



PROJECT JUMPSTART + PAST BLOG POSTS

ABOUT WEEK IN THE LIFE™

Week in the Life® (WITL) is a seven-day documentary project started by Ali Edwards in 2005 that invites you to capture the rhythm and details of your everyday life—the big, the small, the mundane, the magical. This project is about slowing down, paying attention, and noticing what's real in your life right now.

Ali encourages participants to focus on words + photos, combining them to create a snapshot of one week in time. It's not about perfection—it's about presence. She often asks herself and her community, *"What's real right now?"* This project gives you the chance to answer that question in a meaningful, creative way.

Each year, Ali shares her own process through blog posts, videos, and product collections, emphasizing intention, reflection, and authentic storytelling. It's a way to celebrate your life as it is, not as you wish it were.

The goal is "not to create a perfect album but to create a meaningful one." It's all about being intentional, embracing imperfection, and documenting your life—right now.

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ali edwards

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WEEK IN THE LIFE™ BASICS

Before the Documenting Week

1. Get the date on your calendar. *Check aliedwards.com for this year's dates.*
2. Organize your supplies and decide on a format. Are you going to make a scrapbook album, use the prompt journal, make a photobook, or something else? Visit the shop at aliedwards.com if you need supplies for your project.
3. Set an intention for your week. Think about why you're doing this and what you hope to capture this year (which might be different from a previous year).
4. Consider making a list of stories you want to focus on this year. Are there any stories you want to repeat each day (such as foods or gratitudes)?
5. Think about how you want to collect your stories/words during the week itself. Will you use the prompt journal, a blank journal, the Notes app on your phone, or write directly onto elements from a kit? Also consider when you want to do this - as it's happening, at set times throughout the day (a timer or reminders from your phone is great for this), or at the end of the day.

Documenting Week (7 Days)

Your main goal during the documenting week is to take photos and write things down. Imagine yourself as a collector of words and photos for this particular week. Be mindful that there isn't a right or a wrong way to go about this project and no one is going to give you a grade.

Here's a list to help you start thinking about stories you might want to include in your project. Remember that you are the boss of this project and are invited to pick and choose what makes sense in your own season of life.

- Morning routine: *wake-up time, first thoughts, breakfast, habits*
- Midday check-in: *where are you? who are you with? what are you doing?*
- Evening routine: *dinner, unwind, interactions, reflections*
- What are you eating/drinking today?
- What are you wearing? (*colors, textures, favorite pieces*)
- Who are you talking to and what are you talking about?

- What are you hearing? (*sounds in your space, music, voices, silence*)
- What are you thinking about?
- How are you feeling—emotionally and physically?
- One photo that represents “today”
- One moment you want to remember
- Something unexpected
- Something ordinary that feels beautiful
- A list (*to-do's, groceries, kids' activities, etc.*)
- Write a longer journal entry about the theme of your day
- Use a quote, thought, or mantra that resonates
- Write a gratitude note
- Photos that show your environment: *home, workplace, outdoors*
- Photos that show you: *selfies, reflections, shadows, hands*
- Capture the people you interact with today
- Photograph objects that tell a story: *your bag, your shoes, your phone, a favorite item*

Reflection Prompts for the end of the day:

- What stood out to you today?
- What's one thing you don't want to forget?
- What felt hard? What felt easy?
- What did you learn about yourself today?
- What are you most thankful for today?

Moments of joy. Moments of sadness. Moments of boredom. Moments of chaos. Moments of quiet. Moments where I had to go in my room + close the door because it was so darn loud. Moments that repeat. Moments that take my breath away. Moments that seemed annoying at the time. Moments of laughter. Moments of learning. Moments that will simply never exist again.

Reflection + Assembly (After the Week Ends)

Check out aliedwards.com to view our archive of blog posts where Ali shares how she approaches putting her albums together after the documenting week. Some people work one day at a time (meaning they complete Monday before moving on to Tuesday) and others do all the “like” tasks together (making all your photo collages or working on elements that are repeated each day).

If you'd like a more detailed look at Ali's Week In The Life™ process check out our Storytelling With Week In The Life™ self-paced workshop.



COLLECTED BLOG POSTS FOR WEEK IN THE LIFE™

START THINKING NOW ABOUT STORIES YOU MIGHT WANT TO INCLUDE IN WEEK IN THE LIFE™

Originally published: April 15, 2019

As I was driving my kids to school this morning I started thinking about the stories I might want to tell in the upcoming Week In The Life™. I love the idea of starting to pay attention right now to the stories that make up your days at this point in time.

You might want to consider jotting down some notes for yourself about the patterns, stories, etc you are finding in your own daily life right now before the project even begins. It's a great way to practice paying attention.

Here are some things I'm thinking about:

I'm thinking about how every morning when I drop Simon off he shares two or three Simon's Cat videos. They are super short YouTube videos about a cat owner named Simon and his one or two cats. I love that my Simon wants to share that moment with me before he gets out of the car. I love that we start the day laughing together before he moves out into the world of high school and I head home to work. It's a simple, tiny piece of our overall day right now but it's something I treasure.

I'm thinking about how all seven of us go off in different directions each day during the week. Each kid in our house goes to a different school and I head to my office upstairs and Aaron heads to his office downstairs. I'm thinking about ways I can include a bit more of each of their stories from the day. Maybe I will include a map that pinpoints around our town where we are each located during school hours.

I'm thinking about the things I see out in our house right now, the projects in progress and the little things I love + maybe loathe: stacks of frames waiting to be gone through and then hung up both in the hallway outside my office and downstairs in the living room, the fake plants I've been picking up at Target to add easy green to our inside to go along with all the green I see through the windows outside, the puzzles on the work table where different hands contribute throughout the week, the ways the boys navigate video game time on the main TV, the piles that different kids leave on the counters and tables over the course of a week, the way two of our cats wrestle each morning before sleeping the rest of the day, the boxes outside Simon's door that include books he thinks he's outgrown that I want to go through and store away for a time when he might change his mind in the future, the boxes of cleats in the entry way for Elliott to try on as his feet get bigger and bigger each day.

I'm thinking about those kid piles again and how they won't always be a part of my everyday story.

I'm thinking about screen time and how that is one of the most common conversations in our home on a daily basis. That and the reminder to "wash your hands."

I'm thinking about how our homes hold so many stories and all we have to do is pause and look around. I'm thinking about how this project is the perfect home for these little micro stories of our lives. Our basic routines + our daily thoughts. Our lives are made of these moments.

I'm thinking about new photo angles. Everyday life photos are my passion and after doing them for years and years - many from the same point of view (which I love because they show the passage of time from the same perspective) - I'm

having fun intentionally changing things up. This has been an exercise in mindfulness for me - paying attention enough to see what I can see from different spots within my own house. It often requires me to sit or stand in different areas than I normally do - you know how we have habitual places we sit or stand? I have to tell you that even the practice of sitting in different spots in my house, with or without a camera in hand, has been refreshing and motivating.

I'm thinking about spring sports and how our calendar is full of events making that the focus of our weekends.

I'm thinking about how I can't imagine my life without all these people in it. I'm thinking about how I really wouldn't trade my life experience - the totality of it including the really hard parts and the really awesome parts. This is one of the things this project always encourages me to do - get really thankful about the life I'm living right now (even in the most challenging of times).

I'm thinking about how Week In The Life™ is really a Week In My Life™. It's always been that way. I am the main character and my family are all supporting characters of this story. I can only tell you what I know and what I see from my perspective and I never try to include every single detail of the week because that's just a recipe for overwhelm. The invitation to include other voices is always there.

I'm thinking about how with just a little effort + a little pause in your day you can have a list of stories that give a picture of your life right now. I made this list on a Saturday morning while sitting at my dining room table and simply being a witness to the life that is happening around me.

FIVE REASONS TO JOIN ME IN DOCUMENTING A WEEK IN THE LIFE™

Originally published: April 8, 2019

As I get ready for documenting my week I wanted to share with you 5 reasons for joining me in this project:

1. Own your story.

Something I love about this project, and one of the reasons I come back to it year after year, is that it gives me an opportunity to reflect upon and take ownership of the story I am living right now. I am the sum of all the pieces of my daily life.

Who am I? Who are we? Where do we go over the course of a week? What do we eat? What is our current routine? What are we into? What do I care most about at this point in my life? What time do I go to bed? What's different from last year?

Those are just some of the questions I aim to answer over the course of the week. My goal isn't to capture every single detail of every single day - that's just not attainable. What I want to do is capture the essence of life at this point in time in 2019. I want to take ownership of my story through the process of taking photos, writing down stories, and bringing it together in one album that I can hold in my hands.

Maybe this is the year you include more of yourself in the story? Maybe this year you include a self-portrait each day as you reflect on how you are living life.

2. The details are awesome.

In memory keeping one of the things I come back to again and again is this question: "What do I wish I knew?" This past perspective has encouraged me to go beyond the birthdays and Christmas stories to get to the heart of what I wish I knew about my own family - often for me that's my grandmothers or even my Mom. What do I wish I knew about them in their earlier years? Those are the kinds of stories I want to tell about myself. It's the little every day details of routines and thoughts and circumstances that interest me most.

Tell me about your morning routine and the way you feel in the afternoon after a full day of work and what you do in the

evening to wind down. Tell me about the text conversation you had with your Mom or the email from your kid's teacher. Tell me about how you love or loathe your current work situation. Tell me what you are "into" right now - maybe it's gardening or quilting or video games or running or car shopping. Tell me about this season of your life even if it feels exactly the same as the last season.

Being able to go back in time and review my past albums shows me that people make it through things. They show me the beauty of my ordinary life. It is so worth the time.

Maybe this will be the year you focus on what you wish you knew about a relative or friend who has passed away as the inspiration for your own storytelling.

3. This is a project with a beginning and an end.

Over my years of memory keeping I have seen lots of different ways for people to approach telling their stories. It started with traditional scrapbook pages in 12x12 and 8.5x11, then mini-books, then Project Life® or pocket pages, then Instagram + Facebook as a way to document words and photos, then travelers notebooks, then 6x8 albums and page sizes, and it continues to evolve. Sometimes people tell stories in an ongoing fashion and other projects have a beginning and an end.

Week In The Life™ is a project with a beginning and an end. You start on a Monday (or some of you start on Sunday) and you end on a Sunday (or Saturday if you begin on Sunday). It's seven days in a row of documenting pieces of your life at this point in time. Remember, it's way less about capturing every single detail and way more about paying attention and capturing stories that matter to you.

You don't have to be crafty to participate. You don't have to become a "scrapbooker" to participate. Even just taking photos and writing things down over the course of the week is enough. If you want to take it a step further and put it into an album I've got supplies to help you do that. But maybe what fits best in your life right now is simply documenting your stories and images via Instagram or a private blog.

Maybe this will be the year you give yourself permission to start and finish this project with whatever content you collect vs. thinking you didn't get enough or you got too much.

4. The vibrant, supportive community.

This project has been happening annually since 2005. There are posts here on my blog going back years and years with examples of past projects.

Connecting with like-minded people who care about storytelling is icing on the cake. They help me remember that I'm not alone in my love of memory keeping and in how my life progresses. I love seeing the creative ways that people take photos, write their stories, and play with the products we create to help get those stories told.

Maybe this will be the year you open up and connect with others for inspiration and support.

5. Make your life visible via photos and words.

There is a little bit of magic (okay, maybe a lot) that happens when you begin to pay closer attention to the story you are currently living. For me, seeing myself in the story - literally seeing photos of myself inhabiting my life (I take these with my self-timer most of the time) - has helped me to live through some of the most challenging seasons of my life. Taking photos and writing about my experiences - even if I'm not writing directly about the most challenging pieces - grounds me in the present and helps me understand my story. It helps me identify things to be thankful for and reminds me that life moves on.

One of the greatest gifts I give myself is taking the photos. The photos I take during this project are often some of my most favorite I take all year. I think this happens because I'm really paying attention. I am looking for the stories through the lens of my camera and letting it be a tool to gather my content.

Maybe this will be the year you really get intentional about the photos you take during the week and let those guide the stories you end up telling.

Consider yourself invited. You have the time to do this. Your story is important.



FIVE THINGS I LOVE + FIVE THINGS I'VE LEARNED ABOUT WEEK IN THE LIFE™

Originally published: April 8, 2017

Week In The Life™ is quickly approaching and I wanted to take some time today to share some thoughts I've been having as we get closer. I've organized my thoughts into three sections for this post including (2) five things I love about the project, (2) five things I've learned over the years about working on this project, and (3) a little more about my overall approach this year.

This project can easily become overwhelming but it really doesn't have to get to that point. Remember, as with all these memory keeping projects, it is imperative that you make it work for you. To figure out what works for you you have to start somewhere and then often adjust as you go. You may want more page protectors or less page protectors. You may want more embellishments or less embellishments. You might want all black and white photos. After doing this project for over ten years I've found a general rhythm for documenting my week that's in alignment with the kinds of stories I want to tell and the kind of time I want to dedicate to the project itself.

For me Week In The Life™ essentially consists of two main parts: (1) the documenting - taking pictures and writing down stories/words during the week and (2) bringing those photos and words into an album. I keep the two separate because that's worked really well for me over the years.

FIVE THINGS I LOVE ABOUT WEEK IN THE LIFE™ AND WHY I KEEP DOING IT YEAR AFTER YEAR

ONE // I love that this project gives me a very specific reason to use my big camera (I am currently using a Canon 6D with a

24-70 lens). Some of my most favorite photos have come from using my camera during this project. With the advancements and convenience of phone photography I most often just reach for my camera phone as I go about my days. This project gives me a very specific reason to carry my camera around and get the kinds of editorial photos I love to take that show pieces of my life right now.

TWO // I love the opportunity to capture an entire week in depth once a year. I don't want to do all my documenting this way all the time (way too much), but I love having one week to focus on what life looks like right now. This project is different than Project Life® and different than Day In The Life™. I will still include a spread in my Project Life® album for this week by adding one photo per day like I regularly do throughout the year. For me Project Life® is an overview project whereas Week In The Life™ goes into more detail with a greater story intensity. Some people do choose to include their Week In The Life™ documentation in Project Life® but I prefer to separate the two in order to go into more detail for each day.

THREE // I love that this project has a very specific beginning and end. I start on Monday and I end on Sunday and then I make it a priority to put the album together fairly quickly after my documenting week. My goal is to have this project be a time-capsule of one week this year and that if, for some reason, I did no other documenting this year it would tell a really darn good story about what life looks like at this point in time.

FOUR // I love that this project gives me the gift of reflecting my life back to me right now. It's an opportunity to capture one week via my lens and my writing and then to take stock - what routines do I love and which ones do I loathe and how much control do I have over those pieces of my life. In looking back on any given Week In The Life™ project I'm transported back to emotions and thoughts and memories. Our stories are

constantly evolving (through our own choices and the choices of others) and this project gives us a chance to make a record of who we are and what we care about and why we do the things we do.

FIVE // I have long loved that this project makes me so very thankful for the good even during the very challenging. In 2011 I was in the middle of documenting my week when the decision was made to change the trajectory of our family. I didn't write about that directly in my album that year publicly because it wasn't the time to tell that story (not all stories have to be told in the moment or right away), but the fact that I needed to keep documenting because it was my job gave me the gift of remembering that there are always things to be thankful for and things to celebrate even when it's really, really hard to see it on the surface.

FIVE THINGS I'VE LEARNED OVER THE YEARS OF DOING THIS PROJECT

ONE // You don't have to take a thousand photos over the course of the week. In fact I encourage you not to because that is just too much. Don't get me wrong, I still take significantly more photos than I regularly do on most days of the year, but I've learned that I don't have to take a photo of every single detail throughout the day. For many people too many photos can lead to paralysis when the time comes to actually do something (select, print, etc) with those photos. Take enough to give you some choices when you go to document but don't take too many that you get overwhelmed and abandon the project before getting it into an album. The actual numbers will be different for each one of us.

TWO // Throughout my years of embarking on this project I've learned over and over again that the words + photos are the most important parts for me. Because of that I give them the attention and time they deserve during the documenting week. I don't spend any time with my actual album creating during the documenting week because it takes more than enough energy just to get the words and photos taken care of and that's my priority. I highly encourage you to set aside some time at the end of each day to get the words down right then vs. waiting. I have come to find that I'm generally really happy that I took the time at the end of each day to create a blog post that includes my words + my edited photos for each day. Over the last few years the writing that I do for each day of my words + photos blog posts end up being what gets copied and pasted into my album.

THREE // Unless something very unfortunate happens, there will always be another documentation project opportunity. I've learned that I don't have to capture every single thing in this album because it's just not possible. I don't stress about what I might be missing. Whatever I do will be enough for right now + enough for this project.

FOUR // Less is more. I know sometimes it must sound strange when I write about using less product when I sell product. My goal continues to be to provide you with intentional products that are tools for helping you to get your stories told (not stuff to collect and not use). If the products are inhibiting you or creating additional stress in the process then, in my opinion, they are not doing their job. Over the years I have learned that having less product to choose from has enabled me to focus more on the words + the photos which, as you read above, is my the main focus of this project for me. This is a big reason why I wanted to start offering kits for my core projects.

FIVE // Your story is worth telling. My story is worth telling. No matter what your life looks like right now - single, married, kids, no kids, divorced, widowed, depressed & anxious, living with your parents, stay-at-home-mom, working mom, recovering, empty-nester, lost soul, grandma, pregnant, etc - the story of your right now is worth documenting. Not a single one of us knows when our lives or circumstances may change (for better or worse or whatever it might feel like in the moment). This is your chance to capture what life looks like for you right now over one single week. I am so, so glad that I have albums that show what life looked like before Chris left and I'm so, so glad to have albums that show what it was like when it was just me + Simon + Anna and I'm so, so glad that I will now have albums that show what life's like with Aaron + our new family. Your week might be super mundane and routine (never wish that away my friends - love it for what it is right now) or someone may pass away or you might eat way too much leftover Easter candy or your husband might decide to leave or you may win the lottery. None of us know what's going to happen next so take this opportunity to tell the story of what is right now and find the good in your today.

MY GENERAL APPROACH TO WEEK IN THE LIFE™ AND 2017 THOUGHTS

ONE // As I mentioned above, I don't usually prepare my album in advance in the same manner that I do for December Daily® but I also don't do nothing. For December Daily® I do what I call "foundation pages" and you can see examples of

what those look like for my past albums.

Generally before my documenting week for Week In The Life™ I do the following:

- **Get my album “ready.”** That basically means laying out the order of my page protectors and assessing the products I have on hand to help me tell my stories. Taking the time to do this helps me understand the actual number of places/pockets I have available for my photos. I also often add photos outside of page protectors which is always an option when you might not have enough pockets - or you might, like me, just like the mix of having some photos inside pockets and some photos added to the album via rings. The goal here is to simply have some idea of the direction you are heading. I follow the same basic layout formula each day for my page protectors because that simplifies my overall process by eliminating a choice I would have to make later on. I don't personally find that this inhibits my creativity (some people do) - I'm super happy to just craft my story to fit within the pockets.

- **Open up my Week In The Life™ Kit and take a closer look at the contents** (either for the first time or re-visiting them). Sometimes I will add certain products into the album in advance just to get a feel for the flow. Sometimes when I actually go to add in my photos and words I'll change some of that around - just depends on where the stories take me. We still have Week In The Life™ kits available if you are interested in following along with my approach. Make sure to look through the journal cards included with the kit for additional prompt-based story ideas to capture during your week. Looking at them in advance will help guide your storytelling.

- **Make any digital files** that I plan to use for this project easily accessible on my desktop. I will be incorporating some of the new Week In The Life™ Layered Templates into my 6x8 album.

TWO // Not preparing my album in advance doesn't mean that I don't go into the week without intention. You guys should know me better than that. My goal, over the course of the entire week, is to capture a sense of the “whole” of our lives in this house right now. That doesn't mean I have to take a photo of my breakfast every single day. That doesn't mean that I have to include every single detail. There have been some years where I've intentionally included what I ate for every meal each day and other years where I documented it if I wanted to vs. feeling like it was something I “had” to take a photo of during the day.

THREE // Consider a story focus for each of your days. I'm thinking about potentially approaching my storytelling this way but I'm not sure just yet. Maybe one day you'll focus on food and the next day you'll focus on a full day timeline where you actually document what you are doing each hour and maybe on another day you focus on the things you are thankful for at this time in your life. Another way to add focus is to use a specific journaling prompt each day. The journal prompt can guide you in the photos you end up taking as you respond to the specific prompt - consider prompts like “around here” or “the story of today” or “currently” or “gratitude.” You might choose to focus on one person each day and tell their story (invite their voice if they are able to add it themselves via writing and photos).

Maybe your week would look something like this:

Monday: Use the “around here” journaling prompt. As you take photos over the course of the day keep in mind that the story you are telling/question you are asking is “what does life look like around here right now?”

Tuesday: Working life. Focus on what a day at work looks like for you. What routines in your life are related to your work?

Wednesday: “Wednesdays are for...” Tell me the story of what a “regular” Wednesday looks like for you.

Thursday: Use “ing” prompts such as reading, eating, watching, wearing, to form your daily story. Take photos to go along with each of those words.

Friday: “I go.” Where are the places you go in your life right now? Use this prompt on a day you are doing a lot of “going.”

Saturday: “Normal day let me be aware of the treasure your are” (part of a quote from Mary Jean Iron). Focus on the very mundane, normal parts of your Saturday. What are the basics of your day?

Sunday: “Today I am thankful for...” Tell the story of your day via the lens of gratitude. Take photos of the things you are thankful for and let that be your story.

You might also consider picking one thing/theme to take a photo of each day regardless of whether you end up having a theme for each day. I was thinking of taking a photo of Aaron and I each day or something along those lines (I've done self-

portraits in the past - sometimes taking a photo each day of me at our dining table or at my computer).

FOUR// Consider using Daily Sheets. People have been using these for a number of years now to help document the days. They are a great starting point for learning how to write stuff down over the course of the week and then the content can be transferred to your album later. You can search for these on the blog to download.



THOUGHTS ON GETTING READY FOR WEEK IN THE LIFE™

Originally published: May 7, 2016

On Monday (or starting on Sunday) many of you will join me in embarking on documenting a week in your very own life. A week that will include highs and lows. A week that will include meals and work and people and emotions. A week that will include the regular stuff of life and little surprises along the way. A week of your life as it exists right now.

Week In The Life™ isn't about taking a photo of every single thing in your life for seven days in a row. You could totally do that if you wanted to - strap a GoPro to your head and go for it. Taking that many photos just creates a new problem for many people - how in the heck do you use all those photos? Find your own rhythm with your photos. I always end up taking

more at the beginning of the week and less at the end - it's just how it goes for me and I'm okay with that.

Week In The Life™ is about looking for the patterns and stories via the lens of your camera and the words you write down. Look for stories as you carry your camera around. What are the things that make up the piece of your life?

When I first started Week In The Life™ I focused quite a bit on making sure I wrote stuff down throughout the day. The last few years I've written less during the day and more in the evening at the end of the day as I reflect back on what's happened and looked through my photos to post on my blog. As I look through the photos from my day stories I might not have really seen become visible - things that might be beyond the surface. Again, I'm looking for routines, for rhythms, for patterns, and for the pieces that make my life mine.

My goal, as always, is to capture, via words and photos, the season of my life right now. Not your season, not my parents season, not my kids season (even though that is a part of the story) - mine. We, you and me, are the main characters in our stories. Remember that as you go about your week.

You can do this.

THINGS TO CONSIDER AS YOU BEGIN

1. SET AN INTENTION AND/OR HAVE A REASON

WHY// What do you want to focus on this year? What is your reason for doing this project this time around? What are you most excited about capturing? Why are you taking time out of your precious life to make this project a priority? Write it down somewhere you can see it as a reminder to yourself.

2. NARROW YOUR FOCUS// After you figure out your reason why, consider narrowing your focus. For some people the concept of documenting a week is just too broad and the broadness holds them back from doing anything at all. In the Week In The Life™ Facebook Group one of the community members (Carolyn) is doing six photos from six different themes each day (family, play, everyday, nature, enjoy, work). For me, I want my focus to be more broad but if that idea helps you get a handle on this project then run with it. As with all the projects I embark on I encourage you to make it work for you. Keep in mind that narrowing your focus might just mean getting clear on your intention for this project.

3. REVIEW PAST WEEK IN THE LIFE™ PROJECTS

// Even just flipping through them will remind you what you loved, didn't love and what you want to do the same or different this time.

4. IF YOU ORDERED THE KIT, OPEN IT UP // I took some time today to open up the kit packages, look through the cards and get my page protectors in order. This helps me think a bit in advance about how things will flow within the album even before the week begins.

5. TAKE IT DOWN A NOTCH // Don't worry about how many or how your living room looks or what kind of camera you have or whether you stay at home or go to work every day or on and on. Use what you have right now to capture your life right now. No stress, just documentation.

6. DOWNLOAD THE DAILY SHEETS // People have been using these for a number of years now to help document the days. They are a great starting point for learning how to write stuff down over the course of the week and then the content can be transferred to your album later.

7. GET YOURSELF IN THE STORY // You are the main character in this story and your story is worth telling. This project is an awesome opportunity to play with self-portraits using the timer on your camera (iPhone, DSLR, etc). Use this as an opportunity to practice getting yourself in the story - either by making it happen for yourself or by asking others to take photos of you as well.

8. PURCHASE A LAYERED TEMPLATE SET AND/OR WORD ART // For those of you who are digital or a combination of digital and physical don't forget to check out the new layered template sets and word art that became available.

WEEK IN THE LIFE™ PHOTO TIPS

Originally published: August 13, 2015

Someone on Twitter recently mentioned that they fall more in love with photography after working through this project each and every year. I feel exactly the same way. There's something very special about focusing on everyday life photography so intensely for a whole week. Every single year I'm given the gift of at least a couple photos that become some of my personal favorites for the year, if not of all time.

As we get ready to embark on another Week In The Life™ adventure next week, here are some things to think about related to the photos:

1. Look for white space when taking your photos. What does that mean? It means looking through the lens and adjusting the composition of the photo to show more sky or more ground or more wall - essentially blank space within the photo where you can add your stories via Photoshop or with a pen directly on the photos. Last year I added words to just about every single photo in my album. You don't have to follow that lead, but man I love that I took the time and the effort to add all those words.

2. Pick something to capture and repeat it each and every day. In 2012 I took a photo of myself sitting at my dining room table each day. Think about what you do daily - that might seem super basic like sitting in your car or riding the bus or at your desk - but can become a bit more interesting when it's visually repeated. I used that series of photos in my Project Life® 2012 album during the Week In The Life™ week (which is a question that often comes up about what to do in PL during WITL).

3. Make friends with your timer BEFORE the week begins. Practice a bit (this weekend would be a great time to do that). Read the manual - or at least read about the timer feature. It's important that YOU are a part of the visual story you are telling. Self-portraits are a very important piece of this project for me - I want to literally see myself inhabiting my life. For the photo above I set my DSLR down on the floor of the grocery store, set the timer, clicked the shutter, and walked back to my cart and reached for a bottle of soy sauce. Remember that self-portraits don't always have to be shots of your face - capture yourself in your normal environments (bed, desk, car, couch, table, etc) doing what you regularly do in your life.

4. *These days I take most of my everyday shots with my iPhone.* BUT for this project I almost always use my DSLR more. The best camera is obviously the one you have with you - for this project I make it a point to have it with me and to use it.

5. *Take photos of things.* The way your room is currently set up. Your closet. Bookshelves. Stacks of stuff. Dishes in your cabinet. Kids toys. What are you into? What are they into? What are your pets into?

6. *Get close up and far away.* One of the ways I include things is by not always getting up so close as to block out things in the background. Get a combo of close up faces and full rooms - doing this gives you the most flexibility when it comes time to bring all your content together. Also, having options allows you to tell different types of stories - the close-up shot might be great for one story about the thing itself whereas the wide shot might be great for telling a different kind of story.

7. *Along those lines, I want a record of the way things are, not how I wish them to be.* That might mean messes. That might mean the unmatched bedding. That might mean weeds. That might mean you doing the same thing over and over during the course of the week.

8. *Make a date with the obvious.* The obvious are the things you look at every single day and probably pay very little attention to it. Photograph that stuff. Dishes or doing the dishes. Drawers. Work space. Shoes in the closet. Cereal. Saying the evening prayer. Things that you walk by all the time that you barely pay attention to.

9. *Look for opportunities to document relationships.* This can be people to people, but it's often even more interesting to capture the relationship that people have to their surroundings - a child to it's bedroom, the family to the dining room table, an adult to their favorite chair, a child to their most treasured toy. Aim to capture those you love, or yourself, in their environment/element, doing what they regularly do. These are some of my favorite shots.

10. *After doing this project for many years I've developed some personal photography rhythms.* I don't try to capture every little thing every day. My goal, over the course of the week, is to have captured a good visual representation of our lives right now. I might miss a morning or an evening or parts of each day and that's okay. Find a pace that works for

you. Remember this is one week.

You can do this. Celebrate the life you are living - the imperfect, beautiful, hard, awesomeness of your very own life.

In terms of my personal process during the week, each evening I upload my photos and write about the day - sharing it in a blog post the following day. This is definitely a time commitment but it's super worth it when I go to work on brining all my content together and I have all the words right there to flow into my album.

Also remember that you might not use all the photos you take this week in one album. Most people take more than they need - which is awesome because it gives you choice (which can also be challenging for people who have trouble with too many choices). Those photos are often used to tell other stories in traditional layouts or Project Life® - or they simply become part of my photo collection.

Take some time to consider, maybe even make a list of the things you want to make sure to capture over the course of the week. A couple things to consider:

- + A self-portrait each day // remember that it doesn't have to be your face - think feet (showing where you are going), hands (showing you doing something), parts of your face, etc
- + A photo of everyone in your household all together // I took one photo of the three of us last year during WITL that ended up on our Christmas card
- + The inside of your bag or purse or wallet // very "right now"
- + The place you rest // couch, bed, outside, inside
- + The place you play
- + What you are reading
- + What you are watching
- + What you care about most in the whole world
- + Your daily outfit // what makes the way you dress "you"
- + Up-close portraits of your family members // your camera is out and you are capturing the stuff of life - might as well try to get a couple great shots of other family members or yourself along the way



WHAT STORIES WILL YOU TELL?

Originally published: August 5, 2015

I've been thinking a whole heck of a lot lately about words.

It's not really something new, but something that keeps popping up as I work through current projects, plan future ones, and think about what matters most to me.

With Week In The Life™ coming up in the next couple of weeks I thought this would be a good time for a little pep-talk when it comes to including actual words in your projects. Last year one of my main Week In The Life™ goals was to simply include more words. I did just that (mainly by making time at the end of each day to write it all out in the form of a blog post) and I love, love, love the result. I'm planning to include that same emphasis on the words again this year.

I remember, many years ago, teaching a class to scrapbook retailers at a trade show. The whole "meat" of my presentation was that we, as people working in this scrapbooking/memory keeping industry, need to not only teach people how to work with the products, we need to teach them how to tell stories with words.

Writing your stories transcends products. It transcends trends. It's an activity that lives on long beyond foam stamps (still love) and mists and stickers and layout sizes and owls and pineapples.

You can add words to scrapbook layouts whether you use a ton of product or just a little, whether you use Project Life® or traditional layouts or digital pages or an art journal. There is

room for words on your projects.

I think most of us scrapbook because we have something to say and something to celebrate and something to learn about ourselves in the process. We say it through our photos, through the products we select, through the way we craft stuff together, and through the words we choose.

The thing about writing is it doesn't have to be perfect. Repeat that to yourself again and again. It doesn't have to be grammatically correct. It doesn't have to happen in paragraphs. It simply needs to come from your heart.

Tell me more. Tell me the reason why. Tell my why this photo is meaningful to you. Tell me something I can't know by looking at the photos. Tell me why you are taking the time to record this moment, this day, this period of time, this photo. Tell me what and who you're thankful for and who makes you laugh best of all.

Sometimes it might be messy and sometimes it might be pointed and sharp. Sometimes it's conversational and easy. Sometimes it's super clear and other times we might need to work through it a couple times to make our intentions clear. Sometimes it's a list of words, or paragraphs or a single word that encapsulates the whole thing.

I think we're often afraid to put those words down because they are the most personal piece of the combination of elements. We fear judgement, we fear getting it wrong, we fear it not mattering. We leave it to the last thing in our process of memory keeping and then don't do it at all.

You can do this.

Write how you feel. Write what you love. Write what you see. Write what you hear. Write how you've changed and write how you're still the same. Write about that juicy piece of fruit and Thanksgiving and that awesome bargain you got yesterday. Write about what hurts and what heals. Write using that awesome combination I talk about again and again of both facts & feelings.

As most of you know, I'm someone who includes both long and short stories in my memory keeping adventures. It's just what I do. But I've also been practicing and embracing and working to simplify and get to the heart of the matter for a long time. I like the balance of the two because sometimes I want to tell a long story and other times I just want to add a bit more beyond what you might see in the photo.

Truth be told, it's the longer stories paired with a photo or two and an embellishment or two that captivate me most and give me the most long-term happiness.

You can do this.

All that my friends, to encourage you to include a few more words in your projects. Put the words first. Think about your Grandparents or parents or someone you love and imagine what you wish you knew about one week in their lives. Let those details guide you in telling your own story today. Start with an extra sentence or sentiment here and there. Add a list next time. Start with some facts and then add some feelings. For Week In The Life™, tell me the mundane stuff and the stuff that makes your life your life.

Let's tell stories together.



OUR DAYS ARE BUILT WITH STORIES

Originally published: October 23, 2014

As many of you get ready to embark on Week In The Life™, I want you to think about this statement:

Our days are built with stories.

Often when I begin documenting my week I'm hyper-focused on writing down the schedule of our day. Stuff like the times we get up, the times we eat, the time I leave the house to take the kids to school and the time I return home to sit at my desk.

I still plan to do that to some extent this year, but as I alluded to in my post earlier this week, I also really want to be conscious and intentional about the micro-stories that make up a day or seven in a row (remember that was a term Aaron first used with me when he was talking about what he wanted to remember from our Dave Matthews adventure).

Each of our daily actions is often just the tip of a story pyramid. Those of you who took my Hello Story class are familiar with the concept I focus on in that workshop which is simply this, "tell me more."

Tell me more about the why. Tell me more about the who and the where and the what. Don't just tell me you had a cup of coffee, tell me what you had in it or what you left out. Give me more details that will paint a clearer picture of the life you are living right now.

And then give a little more.

Consider these stories:

+ The story of why you wake up to an alarm on your iphone at 5:45am each morning. The story of why you wake up at different times each day, rarely following a set routine. The story of how your child runs into your bedroom regularly (at least for the last week) in the middle of the night for comfort from the fierce monsters in the dark.

+The story of how your 12 year old now makes his own breakfast each morning but you still pour cereal (dry with no milk most days) for your 5 year old.

+The story of why you drive each kid separately to school in the morning and how you treasure the time in between drop-offs when you get to select the noise in the car (NPR, please).

+The story of why you don't exercise. The story of why you do and how that fits into your day. The story of how you think about it every day but still don't choose to put yourself first.

+The story of how you take your coffee and how you hate those little disposable plastic cups in your single-serve coffee maker but how you love a hot cup each and every time.

+The story of the moments of longing you feel at random points throughout the day. For something different, for something complete, for something you once had (or think you did).

+The story of the moments of gratitude that pull you out of the mental funk - where you literally shake your head as a means of erasing the mental spiral.

+The story of how you walk into your office building each day and are, like clockwork, greeted by the same older gentlemen who looks you in the eye and smiles or who barely acknowledges your existence.

+ The story of why you often skip lunch or why you eat the same thing at the same time each and every day.

+ The story of the things on your desk. Bills to be paid. Invoices to be filed. Hand-drawn ideas to be added to the bigger list. Lists piled on other lists, some things crossed off with a thick black pen, others with a thin red marker, but many simply waiting.

+ The story of your commute. In the car. On the bus. On the train. Is it long or short or beautiful or do you wish it away for some other life?

+ The story of the things you are working on - work stuff, life stuff. What's rattling around in your brain during these seven days in your life? What is consuming you? What do you wish you were consumed with?

+ The story of how you walked past a family in the grocery store, smiled at the Mom as she wrangled a toddler into the cart, and wondered what their lives were like.

+ The story of what you are reading. The story of what you are watching. The story of how you have so very little time for either. The story of how Candy Crush is your saving grace after a long day of stress and arguments and discomfort.

+ The story of waiting for your oldest child in the parking lot of the middle school and saying a silent prayer for a report of a good day, a happy smile, a sparkle in his eyes, a conversation - however brief or rote.

+ The story of homework, or the lack of, and a comparison to your experience growing up.

+ The story of how multiple times throughout the day you quickly contemplate dinner options but never settle on anything specific until the kids are past the point of needing to be fed and how you decide that popcorn, cheddar cheese and apples is always a very good idea.

+ The story of how your daughter recounts her kindergarten day in all it's glory and how the cast of characters seems to multiply exponentially as each day goes by.

+ The story of the hilarious amounts of junk mail you receive and how it's a sign of the times we live in.

+ The story of how your cat plops down on the hardwood floor after a long day adventuring around the neighborhood and meows until you rub his belly.

+ The story of why you chose one path instead of another on your evening walk because you know one includes more flowers.

+ The story of what's in your refrigerator and how you feel about it. Do you care a lot about what you eat or a little? Do

you plan all your meals in advance or fly by from moment to moment? Is there very little in there because you regularly eat out? What's your favorite snack to reach for right now and why. Tell me more.

- + The story of your loneliness.
- + The story of your exuberant joy.
- + The story of your current fears and how on particularly bad days you imagine you are the only person on the planet with these fears and on particularly good days you know they ebb and flow and you'll work through them just like most other people do.
- + The story of the movie of the day, carefully selected via a negotiation between the 5 year old and the 12 year old.
- + The story of how you drink decaf tea with a touch of milk at the kitchen table after the rest of the family has gone to bed and how you give thanks for the real life you lived today.

What stories will you tell?



COLLECTED COMMUNITY TIPS

Originally published: April 24, 2023

As part of our 2023 Week In The Life™ Prep Day, we had a fantastic community zoom chat. So many great ideas ranging from mentality, to preparation, to managing expectations were shared. The call was recorded and is available to view in the 2023 Prep Day classroom. We wanted to bring at least a small sample of the community's collective wisdom together here on the blog. Thank you to everyone who participated!

TIP TOPIC ONE | Be the Boss of this Project

- + Don't attempt to tell every story and capture every moment this week. Take some of the photos, document some of the stories and know that the sum is greater than the parts.
- + Acknowledge the ebbs and flows of the project. Monday you will likely take ALL the photos, Thursday you will have less. And that's ok. This project is a marathon and not a sprint.
- + Whatever you get done is better than nothing. You define what is enough.
- + Establish a structure and format that works for you. Many people are using a journal, some are documenting in a travelers notebook. Some are making a photo book.
- + Don't forget that you are the main character of your story. Everyone else is a supporting character.



TIP TOPIC TWO | Preparation + Planning

- + Revisit old albums for a reminder of what you like and don't like, in terms of stories and photos.
 - + Decide on an album size before starting the project. This may help guide your photo taking. But don't forget that cropping can work wonders.
 - + Play with the product beforehand and set aside your favorites. This may influence stories you want to tell or photos you want to take.
 - + Want to avoid feeling overwhelmed? Establish a formula beforehand. If you do, you will know exactly how many photos you "need" for each day.
 - + Check your stash of different sized page protectors. You have so many configurations available if you are willing to trim/cut your page protectors.
 - + Don't be afraid to pivot if things don't go according to plan. Your process may look different according to your season of life...from year to year or even to day.
 - + Lean into what you are most excited about. Photos? Words? Product? Spend the most time on the things that bring you joy.
- ### 3. Stories
- + Think about the stories that matter to YOU. If it matters to you, it matters, period.
 - + There is value in reflective journaling, in stories noted in the moment, and journaling done at the end of each day. They each bring different layers to your story.
 - + Fun tip: use sticky notes to jot down details and just stick

them in your album. What a fun and easy way to incorporate handwriting!

- + Invite your people to participate in whatever way makes sense for them. Teenagers may text photos, parents can send emails, screenshot text messages with friends.

Having a story plan can help when you're feeling uninspired or stuck. Here are just a few examples:

- + five things
- + gratitudes
- + letter to yourself
- + letter to your people
- + around here
- + five senses (I see, I hear, I smell)
- + I want to remember
- + focus on a different family member each day (you could include a family pet!)

TIP TOPIC THREE | Photos

- + Create an album on Pinterest or Instagram (wherever you find inspiration) dedicated to photo inspiration for Week In The Life™ and add to it all year.
- + Consider repeating your favorite photos from previous years. Establish categories beforehand to narrow the scope of your picture taking and possibly make it feel less overwhelming. First time? Perhaps start with three photos: one in the morning, afternoon, and evening each day.
- + Consider using "filler photos" or photos that are not tied to a specific day of the week. You can take these in the beginning of the week when you have the most motivation, or you can address gaps at the end of your documenting week.

+ Don't forget screenshots as stories: music, text messages, emails, daily calendars, memes, podcasts, etc.

+ Repeated photos are great! Want to capture your coffee mug each morning? Your outfit at work? Everyone at the dinner table? Make that plan in advance.

+ Progression photos! Whether you are watching flower bloom or completing puzzle, this could be a fun element to include in your album.

+ Consider doing a daily delete or favorite your photos. This might cut down on overwhelm later in the process.

+ Certain things are best captured on a daily basis:

- Weather

- Front Pages (the Front Pages app does not keep a database, grab your front page of choice each day)

- Tracking numbers? Think about what you are tracking at the beginning of the week.

- Inspiration is a wonderful thing, comparison is not. Be aware of how much time you are scrolling for inspiration, versus the time you spend telling your story.

Bring on the stories!