



Junie Swadron

Guidelines for Writing

& Moving Beyond The Inner Critic



JUNIE SWADRON

**CREATIVE, CORPORATE &
COUNSELLING SERVICES**

YOURLIFEMATTERS@JUNIESWADRON.COM

250-813-0183

JUNIESWADRON.COM

Guidelines for Writing and Moving Beyond The Inner Critic

Breathe: Writing is a full-bodied exercise—it is not just the brain and the fingers. It calls for full breath. When we get scared, our breathing becomes shallow and so does our writing. The more grounded you are in your body, the deeper your writing is. When you're breathing from a shallow place, your writing tends to stay on the surface. Breathe from deep in your belly and write from that place.

In his book, *Writing From the Body*, John Lee explains:

“To begin writing with the full power of our body's knowledge, we must welcome our life, our breath and our emotions completely. Write whatever bursts forward from the breath. Let the pen follow where the breath leads. We have only to begin breathing fully to show life that we are serious about embracing her.”



Forget about Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar:

This only invites the critic to come in and stop you from keeping your hand moving. A startling number of people won't write because they do not spell well and are embarrassed. They feel the same way about punctuation, grammar and their writing style. The kind of writing we do in this class doesn't care if you can't spell or use grammatically correct speech or punctuation—or use any punctuation at all for that matter! Many of us had experiences in school where teachers stood over us with red pens marking up our most creative, imaginative efforts. In many cases, this served to shut many of us down to never want to write again. Writing was equated with perfection.

Mark Twain once said:

“If we taught our children to speak the way we teach them to write, everyone would stutter.”

Our focus here is on the joy and creative discovery through the written word while being gentle and kind with ourselves and each other. It's our process and not perfection we're interested in.



Write quickly without stopping: Your critic may say things like, "This is stupid, you can't write, you can't even spell, you have nothing valuable to say and on and on." Or worse, it will say, "I don't want to write this sad story. What will people think?" This will stop you in your tracks. The next thing you know you'll be getting up, moving from your writing table to get a chocolate bar or turn on the television or engage in some other distracting behaviour because you believe your inner critic's lies. When your hand is moving continuously across the page or keyboard, the critic can't catch up to it. If you just keep on writing that caustic gremlin doesn't have a chance. It chatters in the spaces. Don't give it any!

Don't think: When you're thinking, you're judging, planning, figuring out what to say next. This writing requires us to step aside. We are not leading, but following. Be a conduit. Be open. With a bit of practice you will find the words will naturally flow into you and onto the page. It is then your writing becomes a meditation.

Marion Woodman, in an interview in Common Boundary said:

"After much thought, I realized the trouble I had writing that bleak Friday afternoon was due to my approach. I was trying to analyze, trying to explain rationally. I was failing miserably because I was approaching the task through my head. I had to drop into my belly."

Get inspired about the process. Come to your writing table with anticipation and for what will show up on the pages. *In conjunction with writing your life stories, begin to keep a daily journal so you can write whatever comes up for you while writing your stories such as emotions, thoughts, insights, images and ideas. It's a great tracking system as you move through this program.*

Ray Bradbury, in *Zen in the Art of Writing* exclaimed:

"If you did not write every day, the poisons would accumulate and you would begin to die, or act crazy or both—you must stay drunk on writing so reality cannot destroy you."

Lose Control: Don't worry if it's polite, appropriate, correct. That special place within us connected to our memories and to Source carries wisdom, insight and raw energy and isn't concerned about structure or form. It just is. And when you tap into it, it just speaks. Our job is to simply listen as we follow our hand across the page. We are giving up control. We are not leading. We step aside and follow.

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Write Where You Are! Writing from where you are is a journey into self-discovery which can involve confronting the parts of ourselves that have been hidden or repressed. This is where your energy and passion is. It's the authentic you. It's original thought. Write through your feelings, not around them. Don't be afraid to go right to the marrow. There will be things that scare you. Memories that scare you. It's okay. Keep writing. You will eventually get to the other side and will feel better. This brings healing, catharsis, clarity. Other times you will feel spent. What you are doing is powerful. You are letting your energy flow through you instead of letting it get buried or stuck or playing pretend with pretty and poetic words or half-truths that sound nice but don't describe what is truly going on. Honouring ourselves with our truth, especially in written form, can be very painful, but honestly worth it in the end.

Keeping the Balance

You want to be involved in your story, writing from your heart and be objective at the same time. There's a Zen saying, when you walk, just walk – when you eat, just eat. So when you write, just write. Don't get too attached to what you're writing. It's easy to get stuck in 'woundolgy' if you're writing about something painful.

Let the writing itself breathe you through it to the other side. And the other side is where you are now because somehow you survived it and are now on safe shores looking back.

Enjoy the process.



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