

WRITE ON FIRE

Learn 8 Secrets to Overcome Writer's
Block and Pursue Your Dreams



MARCY MCKAY

WRITE ON FIRE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Who the Hell Are You, Marcy?	3
Skeletons in the Closet	6
Writer's Block Symptoms	11
Secrets to Overcome Writers Block	18 - 42
#1 – Nobody Likes A Bully	18
#2 – Gojo with Your Mojo	22
#3 – Let it Suck	25
#4 – Write on Fire	29
#5 – Time Flies	31
#6 – Don't Start at Once Upon A Time	34
#7 – Talk to Another Character	37
#8 – Trading Places	40
Summary of Secrets	43
The End Here = Your Beginning	44
Formula to Success	47



Photo Credit: Greg Wheeler

Who the hell are you, Marcy?

And, why should I care?

Good questions. I'm glad you asked. To make a long story short, I woke up from a dream in 1995 that told me to write a book. In true Marcy form, I freaked out how fame and fortune would change my life forever. Then, one day a friend lovingly sat me down and said, "Why don't you shut up and write the book first? Worry about the rest later."

So, I did. I shut up, joined a local writing organization and wrote.

Some.

I started a novel, sort of, but I also started a new job as executive director of a nonprofit I adored...we moved houses...I had our first baby...then our cat died. About three years later, when we adjusted to our new life, I gave birth to our

second child. We moved into our current home when he was just one-month old, and the chaos began again.

Baby #2 made me realize that my life was getting fuller. Busier. My dream of writing a novel would have to wait until my kids were grown and I had more time.

Right?

Wrong.

I had a husband, a three-year-old daughter, a newborn son, a job and too many volunteer commitments. But, I felt desperate to write this book. Desperate to stay *Marcy* amidst all these changes. I kept the family and the job, but ditched most of the rest and turned into the Energizer Bunny.

Since then, I've written four novels and one screenplay. This all took time. Years, in fact, but I stuck with it, learned my craft and improved. Today, I'm an award-winning copywriter and short story author, with publishing credits in *Writer's Digest's Writing Basics*, *Accent West* and *Roots & Wings*. I found a literary agent for novel #3, but that didn't work out, so we parted ways.

That broke my heart, so I wrote novel #4 and found another agent, then she left publishing in the fall of 2013.

That broke my heart again, so while searching for a new agent, I started Mudpie Writing -- to help other writers.

Do you see the pattern here? Heartache is horrible, but makes GREAT fuel for writing. Use it.

Writing is such a lonely solitary process that I wanted to provide a place for all of us to gather together to cheer each other on and help each other, but more importantly, TO WRITE.

Talking about writing is not the same as writing. You have to do the work. You have to shut up, sit down and write. I learned to do that, and want to teach you how to do the same, or get you recharged about your career, whatever the case may be. If you're a writer, then I want you to write.

Let's get started...



[Photo Credit: Compfight.com](http://Compfight.com)

Skeletons in the Closet

You know the drill. You're dying to write. Burning, in fact – novels, short stories, screenplays, poems, memoirs, songs, nonfiction articles/books, or any combination of the above. Words inspire and connect you to the world, so you want to share that passion with others. Words flowing like a waterfall.

However, you sit at your computer, or with a trusty pen and paper in hand, then...

Nothing.

Zero, zip, nada.

You freeze. The words stay stuck in your throat, cold – choking you. Your thoughts can't thaw out from your brain to your fingers. Staring at that blank screen, your self-loathing grows.

Or, worse – you force yourself to write, but it's awful. Each word is rotten and unusable. The beauty and brilliance get lost in translation. You hate yourself for being too lazy, too stupid, so...

Not.

Good.

Enough.

Sound familiar?

I thought so.

Merriam Webster defines **Writer's Block** as:

(noun): The psychological inhibition preventing a writer from proceeding with a piece.

Marcy's definition is simpler. **Writer's Block:**

(noun): I can't write. I hate myself.

Some days, my writing's clear as mud.

Other days, it's easy as pie.

Mudpie.

Writing is both delicious AND messy. It's well, Mudpie.

When the writing flows, it's glorious. When it doesn't, it's hideous. On those painful days, I stagger from my computer, desperate and shaky to feel "normal" the rest of the day around those in the "real" world, praying my mojo returns tomorrow, before I've lost my gift forever...

I've googled Writer's Block all over the internet. It's whispered about in chat rooms, a published author might mention it in passing in his or her memoir, I've heard it discussed at writers' conferences. It's even got its own definition in the dictionary, for heaven's sake!

However, Writer's Block seems like a dirty secret that stays hidden in the closet, with all sorts of other unspeakable skeletons.

Well, I'm from Texas and I say to hell with that! I think it's time we throw open the closet doors, drag those skeletons out into the light of day and talk about these taboos. Not only should we discuss the fact that Writer's Block is real, but more importantly, how to overcome it and pursue our dreams.

Writer's Block is part of the creative process. It will grip each of us in its monstrous fingers over and over and over again. Once I realized that, I learned to panic less each time it happens. However, I do still freak because each time Writer's Block hits me, it "feels like the first time," and not in a good way like the song by Foreigner says.

Even after all these years, Writer's Block still terrifies me. I try to remind myself that I've worked through this before, but it always feels bigger and scarier and uglier when I'm in the thick of it.

Still, I climb off the ledge, try to gently coax myself back to the computer.

“Come on, Marcy. You can do this. It doesn’t matter if it sucks. You can fix that later. Just get something on paper. No matter how bad.”

The freak-out sessions are shorter and the writing periods are longer. That’s what ***Write on Fire*** is all about – writing.

Here are some the symptoms associated with Writer’s Block.

Some are emotional.

Some are physical.

All hurt like hell.

Writer's Block Symptoms:

- Fear
- Doubt
- Stress
- Anxiety
- Self-hatred
- Laziness
- Perfectionism
- Failure
- Rejection
- Guilt
- Overwhelmed
- Anger
- Jealousy
- Grief
- Unproductive
- Regret
- Unhappiness
- Restlessness
- Boredom
- Paralysis
- Avoidance
- Ridicule
- Contempt
- Isolation
- Humiliation
- Busyness
- Passiveness
- Aggressiveness

That's quite a list because Writer's Block is quite a problem. I've experienced each of these emotions, multiple times during my career. I've also watched it happen to other writers, too – some of them *New York Times* Best-Selling Authors. It happens to us all.

I've also endured and witnessed the opposite extreme. **Writer's Burnout** is when you've written for so long, and for so hard, with little payoff in time, effort or money. You've done the work, you've produced book after book, but publication still eludes you. Your writer's soul is burned to a crispy char.

Or, it might not even be that YOU did anything, but life has burned you nevertheless. If your dad dies, your best friend discovers she has breast cancer and your husband loses his job, well, it's going to break your heart. It's also going to take time to recover. Life doesn't discriminate. We all carry our battle scars.

The continuum looks sort of like this:

Writer's Block ↔ ↔ ↔ ↔ **!WRITING!** ↔ ↔ ↔ ↔ **Writer's Burnout**

Even though these two conditions are opposite sides of the same spectrum, they can be stripped down to one word:

Fear.

Fear of failure.

Fear of success.

Fear of 1,000,001 different, terrifying outcomes.

All these Fears have one thing in common – they keep you from writing.

That's Fear's job. To keep us small and in our place. To keep the status quo going and not let our fire burn bright. It's intimidating as hell to be on page three of a four-hundred-page book, but you've got to start somewhere.

Yes, writing is scary. Yes, the process takes a long time, but your dreams will never come true if you don't start. That'd be worst of all. More importantly, you'll hate yourself for not investing time and energy into your own life. Honor your dreams.

That's easier said than done. Fear almost kept me from sharing **Write on Fire**, or creating Mudpie Writing at all. I'm doing the work (mainly, writing novels), but that voice in my head still screams, "Who are YOU to start Mudpie Writing? Why do YOU think you can give these people advice? You're not on the *New York Times* Best Sellers list. Hell, you haven't even published one novel. **WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?"**

Fortunately, I started Mudpie Writing and wrote **Write on Fire** anyway, although I felt scared sick most of the time. I listened to that one, still, small voice whispering, "You can," over the loud, screeching opinions that hollered, "YOU CAN'T!"

Fear is actually a good thing with writing. In all aspects of life, really.

Whenever Fear clutches you, and it will, don't run from it. Lean into the Fear.

Remember, Fear is part of the creative process. It's normal.

In fact, the more scared you are about a writing project, the more you love it and the more you absolutely, positively should write it. Your soul NEEDS you to write it and the world needs to read it – fiction, nonfiction, it doesn't matter.

Many people make the mistake of believing you have to get over your Fear FIRST, then write.

Wrong. That's bass-ackwards. You write through the Fear. Writing is what makes Fear go away...until it returns again. Fear won't take no for an answer, it'll pound you every step of the way, so you keep writing and writing. Read, write and stay connected with other writers.

Let's recap the two painful extremes in writing:

Writer's Block – the Fear of not starting, or continuing your writing project.

Writer's Burnout – After extreme over production, the Fear you'll never write again. Or worse, even care about doing so. You feel empty, broken and crushed.

I've developed a survival processes to deal with both Writer's Block and Writer's Burnout, but one challenge at a time. **Write on Fire** focuses on moving past Writer's Block.

Writers need to do two things over and over:

- 1. Writers read.**
- 2. Writers write.**

Try to read AT LEAST one book per month. Pretty much everyone can squeeze out enough time to read one dozen books during a twelve-month period. I know folks who read a book per week.

Not me! I'm not that fast, but I still try to read two novels per month.

Sometimes, I don't get there and try to make it up over holidays when I have more "free" time, but I always have a book on my nightstand.

Read whatever interests you. It doesn't have to be from your genre. Try to read both fiction and nonfiction. Reading is fun, but it also educates you on the market, helps spark creativity, improves your vocabulary, and teaches you how to write.

Bottom line, writers read.

Writers also write. Wanting to write isn't the same as writing. I don't want you to struggle like I did all those years, alone and confused in my process.

That's why I created **Mudpie Writing**. To nudge each other throughout our writing journeys and to celebrate our successes along the way.

I want to share with you 8 secrets I learned over the years on my own and through author friends to crush Writer's Block and to write.



Photo Credit: Compfight.com

1. Nobody Likes A Bully

As writers, we are creators of all things Once Upon a Time: novels, poetry, short stories, screenplays, magazine articles, how-to's, business books. You name it.

A writer's #1 responsibility is to tell the truth. We write about the good, the bad and the ugly: the way the red bleeds across the sky at sunset...the intoxicating power of love...how your next door neighbor beats his wife and children.

It's hard to follow our #1 responsibility and tell the truth when that big bully is standing behind us, waiting to clobber us with criticism. We can beat the hell out ourselves.

I'm going to give it to you straight. Many writers treat themselves poorly.

Most of us would never talk to our best friends the way we talk to ourselves. We bully ourselves. Seriously, think of your very best friend on this planet. That person you love most. Name him or her: _____.

The nasty, horrible, @#%& words slurring through your head about how lazy you are...how stupid your idea is...how nothing you write is good enough. That shuts down your creativity and causes many writers to quit.

Would you talk that way to your best friend?

Nope.

Me, neither.

You wouldn't talk that way to those you love, so stop talking that way to yourself. It's a HUGE and COURAGEOUS effort to sit down and write about the truth. However, why should one word squeak onto the page if all you ever do is bad-mouth it?

Nobody likes a bully. It doesn't matter if the writing is good, bad or otherwise.

Your job is to show up to the page and write. Do the work. You can improve it later. So, BE NICE to yourself each and every time you sit to write. It's a success!

If the words aren't flowing that day, acknowledge whatever you're feeling... even write about it – four quick lines. Because it gets your hand moving, or fingers tapping on the keyboard and connects you to words, then get to your writing.

Here are a few examples:

I feel angry because my wife always nags me when I go to work on my book....

I feel angry I can't seem to figure out what this novel is about...

I feel scared to enter my short story in that contest. I've never finished before...

I feel afraid I don't have enough credentials to write a self-help book...

This quick journaling isn't therapeutic, psycho-babble – it's a practical tip to crush Writer's Block. Who wants to delve into the dark unknowns of your writing if boogeymen wait lurking in the shadows? Name your Fears by name. Face your monsters. Your negative feelings aren't nearly as scary when you call them out.

I've created a **FREE, safe place for to do just that. You can vent anytime at [MudWriting.com](#) at [The Whinery](#)**. It's not a public page. Nobody will ever see what you write (not even me). Go there when you need to gripe, groan, rant and rave about your writing. Visit it as often as you like and please tell your friends.

The Whinery is always open and it's always free.

Voice your frustrations, then get back to writing. Otherwise, you're letting Fear win.

SECRET #1: Acknowledge your feelings, regardless of how negative or silly they seem, then BE NICE to yourself and write anyway. Nobody likes a bully.



Photo Credit: Compfight.com

2. Gojo With Your Mojo

Follow your body clock. It's logical to do the activities most important to you when you're most productive. I'm a morning bird, always have been. Back when I had a full-time j-o-b where I went out to an office, plus had two small children, a husband, and a bazillion different responsibilities, I had a novel BURNING inside me.

The last thing I needed to add to my already extra-long TO DO list was write a book, but I had to write. At that point, I was feeling very lost in all my many, important titles: wife, mother, executive director, church goer, PTA member,

board member, volunteer, carpooler, etc. I desperately needed to feel like me – Marcy, the writer.

I would go to sleep by 9 p.m., rise at 5 a.m. and write for one to two hours before my kids awoke for the day: pre-school and Mother's Day Out for them and jobs for my husband and me.

Would I have preferred to work on my book all day long?

Sure, but financially that wasn't feasible. I had to write when I could.

Remember, some is better than none.

I have a friend who's a night owl, so he does the exact opposite. He tucks his kids into bed by 9 p.m., kisses his wife goodnight, then writes for two or three hours before he goes to sleep.

Writing with your body clock makes sense. For me, I know I want to do my "first" writing – meaning first drafts of a new scene or chapter for my novels, or

cranking out a magazine article or blog, earlier in the morning. I can edit later in the afternoon, when I have the bones of my piece in front of me.

If life gets in the way and you can't write during your peak times, that's okay.

Again, there's no magic pill to swallow to make this all easy. If that was true, then everyone would be a writer! Do the best you can. Lean into the Fear and write, whenever you make the time.

SECRET #2: Write during your most productive time of the day, when your mind is most open to creativity.



[Photo Credit: Compfight.com](http://Compfight.com)

3. Let It Suck (May be sung to the tune of *Let It Snow*)

Perfectionism is the devil. Seriously, it's a socially-acceptable form of abuse.

Think of your favorite novel/movie/how-to book. I assure you that it didn't start out that awesome, powerful, scary, twisted, beautiful, sad (fill in the blank with the best description).

Most first drafts are far from the final product. Writing is like anything else. It takes a lot of work and a lot of practice to reach its final fabulousness.

Don't expect your writing to be perfect. Don't even expect it to be close to mediocre in the beginning. Let it be bad, super bad. Let it be the yuckiest, suckiest, worst writing ever. That takes the pressure off. Shut up, sit down and

write. Vomit onto the page. Get the words out. You'll clean it up later and make it pretty. There'll be a few lines, a concept worth saving in all that mess. Sometimes, it's just one word. But, if it's the RIGHT word, then it's worth the struggle.

As famed romance author Nora Roberts once said, "You can fix anything but a blank page."

First Drafts are really about getting the bones of the story down. Turn your brain off and your hands on. And remember, BE NICE to yourself while you're hurling it out.

Here's an example of what NOT to do:

"Roslyn could still smell the other woman's perfume as her husband kissed her goodnight, then he staggered upstairs to their bedroom. She grabbed the knife and followed behind him." Man, this is horrible. I can't write. Why did I even bother? It's a stupid idea....

That's Fear trying to hijack you. Don't let it. Get the story onto the page. Keep writing. You'll add whatever it needs later to make it sparkle and shine. Let it suck in the beginning.

This works for non-fiction, too. Years ago, I wrote a magazine article about the 20th anniversary of my father's death. I didn't know how to start this piece, much less write the whole thing because I didn't want to revisit that pain again. It hurt bad enough the first time.

Here's how my first draft started:

"I can't believe it's been 20 years. Daddy was the sole survivor of that plane crash in 1968 and he ends up dying of a freakin' heart attack in 1987? I'm not a philosopher. I'm not a therapist. I'm not any kind of a guru. I'm just a student in the school of hard knocks, and here's what death has taught me in the past 20 years."

None of that was the opening of my article, though I did use the underlined portion elsewhere in the story. To this day, it's still one of the most popular pieces I've ever written. My honesty bled onto the page and everyone could relate because they'd suffered losses, too.

I love Natalie Goldberg's book, *Writing Down the Bones* (a great read for all writers, regardless of their level). She makes it clear to subtract rules from writing, not add them. It's a process of "uneducation," rather than education.

To me, First Drafts are about the story's basic framework. Bones are bare for a reason. You'll add meat to it later.

SECRET #3: Forget perfection. It's a socially-acceptable form of self-abuse. First Drafts suck and they should. That takes the pressure off. Turn your brain off and your hands on.



4. Write on Fire

Another trick is to write faster than the Fear. Write like you're on fire. If someone lit a match to you, would you think: "Oh, wow? Look. I'm burning?"

Hell, no!

You'd jump and hop around, screaming, desperate to snuff out the flames. You need to write like you've caught on fire. Write like your life depends on it.

Because it does.

Art matters.

Words matter.

Especially, your words.

Forget fame, fortune and six-figure advances. Write because you have a story to tell, or information to share, in only a way that YOU can. It doesn't matter whether it's fiction, or nonfiction. Honor your dream to write. Start writing, either by long-hand, or tapping away on the keyboard. Get the words out. Like this:

I hate this exercise. It's not helping. That Marcy chick doesn't know anything. I bet all her writing sucks. I need to go to the grocery store. What if my main character has a secret? Something nobody knows until now. What if he...

Keep your hands moving. If you start writing out all the errands you need to run at first, that's okay. Don't criticize or judge, gently nudge your thoughts back to your story. Besides, your brain will get tired of your whining eventually and get back to work. The main thing is DO NOT STOP writing. Don't worry about punctuation or correct your grammar. Don't even think about what to write next. Whether it's by long-hand on a legal pad, or tapping away on your keyboard, write on fire.

SECRET #4: Move your hand nonstop. Don't criticize. Don't judge. Write faster than your Fear.



[Photo Credit: Compfight.com](http://Compfight.com)

5. Time Flies

This is similar to **Write on Fire**, but takes it one step further. Either set a timer for 15 minutes (your phone, the stove, etc.). If you don't have a timer, no problem, free-write for three notebook pages. In fact, sometimes I prefer this way because I'm not focused on, "*how much more time?*" I know exactly how many pages I've written and how many more to go. Do it by long-hand or type. Whatever works best for you.

Once you've chosen a method, then BOOM. Write on Fire for the next 15 minutes. Write about whatever you need to with your project. If you need something specific to focus on, maybe ask yourself questions like:

- What happens next in my book?
- What's this novel/article/short story about?
- Who should I interview for this article?
- What's the most compelling way to start the piece?
- What's my character's backstory?
- Write the actual dialogue or scene.
- Whatever gets you writing.

You can do Time Flies on the computer, or by long-hand. Whichever way you feel more connected to your writing and to free yourself from Writer's Funk. For me, there's something about having the actual pen or pencil in my hand that I feel the words flow from me stronger, but I know several people who feel the same way about tapping away on their keyboards.

Regardless of the method, it doesn't matter how messy or confusing your writing is – just write.

In fact, with each new novel, I buy a "5-Subject Notebook " from the office supply store, and do all my Time Flies in it. Because they're the cheap, easy notebooks like I had in high school, so they feel familiar. Plus, I don't feel the

pressure to write high and lofty like I do when writing in pretty journals. I let it suck.

SECRET # 5: Free-write for a specific length of time (i.e. – 15 minutes or 3 notebook pages). Turn your brain off and your hands on. Write.



Photo Credit: Compfight.com

6. Don't Start @ Once Upon A Time

You know your mystery starts with a dead body and you can picture the big shootout at the end of your book with your detective and her killer, but it's the 370 pages in between.

Yes, it's best to write your story in chronological order, but writing is like the children's game, "Blind Man's Bluff." You're blindfolded, and you're not sure where you are, or where this story's going, so you grope and stumble around for something solid to grab hold of in the narrative. To feel more confident about your writing.

None of it's easy, but try it anyway. You love writing, even on the days it's hard. Do the work and put in your time. Write in a way that nobody else but YOU do.

On those difficult days, I have two suggestions. First, it's better to write some scene that goes into your story, even if it's not next chronologically. If you're stuck, write whatever scene comes to mind. Some is better than none. When you have more of the story down later, then you can put it all in chronological order.

Again, this works with nonfiction, too. When I struggle on how to start, I write the parts that excite me the most. For my magazine articles, it may be the interviews I enjoyed the best. For blogs, it may be the how-to section of the piece. Just anything to keep my fingers moving.

I know people who absolutely, positively cannot do this – jump around their story, all out of order. It makes them crazy. If that's you, fine. Don't do it.

If you're a more linear writer, my second suggestion is to make a Laundry List:

1. Detective finds dead body.
2. Clue takes her to the warehouse.
3. Follows first false lead.
4. ?
5. ?
6. Questions the killer, but she doesn't realize he's the murderer yet. He gives her a false suspect and sends her on a wild goose chase.

Make a list of what happens, skipping over the unclear parts, then go on to the next scenes that you do know. After you've made your list, work your way backwards to fill in the blanks. Making a Laundry List of your story triggers your brain in a new way and sometimes gives fresh insights. Remember, writing is far from an exact science. Find what works best for you. The key is – KEEP WRITING.

That way, you “win” at Blind's-Man Bluff. You can finally “see” your story and have a firmer foundation. Many writers don't fully understand what they're books are about until they write the whole piece. They don't understand the beginning until they're written, “The end.”

SECRET #6: You don't always have to write chronologically. If you're stuck, jump to another scene and write about it. Or, make a Laundry List of what you know happens, then work backwards to fill in the blanks.



Photo Credit: Compfight.com

7. Talk to Another Character

I love this secret because it's fun. Regardless of the point-of-view for your story: first-person (I, we), second-person (you, your), third-person (he, she, it, they), or omniscient (inside everyone's heads), free-write from a particular character's perspective other than the narrator. Choose whoever's voice you hear loudest in your head. They can reveal secrets about other characters and your story that even you didn't know.

Here's an example of switching points-of-view:

“The girls buried their father. The three lugged his whiskey-sodden body into the woods that night. The dead leaves crunched under their boots as they walked deeper and deeper through the trees. They didn’t speak about what they’d done because there was nothing to say. They’d killed him.”

Have one of the girls tell you her side of the story. You may want to listen to all three because they’ll probably have conflicting viewpoints and that’s GOOD. It gives you more material and more conflict, which is what makes great stories.

“Of course, Cookie cried the whole blasted time. Damn titty-baby. It’s all she ever does. Tweed didn’t say nothing, but I don’t care Papa’s dead. He was a sorry sonovabitch and I’m glad he’s gone. We should’ve killed him years ago.”

I read that Barbara Kingsolver followed this method while writing her Pulitzer-nominated novel, *The Poisonwood Bible* (a BRILLIANT read, by the way). A different character narrated each new chapter. In deciding who should tell the next part of the book, she wrote that same chapter in all four daughters’ points-of-view. Sometimes, in the mother’s, too.

Kingsolver said, “I spent nearly a year getting the hang of the Price girls, by choosing a practice scene and writing it in every different voice. I did that over and over until I felt the rhythm and verbal instincts of each character.”

Remember, this works with nonfiction, too. Once, I interviewed a woman who'd led an amazing life, but had become such a morphine addict that her stories were incoherent. Hardly anything she said connected, or made sense. Fortunately, her assistant gave me enough old magazine articles that I was able to piece the article together, but I tried to imagine this accomplished woman years before drugs had destroyed her. I wrote in her voice. "*I met the President*" later became *'she met the president.'*"

Yes, you may throw out a lot of writing like this because you won't use it all, but you're writing so fast you don't mind the extra. Plus, you're finally getting the story onto the page. Letting another character tell the story is another way to strike the match to light your writing on fire.

SECRET #7: Switch your story's point-of-view and free-write in one specific character's perspective.



Photo Credit: Compfight.com

8. Trading Places

When you have Writer's Block, sometimes it helps to have a change of scenery. If you normally write in the solitude of your home, pick up and move. Take your laptop/pen and paper and go to the library, a coffee shop, the park. Wherever. New places fresh perspectives.

Is your story a white-collar thriller? Go to a bank during lunch hour to watch the people hustle and bustle about. Is a dead body left abandoned on top of a grave? Go to the cemetery and drive around for inspiration. Do you have a scene

that takes place in the hospital? Look for details there, but don't get in the way.

They're busy saving lives there.

One summer, an author friend and I were both in a funk. My awesome agent loved my main character, but the plot was off. She made me pretty much start from page one and write a new 375 pages. I was devastated, but determined to push on toward publication. My friend, who had published several novels, was burned out and struggling with what to do next in her career.

We met in a coffee shop every Tuesday afternoon for an hour or so. With our tasty beverages by our sides, we did two or three free-writing sessions together, then read them aloud to each other. This helped me SO MUCH because she heard and saw things in my story that I couldn't because I was too wounded. She helped me find the jewels in my novel and encouraged me to keep writing when I struggled to keep going.

We were already in a weekly writing group together, but that was different. In those, we read and critiqued our polished chapters. Those coffee-shop sessions

were more the day-to-day, nitty-gritty grind of finding the story, shaping characters, and sucky first drafts. It was ugly and raw. It was also beautiful and inspiring. Those coffee-shop sessions helped free me from Writer's Block.

Writers are creative creatures, by nature, even if we're hidden behind 9-5 suits. We have to encourage them to come out and play. Take a field trip for motivation.

SECRET #8: Physically remove yourself from your typical writing scene to change your writing habits and bring breakthroughs to your writing. It's inspiring, even if it seems mundane.

Summary

Secrets to Overcome Writer's Block

1. **Nobody Likes A Bully** – Acknowledge your feelings, regardless of how negative or silly they seem, then BE NICE to yourself and write anyway.
2. **Gojo With Your Mojo** – Write during your most productive time of the day, when your mind is most open to creativity.
3. **Let It Suck** – Forget perfection. It's a socially-acceptable form of self-abuse. First Drafts suck and they should. Takes the pressure off. Turn your brain off and your hands on.
4. **Write on Fire** – Move your hand nonstop. Don't criticize. Don't judge. Write faster than your Fear.
5. **Time Flies** – Free-write for a specific length of time (i.e. – 15 minutes or 3 notebook pages). Turn your brain off and your hands on. Write.
6. **Don't Start @ Once Upon a Time** – You don't always have to write chronologically. If you're stuck, jump to another scene and write about it. Or, make a Laundry List of what you know happens, then work backwards to fill in the blanks.
7. **Talk to Another Character** – Switch your story's point-of-view and free-write from another character's perspective.
8. **Trading Places** – Physically remove yourself from your typical writing scene to change your writing habits and bring breakthroughs to your writing. It's inspiring, even if it seems mundane.



[Photo Credit: Compfight.com](http://Compfight.com)

The End Here = Your Beginning

I've really enjoyed my time together with you and hope you found **Write on Fire** helpful. I'd also would love to hear which of these secrets work for you, or other tricks that you've discovered along the way. I always want to learn more ways to fight Writer's Block. Plus, I love a good secret.

Please let me know how I can help you with your writing.

Seriously, I want to hear from you: marcy@mudpiewriting.com.

Feel free to share **Write on Fire** with friends. I'm happy for them to read it and would love for them to join the Mudpie party, too. **GIVE A HINT WHAT THEY'LL GET THERE.**

Remember, writing is delicious, messy. We need to stick together and hold each other accountable with tough love throughout our journeys, as well as celebrate our victories along the way. The key is to keep writing until you find what works best for you.

I hope you'll keep stopping by Mudpie Writing: www.mudpiewriting.com

Bottom line, writers do two things continually:

1. Writers read.
2. Writers write.

Don't forget that Writer's Block is part of the creative process. No matter how many years you write, or how famous you become, Fear will always be a few steps behind and will scare the hell out of you time and time again.

Lean into the Fear, stare it in the eye, then write anyway because the more afraid you are of a project, the more you love it. With writing, some is better than none.

Show up to the page, do your work, then go about enjoying the rest of your life. Don't play the tortured artist and bemoan to others how hard this is, how you can't get the plot to work, or how one-dimensional your characters are. This is Fear in disguise. Besides, most non-writers won't understand what you're saying anyway. It's not their world. They don't speak the language. Don't blame them that this is your dream.

Be present for whatever you're doing. When you're writing, really focus on the words and whatever you're creating. However, on the flipside, when you're with your family and friends, enjoy their company. When you're at your paid employment, do your best. All this will enrich your writing.

Although there truly is no magic formula, here's the secret to success:

WRITE ON FIRE
+
NEVER GIVE UP
=
ENDLESS POSSIBILITIES

I wish you all the best.

~ Marcy