

Five TESTED Pro Tricks to Kiss Writer's Block Goodbye, & Start Making Out with the Muse



Throes of Creation by Leonid Pasternak

1. Unslump yourself by just daring to write something

Some days I feel inspirationless—or worse, I feel discouraged—that my writing isn't good enough, or I haven't got anything to say, or that no one wants to read what I write. And, well, that feels awful.

But I've found that the way through it is *writing*.

It's easy to doubt myself. And it's easy, in turn, to let that doubt freeze me, debilitate me, dictate my right to be a writer.

Well, I'm tenacious, and more than a little bit stubborn. Besides, I've never been really good at doing what people tell me to do (more on that later).

So I disobey my doubt.

I also write about what's *real*. Sometimes I feel writer's block comes from some perfectionistic image of what we're *supposed* to write, instead of addressing the issue at hand.

Write it out. See what happens.

You're upset about your marriage or the dog dying? Write it. You're waiting for that package to be delivered or that email to come? Write it.

Capture for yourself the feeling of that moment—sure, the scene may never be useful for you—but the description of that feeling may become invaluable—because, after all, your characters may experience some of those oh-so-human emotions of disappointment, loss, anxiety, and anticipation. And you've just time-capsuled for yourself what it feels like to be in that moment.

Write through it and you may end up with some of the best nuggets, the ones you thank yourself for later.

Dr. Seuss said “unslumping yourself is not easily done,” but one way through this feeling is to realize that not everything we write will be or is *intended* to be published.

We *know* this somewhere deep inside ourselves. We *know* this because we've been through the revision process. Yet, when we sit down to write, we put this unrealistic expectation of publishable material flowing from our fingertips.

I get it. We all want to be writing geniuses. Wouldn't it be great to sit down and write the perfect novel from beginning to end, first try? Sounds great, but it should also sound laughable.

I'm sure it's happened to someone, somewhere—perhaps several times. But it's the exception, not the norm.

Accept your doubt, but disobey it. Write through it and see what happens. The worst thing that could happen: you write a flop. But it's more likely you'll generate a nugget to save for later, your doubt will dissipate, and you'll be able to get on with the writing task at hand.



2. Silence Your Inner Critic

In one of the most notable scenes of one of my all time favorite chic-flicks, Bridget Jones chides her love interest (So Austen-ly named Mr. Darcy) of making her feel like an idiot.

“I already feel like an idiot most of the time anyway,” she says.

Yeah, I get it. While I (thankfully) don't slide down fire poles and reveal my undergarments to an entire nation of viewers or land my parachute in pig feces, *a la* Ms. Jones, I *do* have my own specialty brand of sticking my foot in it.

So what to do when I feel like walking around town with a paper bag on my head?

Why, revel in it, of course.

Say WHAT?!?!

Yeah, you heard me right. I look like a dope and I'm proud.

Ok, ok, ok, maybe that's taking things a bit too far, but here's the deal: when I make a donkey of myself, I take a deep breath and own it. Sometimes it's a legitimate mistake and I need to own up to it, and sometimes I am just down right uncomfortable.

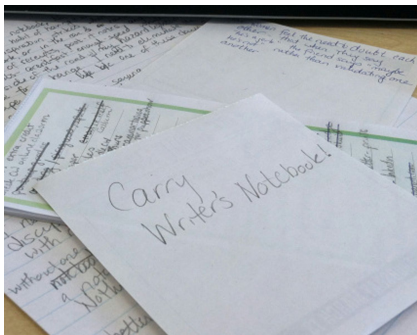
That is what the inner critic wants us to feel. Uncomfortable. "Don't share your writing. No one will like it." "Everyone will call it stupid." "Are you serious? Three adjectives in a row? And you call yourself a writer!"

Ta Ta, Inner Critic. Time to write.

3. Always have something to write with

Sometimes inspiration strikes when I'm at the grocery store, or at work, or in the car; and random notes get jotted down on the back of receipts, post-it notes, and half-typed into my iPhone at my-thumbs-aren't-fast-enough speed while I'm pulled over on the side of the road with my hazard lights on.

It's time for a change.



I need to eliminate the little bits of paper from my life, because one of these days, I'm going to lose one. And of course, it will be the one shining brilliant star of an idea that I ever had for a novel, or the most beautiful sentence I will never write again.

Annalisa (I hear you saying), just type your ideas into your iPad. Yeah. About that.

Put a pencil in my hand, I'll write you a tome.

Sit me in front of a computer, and my muse suddenly goes mute.

I cannot create and interface with technology at the same time. That's just the way my writing process works, and I've accepted that.

However, recognizing my limitations is not enough. I need to make the next step in the all-important word to writers: discipline, and start carrying my notebook--or at least a reliable piece of paper-- everywhere with me.



How to take a break from writing- my tips

4. Take a writing break

If you're like me, there's only so long you can sit with your butt attached to that chair writing. To cope with this, every 15 minutes or so, I give myself a dance break.

I put on one song, loud!, and dance like a fool around my office. Yes, you may look foolish. But you'll liven yourself up, and you may liven your writing up, too.

5. Use a writing prompt

I teach a memoir class once a week in a continuing education program. Each week I give the

participants a prompt. Oftentimes they will bring back what they've written over the week in response to the prompt. Some are better than others; here is one that yielded a lot of good writing and discussion.

Where does your character like to *be* (not go)?

What does the character like about it?

What are the intriguing or appealing aspects?

Conversely, where does the character *not* like to be?

What makes him or her *not* want to be there?

See the pattern? Good prompts are questions that help you explore a side of your story which you may not have explored. Next time your writing slows down, ask yourself one of these questions and let yourself go.

Looking for more tips? Follow me on Twitter & stay tuned for upcoming events in your area.



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