

Be in the moment

Writer Emma Pritchard explores why life is best lived day by day

THE JOY OF JOURNALING

When was the last time you sat and let your mind wander? Doodled perhaps? Or made handwritten notes about the highs and lows of your day? June 21 marks the longest day of the year, no better time to take time out for wellbeing and self-reflection.

According to a study from the University of California, writing a journal – particularly by hand – can essentially relax the brain and improve mood and emotional wellbeing. While, research published in *JAMA* (*The Journal of the American Medical Association*), among others, has identified connections between writing and physical wellbeing; it can alleviate symptoms of asthma, rheumatoid arthritis and even speed up recovery and healing post injury.

The good news is, it's surprisingly easy to benefit. All you need is a notebook (try the handcrafted ones from Esmie (esmie.co.uk), which are silk screen printed; a pen or pencil (The Happiness Planner (thehappinessplanner.co.uk) has a

selection featuring inspirational mantras); and a spot to sit without distraction.

Need an extra nudge? Richmond-based life coach Monica Castenotto shares three tips for getting started:

Relax There's no right or wrong way to journal, no structure to adhere to. Give yourself permission to start somewhere – anywhere – and see where the writing takes you. Don't self-censor; just let go.

Question yourself Not sure what to write about? Answer the following: What has happened? When did it take place? Why do you want to document it? Who was there? How did you feel?

Enjoy the act Journaling isn't just about the words you write, it's the process, the relative slowness of it, the weight and feel of the pen in your hand, the smell of the ink and the look of your marks on the page. Notice how you feel at the start, in the middle, and at the end of your journaling – and how your writing reflects that.

■ For free resources and information about Monica's Authors' Group, visit livealifeyoulove.co.uk

