hand-cranked machine enabled users to shoot at varying speeds based on the number of cranks per minute. "Ben-Hur:



"A Tale of the Christ" (1925) and Charlie Chaplin's "The Gold Rush" (1925) were among the movies shot with a 2709. The technology allowed directors to order camera operators to either slow down or speed up their cranking for dramatic effect.

From there, the movies would hit theaters, where they'd often appear to move even faster. For example, something shot at 16 fps would appear sped up when shown through projectors running at a quicker pace. In fact, theaters loved to project films at very high speeds, as faster films meant quicker showings, enabling them to sell more tickets per day.

PUZZLES AND PATIENCE

KEYS TO RAISING CRITICAL THINKERS

In a culture overwhelmed by algorithms and conflicting media sources, critical thinking is more important than ever. This is especially true of young children, many of whom will become our future CEOs, writers, and world leaders. Here are two simple ways parents can help their little ones develop the thinking skills they'll need to thrive through life's challenges.

Questions kindle thoughtful truths.

Whether you're raising a young child for the first time or are a veteran grandparent who's



done it all, you can surely recall moments when a little one hit you with a barrage of questions that tested your patience. Few people would fault you for rushing through your answers to satisfy your tiny inquisitor when stressed, but regularly questioning things is a sign of a critical thinker.

Whenever possible, take the time to *lean into* your child's questions. Instead of simply giving them an answer, ask them their thoughts about the information you've provided. Rather than asking them questions that could be answered with a simple yes or no, prompt them with open-ended ones that will strengthen their reasoning skills and prompt them to consider a topic more deeply.

Small struggles make stronger minds.

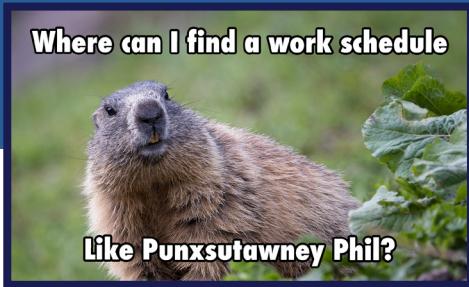
As parents, we want to answer our children's questions and find solutions to all their problems. While some situations

will always require our intervention (such as a medical emergency), it's sometimes best to allow kids to find their own path to solving dilemmas or discovering answers. Board games, puzzles, building blocks, and even role-playing games with friends can foster stronger thinking skills, so allow your children plenty of time to engage in activities that expand their minds while they're having fun.

When you see your child struggle to figure out how to complete a playtime task, pause before jumping in to help. Giving them room to sort out the issue instead of immediately coming to their aid will help them think and problem-solve more independently.

When we practice patience and give children space to explore the world in their own way, we nurture curious, confident thinkers who are ready for whatever life brings.

TAKE A *BREAK*



MOUTHWATERING MINI CHEESECAKES



Ingredients

- 12 oz package vanilla wafers
- 16 oz cream cheese, softened
- 3/4 cup white sugar
- 2 large eggs
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 21 oz can cherry pie filling

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350 F.
2. In two 24-cup miniature muffin pans, line each space with a paper liner.
3. Using a food processor or resealable plastic bag, crush vanilla wafers into a fine crumb.
4. Press 1/2 teaspoon of crumbs into each paper liner.
5. In a mixing bowl, beat cream cheese, sugar, eggs, and vanilla until light and fluffy.
6. Fill each miniature muffin liner with this mixture, almost to the top.
7. Bake in the preheated oven for 15 minutes or until the cheesecakes are set.
8. Cool completely in the pan.
9. Top each mini cheesecake with about a teaspoon of cherry pie filling before serving. Enjoy!

Inspired by [AllRecipes.com](#)



A Sweet Swindle? The Case of the Skimpy Snack

The concept of "shrinkflation" may be gaining ground in light of today's economy, but it's nothing new. In fact, nearly a decade ago, the thought of companies reducing the amount of product available in each sale while charging the same price hit one Midwestern man right in his sweet tooth.

In 2017, Robert Bratton of Columbus, Missouri, sued the Hershey Co. for \$5 million, claiming that the boxes of Reese's Pieces and Whoppers he regularly purchased were not filled with enough candy. Citing violations of the Missouri Merchandising Practices Act, he alleged that 29% of the Reese's Pieces boxes he purchased were empty, while only 59% of the Whoppers packaging contained actual product. His suit further alleged that the candy company unjustly enriched itself by knowingly selling boxed items containing considerable empty space.

Aiming to avoid leaving a sour taste in court, Hershey contended that at least some empty space is common in most packaged goods to allow for "efficient manufacturing and distribution." Additionally, the company claimed that consumers are made aware of this necessary space before purchasing its goods, as the contents of Whoppers and Reese's Pieces boxes "audibly rattle."

Despite his multimillion-dollar complaint, Bratton continued to purchase Hershey products, a move that ultimately led to the unraveling of his lawsuit. In 2018, Judge Nanette K. Laughrey dismissed the case after it was revealed that the plaintiff had purchased Reese's Pieces and Whopper boxes *by the hundreds* over several years, despite knowing the high likelihood that they would not be full.

"Mr. Bratton testified that he initially expected the boxes to be full, but at some point ... [he] realized that they're not," Laughrey said in her ruling. "Although Mr. Bratton claimed to have always clung to his hope that the boxes would be full, he acknowledged that he did not expect the box to be miraculously filled the next time he bought it."

While Bratton's love for sugary treats is impossible to deny, his efforts to take down a chocolate giant for shortchanging his confectionery conquests were questionable at best.

6800 France Ave., Ste. 190
Edina, MN 55435

877-262-9377
AndrewMAyers.com



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BRIGHT DAY, DIM IDEA

Sunlit Stupidity Foils a Thief

Santa Claus isn't real. The world doesn't disappear when you close your eyes. You can be arrested for burglary regardless of the time of day you commit the crime.

Most reasonable people accept the above facts as undeniable truths long before they reach 22. Unfortunately (or humorously, depending on your point of view), James Blankenship of Willoughby, Ohio, was unaware of that last fact despite being a legal adult for four years. One day during the summer of 2013, he broke into his mother's house in the neighboring city of Eastlake by removing a window screen.

Already on shaky ground with his parent for reasons not specified in media coverage of the incident, he had been banned from the Eastlake premises for at least three months before attempting to enter it without permission. According to statements his mother later gave to the police, her son had no possessions in the home at the time of the incident.

Because Blankenship chose to commit his crime *in broad daylight*, his mother spotted him and alerted the police. Rather than fleeing the neighborhood when he was discovered, he hid in a crawl space near his mother's home. A witness reported seeing him run behind a nearby house, which allowed police to locate him easily. According to an official statement on the Eastlake Police's Facebook page, Blankenship told the arresting officers, "I thought you could only be charged with burglary if you break in during the nighttime."

After pleading guilty to a lesser charge of breaking and entering, Blankenship served 60 days in prison (with 120 days out of his original 180-day sentence suspended) and was fined \$100. Perhaps most significantly, he also learned a valuable lesson on how the sun helps people see things during the day.

