

Dad's Diary Prompt Template

One moment, three prompts, five minutes

Founders keep a decision log for a reason: memory is unreliable, and the story you tell yourself about last week is rarely the one that actually happened. This is the same move, aimed at home. Three prompts, one timer, five honest minutes a week, and over a couple months you'll see the real pattern of what's draining you, not the one you assumed.

What you need: a notes app, a notebook, or the back of a receipt. A timer helps.

The steps

1. **Set a timer for 5 minutes.** (10 seconds) Weekly, same-ish day. Sunday night or Friday afternoon both work.
2. **Answer: what happened?** (90 seconds) One real scene, not a summary of the week. The spilled cereal, the good bedtime, the fight in the car.
3. **Answer: how did I feel?** (90 seconds) Not "fine" or "tired." Name the actual feeling underneath those.
4. **Answer: what surprised me?** (90 seconds) Something that went better or worse than expected. Surprise is where the pattern hides.
5. **Close it. No editing, no re-reading.** (30 seconds) You're building a record, not a memoir.

This week's entry

What happened

How did I feel

What surprised me

When it goes sideways

You skip a week (or three). That's not failure, that's a normal week. Don't backfill from memory, just pick it up again this Sunday. The gap itself is data.

Every entry starts sounding the same. "Tired, kids were a lot, work was busy." That's a sign to change the prompt, not the ritual. Try: "What did I say yes to that I regret?"

You reread old entries and feel worse, not better. Stop rereading for a month. The value is in the writing, not the archive. Come back to it once you have more distance.

You're not writing a memoir. You're keeping a decision log for the version of you who's tired at 9 PM and needs proof she's handling more than she thinks.