

Sweet Support

“It helps if you have someone to talk to; it really helps. I have my husband to talk to. It helps very much if I say to him, ‘I think I’ve painted myself into a corner. Now I have three or four different situations.’ We discuss the solutions, and I pick the one I like best. I don’t think you can write a book completely alone,” says Judy Krantz, author of *Scruples*.

I imagine if I were to interview all the best-selling authors, each one would speak of some sort of support that keeps them going. In his book, *On Writing*, Stephen King talks about throwing his first draft of *Carrie* in the trash. His wife, Tabby, “...had shaken the cigarette ashes off the crumpled balls of paper, smoothed them out, and sat down to read them. She wanted me to go on with it. She wanted to know the rest of the story.” He also says, “Having someone who believes in you makes a lot of difference. They don’t have to make speeches. Just believing is usually enough.”

I agree with these two authors, but what of the writers who don’t have spouses, or what if their spouses love them but couldn’t care less about their writing, or what if a supportive spouse is still not enough to answer the technical questions or provide motivation to keep writing? I recommend finding a balance between the solitude it takes to do the writing and ways to meet the human need for social interaction with like-minded people.

In my own personal journey as a writer, I have found a number of ways to find support for my creative expression. I live alone, and that helps me find the time to write without interruption. Yet, there are times when I feel the need to interact with other writers.

Local Writers’ Groups

I am fortunate to attend a local writers’ group facilitated by my friend, Dr. Marjorie Miles. A small group of us get together twice a month for free writing activities. We begin with a guided meditation to relax and connect with our Muse or inner voice. The act of writing quickly and without censoring is a lot like therapy for writers. Often, when I feel stuck in my writing, I come to this class for the freedom and joy of self-expression. Many of us attend the group regularly, and we have developed close bonds of love and respect for one another. We never know what we will write and in sharing after writing, find we have written something quite funny, or sad or even profound. One of the main characters in the novel I am writing came to me during one of these free-writing activities. The class is never boring, and I leave it with greater motivation to continue my novel. I highly recommend finding a local writing group near you.

Groups may be found in local libraries, book stores or formed from taking creative writing classes. You may be inclined to start your own group of writers who are willing to meet in a positive atmosphere of camaraderie and support. It is wise to choose carefully and stick with people who are serious about writing and not there to criticize and tear people down. Set firm boundaries for a supportive, creative environment which encourages true self-expression and

growth for writers. These groups may consist of free writing activities or as reading response groups where you share what you're writing at home. If in a creative writing class, be alert to others who seem to resonate with you and see about forming your own group outside of class.

Online Writing Groups

Last year, I entered The Next Best Fiction Author contest online. This led me to become involved in a closed Face Book group of other contestants who shared thoughts about writing, gave each other constructive feedback about the chapters we entered and shared resources such as editors, online courses, etc. One of the people in this group asked if I had a book cover to post. Huh? I didn't even know writers were having their book covers done by free-lance artists these days. I'm learning a lot about the business of writing in today's fast changing technology and media trends by associating with other writers.

I also started an open writers' group on Facebook called Writers, which now has 150 members and growing. We share writing resources, jokes and questions about writing. Many people have had important questions answered by group members who've been in similar situations. If you need an opinion or advice about something you are pondering, groups like this can be very helpful.

I have a friend in another group who is having problems being accepted as a writer by some of her family members. When she reached out for support from her group, the love and encouragement that resulted was heartwarming and motivating to her. Online writing groups provide excellent resources from other writers all over the world, often based on their own experience of trial and error in writing, publishing and all things related to writing.

Weekly Check-In Group

My weekly writers' check-in group is another excellent source of support, motivation and inspiration. Each week, two other writers and I set writing goals for the week, and every Thursday one of us sends out an email saying what the goals were and what actually got accomplished, followed by new goals for the next week. The other two writers respond in kind. We also acknowledge these accomplishments, keeping the tone upbeat and supportive. Believe me, there has been more than one Wednesday night of frantic writing on my part just to keep from having to say, "I got nothing done but hope to do better next week." It also helps keep me on track in thinking of reasonable goals that can be accomplished within a week's time. I am the slowest of the three, but I don't feel pressured to keep up or that we are competing with each other. I have been pleasantly surprised and highly motivated by the encouragement received by my writing partners.

Recently, I received a referral to a site that published chapters one at a time to help writers build an audience for their books. Unsure if this was the right way for me to go, I checked in with my weekly writing partners and my mentor/teacher, Dr. Marjorie Miles. Each of them responded with the requested candid feedback, and none of them had favorable reactions to the idea. They confirmed my initial feeling that this was not the right opportunity for me. It would have ended up being much like a relationship that isn't strong to begin with but expecting things to change

over time. What a blessing to have trustworthy, caring friends to give me the feedback I needed to make the right decision. These are the bonds of trust and sweet support that are built in ongoing relationships with other writers.

Lillian Nader, M.Ed. is currently writing a YA science fiction novel entitled *Theep and Thorpe*. She is the published author of educational workbooks and the librettist of the musical, *Pandora*. Lillian is a retired teacher who does part time tutoring and freelance copy editing at reasonable rates. She can be reached at Lnader1910@sbcglobal.net

This entry was posted in My Guest Posts on July 29, 2014.

WRITING: ENJOY THE PROCESS

Writing is a process meant to be *enjoyed*. There is something freeing about having time for getting one's thoughts on paper before having to revise and edit. In other words, it doesn't have to come out perfect in one sitting. With this freedom, I find that most writers are more creatively daring than they might be otherwise. When I work with reluctant writers, I often see a look of relief when I say, "In the rough draft, spelling doesn't count. Just get your thoughts on paper and *enjoy* the process."

The following are recommended steps of the writing process.

1. **Prewriting:** There are dozens of ways to generate and organize writing ideas. Some of my favorites are brainstorming with others, word clusters and meditation.
2. **Drafting:** Get all your thoughts on paper as quickly as possible without editing.
3. **Revising:** Reread your work (preferably aloud) to see if your words are conveyed with clarity and without needless repetition.
4. **Editing:** Now is the time to look for misspelled words and grammatical errors.
5. **Publishing:** Some ways to be published are hiring an agent, submitting to publishers and self-publishing.

Step 1: Prewriting.

First, *brainstorming* with others is a good way to formulate your initial ideas and get a sense of what you have passionate feelings about. If the energy isn't there, keep going until you find something worthy of your writing time. If you process ideas by talking about them, this is a good technique to try.

Second, *word clustering* is good to access the creative right side of the brain. Begin with a nucleus word or idea circled in the middle of a page. From there, write the first thought that comes, connecting it outward with a line and draw a circle around it. Go back to the nucleus and repeat the process. Word cluster templates can be found on Google.

Finally, my favorite one is *meditation*: the act of quieting the mind and listening for insights and guidance from within. I suggest sitting down to meditate with the intention of writing afterwards.

Set aside some quiet time to be followed by writing. You may surprise yourself—in a good way—with the results.

Step 2: Drafting. When drafting, it's best to leave your inner critic at the door or in the waste basket. All you need to do is write your thoughts with total disregard of rules and concerns about what people will think. While drafting, you are the only thinker that matters. Too many people allow their fears and inhibitions to interfere with true creative expression.

Step 3: Revision. Now, you want your critical mind to come into play by reading to see if your words make sense. Have you conveyed the meaning clearly? Have you left out words that your mind thought you typed as your fingers flew across the keyboard? Did you show without telling? Here, you also consider if you've used the right form of homophones such as *hear* and *here*, *your* and *you're*. Revision has to do with accuracy and clarity for your readers. Beta readers or first readers, usually friends who enjoy reading, are helpful at this time to get fresh views and insights of your work. Consider hiring a copy editor and/or content editor before going on to step 4. The phrase, "writing is rewriting," is applicable here.

Step 4: Editing. Now is the time for the critical left brain to be fully engaged. Use reference books on grammar and punctuation to dispel doubts you may have about your work. Since this is the final step before publishing, you want to polish as much as possible. Once you feel there is no more you can do, you may consider hiring a line editor before publishing.

Step 5: Publishing. The world of publishing has changed quite a bit in recent years due to electronic devices and sources for reading literature. Choices for publishing depend upon your genre, budget and resources. I recommend joining writing groups online and in your community for support in making the right decision regarding ways to publish your work. Often, even with a publishing house behind you, there is still much marketing to do by the author.

Whether you're writing fiction, nonfiction, poetry, memoirs, blog articles, or technical writing, use of the writing process will help you along the path of successful creative expression. It is my hope that through use of the writing process, you write more often and *enjoy* it more.

Lillian Nader, M.Ed. is currently enjoying Step 2 of the writing process while drafting a YA science fiction novel. She is the published author of educational workbooks and the librettist of the musical, *Pandora*. Lillian is a retired teacher who does part time tutoring, freelance copy editing and beta reading at reasonable rates. She can be reached at Lnader1910@sbcglobal.net and on FB at <https://www.facebook.com/Lillian.nader>

This entry was posted in My Guest Posts on July 29, 2014.