

dear diary...

WHY WRITING IN A JOURNAL IS ONE OF THE BEST SELF-ESTEEM BUILDERS AROUND.

What?

Ah, the journal... It's been the basis for so many can't-live-without films. Who could forget all the laughs we had while watching *Bridget Jones's Diary* (and how much trouble her precious diary got her in to)? And where would we be without films like *My Week With Marilyn*, a film that's based on events that were documented in British writer and filmmaker Colin Clark's diary? Diaries are great for recording history, but they're also perfect for our day-to-day lives, helping us sort through emotions and figure out where our heads are at.

We asked psychologist Dr Pene Schmidt to teach us the ins and outs of this phenomenon. Firstly, what is it? Put simply, Dr Pene explains, "A journal is something you can record your innermost thoughts in without worrying about being judged by anyone".

Why?

Journals are great at helping us understand our

emotions and identify our own wants and needs – really important stuff!

Dr Pene says journals can also help us identify any unhelpful patterns in our thinking. "For example, if we read back over our journal and notice that a lot of what we're writing is negative, we can make a conscious effort to start challenging some of those unhelpful thoughts," she says.

EVENING OUT THE PLAYING FIELD

Dr Pene says when we notice a lot of negative thoughts being written into our journals, it's important to record positive things about ourselves. Think "My favourite thing about myself is..."

"While this can feel strange at first (particularly if we have low self-esteem), it's a great way to help us focus on the things we do like about ourselves, and can help build our confidence," says Dr Pene.

How?

Starting a journal can seem quite intimidating; all those blank pages staring you down, and always wanting to write as neatly as you can... Well, Dr Pene has a perfect suggestion to help you on your way: "Set a timer for three minutes and just start writing

whatever comes to mind. Don't worry about whether it makes sense or not – just write."

If writing isn't your thing, Dr Pene suggests expressing yourself in pictures. "Go through all your old mags to find images or words that represent you and your feelings," she says.

When?

Journals are great friends when you experience a strong emotion – listening intently and allowing you to analyse your own thoughts without judgement. However, it's important to remember journals aren't just for negative emotions. Dr Pene says you need to note both the good and the bad times down because it'll help you celebrate and acknowledge the good times, and work through the more challenging emotions, such as anger, jealousy and anxiety.

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