# **Journal of Family Life** with Amy Karol

**Chapter 1 - Introduction**
Overview
- I'm going to show you how to make a family book of everyday life. And what that is, is a book not of birthdays and of holidays, but it's to document and record your children's messes and crazy rooms and lost shoes and things that maybe you don't think are important now, but in years to come, they'll be really, really special. It's going to be stress-free and guilt-free ^and easy to do.

**Chapter 2 - Materials**
Materials
- Okay, so to make this book, you need a book. And I like to use a sketchbook. And the reason why is because they're inexpensive and they're easy to find. I usually use one that's about nine by 12 and that's because so many of your materials are eight and 1/2 by 11 or smaller. So this will allow you to get your materials in. And I also like to find pages that are perforated so you can take a page out if you need to. You also need some paper to decorate your book. And I just use scrapbooking paper and put it right on the cover like this, just with a glue stick. So that's your book. And then you need some items to put the things in your book. So I really like mounting squares and these allow you to put in photos and don't show at all. It's just a little bit of double-stick tape on the back. I also love using decorative tapes and these are so fun to use. I also use glue sticks and these are just simple glue sticks that you can get at the store. These actually are my daughter's. They work fine. You don't need anything fancy. And then I have good sharp scissors and some pens and pencils. Pencils are actually nice to have in case you need to erase guidelines. And a pen that you love and it's off-limits to everyone else in your family. Keep it in here. And I keep everything in here with no lid and I always keep it on my desk so it's handy. And the reason why is because you will actually use it if you can see it and it's easy to get to. If it's tucked away or it has a lid on it, you're going to forget about it. And this whole thing is going to seem just a little bit harder than it needs to be. So keep something open and handy and just put everything in it. Then what you're going to need is some decorative paper that you probably already have lying around. This is just to make your pictures and pages more fun. I have some envelopes and I have some labels. And I also have what I'm going to put in my book, which is drawings and artwork and photos. The other thing that I really like to have is a cutter, a paper cutter. And this is really, really important because you just can slide through, it's always straight, very easy to use. And then I have photo paper for my printer, for printing my own photos at home. And I'm going to go over printing photos. I know not everyone prints photos at home, but if you do, you'll need to have this. The idea here is to use what you have. Go through your junk drawer. Go through all that stationery you never use. And make it easy on yourself. You probably don't need to buy anything. And if you do, have fun and buy it and don't worry about it.

**Chapter 3 - Making Journal**
Journal example
- So, this book came about because I was looking through all of our photo albums we had, which are beautiful and fun to make, but they just didn't have the everyday in them. They had a lot of birthdays, they had a lot of holidays, but they didn't have things that I thought were really important

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to keep. Things that maybe actually drive me crazy, like, things that I want to maybe sometimes forget, actually, but in 20 years, I'll want to remember them. And what I've done here is I've just put on a piece of decorative paper and printed out a label to put on. And I actually am going to have these labels available as a PDF for you to print. This photograph is really special. This was in our first house. It was drawn by Sadie, and I've labeled it here. And labeling is so important because we forget, and also, in years to come, they'll want to know who drew this. So this is a different type of item I've documented. And whenever anyone says anything we quickly want to write down, we put on the quote page. Sadie says here, "I'm going to be an artist when I grow up." Then Delia says, "I'm not going to be anything, "I'm just going to grow." This is another sheet of quotes from Liddy, and these are really special because she was the youngest, she is the youngest, and so she didn't talk like a baby for very long. She very quickly started using words that were correct, but for awhile there, she had her own little way of saying things. So Grammie was Bammie, and graham cracker was bam tacker, and chips were pips, coffee cake, poffee take, and slipper was fipper, and mama's sleepin' was mama feepin'. She's afeep. And this is so sweet to read because I had forgotten that she did this. And it actually makes me really emotional because this was only a few months that she used this little language. And also, Pete wrote this down, and so this is his handwriting, and I'm kind of a nut about handwriting. I think it's really special, and so this is a great way to document handwriting and special words that you don't hear anymore. And again, you think you're gonna remember, and you don't. So this is a drawing of Liddy's, and again, these early drawings don't last very long before they start to get a lot more developed. And I've written a label here, "Liddy 3.5," so three and a half years old. We think it's horses and a potty. That just speaks for itself, I think. This photo is from my middle child's first birthday, and this was gingerbread cake that I made from scratch, and she ate it and crawled away after taking off her sock. So I have here, "After Delia's first birthday, "this is her gingerbread cake and her sock," and I've just used tape on here. And this is one of my favorite photos from her first birthday. I have about 20 photos of her opening gifts and of all of our family being around her, but this really captures the moment in a really special way. This is just an example of different things you could put in this book, and I've shown you photos, I've shown you cards, I've shown you quotes. The point is is to make it meaningful for you, but what I don't want is for you to feel like this is a project that you have to feel guilty about, that you have to keep up with, that you have to do weekly, or monthly, or even yearly. This is up to you. You can do it once a year, you can do it every day. So this is sort of messy, and wonderful, and unorganized, and real. It's as real as our life is. So, use it that way, not as something to aspire to, to make look perfect, this is just everyday stuff.

Creating pages

- So we've gone through a bunch of pages here and now I'm gonna show you actually how I put the items in the book. And it's not hard, it's really easy, and you probably could figure it out just by looking at this, but I have learned some tips that make it a lot easier, so I want to share those with you. So this is Delia's lunch. And this a before and an after. And one thing I want to point out is it's always good to work on only one side of the paper because then later if you, for any reason, want to take out a page to put in another album, which you can do, you only have work on one side. So that's an important thing. Also if you work on two sides, the whole album becomes too thick and you end up with this sort of huge thing that is hard to manage. So only work on one side. And this, I'm gonna use some, I just, you know I kinda go fast. I don't really worry about it too much. I think I'm gonna use this tape because I like the way it's white, so it's not going to contrast too much. This

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is the way I do the tape on these. Again, we're talking less than a minute here. I just take a big piece. I tear, I don't cut. I love this tape so much and the more I use it, the more I can buy. And I know I said you shouldn't buy a bunch of stuff for this project, but you know what, buy this tape 'cause this is just the best stuff. Done, all right. Now, I just grab a label. You don't have to use label paper. You don't have to use anything sticky. Some of these are sticky, some of them aren't. You can just glue stick in a regular piece of paper if you want to. But I do like to work on labels because then if I have a handwriting freak out and I mess it up, I don't have to cross it out. I just write a new label. Now, if you get crazy, which I totally encourage, and you freestyle right on the page and you do mess it up, then just get a label and put it over your mess up. Or you could keep it really real and keep your crossed out, messed up label. That would probably be the coolest, but I'm not that cool. I have some scrap paper here, I'm just gluing this in. All right, now I'm going to write on here. Oh, and scrap paper is always nice to have handy because then you don't glue stick on your desk. This is Delia's lunch before and after. And then I'm gonna just put the date down here. I'm not even gonna worry about the month. Now, part of why I'm doing this is this is what it looks like every day. These crusts are surgically removed from the sandwich. These are little tiny like pizza pocket things. I'm sure they're not the healthiest, but anyway, she was able to find the crusts on the miniature pizza pocket. I mean, that is a talent worth documenting. I was gonna put down here that this was eaten in less than five minutes because she eats that fast. So that's it, that's done. That's a page documented forever. Crazy like a fox. This page is pretty cool because it shows one of Lydia's drawings. This is the original. I cut it down, stapled it to some card stock. Labeled on the back who drew it and approximately their age. And inside I just used graph paper. It's really nice to have a book like this in this book because this is a quick place you can go to to write down quotes or a list of things that you want to remember. This book is going to have the names of some of the baby dolls that the girls have collected over the years. And what I've done is just taken an envelope, cut the top off, it creates a pocket, use the tape to put it down, and then labeled here, quote book. And I'm actually going to also say baby doll names and quote book. So again, I just label this as I need to and if I want to add to this later, I would just write something down below. I don't worry about it being perfect. So, we were having the conversation the other day about baby doll names. And they are crazy. Plasha, Aneeno, Arena. I don't know where they came up with these. George and Shally, the twins. And Spoomby. I don't know where they came up with these, but when I bring it up, they can't stop laughing. These names were mostly by Sadie. I think she was about three and a half when she came up with these names. I might be wrong, but it doesn't matter because I've written it down and it's okay if I'm wrong, these names are awesome.

Photographs
- I really strongly recommend that you don't save photos, but you print them and put 'em in right away, because otherwise it goes on your to-do list and that's not what this is about, but if you have to, I put a little bag in my book so when I do, I make sure I label them always, because otherwise I'll forget why I'm keeping them. Photos are an interesting topic to talk about, because everyone deals with their photos differently and I've had to really look at how I deal with my photos. Do I print them, do I not print them, why don't I print them, what do I do with them, how many do I have, and it changes. When we first started documenting family stuff, it was with a traditional camera and then we used digital and I still started printing and I think I got those printed at Target, you know, and I just would get a big pile and stick 'em in an album, and then I started taking more photos and more photos and uploading them to Flickr and then not printing and not making albums, so I was

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doing nothing and it started to really stress me out. So I started getting albums printed with another company, so like Shutterfly or Snapfish, I kind of forget which one I used, but I made a promise to myself that I would get the family photos printed in some way once a year. What happens when you do journaling like this is this a very fly by the seat of your pants quick, quick quick quick, it's supposed to be quick and easy. So how do you get your photos quick and easy, and only you know that. Are you the type of person that would be much better printing at home, you have your phone or your camera, you plug it in or upload it and you print it in your office or wherever you have a printer, great, go ahead and do that. If you don't have a printer or you're never gonna get around to printing your photos, then you maybe print once a month and there are services that can print from your camera, there are really cool services now that print from your phone. Instagram has a bunch of different companies partnering up with it and you can print the adorable little Polaroids. They're so cute and they're so fun, and what this well help you do is edit, which is so important that I think people don't document some of their family stuff because it's overwhelming. They have too much, they've been saving it for too many years, it's scary and it seems impossible to go through it. So what I recommend is printing 20 photos. That's it, print 20, only 20. You can change your number, I'm not gonna really tell you what to do, maybe it's 10 or maybe it's 30, but pick a number and only print those, and if you're already panicking about this know that you can change your mind or you can print them again a week later, but then you'll get your photos. Then you put 'em in your book. Now, I have friends that say but I'm four years behind. It doesn't matter, that's not what this is about. This is about anything you want it to be, so get rid of all those rules. It doesn't matter if you haven't printed photos for four years. Just pick 20 and put 'em in. You will feel so much better, I promise. I know this sounds like therapy but this is heavy stuff. It's heavy stuff having children and knowing how to preserve memories. It's hard, and the way it's not hard is if you make it easy. So I kinda do everything, but one of my favorite things to do is to print at home. I use this paper, which I really really like. I have found that the paper makes the difference, not the printer or the ink. I mean, I use archival ink, but almost all inks now are archival. You just keep it in this little plastic envelope thingy, you're done, this is not that much money and there's 50 in here. I have a couple printers 'cause, you know, I'm kinda weird like that, but this is my chief printer that I use for this. And these are the photos, and they look awesome. They look totally good, it's about the paper, I swear, it's not the printer, I can't believe some of the quality of these. So what I do is I print them and I put 'em in my book. Done, that's it, I don't think about it too much, otherwise it will make me crazy. If your kids have a camera, look at the photos they've taken. I kind of forgot about doing this and I later discovered about 400 photos on my computer that they had taken over the last couple years and they were so weird, and most of them were horrible. I know people like to say oh, my kids take the best pictures. Often they don't, but what they see is so cool and their perspective is so cool and it's all low and weird and out of focus and they also usually document their favorite toys which is really fun. And then the other thing that I would like to bring up is the vacation photos and that clutch shot that everyone goes for. This is kind of like birthdays or holidays. Vacation photos, everyone's standing together and they all are smiling even if they're not happy. There are so many moments on vacations that are horrible and awkward and you want them to end and you're hot and you're sticky and you're waiting in line or you're eating really weird food or you're so bored in the car. There's a lot of great photos in those moments, and if you don't have your camera, you probably have your phone, but some of the best vacation photos that we've taken have been those in between moments. The moments where you're waiting, the moments where you're bored. The in between, that's really what this is about, is getting into a groove of documenting every day in between, not

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special but ultimately very special moments. So I really hope that you try this and that you have fun and that if you make a bunch of rules for yourself, you break them.

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