



So what do you see? A beautiful woman in a fur coat or an old hag? Which one do you see first? Do you have to really work to see both of them? Can you see one immediately but not the other one until someone points it out to you? As it is with an optical illusion, so it is with recording our story in our scrapbooking. Sometimes it comes easily, but sometimes we have to really work to see things with fresh eyes. In a new way. This month, that's what we're going to look at. Seeing things in a new way.

Very often, we struggle with our journaling not because we don't have anything to say, but because we feel like can't say it *right* or interestingly enough or clever enough or whatever. So, we record the "who, what, where and when" & leave it at that. Which is okay, but it leaves precious little behind for others. Others who might actually want to know *who* we were rather than what we *did*. These magic "w"s are important, yes, but they really don't tell anybody much of anything other than the facts. What's really important is the "why" and the "how". Not that we always went to the pumpkin patch every year and have 74 layouts recording it, but why it was important. What did everybody look forward to? What did little Joey do every year that was totally hysterical? What memories did the trip create, reinforce or bring back for you?

Remember, nobody's expecting you to be a Pulitzer Prize-winning author in your journaling. However, there is only one person who can write down the emotion, the memory, the sights, smells, sounds, tastes and feeling of a particular scrapbooked event. So let's work on seeing things with new eyes and finding a way to record them.

This month, you're going to need at least one notebook/notepad. It doesn't need to be big or fancy, just a little dollar store notepad that you can carry around with you. If you can attach a pen to it, all the better. If you'd like, get a couple and place them in strategic spots like your purse, your desk, your nightstand – whatever. The point is that when something strikes you, you need to be able to write it down **RIGHT THEN**. Not in 30 minutes when you get home or after you've finished with dinner. **RIGHT THEN**. It's amazing how quickly we can forget something when we're distracted. Keeping one in your purse is a great idea, too, because how often are we out &

about & we see or hear something that resonates, but we've forgotten it before we're home. That's step 1. Get your notebooks ready.

Now, step 2 is a little harder. It's time to start looking at EVERYTHING in a new way. In a positive way that encourages beauty to blossom. And we can't find it outside until we find it inside. So here's your homework. You're going to take that notebook and stand in front of a mirror. You're going to look at yourself – not just physically, but also inside – and make a couple lists. First, you need to list at least 5 things about yourself, physically, that are BEAUTIFUL. If you're anything like me, the first thoughts will be negative. Shake them off. Literally. Shake your head like that thought is an annoying mosquito. And look again. And again & again if you need. Find at least 5 things. It could be the sparkle in your eyes. The way your hair curls right there by your ear. The curve of your neck. Be specific. Not "my eyes". WHAT about your eyes? Not "I have nice hair". Rather, "my hair is the color of milk chocolate and it has a fun, spunky, freespirted bounce to it". You see the difference? You're encouraging yourself to see things in a new way. Use your words – be innovative & unique in how you describe it.

When you've got that list, move inside. Write down at least 5 things about yourself that are beautiful that aren't physical attributes. Focus on your mind, your artistic side, your soul, your emotions. Again, be specific & creative. Not "I'm smart". Instead, try, "I have a love of the written word – books transport me to a place where my imagination can run free". Not, "I'm kind". Rather, "Seeing people suffer makes me die inside – I have to do things that provide solace, comfort and hope to people". With this exercise, feel free to expand on it. If you come up with something that unleashes a floodgate of things you want to say; then say it. Write it all down. For example, maybe the "I have a love of the written word..." idea unlocks a whole cavalcade of memories about when you discovered the power of language and how that affected you or it reminds you of a book or series of books that you fell in love with as a child. Take that extra few minutes to write all of that down. It's not only an exercise in tapping your mind for material; you're getting down the stuff you should be recording as an artist/archivist.

When you've finished with your lists, keep that notebook with you. Use it to write down when you see something beautiful in the world. Train yourself to see things in a new way. Practice it when you're out. Don't just see a Salvation Army bell ringer. Use your imagination to give him or her a story. Ask yourself why they're there. What motivated them to stand outside a store in 3 degree weather ringing a bell? Doesn't have to be true – you're just teaching yourself a new skill. LOOK for beauty and you'll find it. If you see something that inspires you or triggers a memory – write it down immediately.

Remember – you don't have to be a poet or a novelist to create meaningful journaling. All it takes is honesty, a little creativity and practice. Because this is YOUR story. That's what you're recording with all these scrapbook layouts. Your story. It's important, it's meaningful, and it's worth telling. Try seeing things with new eyes for a month and give yourself permission to tell it like it is.