

The Writer's 12 Step Inspirational Program

**trade your fickle muse
for tools you can use**

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Thanks for reading our free e-book, The Writer's 12 Step Inspirational Program. Our e-book is based on the workshop we created for writers looking for tools to keep their writing goals on target and, more importantly, looking for ways to connect with their writer's soul ... a part that we often lose touch with as we pursue publication and promotion.

Our e-book takes little time to read, but completing our 12-step program can take from 30 minutes to an hour. How much time it takes depends on you, your answers, and what you want to accomplish. On average, our workshops with groups of about 20 people take about an hour. You will need pen and paper. We recommend that you read the entire book before starting the steps so you'll know exactly what to expect.

Now ... are you ready to trade your fickle muse for tools you can use?

Step 1. Admit that you are a writer.

Admit it to yourself first and believe it. Then admit it to others. Okay, so you're an accountant or spouse or parent or drill instructor or <insert role here>. However, if you wake up in the morning and your first thoughts include how to extract your character from the sticky situation you left him in at the end of Chapter Three, then you're a writer. Reaffirm your belief in yourself and your talent by letting people know the secret in your heart: You are a wordsmith, a storyteller, a creative soul. Whenever you have the opportunity, tell those who ask what you do ... I'M A WRITER!

Authors' note: In our workshop, participants must begin any discussion by saying, "My name is _____ and I'm a writer."

Step 2. Tell the Universe what you want.

Universe. God. Spirit. Energy. Whatever you chose to call the positive force in your own life ... it's time to ask it for you really want as a writer. This step isn't about your belief system, it's about putting your true desire (publication, better contract, more money, another book deal) on paper and letting the Universe know what you want. It's about admitting to YOURSELF what you'd like to happen with your writing.

Take a moment to write down ONE thing you want from your career. Unlimited possibilities exist. Make it as big or as small as you want—from becoming famous to just finishing your current project.

Dream big. You CAN do it.

Step 3. Recognize that writing is more than words on paper.

This is a focused free-writing exercise. Think about what your writing means to you. When you start this exercise, don't edit yourself. Don't re-read a paragraph before writing the next one. Don't worry about spelling or grammar or rules. This is stream of consciousness, this is from your heart ... you have the freedom to write whatever and however you want.

Get comfortable, ready your pen and paper ... now write.

Authors' Note: We usually give workshop participants five minutes to complete this exercise. You can use a timer or you can write until you feel like stopping.

Step 4. Set two goals to accomplish in the next 30 days.

Think about two ways you can begin to achieve your dream. Be reasonable. Don't make the goals too easy or too challenging. Make sure you have a real chance of accomplishing your goals within a month's time.

What are you waiting for? Write them down.

Step 5. Verbalize your goals.

It's time to share your heart's desire. In our workshop, we ask participants to pair up. If you don't have a human being available to work with you, use a mirror (yes, you're going to talk out loud to yourself). Find a partner (or a mirror).

It's important to hear yourself admit what you want to accomplish. It's equally important to hear others to validate your goals. When you get an opportunity, ask a family member or friend to do this exercise (and the other partner exercises) with you.

Tell your partner what your goals are, then your partner will repeat back to you what you said. (If you feel silly using a mirror to do this exercise, then read your goals out loud.) For example, you might say, "I want to sell my book. In the next 30 days, I will submit my book to an editor and to an agent." Then your partner will say, "You want to sell your book. In the next 30 days, you will submit your book to an editor and to an agent."

Don't give feedback or expound further on the possibilities.

Step 6. Be prepared to act. What are you willing to do to achieve your goals?

What are you willing to give up or to rearrange in order to accomplish your goals? Can your children or spouse take over some household tasks? Is there a volunteer activity you can give up? Think about your life and where you can carve out some time. Consider everything—even those things you think are unchangeable.

Write down a few of your ideas.

Step 7. Verbalize and validate.

Get your partner (or mirror). Tell your partner what you've decided. "I will give up carpool once a week so I can write." Or "I will ask my kids to do the dishes every night so I can write query letters." Now partners, look your peer in the eye, and after every statement given, say, "You can do that." If you're using a mirror (or just talking to yourself out loud), after each of your statements say, "I can do that."

Step 8. What's holding you back?

Think about what obstacles you must face in order to reach your goals. Be honest and don't worry about how to tackle the problems right now. We came up with a list of three major areas that might affect your progress:

1. Writing space. (Sharing space with others, disorganized desk/files, uncomfortable chair, etc.)
2. Overextending commitments. (Rarely saying no,¹ stressed from attempting to many tasks, sacrificing writing time to finish other projects, etc.)
3. Negativity. (Energy-draining relationships, listening to or contributing to gossip, believing the criticism of others, etc.)

Write down two or three challenges you need to deal with in order to move forward in your writing.

Step 9. What can be done?

Free write/brainstorm ideas about clearing out your blockages to accomplishing your goals.

Step 10. Re-evaluating your feelings/dreams/goals.

Since you started this exercise, has anything changed? Do you feel more committed to your writing? Uncomfortable about what you're attempting? Excited about the possibilities? Expand your self-expression, write everything that comes to mind.

Step 11. Sharing time.

At this point in our workshop, we ask participants to share what they've learned about themselves and their writing. Take a few minutes to think about what you've learned. Share your thoughts or plans with a friend or family member or just spend another few minutes writing out how you feel right now.

Step 12. Spread positive energy.

Be principled. Keep within the boundaries you've created. Stay in integrity. Use active listening when someone is speaking to you. Be present for those around you. Validate people. Appreciate the moment. What you put out into the Universe will come back to you.

1.

Saying No...

Saying no to someone is saying yes to yourself. If you commit to a project that you don't really want to do, you're not honoring those who asked you to do it. How committed are you if you feel resentful for having to give up time, energy, effort? If your heart isn't in it, are you really going to do a good job with it? How is it helping someone else if you're only saying yes because you don't want to say no?

From a practical standpoint, I suggest a few things. First, you might try practicing. Get together with your friends and role play saying no. I role play situations with my daughter all the time; she's used our conversations to deal with peer problems at school. Have your friends wheedle

and whine, too, so you can face down the "guilt factor."

Second, use "the question" technique. Like this:

"What would I say if this wasn't my mother/spouse/child?"

"What would I say if I didn't feel guilty/obligated?"

"What would I say if I could answer w/o consequences?"

If the answer is no ... then follow through and say it.

Third, you might seek support from your friends/critique partners. Ask them for "you can do it" speeches or pats on the backs after you've done the deed. This is not the same thing as asking someone else, "Do you think I should say no?" You don't want a survey on whether or not you made the correct choice.

Fourth, when you honor and respect those things important to you, so will others. Creating and sticking to boundaries is the same thing as saying no w/o having to say it. For example, create a few hours in the day that are yours. Make sure everyone knows you own that time. Don't let anyone or anything infringe on it. Soon, people won't even bother asking you to do something during that time because they already know the answer.

When the world doesn't fall apart, people don't hate you, and the sun still shines the next morning, you'll realize the empowering force of saying no (or, gasp, changing your mind). Remember, the choices are yours. If you're overcommitted, stressed, giving up writing time to do things for other people ... then you're saying no to yourself too often. You deserve as much time and attention as those people and projects in your life.

--- Michele R. Bardsley

[Return to Step 8...](#)

Congratulations! You've finished the 12-step inspirational program. We hope you are revitalized, refreshed, and inspired. Re-work the steps any time ... writing doesn't have to be the focus of your efforts.

We've presented this workshop at the following conferences:

Ohio Valley RWA, April 2000

Romantic Times Convention, November 2000

Ohio Valley RWA, April 2001

World Romance Writers Online Conference, June 2001

Conference coordinators: Would you like us to present our workshop at your upcoming conference? Contact us!

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

*Award-winning author **Michele R. Bardsley** has sold short stories, articles, and novels in print and electronic markets. Her bestselling e-book **DADDY IN TRAINING**, published by Hard Shell Word Factory, is now available in trade paperback with its sequel, **BRIDE IN TRAINING**. Her two romantic-comedy novels, **HUSBAND FOR HIRE** and **HOUSEWIFE FOR RENT**, are currently available in electronic formats from Wordbeams and together in trade paperback from Xlibris.*

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