

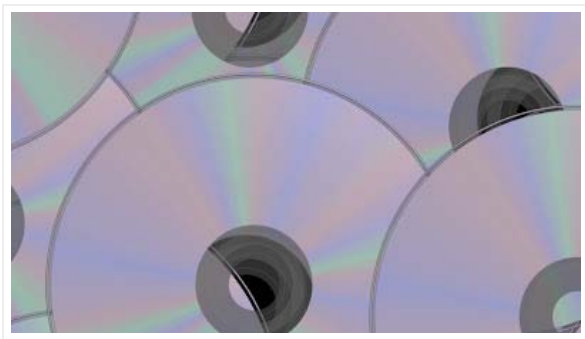
COFFEEHOUSE FOR WRITERS

WE'RE BREWING SOMETHING GOOD DAILY!



14.8.12

Bloom Where You're Writing! By: Noelle Sterne



ALL YOUR MUSIC

One of the most cautionary and moving imperatives I ever heard is the title of a chapter in Wayne Dyer's 10 Secrets for Success and Inner Peace: "Don't Die With Your Music Still in You."

With our writing goals in mind, we should take this instruction seriously. Not to play our music is one of the greatest tragedies writers can choose.

How Do You Know You're Not Playing Your Music?

We denigrate and ignore our music when we make excuses. Any of these sound familiar?

I want to . . . but I can't find the time.

Too many responsibilities—carpools, cleaning, laundry loads, work stuffed in the briefcase I drag home.

My husband/wife/partner/kids/pet goose and new goslings need me.

Too tired when I get home from work/school/gym/deli gorge.

Too many others writing in the same genre.



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I'll never get anywhere anyway.

The Basic Decisions

We may convince ourselves these excuses are all airtight. But like me, you probably know other writers with day jobs, night jobs, weekend jobs, fringe jobs, businesses, families, farms, etc., etc., who do manage to practice their writing music. How can we possibly understand or explain their intimidating success?

One phrase: Their decision.

One sentence: They've made writing time.

One action: They've said "No" to many other things they used to think they had to do, couldn't possibly refuse, or considered indispensable.

Like them, you too have the power to decide, to say Yes and No.

What's the worst that can happen when you take your stand? Make a list of the real imperatives and those you feel pressured or embarrassed into. Okay, the kids need to be fed. But can you trade "kid suppers" with a neighbor, you taking her two darlings one night and she taking yours on another? Can you budget for takeout or delivery once a week? Does the housecleaning have to be done every two days (or—heresy—even once a week)? Can you train yourself to a fifteen-minute meditation or nap after work to refresh for writing?

Look at other writers' solutions. They often tell us in blogs, articles, or interviews how they're doing it. Adapt their ideas to your own life.

Enlist your partner, relatives, and friends. Your husband may (shockingly) offer to fold the laundry, cook dinner, or even do some necessary research for your Victorian novel. Your sister may rescue you from your rash offer to help at the fundraising carwash: "Tell them you're allergic to large bristles."

More Subtle Avoidances of Your Music

Once you make room for writing, listen inside to what you really want to write. Do you yearn to write fiction but keep doing how-tos? You've got flawless reasons: you know a lot in your field, how-tos are shorter, they stand a better chance of getting published. Or you really want to write poems but keep doing essays: they're quicker, less gut-wrenching, and stand a better chance of becoming guest blogs.

Admit you're avoiding your deeper music. Nothing wrong with continuing to do the pieces you're comfortable with. But remember Dyer's title. What can you do to heed his advice?

How to Help Yourself Write Your Music

Swallow hard. Choose one way, a small way, to branch out, even if you have to tiptoe onto a far bough. One day a week, or for a fraction of you writing time, start that story or poem. I'm often encouraged by favorite lines from a poem by the American poet Richard Wilbur ("Walking to Sleep"):

As a queen sits down, knowing that a chair will be there,

Or a general raises his hand and is given the field-glasses,

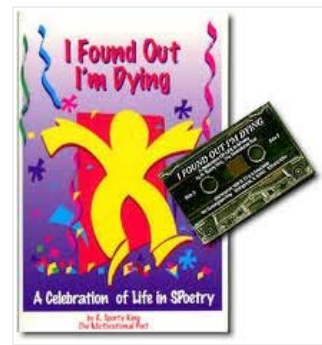
Jump off into the blank of your mind.

Something will come to you.

Notice that Wilbur prefaces the advice to "jump off" by similes suggesting we see ourselves as entitled. The queen or general assume that others will do their bidding. This is what we should assume of our minds.

and Creative tips...

- Article of The Week
- Bloom Where You're Writing! By Noelle Sterne



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Writing mentor and inspirer Julia Cameron offers similar advice. In *The Artist's Way*, she admits she needs to stare at a sentence taped to her desk: "Leap, and the net will appear."

Are you ready to risk leaping? What's the worst that can happen? Your wastebasket fills with wads of paper, your "Delete" button gets its letters rubbed off from overhitting, you seem to "waste" precious writing time with nothing to show or send out.

But your subconscious is always working, storing, sifting, recombining. When you jump off or leap, at just the right moment the right mix of ideas and words surfaces.

When it does, you find yourself compelled to get down a good—no, great—phrase, sentence, or idea. Or your character rises from the ashes of all those discards and you know exactly what he/she/it looks, sounds, smells like. Your Creative Mind and Heart have awakened, and now, like Wilbur's queen or general, you feel more confident in it.

Your certainty will grow. Keep at it.

How to Keep At It

Reaffirm Your Purpose.

Extremely meaningful for our writing is the Sanskrit word dharma. This is not

karma with a cold. Spiritual expert and guide Deepak Chopra in *The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success* explains that dharma means "purpose in life." It's made up of three elements:

We seek our higher self, spirit, our heart's deep stillness.

We discover our unique talents and what we love to do by expressing them.

We contemplate how, through the expression of our talents, we can help and serve others.

Apply These Principles to Your Writing.

Before you start a session, sit quietly for a few moments, breathe deeply, think of nature, gaze at it if you can, and feel the limitless space and peace inside.

Ask yourself what special talents you know you have in writing. Dramatic stories with characters painted alive? Succinct layered-meaning poems? Great dialogue in plays? Clear and powerful nonfiction? You may know already; reconfirm your love of writing and the forms that excite you.

Think about how you can help and serve others through your most-loved modes. Write down your answers.

If you're unsure, know that your writing does serve others. It's not an indulgence of selfish desires. Nor is it less valuable than becoming a social worker or Peace Corps volunteer. Look at what words do: encourage, motivate, call to action, inform, enlighten, elicit hope, comfort, console, direct, reassure, energize, inspire . . . Make your own list.

Write Regularly.

When you've got a good handle on your dharma—and more importantly—believe it, you will write with greater consistency, fervency, and dedication. Remember that all you music doesn't have to be written at once, or in a week or a year. Rather, when you take your time, your music becomes richer, better, deeper, and truer to yourself.

Establish a daily writing routine. I'm sure you've read all kinds of advice about this; choose the one that works for you. Constancy is the key. "The secret of your future," says minister Mike Murdock, "is hidden in your daily routine."

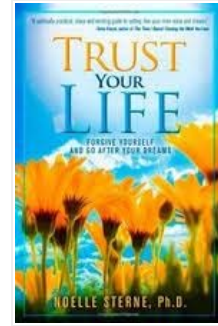
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QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"Whatever sentence will bear to be read twice, we may be sure that it was thought twice."

--HENRY DAVID THOREAU



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One word at a time. One word after another. Even if you wring out five rotten ones, the sixth will be the right one. Commit to five-eight-fifteen minutes if you need to start there, one to two hours if you can arrange your life for this chunk.

Keep Going.

No matter what you produce or don't, keep going, even through days, pages, chapters of what you label junk. Successful writers and experts recognize we all have to write through the trash—it's an inevitable part of the process. A longtime writing friend counseled me in a free verse I keep on my mouse pad:

Don't get it right.

Get it written.

Then get it right.

So just keep going.

Your Music Surfaces

Your music will surface and build. If you falter, know that it will never fade. Dive underground for a while maybe, but it cannot help but push up again like spring shoots.

Remind yourself often of your dharma, your dedication and determination, and your service to others by writing. As you do, you'll find it easier to keep jumping off, leaping, and trusting. Your creations will come forth, strong, true, and satisfying. And you'll continue to express all your music.

Bio:

Author, editor, ghostwriter, writing coach, and spiritual counselor, continues her dharma through several means. She has published over 250 fiction and nonfiction pieces in print and online venues. With a Ph.D. from Columbia University, for over 28 years Noelle has guided doctoral candidates to completion of their dissertations. Based on this work, her latest project-in-progress is a practical-psychological-spiritual handbook, *Grad U: Complete Your Dissertation—Finally—and Ease the Trip for Yourself and Everyone Who Has to Live With You*. In her current book, *Trust Your Life: Forgive Yourself and Go After Your Dreams* (Unity Books), Noelle draws examples from her practice and other aspects of life to help writers and others release regrets, relabel their past, and reach their lifelong yearnings. Visit Noelle at <http://www.trustyourlifenow.com/>

Image Credit: SPFF

Posted by **COFFEEHOUSE FOR WRITERS** at 8:09 AM

2 comments:



Jennifer Brown Banks **August 14, 2012 8:55 AM**

Noelle,

Excellent advice here for your "encore performance" at the Coffeehouse. :-)

I am a huge fan of both Deepak Chopra and Wayne Dyer. I often read their books and listen to their motivational tapes on human behavior.

Thanks for your guidance for writers, as well.

[Reply](#)



Noelle Sterne August 15, 2012 12:38 PM

Much appreciate your words, Jen. As writers and humans, we can learn much from Chopra, Dyer, and other highly evolved individuals. Continuing to learn . . .

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