



## February 2021: DEVOTION Workshop Notes

"Attention is the beginning of devotion."  
- Mary Oliver

"Practice until you make it a song that sings you."  
- Sue Monk Kidd

Access all recordings for our monthly Gathering, workshop notes, and downloads on the Lotus & Pen Perks Page (plus lots of other goodies).

\*New material will be posted the Monday following a Gathering

**Questions? Feedback? Want to work 1-on-1?** :: [heatherdemetrios@gmail.com](mailto:heatherdemetrios@gmail.com)

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### Devotion

a : religious fervor: piety

b : an act of prayer or private worship (*Her morning devotions.*)

c : a religious exercise or practice other than the regular corporate worship of a congregation

2a : the act of dedicating something to a cause, enterprise, or activity : the act of devoting (As in, *the devotion of a great deal of time and energy*)

b : the fact or state of being ardently dedicated and loyal (*Her devotion to the cause.*)

- From Merriam-Webster

*Reverence, longing, zeal, fervent, fidelity, worship, adoration, ardent*

### Devotion as Writing "with the blood"

- Rodrigo in *Mozart in the Jungle*
- Passion, zeal, giving oneself over to the work—intense flow
- But that's only the "highlights," the "sexy parts"
- Devotion as expressed in musicians, dancers: devotion as grit, discipline, habit: "working class devotion" – this is what we're looking at today

### Exploration #1

- What is your love language? (If you haven't taken the quiz (see resources below) then circle your best guess – it may be more than one thing)

- Receiving Gifts
- Acts of Service
- Words of Affirmation
- Quality Time
- Physical Touch

### Working with Love Languages in Your Writing Practice: You Are In Relationship With Your Writing

#### Examples:

- Physical Touch = Try writing by hand or doing physical exploratory sidewriting activities like collage. Get a massage for your arms and hands or buy a lovely lotion and spend time each day loving the hands that write your words.
  - Ritual: Light some incense or a candle before each writing session. Bow to your laptop. Bless your hands.
- Words of Affirmation = Write a love letter to your writing ([Get the download below in Resources](#))
  - Ritual: Create a mantra or say other words of power before every writing session that links to your intention for your writing and how you show up for it.
  - "Prayer isn't magic. It's applied consciousness." – Deepak Chopra
- Acts of Service = Write your Writer's Artist Statement. (Link to exercise in Resources below)
  - Ritual: Before you write, spend a few minutes doing lovingkindness meditation or simply ask out loud that your words may benefit all beings. You could also recite the Shantideva Prayer. (One of the Dalai Lama's favorite prayers- see resources below for this).
- Receiving Gifts = Buy a pretty notebook or items for your writing space. Invest in a class or coaching. Get that standing desk your back is begging you to add to your writing cave.
  - Ritual: Give an offering to your writing each day. Google the flower offerings that are common in Bali. Before you write, place a gift of some kind – perhaps the gift of your attention if you don't have a physical thing – on the altar of your writing.
- Quality Time = Bring the *quality* back into your writing practice (remodel your writing space, schedule it in and make it non-negotiable, leave your cell phone on airplane mode)
  - Ritual: Treat writing as though you're going to mass. Same time, same place. Enter your writing cave as though it's a cathedral. Holy water and crossing yourself optional.

Exploration #2: Write one way you can express your love to your writing through your unique love language. How can you show up for writing and give it the present of your presence?

#### Your Relationship To Devotion: Word Contemplation Practice

- Close your eyes as I lead you through this short contemplation. If you're not working with us live or on the recording, you can also grab a journal and begin engaging in some free association with our word of the month, such as a mindmap of the word. (Link to mindmapping at the end of the lecture notes)
- Think of someone or something you have felt truly devoted to. Could be a person, or an animal companion. Could be a series of books or a cause. Whatever comes to mind, work with that.
  - Bring this person or thing to mind as vividly as possible. You might want to imagine the last thing you did for this person, or the last time you engaged in this activity.

- What images, memories, sounds, smells, etc. come to mind with this word?
- Drop into your body: What does devotion *physically* feel like? Where is the sensation located in your body?
- What quality of mind does it cultivate within you? Do you feel bright, manic, muddled, whirling, peaceful?
- Make these feelings and images as vivid and specific as possible.
- Now, let all those images fade and take a moment to sit with what it feels like to be DEVOTED.
- When you're ready, jot down insights, impressions, and questions in your notebook or journal.

### Exploration #3

- Jot down whatever came up for you during our contemplation.
- How does devotion express itself uniquely through you?

### Devotion In Action & Atomic Habits or Grandma Zora Goes To Mass

- **In religion:** candles, rituals, endowed objects (a cross or star of David worn around the neck, mala beads), objects in the home – a religious symbol on the wall, prayers, attending services, bowing, practicing yoga, leaving offerings (the flowers creations in front of shops in Bali, rice in front of a photo), good acts (money / volunteering etc.)
- **Explore on your own:** Signs of devotion to your writing: what are they?
- **Cue-Craving-Response-Reward (Atomic Habits):**
  - Cue: Your sign of devotion can act as a cue to crave your writing
  - Craving: You crave your writing because it (fill in the blank): *it feels good, it completes you, it energizes you...*
  - Response: You write.
  - Reward: Your reward is the feels after having written, the book you write, etc.
- Most typical cues = time and location (Grandma Zora at mass = devotion)
  - **When do you write? Where do you write?**

### Couples Therapy with Your Writing: Devotion in the Darkness

If you're feeling like your story has gone dark, like you and your writing are in a terribly rocky place, you might find some comfort in...well, nuns. Hear me out:

When we think of devotion, an easy icon that comes to mind is Mother Teresa, a saint so devoted to her god and those the world had forgotten that she spent her life serving them. This is what I adore about her: Even though she didn't feel God's presence (what she called "God" and I might just think of as "Source"), she continued to be devoted to what her heart called her to, to do the work she knew was necessary, and to trust in her calling even in her darkest moments. Setting aside any of our beliefs surrounding patriarchal institutions, etc., I want you to consider this, an excerpt of a letter she wrote to one of her confessors:

*"Darkness is such that I really do not see—either with my mind nor with my reason.—The place of God in my soul is blank.—There is no God in me.—When the pain of longing is so great—I just long & long for God—and then it is that I feel—He does not want me—He is not there...The torture and pain I can't explain.—"*

It blew my mind to read that and to learn the ways in which she began to work skillfully with this sense of loss, which she describes in her private writings (*Come Be My Light*) in much the same way we writers might describe writer's block (which I don't believe in - I just call it "being stuck" or having a dry well). And this got me thinking:

#### Exploration #4 (Do this on your own)

- What does devotion to my writing look like when I feel like I've lost my groove, my flow, the magic?
- How can I work with this darkness, continue to live out my calling to be a writer even when it's hard?

#### Antidote to Darkness #1: "Temptation Bundling" or Coffee and Doughnuts after Church

- From *Atomic Habits*: "Desire is the engine that drives behavior...We need to make our habits attractive because it is the expectation of a rewarding experience that motivates us to act in the first place...Temptation bundling works by linking an action you want to do with an action you need to do...You're more likely to find a behavior attractive if you get to do one of your favorite things at the same time." (p. 108-109)
- In this way, you associate the thing you need to do (write) with something you really want to do (have coffee)
- Go to church = get coffee and doughnuts after
- Example:
  - **Thing you want:** A second cup of coffee ("After I write for one hour, I get my second cup of morning coffee.")
  - **Thing you want:** Check Instagram ("After I write for one hour, I get to check Instagram.")

#### Antidote to Darkness #2: Leap of Faith Mindset

- Mother Teresa: the "saint of darkness"
  - Unrelenting love and devotion despite not feeling her god's presence
  - Conviction
- Vocation: "a summons or strong inclination to a particular state or course of action"
  - **Create a Writer's Artist Statement – see resources below**
  - Why do you write?
  - Who do you write for?
  - How do you serve your writing?
  - How does your writing heal you? How might it heal others?
  - What would a world without writers look like?
  - Why does the world need your words?
  - Why do *you* need your words?
  - Why do your family / friends / community / students / clients / customers need your words?
- **Thought Work:**
  - Note the limiting belief that threatens your devotion. "Hello, Fear."
  - Apply words of power: "My writing is not pointless. I write because\_\_\_\_\_."
  - What would have happened if (insert your favorite author) quit writing?
  - List all the things a book you enjoyed meant to you personally.
  - Now, list all the things your book might mean for someone else.

#### Final Exploration for Breakout Groups and/or Journaling:

- What's your love language and how might you express it with your writing?
- What are some rituals you can bring into your writing practice to show and increase your devotion?

- How might you work with the concept of “temptation bundling” to combine writing with an easy, enjoyable activity that you want to do?
- What challenges are you facing getting to your writer’s seat (or staying there)?
- What or who gets in the way of your devotion?
- How do *you* get in your way?

### Resources & Further Reading

“The Five Love Languages for Writers”: <https://heatherdemetrios.com/blog/the-five-love-languages-for-writers>

Love Letter Sidewriting Exercise Download:

[https://static1.squarespace.com/static/590df227e3df284583731975/t/60246284e6856f1d71eff364/1612997252124/DEVOTION\\_Sidewriting.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/590df227e3df284583731975/t/60246284e6856f1d71eff364/1612997252124/DEVOTION_Sidewriting.pdf)

“How To Write A Writer’s Artist Statement”: <https://heatherdemetrios.com/blog/how-to-write-a-writers-artist-statement>

Mindmapping: My dear friend, the author and coach Camille DeAngelis, has a great video on the mindmapping technique here:

<http://www.cometparty.com/2012/11/flashwrite7/>

*Atomic Habits* (James Clear)

*Come Be My Light* (Mother Teresa)

### The Shantideva Prayer

May I become at all times, both now and forever,  
A protector for those without protection,  
A guide for those who have lost their way,  
A ship for those with oceans to cross,  
A sanctuary for those in danger,

A lamp for those in the dark,  
And a servant to all those in need.  
As long as living beings exist,  
and suffering afflicts them,  
May I too abide to dispel the misery of the world.

May I be a guard for those who need protection,  
A guide for those on the path,  
A boat, a raft, a bridge for those who wish to cross the flood.  
May I be a lamp in the darkness,  
A resting place for the weary,

A healing medicine for all who are sick,  
A vase of plenty, a tree of miracles;  
And for the boundless multitudes of living beings,  
May I bring sustenance and awakening,  
Enduring like the earth and sky  
Until all beings are freed from sorrow,  
And all are awakened.