

## Greasing the Process

By Linda Rohrbough

Copyright 2006, all rights reserved.

I used to make New Year's resolutions and discovered it was self-defeating, guilt-producing behavior for me. So I stopped willy-nilly firing off a list of should's and switched to one or two goals. A year ago, I decided to increase my output. I'm happy to report I've done that and I'd like to share what I've learned.

I discovered I had a number of unrealistic expectations about writing. One is I expected if I had say eight units of talent, I would have all eight units available to me every day. Not true. Some days I feel I write pretty well, others it's like this so sucks. There doesn't seem to be any way to predict when either will occur. I'm realizing my moments of ecstasy come about as frequently writing as they do when I'm doing the dishes.

Interestingly enough, after three national awards for my books, it was pointed out to me I wouldn't be able to tell by looking at my work when I felt brilliant and when I felt like I scraped myself up off the floor to get the work done. And that's true. I cannot tell. I must say, this is a huge comfort to me because the times I feel ecstatic are way fewer than the times I feel ordinary or even crummy.

One of the most helpful things I've done for my productivity is to visually change the environment when I write. I love the color of water in a pool, so I went to Wal-Mart and bought a couple of paper notebooks that color. I stand them open on each side of me during my writing time. I close my eyes and relax for a minute or two to transition. This is a way to "fool" my brain into going into writing mode, and it works.

It's actually not such a big trick. Other professions have similar environmental clues. My husband goes to his office where the sights and sounds are different than any place else he spends time. Whether he feels like it initially or not, pretty soon he's in "work" mode. The same is true for a dentist or a truck driver or a welder. I'm just simulating the same thing in my writing environment.

These tidbits and several others came from Jerry Mundis' "Breaking Writer's Block Forever" audio tapes. I'd never heard of Jerry before, though it turns out a lot of famous writers and artists have, like Judy Collins. The price of his audio course made me hesitate, but I owe Jerry a huge debt of gratitude. I wasn't blocked, but I wasn't as prolific as I wanted to be. I now execute imperfectly his plan and it has made my writing life more satisfying and productive than I could have imagined. I'd recommend his course as the best investment you can make in yourself, especially if you find yourself struggling with block.

Another book that's helped me a great deal was Steven Pressfield's *The War of Art: Break Through the Blocks and Win Your Inner Creative Battles*. Pressfield talks about resistance. I had it in my head that if I was where I needed to be, resistance wouldn't exist for me. Wrong-o. Resistance is part and parcel of this whole deal, every day. At one point, Pressfield lived in a trailer next door to a writer no one ever heard of. He announced one day he'd finished a book he'd been struggling with for a long time. The man looked at him and said "Good. Tomorrow start the next one."

I recently visited the lovely home of New York Times best-selling romance author Jodi Thomas ([www.JodiThomas.com](http://www.JodiThomas.com)). She has a new oak dining room table.

She's held writers' retreats in her home and a friend suggested she get a glass top for the table so writers working with pen and paper wouldn't leave remnants of their stories in the wood. Jodi looked at me and said, "I decided not to. I love the idea of writers leaving the marks of their stories in my table." And I thought, here's a woman who loves the process.

I guess what all this means for me is increasing my productivity is about doing whatever it takes for me to grease the wheels of my own process. Non-fiction writing is taxing, but fiction is a much more taxing process for me, filled with a lot more self-doubt and guilt than writing non-fiction ever was. And the rewards are a lot farther apart.

Speaking of rewards being far apart, one of the most encouraging stories I've heard lately comes from Sharon De Vita, an award-winning writer earning six-figure advances who hit a four year dry period with no sales. She kept writing the entire time. What's even more amazing is she talks about using the tools she'd learned to keep herself going during the **eighteen** years before she published her **first** book. Now there's someone who understands how to get and keep herself going.

So, my wish for you is you find, if you haven't already, what you need to grease your own process. After all, isn't that what writing is about?

### **Sidebar:**

#### Tools and Encouragement for Greasing Your Own Writing Process

1. "Break Writer's Block Forever" audio tape set by Jerry Mundis, [www.unblock.org](http://www.unblock.org)
2. *The War of Art: Break Through the Blocks and Win Your Inner Creative Battles* by Steven Pressfield
3. "Desire, Determination, and Discipline" article by Sharon De Vita [www.romantictimes.com/data/tips/101.html](http://www.romantictimes.com/data/tips/101.html)

### *BIO*

*Linda Rohrbough has been writing about the computer industry since 1989 and has more than 5,000 articles and five books to her credit. Her work has been honored three times by the Computer Press Association. She has finished her first techno-thriller novel and is working on a second. E-mail Linda at [Linda@PCbios.com](mailto:Linda@PCbios.com) or visit her website [www.PCbios.com](http://www.PCbios.com).*