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## **Family Memory Journal**

**By Rachel Paxton**

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by: **Rachel Paxton**

A family memory journal is a fun, easy way to preserve family memories. A couple of years ago I was sorting through a pile of unused journals (many given to me as presents!) and was trying to come up with a way to put them to good use.

One day after a family gathering, I sat down and wrote a short description of the gathering in one of the unused journals. I wrote where the gathering took place, the occasion we were celebrating, the names of the people who had attended, and anything about the day that had stood out in my memory. I did this for the next couple of family get togethers and then just stuck the journal in a drawer somewhere.

It didn't seem like that big of deal at the time, but probably a year or more later I pulled out the journal again and looked at the entries I had made. It was really fun reading them again. I had already forgotten some of the things that had happened, or thoughts that I had at the time that fortunately I had thought to write down.

I've been really forgetful about writing in my family memory journal, but in the past couple of years have probably chronicled two or three family events a year. When you think about it, 25 years from now, the journal will be full of family memories.

Family journals are a great thing to pass down to your children and grandchildren. At the time they don't really care about what's going on, but some day they will appreciate being reminded of some of their childhood memories.

In the past year or so I've really gotten into scrapbooking. I was just thinking that my memory journal will be a great resource for my scrapbooking projects. Sometimes it takes months to get your photos ready and pages laid out. By that time you will forget any memories you had to go along with them. If you have your family memory journal, you can use it to add journaling to your scrapbook pages, with your memory as clear as if you had taken the pictures yesterday.

Don't let time pass you by and let those special family moments get away from you. Sometimes an

event as routine as "another family birthday party" might make a great memory later in life. Especially when older relatives start passing away, it's special remembering the times they were involved in family get togethers. Someday when you're that older person, your youngest family members will enjoy reading about their great- and great-great grandparents.

Rachel Paxton is a freelance writer and mom who is the author of What's for Dinner?, an e-cookbook containing more than 250 quick easy dinner ideas. For recipes, tips to organize your home, home decorating, crafts, and more, visit Creative Homemaking at <http://www.creativehomemaking.com>. Email: [rachel@creativehomemaking.com](mailto:rachel@creativehomemaking.com)

## As The Primary Caregiver, Should I Journal My Feelings About Alzheimer's Disease?

By William Hammond, J.D.

### As The Primary Caregiver, Should I Journal My Feelings About Alzheimer's Disease?

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Being a caregiver is stressful and difficult. It involves contradictory feelings, thoughts and frustrations. When you have to care for a loved one who has Alzheimer's, you have to be patient, talk with a calm voice and never "talk down" to your loved one.

Journaling your thoughts and feelings will definitely help you cope with the situation. Write in your journal all that comes through your mind and your heart; nobody but you will read it. It is between you and your journal. Let your pen guide you through the pages. You may want to do some extra research on Alzheimer's disease to better understand the process and stages your loved one will pass through. If you are a little bit knowledgeable about the disease, the process of caring will be easier on both you and your loved one.

You can keep daily notes on your loved one, such as bathing or eating changes, whether she becomes agitated, and so on. It can also help you remember things to discuss with the doctor.

The good thing about a journal is that it is handy and you can write whenever you feel like it, day or night. It will never contradict you. On the contrary, it will aid you in dealing with your internal emotions; it will relieve your mind and your soul. If you are uncomfortable about writing, then it may be easier for you to express your feelings by recording them on a tape recorder. If you like, you can recall some family gathering you all had together, a camping trip or fishing trip where your loved one caught a BIGGGGG fish! You can read this part to him and it might trigger some memory in your loved one...a memory that was lost to Alzheimer's.

Journaling will also help you release the burden of care giving you may have. Releasing the burden through the pen will definitely ease the pain. But journaling should not be the only way out for these strong feelings you have. You may want to enroll in a support group. You can check through the Alzheimer's Association if there is such a group in your area. Speaking to other people will help in getting all these negative emotions out. And most of the participants are dealing with exactly the same emotions because they have to care for a loved one who has dementia. Sometimes, speaking out loud and getting out these feelings will do you a lot of good and you will feel much better after. You may even make friends through these groups, friends that will be able to support you as time goes on.

Remember, you are not alone. You have friends and family to talk to. Maybe you can ask a family member to help with your loved one. It will ease the burden and give you more time to yourself, to journal and to recharge your batteries.

William G. Hammond, JD is a nationally known elder law attorney and founder of The Alzheimer's Resource Center. He is a frequent guest on radio and television and has developed innovative

solutions to guide families who have a loved one suffering from Alzheimer's. For more information you can visit his website at [www.BeatAlzheimers.com](http://www.BeatAlzheimers.com).

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