

## A Message to Moms

About seven years ago, I became inspired to start journaling by a fellow mom who had the most immaculate sets of journals you could imagine—colorful, clever captions penned in perfect handwriting beneath chronologically placed photographs amid pages of poignant descriptions of her life as a mom. She loved the art of handwriting. I can barely *read* my own handwriting and do not particularly enjoy the pen-to-paper process. I was overwhelmed. I knew my limits.

My friend encouraged me to keep it simple and to do only as much as I could realistically

maintain and enjoy, in other words to personalize my journaling to fit *me*. So I pulled out a three-ring binder, wrote my kids' names on dividers, and scrawled in black-and-white letters on the front cover "Chase, Chance, and Chandler: Funny Sayings and Stuff." No photos, no colorful captions, very few passages of long, flowery prose, but lots of pages filled with short paragraphs or cryptic phrases meaningful only to members of my family. Like this entry: "8-27-02 CHANDLER—Deodorant on forehead."

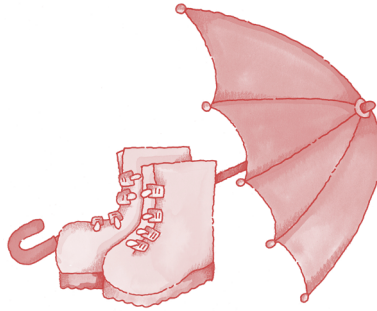
Everyone in the Johnson home knows that phrase speaks of the time my youngest son, nine-year-old Chandler, put deodorant on his forehead because "that's how they did it on the TV commercial." (They were demonstrating how this particular antiperspirant went on clear, but he didn't get that part.) His older brother Chance, eleven at the time, promptly chimed in to straighten things out, "How dumb. It doesn't go on your forehead. You're supposed to put it on your stomach."

Journaling is truly a personal thing. There is not just *one* way to approach it—no right or wrong way. Maybe you hum a happy tune at the

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thought of pouring each day's events down to the last giggle into your journal. Or perhaps, like me, your entries are as random as dry pants during potty training.



Maybe you prefer to write directly to your child. For example, one of my entries reads, “7-31-98 CHASE—The other day we said to you, ‘Chase, we could never ask for a better first son than you.’ You said, ‘You could, but then you’d have God on your hands.’” Or maybe you’d rather write for yourself, as if no one else will ever read your words. If you already have your own style of journaling that works for you . . . way to go! Stick with it, girlfriend! If not, here are some suggestions aimed only at priming the pump of your own well of creativity.

1. Keep your journal in a visible place, preferably where your kids are most likely to say or do those things that you absolutely *must* capture for posterity. Easy access is key. And

make sure your writing utensils are nearby. By the way, using specially colored ink is fun, and when something is fun, we're more likely to do it.

2. If you're using multiple journals (one for each child), consider keeping them between bookends in a prominent place or make it a special occasion to go out and choose a container you really like such as a basket or an antique tin. Many moms use multiple journals so that they can pass them on to each child as a keepsake.

3. Should you choose to use one journal for all your children, you might try different ink colors such as pink, green, and purple so as to easily discern who said or did what at a glance. Of course, you could also simply write the child's name next to your journal entry date. I prefer to differentiate *clearly* who said or did what because it proves a handy time-saver when preparing to

blackmail your children as they hit adolescence. I label each entry with the date and the name of the child or children involved.

One thing that always kept me from using those



adorable baby books was the myriad headings and subtitles I was supposed to fill in and could never keep up with (for example, first overnight trip, first pair of shoes, first time to break wind, etc.). This journal is designed to give you the freedom to write what is important to *you*. The quotations and questions are not meant to be strict guidelines for what to write on each page. Their purpose is to encourage you as a mom and to inspire you in your journaling. Whether related to the writing prompts or your own random recollections of the day, whether penned as poetic paragraphs or snappy snippets, your entries, in your own style, should grace these pages.

If you just aren't able to keep up with your journal for a while, and you're feeling like, "What's the use? I've dropped the ball," remember the goal is not perfection (said the perfectionist to her fellow moms). The goal is to capture some wonderful memories. Just start again when you can and go from there.

Mothering can lead us down a path of tremendous personal and spiritual growth. That's why this journal has two parts. In the first, entitled *Here's to Me*, you will encounter questions



as well as inspirational sayings from my book *Days of Whine and Noses: Pep Talks for Tuckered-Out Moms*. These are aimed at encouraging you to explore your own thoughts and feelings

about mothering and life in general. The second part, *Here's to You*, focuses on the hilarious and heartwarming antics of your children. In years to come, you will pull out your journal and reread your words and marvel at how motherhood shaped and molded you in ways you could never have dreamed. You will recognize the profound lessons learned in the often mundane routines of mothering. You will see how just as your children were growing up, so were you.

As moms, we tend to feel guilty about *everything*. This journal is *not* intended to serve as one more opportunity for you to exercise your guilt muscle. I'll be the first to admit that there are times when my journal entries are separated by more than a few major holidays. That's OK.

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The purpose of this journal is to nurture you as a mom, so decide now to enjoy the journey and give the guilt muscle a rest. Heed my wise friend's advice—keep it simple and only do what you are able to maintain and enjoy. Here's to a journey like none other—these wild and wonderful Days of Whine and Noses!