



NAMW Newsletter Issue #25 | November 2009

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The voyage of discovery lies not in finding new landscapes but in having new eyes." - Marcel Proust

Hi, this is Linda Joy, the president of the National Association of Memoir Writers. I'd like to welcome new subscribers to our newsletter and all our new members this month! It has been busy at NAMW as we get the word out about our organization to conferences, booksellers, writers, and mentors. This last week I attended two events that focused on the writing community in the San Francisco Bay Area. The first one presented by the Women's National Book Association celebrated National Book Group month by showcasing three writers who talked about their writing and research process and read from their work. There's nothing quite as stimulating and pleasurable as learning from other authors! And, there was champagne, strawberries and all kinds of great food. As always with a group of writers, everyone talks about what they are working on and buying up books! This event took place at Book Passage in Corte Madera, CA, north of San Francisco, a popular gathering place for writers.

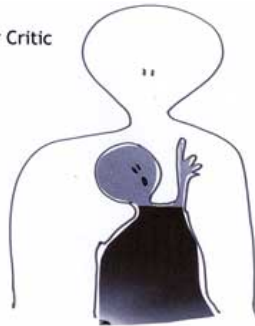
On Saturday, I attended the Redwood Writers Conference in Santa Rosa, California. The Redwood Branch of the California Writers Club which is celebrating its centennial this year, put on a wonderful one day conference that offered not only great food and desserts, but a variety of presenters and workshop leaders--including one of our favorites--Jordan Rosenfeld, who taught our NAMW teleseminar on Scenes last month. Tamim Ansary, author of West of Kabul, East of New York, gave the keynote address and a workshop. There led the crowded room in a free flowing discussion about the different issues that come up for memoir writers--from family reactions to telling the truth. When asked if we had to stick to the truth in memoir even when it's not convenient his answer was a resounding, "Yes!"

He said this about memoir: "A memoir is a constructed view of reality," and urged us to see writing a memoir as a quest, as a journey. "Life's journey has a natural arc, so the story of our life has that shape." Tamim urged us to listen to our inner selves in order to glean the meaning out of our experiences, and to understand that writing the memoir is the way we learn about who we are. I was inspired by him, and by Adair Lara, who wrote a personal essay column in the San Francisco Chronicle for thirteen years. She taught us how to focus on in one particular point

of change as a way to create personal essays.

The best part of a conference, other than the learning and the good food, are all the new connections and networking with other writers. It's inspiring to sit in a room with over 150 people who do what you do every day--sit alone and write! I look forward to getting to know some new friends and continuing to share writing ideas and process with old ones. Here at NAMW, we strive to inspire you and help you with your networking, as well as present excellent learning opportunities. The important thing is to keep writing! But add to your list attending conferences, author readings, and your own reading. Each stimulating event feeds your writing life.

The Inner Critic



Claiming Your Writing Life and Fighting your Inner Critic

You feel passionate about writing your stories, but the voices of doubt and the inner critic can get in the way.

You might start worrying about what you write, writing and deleting, writing and throwing away your work. It's very important that you do not delete what you write. I ask students to swear they will save it to read another day. There might be jewels in that piece that you can't see or judge properly due to a negative frame of mind. DO NOT DELETE!!

Your Creative Process

What is your writing process? Most writers have an ideal situation that brings out their creativity. Some people need absolute quiet, and others do better in a cafe where can't clean or answer the phone.

If you go to a cafe, turn off your cell phone and don't surf the net. Make this time a retreat where you can enjoy coffee and enough noise to keep yourself awake and active while you write and remember.

Do you write most often by longhand, or on the computer? Studies show that writing from the body by hand is the most healing. Your impulses flow directly from your mind into your hand in an organized process of creativity. You are in the flow of ideas, images, and need to allow them to appear. If however you write better on the computer, allow this same kind of flow.

Dreaming Our Stories

Dreams and freely journaling are a way to access your stories. Write as if in meditation. Listen deeply. The creative well is within you at all times, and it needs

to be cared for and refilled with juicy, encouraging attitudes and mantras.

Despite our best intentions, internal critical voices can interfere with our writing process and create a block to our heart's desire--to write freely and get our stories on the page.

Inner Critic Voices

That pesky critic voice inside us brings doubt, whispers our fears of self-expression--"you can't say this, why do you even try, this is bad, this makes no sense, what will people think?"

Even famous authors have this voice--but they write anyway. For those who come from strict, judgmental, or abusive homes, the negative voices can take on a particularly sharp edge.

When we grow up silenced, we squash our own voice and Self. We learn to keep ourselves hidden, and when speak we are afraid, doubtful, or ashamed, which translates into a writer who becomes afraid to write or blocked.

To break free of the critic requires effort--you have to face it and listen to what it says, then fight back. The critic is stronger in the shadows of silence.

Families teach us to keep the secrets--***don't talk about what really happened,. Don't talk about our problems and truths, our secrets. Let's pretend that everything is all right. It's all in the past, just leave it there.***

Put aside your family's voice so you can hear your own voice.

Some typical inner critic voices:

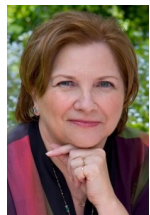
- No one will be interested.
- Who else cares about what happened.
- People will get mad at me.
- Who do you think you are?
- I am boring.
- I can't write.
- I'm not really a writer.
- I'm too ashamed to write this
- What if my memories are wrong?
- I don't really know the truth.
- My family will disown me.

Freewriting--writing as fast as we can--speeds us beyond the critic for a few minutes, but if we have transgressed beyond our "normal" boundaries, the attack may get louder. Just keep writing down the negative voices and answer them back with power about your right to speak and write. Do the exercises below and claim your right to write!

Fighting the Inner Critic Exercises

- Write down exactly what the critic-censor says. Get it out of your head and onto the page. Write freely all the phrases you hear in your head, couched in second person. "You...e.g. "You are boring."
- This is important: Answer each accusation with an argument against that statement. Argue against the voice that is saying negative things about you and creative spark. "Many people do seem interested in what I have to say. At times, I feel my writing is good and I need to get these stories out."
- Write down some of the truths you feel you must not share with anyone.
- Make a list of people who don't want you to write your stories. List why they wish you to be silent. AND--answer back to them why you need to write your stories.
- Talk about your critic voices with our group. Sharing the shaming voices with those who empathize and support you is healing.
- Write a letter to the critic. Talk to it directly about its power, its pain, and how it frustrates you. "You get in my way. You stop me from what I want to say, just like when I was a child. I'm sick of your negativity! I want to write and tell my story! You can't silence me like this!"
- Write for 15 minutes without stopping about a turning point in your life. Now write a story about the happiest day of your life!

News and Events



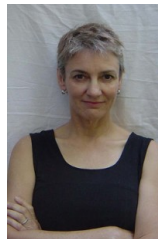
[NAMW Teleseminar November 13, 2009](#)

[Tap Into Your Creativity with Mary E. Knippel](#)

Times: 11 am Pacific | 12 noon Mountain | 1 pm Central | 2 pm

Eastern Cost: Free for NAMW Members

[Become A Member of NAMW Today to take part in this teleseminar!](#)



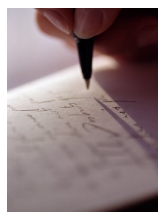
[NAMW Teleseminar December 11, 2009](#)

[Planning and Publishing In Spite of Ourselves with Rebecca Lawton](#)

Times: 11 am Pacific | 12 noon Mountain | 1 pm Central | 2 pm

Eastern Cost: Free for NAMW Members

[Become A Member of NAMW Today to take part in this teleseminar!](#)



[\[FREE PREVIEW WORKSHOP\] November 2009 Honoring National Life Writing Month and Family Story Month, Preview Workshop \(free for all\)](#)



November 3, 2009

Times: 3 PM PST; 4 PM MST; 5 PM CST; 6 PM EST

This workshop preview is offered **free of charge** for everyone who wishes to sample this workshop before purchasing the actual course. To view the full details about this course, [click here](#). If you wish to sample this workshop, simply enter your information in the form [through this link](#), and you will receive the call information via email. [[Read more](#)]

Free Audio Downloads



[Inaugural National Day on Writing](#) Listen in to this downloadable audio as Linda Joy Myers Ph.D., MFT, President and Founder of the National Association of Memoir Writers (NAMW) shares her thoughts on this inaugural National Day on Writing. [[Read more](#)]

Featured in NAMW



[Write Your Story Today --Write from the Heart.](#) Linda Joy Myers, President & Founder of NAMW shares this commentary on writing in honor of the inaugural National Day on Writing. Join in on this National celebration by posting your writing sample by clicking on the "Leave a Comment" button located just above this paragraph. You can also listen to Linda share her thoughts on this historic day!

[[Read more](#)]



[\[Featured Member\] Book designer Robin Brooks.](#) ***NEW -- Listen to an exclusive Interview with Robin*** I came to be an artist as part of surviving an extremely abusive childhood. Silence was mandatory. The denial of my being in the presence of others, I hoped, might stop the abuse, bring love instead. [[Read more](#)]

Workshops



[Harvesting Our Wisdom: Napa Valley Writing Retreat](#)

Join us November 6th through 8th, 2009

Friday from 6:30 PM to Sunday 12:30 PM

28 CEU units

Location: Calistoga, CA

[[Learn More](#)]



[\[Memoir Mini-Seminars\] November 2009](#)
[Honoring National Life Writing Month and Family Story Month](#)

Course Dates: November 10, 17

Times: 3 PM PST; 4 PM MST; 5 PM CST; 6 PM EST

In this teleseminar lead by the president of the National Association of Memoir Writers in honor of this important month, you will learn the skills you need to find your memories, organize a running list, and learn the turning point and timeline technique. In session two, we turn our attention to the skill building aspects of writing a memoir—building your memoir one scene at a time.

You will find out what agents and editors are looking for in your work, and how to use your chapters and vignettes as small publishable pieces. We will discuss elements of scene, how to use the turning points to find your plot, and how to structure a book length memoir. [\[Read more\]](#)