

Title:

Turn Writer's Blocks Into Stepping Stones!

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Summary:

Years ago at a presentation at the UCLA Extension Writer's Program, I promised an audience to teach them to conquer this beast once and for all. Later, another instructor approached me and said "why did you say that to those people? It's not possible."

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Article Body:

Years ago at a presentation at the UCLA Extension Writer's Program, I promised an audience to teach them to conquer this beast once and for all. Later, another instructor approached me and said "why did you say that to those people? It's not possible."

Poor woman. All she was saying is that SHE cannot break writer's block, which told me all I need to know about her career. In all likelihood a promising beginning, perhaps an award-winning poem or book...and then pain.

It is not only possible to end writer's block forever, but you can actually use it to your advantage!

First, let us define it in some useful way: Writer's block is the inability to

- 1) Produce new text.
- 2) Edit and polish existing text
- 3) Finish projects on a reasonable schedule
- 4) Send those projects out for editorial judgment.
- 5) Continue sending them out until they are sold.

Accepting the above, I'm going to give you a definition of the root cause of Writer's Block that will actually help you in every arena of your life.

"Writer's Block is nothing more than a confusion of two different states of mind: the Flow state, where you produce new text, and the Editing state, where

you evaluate and polish what you have written.”

WB is such a killer because most of us have done far more reading than we have writing, and spend far more time in critical analysis of finished, polished work of the masters than in experiencing our own early drafts. So when we try to create text, we measure our first draft efforts against the polished work of the world's great writers. Immediately, that “this is garbage!” voice goes off in your head, and you have a block.

It is said that novice writers must work through a million words of garbage before reaching their true voice. How in the world will you ever get through it if you constantly judge every word? If you will learn to turn that voice off, you will learn a massive and important lesson about the structure of the human psyche.

But what exactly is “Flow”? It is the psychological state where time seems to vanish, where you “fall into the page”, where the rest of the world floats away as you concentrate. This is similar to the “hypnogogic” state experienced just prior to sleep, and the first thing in the morning. It is experienced in distance running, dancing (remember the lyrics to “Flashdance”? “She’s moved into the danger zone, where the dancer becomes the dance”) and, to be perfectly frank, it is experienced during sexual relations in the moments just prior to orgasm. It is the dissolution of the subject-object relationship sought by numerous schools of meditation.

- 1) Alternate days (or work sessions) between flow and editing. If necessary, wear different hats, or sit in different chairs for each. NEVER DO BOTH IN THE SAME SESSION
- 2) Set yourself a daily output that will get you to your goal of one million words in less than 5 years. 1000 words a day will do it in three years. That's roughly comparable to earning an AA degree. Not too shabby!
- 3) Explore and specifically study “Flow State” as a discipline. Do your internet searches and find a physical or mental activity (running, dancing, meditation, Tai chi, yoga, etc.) that opens a doorway to this inner world.
- 4) Listen to largo rhythm, sixty-beat per minute string music. Vivaldi is perfect for this, and induces “Alpha” (flow) state rapidly and effectively. Stay away from music with lyrics, but soft jazz is also terrific.
- 5) Practice making pictures in your mind, and then writing down what you see WITHOUT judging the quality of your descriptions. You want to enhance the

connection between your deep consciousness and your typing or writing.

6) If you can't find a good meditation technique, just sit and "listen" to your own heartbeat for 15-30 minutes a day.

There are many other ideas, but these will get you started. The most valuable thing you will learn is to "turn off" or ignore the negative voices in your head. And an artist who learns to do this on demand is on the way to integration of the deep levels of the unconscious...and greater joy in the act of creation.