



## Ordinary Beauty

I once had a friend (many, many 15 years ago) who used to ask me the following question nearly every day.

“What was beautiful today?”

This was integral to my healing during the time. I was in a massive downswing and having difficulty keeping my head above water. I’d moved across country for a romance that died after a year of trying to make it work. I was living alone in poverty and feeling very, very lost and hopeless.

But somehow, that question kept me going.

It didn’t matter how miserable I was or how bleak my situation. I could ALWAYS find one beautiful thing to relate.

Finding one thing led to finding more than one and that led to seeing things in a whole new light. There is beauty everywhere. Meaning is just sitting there waiting to be noticed. Gratitude really helps when one is feeling awful. Eureka! Epiphany!

Her question led me to begin to take what I now refer to as ‘the long look’ at things. The ‘long look’ is a mindfulness practice that once inspired reams and reams of poetry, and now inspires art journal spreads and other art. It is a practice by which I \*notice\* what is around me and within me.



me circa 2000

When I engage in this practice on a regular basis, gratitude, and its offspring, joy, comes more easily. It is important to feel what we feel - the full spectrum that is available to us as humans - and it is important to acknowledge it when things suck, but I think it’s equally important to notice what is right, what is good, what is beautiful in each and every moment.

That's why our theme for the first session of [Book Of Days](#) in 2015 is Ordinary Beauty. I want us to seek it out like pigs snorfling truffles in a European forest. I want us to master the long look that leads to art and poetry. I want us to pay attention to our lives, knowing that you really do get what you pay for..

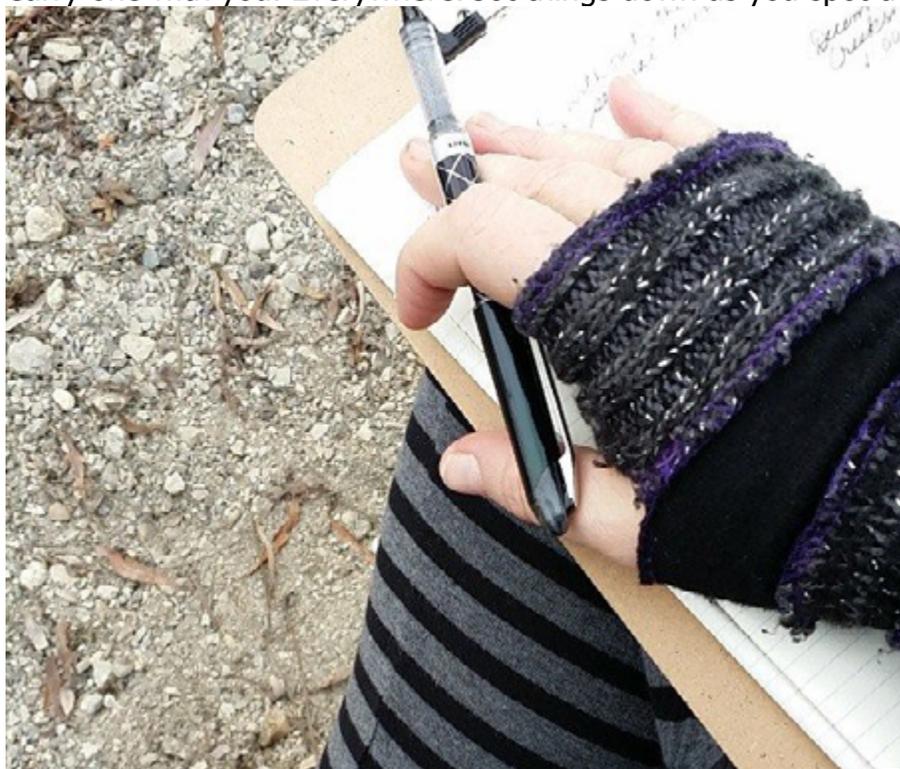
Attend to beauty, and you will find it. Attend to joy, and it will come.

### Your Brain Is The Best Memory Keeper

But considering all the stuff we cram it full of, it can use a hand in sorting the stuff that really matters from the stuff that doesn't. Art journaling is one way of doing that. Before we get to the art part, however, there are a few things we can do to ensure that we are paying attention so we can capture the ordinary beauty we encounter.

### Notebooks

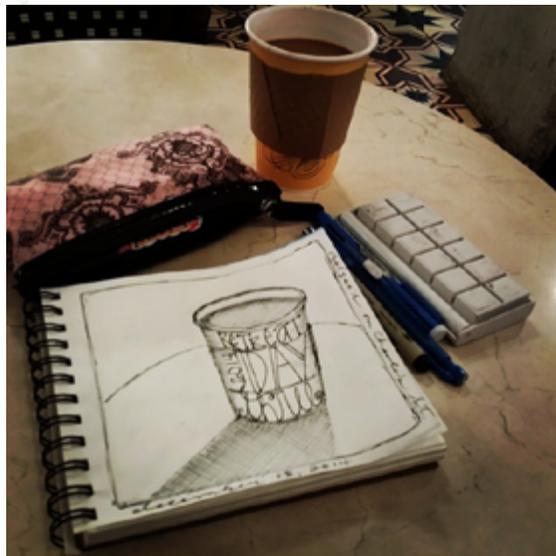
Carry one with you. Everywhere. Jot things down as you spot them or as they happen. That thing your friend just said over coffee? Jot it down. That bird you saw that you can't identify but wish you could? Jot down a description. Your wishlists. A meal you ate that made you feel nourished. Write it down.



As you sit down to art journal each week, flipping through this notebook will give you lily pads of inspiration. Leap from your written notes into your journal and VOILA. You will always find it easy peasy to find something to art about if you pay attention in this very active, engaged manner.

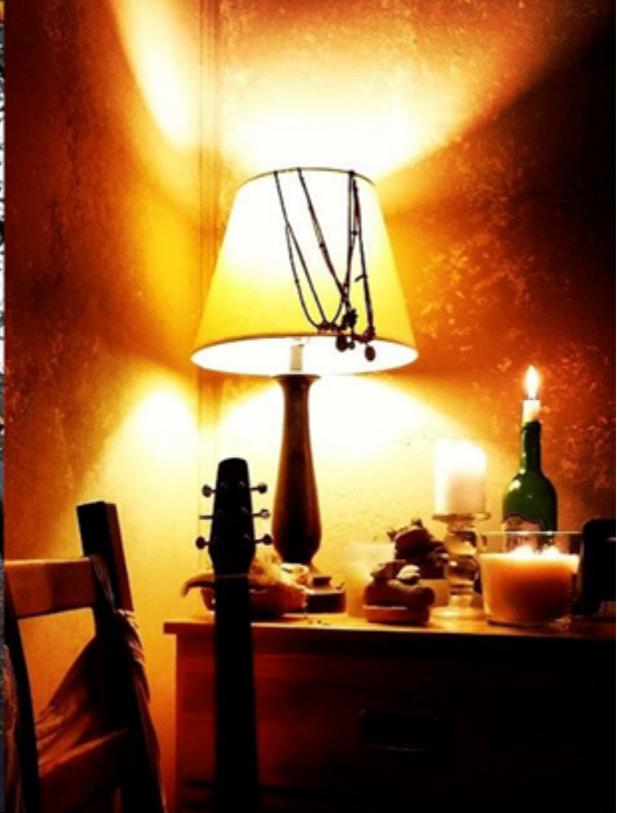
### Sketchbooks

Optional, but grand. Carry one. Make it small and simple. Use a black pen or a pencil (whichever you prefer) but leave the eraser at home. Do quick sketches of things that catch your eye - a leaf, a window, the shape of a cloud. Make a note of why you're sketching it. What emotion did it bring up? What did it remind you of? Why is it beautiful to you? Voila. More inspiration. Flip through it as you sit down to journal each week and try to incorporate one thing you sketched into your journal.



## Camera Phones

Take pictures of everything that catches your eye. Upload them to Instagram or another photo sharing website. When you share it, include a note about why you snapped the picture. Why do you find this beautiful? What does this mean to you? Tag these images with #bodfodder. Each week, as you sit down to journal, visit your collection of #bodfodder and go from there. This is my favourite method because a) I can include these images in my Project Life AND my Book Of Days and b) what could be easier than taking a snapshot on your camera phone?



### This Is Life Changing

In an Internet culture where everyone is claiming that their thing is LIFE CHANGING, I really do hesitate to talk about BOD in those terms, but I have no trouble telling you that this one aspect of BOD, this 'paying attention' aspect, this memory keeping aspect really is life changing.

I came from blocked writer with no personal or financial sovereignty who allowed herself to be walked all over by her misguided (and unaware) partner, her kids, her dogs, her LIFE to an entrepreneur who makes her living creating empowering and beautiful e-courses. I went from completely sedentary and mostly miserable to walking regularly and finding meaning and joy in the little things.

This changed my life. It works if you work it. Yadda Yadda Yadda. ;) Also, it's fun.

### Don't Take My Word For It

Put it to use and see how things change for you in the first 12 weeks of 2015. Make a conscious and determined effort to pay attention to what's good, right, beautiful and full of juice for you and record it in your journal in some way. At the end of this session ask yourself how you are feeling about your life in comparison with how you were feeling about it at the beginning of the year.

If you aren't feeling more inspired, more awake, more grateful, I'll eat crow and humble pie and my hat and YOUR hat.

Deal?

Okay. Let's do this thing.



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