
DEALING WITH PROCRASTINATION AND DOUBT



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There are two major roadblocks to writers getting their work done: procrastination and doubt. They are both very simple to understand – and very hard to overcome.

DEALING WITH PROCRASTINATION

When you have a job and family and a dog and a life, and when your car needs washing and your tooth needs filling and the ants are taking over your kitchen, it's easy to put off writing. It's easy, in other words, to think of writing as a bonus – something you only get to do when the planets are aligned properly.

Except that there's one teeny tiny little problem: the desire to write is always there, even when the planets aren't aligned, simmering away like a pot of soup on the back burner. It doesn't go away. That desire looks something like this:

- You can't get the characters of your novel out of your head. They feel more real to you in many ways than the people in your own life. They speak to you, taunt you. You can't wait to spend more time with them. When you DO spend time with them, the minutes speed by. You feel relaxed, whole, happy. You wish you could write every day, but well, there's the dentist appointment and that meeting at your kid's school.
- Something unusual or unique or wild or compelling happened to you and everyone you tell your story to says, "You should write a book." You begin to think, YES, yes I should write a book. I would love to write a book. So you start writing – awesome scenes, snappy dialogue, heartfelt insights. You feel powerful. You feel that you have something to say that can help other people who are living through what you lived through. You start to feel that this is your purpose in life – to share your story. You wish you could devote enough time to it to get the story down, but there's lunch to make, the dishes to do, so you put off the writing until it becomes something you hope to do some day.
- You are on top of the world in your career – an expert, and authority. You dream of capturing everything you know and shaping it into a book so that you can widen your influence, become a speaker or a thought leader – someone quoted by the media, invited to panels. You write pages of notes, worksheets, amazing stories to illustrate your points. You think, "I GOT this." But then your top employee quits, your top client needs something tomorrow, there's a crisis in HR -- and suddenly your writing is at the bottom of the to-do list again. You begin to think that what you really need in order to get your writing done is three months free and clear of anything – no family, no Internet, not work.

Sound familiar?



THE ONLY WAY TO GET A BOOK TO STOP HAUNTING YOU IS TO WRITE IT.

STRATEGIES FOR OVERCOMING PROCRASTINATION

1. Just do it.
2. Beat yourself up when you don't do it as a means of hopefully inspiring yourself to just do it tomorrow.
3. Get so jealous about the people who ARE just doing it that you start doing it—at least for a little while—in a fit of rage.
4. Get a publishing deal and an editor who will give you deadlines you won't dare miss.
5. Set a series of specific, reasonable, measurable goals and find a way to hold yourself accountable for meeting them.

If this were a test asking you to pick the best answer, you'd probably go for #5. So hold that in your mind for a minute while we look at the problem of doubt.



Doubt stops writers the way Superman stops freight trains. It is so powerful, so swift, so strong. It leaps out in front of your best intentions and stops you cold. It never lets up. It's always there. Here's how it often looks:

- You never start writing because you're convinced your idea is crap.
- You never start writing because you think that your idea is awesome but you are convinced that you are untalented, unworthy and unable to pull it off.
- You start writing but don't continue because you saw another book that was kind of similar to yours and you realized that you should have done this a year ago and now you're too late.
- You start writing but and you gain some momentum and you give your pages to someone who loves you but who knows nothing about writing, and they say something supremely unhelpful which tweaks a raw nerve and you realize that you were silly to think you could write a book and so you stop.
- You finish a rough draft of your book but then you become terrified of actually moving forward and so instead of looking for an editor and researching agents, you sign up for a writing conference and call that progress instead.
- You send out your book to agents and get some requests for full manuscripts reads but suddenly you realize you should have ditched chapter 3 and revised chapter 10, and so you start tweaking and never respond to the agent, convincing yourself that they would have thought it was crap anyway.

Sound familiar?

THERE IS NO WAY TO GET RID OF THE DOUBT FOR GOOD. THERE ARE ONLY WAYS TO MANAGE IT.

STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING DOUBT

1. Change your self talk so that the voice inside your head is constantly saying, “You can do it, you’re awesome, keep up the good work!”
2. Look for piecemeal outside assurance (from writing course, writing workshops, writing conferences) every time you feel doubt read its’ ugly head.
3. Tell yourself that you’re not really full of doubt, you’re just too busy and you’ll write your book some day when you have time. (See strategies for overcoming procrastination.)
4. Get specific, detailed, consistent and personalized feedback that lets you know at regular and dependable intervals that you are on the right path

The best strategy? A program that helps you kick procrastination with weekly deadlines and editorial feedback so you can finally finish your book.





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PRO-TIP:

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