

Writer's Block Detox

Transcript: how long is long enough?

How long?

Hey, I just wanted to have a little word with you about about writing habits and about developing habits that work for you. Now, I started doing mindfulness and meditation a while ago, and the app that I use lets you choose how long you sit for. And I really felt like I should do 20 minutes or half an hour a day, but what I found was that I just wasn't doing it.

I'd started off really well, and then when I upped it to 20 minutes it was suddenly really difficult and I'd be going, well, I know I SHOULD do this but I'm really busy and I'll do it later, and then I didn't do it... But on the other hand, I'd found 10 minutes too short and it was jarring to stop after 10 minutes. It was months down the line that I finally made an agreement with myself that 15 minutes a day is actually okay and that I didn't have to do 20 minutes, when I realised that nobody was going to give me a medal or think that I was a better person for doing half an hour a day rather than 15 minutes that I started actually meditating regularly, and like writing regularly it's something that can change you for the better in really fundamental ways.

So I want to be very clear about this: there is no right answer to how long you should write for or how you should write, there's no proper way of doing it. So for example, I tell you to do it with a timer. If you feel better writing without a timer, write without a timer! If 10 minutes is your sweet spot where you get really excited but it doesn't feel like so big a time that you can't quite be bothered to do it then write for 10 minutes. If you find it hard to get into and you're raring to go after 15minutes, then try 20.

It's really hard for us to let go of the need to feel like we're achieving something all the time, that we're challenging ourselves, that we're doing better, but it's really unhelpful if it puts you off doing it.

What's actually important is that you're building a habit and that you are doing it in a way that works for you. And if you impose all of these rules on yourself about what's good enough (and those rules are nonsense anyway, they don't actually mean anything – there's nothing morally better about writing for longer or shorter periods of time), you know, it's going to stop you in your tracks and you're not going to want to write.

So in the same way, yeah, I recommend writing every day at least during the detox and in general writing regularly enough to keep a connection with your writing. Personally I think morning is the best time to write because it means that your head is clearest. But these things are just guidelines, no matter what I say to you this is your writing journey, nobody else's, so maybe take a moment to sit quietly and ask, what *do* you actually want? What's going to work for you? And then listen to the answer. Because finding things that work for you, that really fit you, is the key to actually doing it, and doing the writing, that's the thing...