

Healthy Practices to Care for Yourself and Your Writing Muse

By Isla McKetta

Your body and mind are the vessels your writing flows through. If you don't take care of yourself, you risk emptying those vessels of creativity—the worst symptom of which is the dreaded writer's block. The key to a successful and continuous writing career is to feed your muse by practicing a health writing/life balance along the way.

Here are some ways to fuel your writing self when you start to feel empty:

Your Daily Life: Inspiration is all around

Sometimes writer's block is a small affair. You've written all weekend and can't think of another word. Or a rejection letter makes you want to take the afternoon off. But you have to get back on the horse eventually. There are four quick ways to refresh yourself and brush aside the block.

Take a Walk

According to Psychology Today, walking stimulates creativity. Whether it's the change of scenery or your increase in blood flow, try taking a stroll through your neighborhood the next time you feel blocked. You might find out why stopping to smell the roses became a beloved cliché.

Read a Book

Books will always be your best teachers. If you feel blocked about how to handle a dialogue, crack the spine on a book where you know dialogue is handled well and examine how that writer did it. If you are more generally blocked, open up a book of poetry and let the words spill over you. You'll feel both nourished and inspired.

Sleep

The New York Times can tell you that sleep inspires creative thinking. A nap gives your brain time to work through the block for you. Hemingway is rumored to have stopped writing mid-sentence at the end of each day. Can you imagine how rich his dreams must have been? Give yourself the gift of an afternoon nap or a full night's sleep and then get back to work.

Call your Friends

One of the best ways to break through writer's block is to gather your writer friends around you and say all your fears out loud. Your friends will share theirs too and all the things that

seemed so scary before will seem manageable. If you don't have a writing group, get one. Your life will be enriched in more ways than one.

Big Changes: To Write, Live an Unwritten Life

Some cases of writer's block feel major. This happens when you've finished a novel and can't face another page, or a major life event can shock your writing rhythms all out of whack. These are good times to shake up your day-to-day. Many a writer became famous by turning their interesting life experiences into creative writing.

Take an Unusual Job

Great writers have often drawn direct inspiration from their jobs. John Steinbeck ran a fish hatchery before writing *Cannery Row* and Stephen King used his experience as a janitor as fodder for *Carrie*. It may be difficult to get a job on a paddle wheel boat like Mark Twain, but if you want to explore the wilderness like Jack London, consider [Alaska job openings](#).

Wherever you earn your daily bread, take time to observe the people and culture around you. You may not write a searing tell-all like Lauren Weisberger's *The Devil Wears Prada*, or maybe you will...

Travel Widely

Great adventures make great literature and travel is often the surest route to adventure. Minnesotan F. Scott Fitzgerald met his muse Zelda in Alabama. Together they lived in many places including New York, France, and Switzerland. Would he have written *The Great Gatsby* without having met Zelda? Could *Tender is the Night* have been set in Minneapolis?

Similarly, Isak Dinesen was a writer in Denmark before she managed a coffee plantation in Kenya, but we might never have read her other stories if *Out of Africa* hadn't made her famous.

However you choose to work through your writer's block, be kind to yourself, and know that while you are not alone, you alone can make it better.

What are your tips for shaking writer's block?

Isla McKetta, MFA finds time between naps, reading, writing groups, and world travel to write fiction (most days, anyway). She reviews books and tweets about them as [@islaisreading](#). You can learn more about Isla at her [blog](#).