

HOW TO 'PROTECT YOUR BACK' WITH DOCUMENTATION

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PREPARATION IS PROTECTION

We live in a challenging time when social unrest and hard economic times have triggered an increasing amount of anger, frustration, criminal activity, and violence. A wise citizen might counter these influences by considering the valuable tool of record-keeping as a possible way to protect their integrity in business, and personal relationships.

Few documents are truly private anymore, and advanced technology can be used by unsavory, yet talented, individuals to alter or destroy computer records, or to demean or misrepresent unsuspecting victims on the internet. Nothing is full-proof, but a careful protector will invent ways to prepare for incidental events that might cause problems later on. It is hoped that the simple suggestions in this pamphlet will be adopted and implemented as a habitual course to 'protect your back' in these troubling times, by using the written word as a means of protection.

1. Buy a journal and write in it

The first step is to purchase an inexpensive spiral bound notebook or journal with pocket separators, or a daily planner with a note-taking section. There are various sizes and styles, so choose one you like; one that will fit on your desk, TV tray, nightstand, or wherever you sit for several minutes at the end of the day. Resign yourself to do the following:

a. Develop the habit of recording a daily *hand-written* account of events that happen in your life. Include the fun and wonderful events and the challenging ones. (Hand-written documents can be analyzed to prove that you are the actual contributor, should the information ever be needed as evidence.)

- * Note any significant event, and even trivial things that come to mind.
- * Record the *complete date* for every entry. Separate numbers: (14 October, 2009).
- * Include the day of the week, and time of day for important transactions.
- * Always record a truthful account.
- * Include *first and last names* of people with whom you interact.
- * If you meet a person for the first time, briefly describe them.
- * Impressions about people and/or events can be helpful.
- * Use the margins to leave code words or signs to help you find an event in a hurry.
- * Use the pockets to store business cards, receipts, pictures, or special documents.
- * If there is a conflict, record details and try to see both sides of the issue.
- * If a serious altercation occurs, record the event in profound detail.
- * Take care when venting in this record! It is difficult to be truthful when angry.

* Keep this record in a private place.

b. If you witness something suspicious in your office, workplace, school, or among your associates at home, or at play, for which you have no proof, write it down. Note that it's just a suspicion, and be certain it's a truthfully accurate account. You may never need it, but if you do, it might save your neck.

c. Record significant sales or purchases; staple in the receipt. Avoid verbal agreements for which no contract or receipt is made, but if you've made one, enter detailed notes in your journal, using the full names of the person(s) involved, exact date, time, witnesses, and specifics. It is always safest to insist on a written business contract, even with family. Always sign your signature using *all* the letters in your name. Do not use initials or unintelligible lines, especially on legal or important documents.

2. If you are a crime victim

a. If you witness a crime, or are a victim of a crime, notify authorities immediately. If you can, gather evidence that might help in an investigation. Be alert to:

*The type and severity of the crime

*Appearance of the criminal(s) - distinguishing characteristics (race, gender, etc.)

*Listen to the voice of the criminal(s); pitch, tone, names repeated, slang words, etc.

*Full names of individuals involved, and contact information, if you know it

*Witnesses to the crime, their full names, and contact information

*Exact location of the crime

*Exact time the crime occurred

*Full extent and proof of injuries - take pictures if you can.

*Full description of items stolen in a robbery

*Make, model, and color of car(s) involved, if applicable

*Note license plate numbers and the state.

*If a weapon is used, note type, size, make and model, if you can.

*If the crime is sexual in nature, keep soiled clothing or sheets as evidence. *Do not wash them.* Do not take a bath or shower, until after you've been checked at a hospital. Evidence can be submitted at a hospital anonymously, and there are usually counselors there to help you.

*If the crime is a surprise physical assault and you must defend yourself, use your elbow. Your fingernails can collect DNA evidence if you scratch the attacker's eyes, nose (vulnerable areas that might provide a momentarily release for escape), or the skin. Run away if you can. Pulled hair can also provide DNA evidence.

3. Pay attention to 'Red Flags'

a. Red flag warnings, or suspicions, *before* a crime occurs can be very helpful, because you can click your mind into ‘detective mode’ and begin taking detailed mental notes – especially if you feel uncomfortable, or threatened.

b. After a crime, call police immediately. Avoid touching evidence, but take mental note of it. When you have the opportunity, or the presence of mind, record a minute-by-minute truthful account in your journal of what happened. This is especially important if you witness a crime. You may be considered a suspect, or you may be called upon to provide information, or testify under oath in a trial. If you’ve ‘protected your back’ by making accurate notes, and keeping evidence, you’ll be prepared.

c. Police will look for:

- Blood stains,
- Seminal Stains
- Hair
- Fibers and Threads
- Dirt or plant samples
- Glass
- Paint
- Flammable liquids
- Firearms evidence
- Tool marks
- Controlled substances and medicinal preparations
- Incriminating documents and computer records
- Latent fingerprints, footprints, or tire tracks

4. How to fill out a police report

Note that if you are asked to fill out a police report, you must use black or blue pen only. Police will want to know all the details (check the lists provided for crime and abuse victims). If you’ve written details in your journal, you can make a copy for police. Always keep the original record. Ask for the police officer’s business card and get the case number. Keep the information in a safe place. Call the officer back if you remember additional information.

5. If you are a victim of abuse

Victims of repeated abuse; be it domestic or otherwise, must begin a *separate journal* for that purpose only. Abuse is a crime. If the abuse has been a long term repeated occurrence, and the perpetrator is a parent, spouse, or relative, you might think it’s impossible to protect yourself, or be believed, especially if you’ve been threatened into silence. You can, however, begin now to collect and hide evidence, such as:

- * Soiled clothing, bedding, hair, saliva, or other DNA evidence
- * Receipts for doctor or hospital visits, doctor’s name, etc.

- * Fingerprints
- * Phone records
- * Incriminating or threatening e-mails/texts, etc.
- * Recorded conversations (secure a recording device and use it)

This separate *hidden* account should include the following:

- * Nature of the offense – (Physical, emotional, sexual, psychological, verbal, etc.)
- * Severity and location of injuries – take pictures of bruises, scars, etc.
- * Location or address where the abuse occurred
- * Exact dates and time of day
- * Full names and detailed descriptions of the perpetrator(s)
- * Witnesses and their contact information
- * Circumstances under which the abuse occurred
- * Threats

This information should be taken to the proper authorities as soon as evidence is gathered, and it may be submitted anonymously. (It's worth repeating again that most hospitals have services for sexually abused victims, and counselors available to help and guide you. Most hospitals will collect evidence anonymously.) You may feel that you cannot do this, especially if the crime involves a family situation where little children are a concern, but if you or an innocent child are subjected to repeated acts of criminal abuse, it is your duty to stop it – for your sake, as well as for them, and others!

6. Document your legacy

We live in a forensic age where science can prove almost anything. Pure science cannot be refuted, but a personal verbal testimony can. Honesty and accuracy are paramount when recording one's private written history and it should harmonize with scientific evidence, if needed. 'Protecting your back' is a wise goal to have in mind as you record your personal activities and associations in a daily journal.

The highlights of your life's journey – the wisdom of life-learned lessons, and special history of family, talents, accomplishments, etc. are best left in a one-volume lifetime legacy yearbook that can be handed down to future generations. Never forget that the way you live, and the example you leave behind, becomes your legacy. Be safe, live a worthy legacy, and document it well!

Most sincerely,
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