

Writer's Block Detox

Task 4: What's Holding You Back?

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Think about that thing you really want to write, the one you haven't really been doing.

Sometimes when we put things off it's because we are subconsciously trying to protect ourselves from possible consequences. You might say you want to have a best-selling book published and think it sounds amazing, but you can bet the recesses of your brain are turning over the potential downsides (like the prospect of negative reviews or having to have an online presence that makes you available to detractors, or by not writing you get more time to yourself) too.

Often there will be lots of little things in the way plus big one, but it can take a while to find it. Try to get 25 reasons you haven't been writing that thing, giving yourself just 10 or 15 minutes on this worksheet. Then look for the one that makes you think, *ahhhh, yes, that feels like it.*

What are the hidden benefits of NOT writing?

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Find that big reason you haven't been writing, the one that feels most true. You're going to ask yourself why and peel back a few more layers to find the core, the secret reason you're not writing that you probably haven't admitted to yourself.

It might go something like this:
If I'm not writing, I don't have to put myself out there for criticism.
Why? It's scary
Why? Because I don't like the thought of people I know reading and judging it and laughing
Why? Because I think lots of people don't really like me
Why? I'm not sure I'm all that likeable
Why? I'm just not.. quite good enough, nice enough.

The things at the bottom might not be what you expected, and there might be a couple of big reasons underlying your reluctance to write, but it's often something about how it will impact your life or your ability, and under that will be something about the way you see yourself.

Why is that? Why do you feel that way?

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Now you're going to take that bottom reason or whichever one resonates most and invert it into a sentence about how you want to feel instead – but write it in the first person, present tense, as though it were true now. It might feel a bit silly or like it's simply not true (it doesn't feel like it is right now), but go with it and put down how you'd like things to be. We'll use this in a few days.

In the previous example, the new way you want to feel might now look like:
I'm a good person, I'm lovely. People love my writing and think really well of me, but even if they don't I am still a nice human being.

Your go. Turn the secret reason you're not writing into how you'd like to feel.