**5 Writing is Hard Work – How to Make it Easier**

One of the biggest ideas that stops people from writing is that it’s hard work. I’ve mentioned before in this podcast how greatly our school experiences have conditioned us into a lot of negative beliefs about writing. This is one of those beliefs, that writing is hard.

A belief isn’t necessarily a truth. We make beliefs based on what we experienced, and you may have found writing difficult in school. Maybe the assigned subjects bored you. Maybe you got confused about outlines and footnotes.

No matter what situations gave you the belief that writing was hard work, you can change your beliefs. If you do that—and it may take a little time and a lot of determination—you may find that writing gets easier.

I’m Pat Iyer. I know writing gets easier when you follow the tips in this podcast. I’ve written or edited 800 chapters, books, online courses, articles or case studies, and thousands of blog posts.

Practice makes everything easier, including writing. Sit down as often as you can and write. Don’t judge what you write. Praise yourself for your persistence and for your ability to make one word follow another. You’re doing it. You’re writing.

Don’t give a thought to how good it is until you’ve established the practice of writing. It *does* make perfect.

**Writing is Hard Work – Or Is It?**

Everyone says it is. I remember reading something attributed to sportswriter Red Smith: Red Smith was asked if turning out a daily column wasn’t quite a chore. “Why, no”, dead-panned Smith. “You simply sit down at the typewriter open your veins and bleed.” And I’ll note there is controversy about who said this first. The record is unclear.

If you believe that, you can sit down in front of your computer every day and wait to suffer. You’ll look at writing the way many people look at going to the gym. It’s hard work. You’ve probably read that most people stop going to the gym after no more than a month of attendance. The gyms love to sell memberships in January, fill their exercise rooms until February, and then look at empty rooms for the rest of the year, while happily charging credit cards every month.

If you really want to write, you’re going to have to take a long, hard look at this “Writing is hard work” idea.

**If You Believe It, It Will Be True**

I would be willing to bet that those people, all togged out in their new exercise outfits in January approach the treadmill or stairs, thinking, “This is going to hurt.” As a result, their calf muscles begin to tense, or their arms, or their lower backs, and, surprise, they’re already in pain even before they’ve taken a single step.

The pre-writing equivalents could be backache, neck pain, or a throbbing headache. The writer might not directly associate these sensations with anxiety about writing, but that’s probably their source.

*Relax.* That’s the first step before writing, and you should do it deliberately. Do a series of neck rolls. Lean forward and backward. Make sure that both your feet are flat on the floor. Have you invested in a comfortable chair? It could be the best investment you make.

*Don’t glue yourself to that chair.* If you feel stuck for words, walk around a little. Don’t leave the room and get distracted, though. Stretch. Look out the window. Then return to the computer.

*Pay attention to what you’re thinking.*

* “I don’t know what to write next.”
* “Whose idea was this, anyway?”
* “I don’t have what it takes to be a writer.”

These are all variations of “Writing is hard work.” When you think them, deliberately switch your thoughts. Imagine yourself holding a completed manuscript or printed book.

**Set Achievable Goals**

Don’t read about how much writers are supposed to produce in one session. This will discourage you and start the “I don’t have what it takes” routine rolling.

Try this, instead. “Whatever I manage to write will be more than I would have written if I weren’t sitting here.” Only keep track of your word count if it encourages you. Otherwise, wait until you’ve established a productive pattern of writing.

**Make Some Affirmations**

“Writing is Hard Work” is an affirmation. You might be saying, “But I thought affirmations are all positive.” Unfortunately, you can convince the mind that anything is true if you mentally or verbally repeat it enough. This is known as the *dark* side of affirmations or negative thinking.

Turn on the light. Make up a series of affirmations to encourage—rather than discourage you in your writing.

* Writing doesn’t have to be hard.
* Writing can be fun.
* Writing can be easy.

You’ll notice that all these statements have a “maybe” quality. This means that they have possibility and room for exploration. You might not believe yourself if you said, “I love writing!” It’s too far a jump from “Writing is hard work.” The idea here is to create a set of transitional affirmations.

You can make up some longer ones, too, like, “I’m accomplishing more here than I would sitting like a couch potato and vegging out on front of the TV.” That’s practical and true.

**Be Patient with Yourself**

As a writer—and, incidentally, as a human—you’re a work in progress. Make the commitment to sweep out that old, limiting affirmation: “Writing is Hard Work.” As you do so, you may find yourself sweeping out a lot of additional debris.

Imagine how it feels to have a nice, clean mind ready to create ideas that you can then write or type. That’s fun.

**Practice Really Does Make Perfect**

It may take you some time and practice to get to the feeling that writing is fun. No child first learning to play the piano ever said that playing scales was fun, but when these scales become chords, and both hands begin to cooperate to make music, and they realize it is fun.

You’ve probably noticed that some people write with ease. Perhaps you envy them. Maybe you think they were born with that talent, and you conclude that you’ll never have it.

You may never become a great writer, but you don’t need to set the bar that high. While it’s true that some people are born with a facility for language, no one is born with the ability to effortlessly stream out highly readable writing.

**It Takes Patience**

You do have to get some basics out of the way. Learn the essentials of grammar, spelling, and punctuation. You probably learned these in school, and you only need to remember. Find a good book or books on these subjects.

Explore websites—there are many—on these subjects. They are often clever and entertaining and make learning fun. Some of them have online tests you can take. This will help you gauge your progress.

Confidence in your ability to correctly write provides a foundation for going further in terms of developing originality. You can more easily focus on writing when you don’t have to stop to remember where the comma goes.

**Discover Your Voice**

Have you read about the writer’s “voice”? This is not a mysterious concept. Your voice as a writer is how you express who you are. Everyone’s voice is as different from yours as they are, and this is good news. It means that you are unique. You can write in a way that no one else can.

A good way to develop your voice is to keep a journal. Use it to free write. You could, for example, set a timer for ten minutes, and write whatever comes into your mind. (Don’t worry about grammar, etc., while you’re doing this.) By creating a safe space in which you write without fear of others’ judgment, you forge a pathway from your innate creativity to your conscious mind.

You’ll also be practicing a style of writing that works very well for a first draft on any subject. Most writers will tell you that this draft should be a form of freewriting. Jot down your ideas, notes for what you’ll look up later, anecdotes, and anything else that relates to the subject you want to write about. Editing comes later.

**It Takes Practice**

Writing is like everything else in life. Athletes, artists, singers, and typists practice. A natural gift is like a rough stone that a gem cutter shapes into a jewel. With practice, any intelligent person can become a competent writer. Practice, dedication, and imagination may raise them to higher levels.

Without practice, though, whatever talent you have is as undiscovered as that rough stone.

If you are consistent and dedicated, you will get into a rhythm of writing. If you are patient, you’ll see progress.

Don’t worry about how much time it takes. Give it the time you can. Ten minutes a day will get you further than half-an-hour a week.

As a bonus, your writing, especially your journal writing, can lead you on a voyage of discovery. People report that regular journal writing taught them to be more self-forgiving and self-appreciative. If you got no additional rewards from writing, wouldn’t that be enough?

You will get more, though. The time will come when a once-weekly blog won’t intimidate you. You may decide to write a newsletter or a sales brochure or a speech.

When you develop ease as a writer, the world opens for you.

Let me summarize.

* If you believe writing is hard, it will be. You’ve conditioned your mind with this negative belief. And the good news is you can condition your mind to love writing and see it was easier.
* Brush up on grammar, punctuation, and spelling. This investment of time relearning the basics will pump up your writing.
* Keep a daily journal to get into the practice of writing.

In my next series of 4 podcasts, I focus on writing style – we’ll get granular into what great writers do to capture and keep the interest of their readers. You’ll get tips on how to most effectively write emails and use lists to make your writing easy to follow. I’ll cover the differences between newsletters and blogs and how to create them. And we’ll talk about headlines to capture attention and how your first line after the headline will cause your reader to stick with you or shut you off.