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Guide to Literary Agents

WHERE & HOW TO FIND THE RIGHT AGENTS TO REPRESENT YOUR WORK

By **Chuck Sambuchino**

7 THINGS I'VE LEARNED SO FAR, BY NOELLE STERNE

Categories: [7 Things I've Learned So Far](#), [Book Agent](#), [Chuck Sambuchino's Guide to Literary Agents Blog](#), [Guest Columns](#), [How To Find A Literary Agent](#), [Nonfiction](#), [What's New](#).

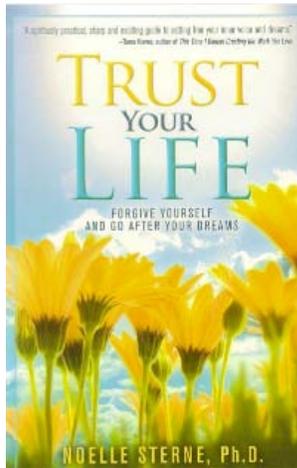
November 18, 2012 | [Chuck Sambuchino](#) | [Comments: 10](#)

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This is a recurring column I'm calling "[7 Things I've Learned So Far](#)," where writers (this installment written by nonfiction writer Noelle Sterne) at any stage of their career can talk about [writing advice and instruction](#) as well as how they possibly got their [book agent](#) — by sharing seven things they've learned along their writing journey that they wish they knew at the beginning.

GIVEAWAY: Noelle is excited to give away a free copy of her book to a random commenter. Comment within 2 weeks; winners must live in Canada/US to receive the book by mail. You can win a blog contest even if you've won before.



Author, editor, ghostwriter, writing coach, and spiritual counselor, [Noelle Sterne](#) publishes fiction and nonfiction in print and online venues. Her current column in Coffeehouse for Writers is titled “Bloom Where You’re Writing.” With a Ph.D. from Columbia University, Noelle for over 28 years has assisted doctoral candidates to complete their dissertations. Her book, [Trust Your Life: Forgive Yourself and Go After Your Dreams](#) (Unity Books), uses examples from her practice, writing, and other aspects of life to help readers let go of regrets, relabel their past, and reach their lifelong yearnings. She is completing a practical -psychological-spiritual handbook to support doctoral candidates: *Grad U: Complete Your Dissertation—Finally— and Ease the Trip for Yourself and Everyone Who Has to Live With You.*

Visit Noelle at www.trustyourlifenow.com.

1. After all the time, send-outs, get-backs, and hard work, the ecstasy of acceptance is fabulous and tear-filled. Let yourself scream, cry, feel the nervous soaring rise in your chest. If you can share it with someone, all the better.
2. The ecstasy lasts 12½ minutes. Then the work begins.
3. As much as (you think) you’ve revised and refined the manuscript, it’s in our writer’s genes never to be satisfied. And maybe we shouldn’t be. When you review the manuscript yet again, make notes (I use the Word tracked-change tool) of what you want to change, add, delete.
4. Give all editorial suggestions your close attention and ample, undisturbed stretches (remember your dominant revising gene). If you really can’t stand what an editor has recommended or dictated or you see something you’ve just got to fix, have the courage to communicate your own revisions. Even on a text or galley that looks “final.” The editor may groan from afar but will admire you for the time, effort, and attention you’ve taken to make the book better. Remember, the publisher benefits too.

And when they say “final,” don’t be scared. This term can change like cloud formations on a windy day. After my book was supposed to have gone to the printer (“final”), I found a terrible typo. I rushed an all-cap email to the editor. She quickly responded and said one of the copyeditors had also found a late-stage error and both would be corrected before the final really became final.

5. Nevertheless, at some point, you’ve got to let it go. We’ve all had the experience of reading a “finished” work

and having to admit to ourselves it's great. Then when we return to it, days or weeks later, we cringe. And want to dive in and tear it apart. As I extracted article material from my book, I saw with horror what I thought were awkward phrasings, overcuteness, obscureness, inconsistencies, gaps in transitions, no reasons at all for some of the text. I was ready to burn the pdf. But then I remembered that this was just my insecurity and the ol' revising gene acting up. So, swallowing hard, I did what I advise you now: Let it go.

6. Once the manuscript really is done, much of your writing time may be (should be) taken up with developing your publicity and [platform-building](#) (you know—blogs, websites, ads, reviews, press releases, social media, articles, interviews, book tours). For most of us introverts who never have enough time just to write, the prospect of all this may sound uncomfortable, distasteful, or migraine-prompting. But accept the steps and give them your best. Your book's success depends on them. You'll stretch yourself, conquer a few fears, and maybe surprise yourself by almost getting to like the promotion process (it is writing too).

7. Despite this pep talk, keep filling the well, as Julia Cameron says. At least twice a week, give yourself uninterrupted time to write. Let it be something connected or unrelated to your present book. I've done drafts of spinoff essays, the opening of my sequel, a quirky short story that blossomed in the parking lot, a poem, and even a list of things I learned from publishing my first book...

GIVEAWAY: Noelle is excited to give away a free copy of her book to a random commenter. Comment within 2 weeks; winners must live in Canada/US to receive the book by mail. You can win a blog contest even if you've won before.



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10 Responses to 7 Things I've Learned So Far, by Noelle Sterne



laurbor says:

November 18, 2012 at 9:04 pm

I loved Julia Cameron's book. This one looks great as well! I'm currently participating in Nanowrimo and am getting the word count in...but the quality...not so sure haha. But that's what revisions are for!

Best,

Laura

[Log in to Reply](#)



Noelle Sterne says:

November 19, 2012 at 1:50 pm

Thank you, Laura. Julia Cameron continues to inspire me. The very best with your Nanowrimo project. Keep a'scribblin'. The quality will eventually surface.

[Log in to Reply](#)



Chuck Sambuchino says:

November 20, 2012 at 1:41 am

I just wanted to stop real quick and thank Noelle for her guest column!

[Log in to Reply](#)



leeanniazi says:

November 20, 2012 at 11:08 am

Thank you so much to Noelle Stern for creating such an insightful and useful piece of work. Currently I am trying my very best to balance my work as an elementary teacher, my work as a university student, my role as a wife and mother of two young daughters and my desire and passion to write. The writing is something that is

innate in me. It will live inside of me always. I just need to find out a better way to manage it. Thank you.

[Log in to Reply](#)



Noelle Sterne says:

November 20, 2012 at 12:31 pm

Chuck and Lee-Ann, appreciate your comments very much. Lee-Ann, I empathize: balance is hard. Pardon the commercial, but you may find help in my current column in Coffeehouse for Writers, "Do You Suffer from the TTW Syndrome?" The piece has more ideas for managing all our other duties and giving ourselves the essential writing time.

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Lilia F says:

November 20, 2012 at 4:05 pm

I've found typos and such in finished novels and never demanded my money back.

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Kateindc says:

November 21, 2012 at 9:55 pm

Thank you for the wonderful advice and the validation of my perfectionistic tendencies! I absolutely agree with what you've said – I think that you have to take your writing seriously and make it the best you can, but find a way not to make yourself crazy. Your book sounds great, best of luck with it.

[Log in to Reply](#)



Noelle Sterne says:

November 22, 2012 at 12:17 pm

Lilia—Appreciate your observation. Next time . . . money back, and even write to the publisher. You may get a comp copy.

Kateindc—Thank you for your lovely words. Perfectionism forever (except for house cleaning, and maybe sock matching)! Do visit my site to download a sample chapter of my book and learn more about it.

[Log in to Reply](#)



Jobe says:

November 26, 2012 at 6:40 pm

I've never heard of Coffeehouse for Writers... Cue Google. Thanks for the tips, Noelle!

[Log in to Reply](#)



Noelle Sterne says:

November 27, 2012 at 1:01 pm

A pleasure, Jobe. Not just because of my column, explore Coffeehouse for Writers. It contains many terrific helps for writers.

[Log in to Reply](#)