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RAW WRITING

Preamble, Foreword, Preface...etc.,

The sole (or soul!) purpose of this e-zine is to complete the final step in “releasing the writer within” and that is “sharing”. To *release the writer* is to allow the writer’s authentic voice to be spoken (written) and heard. Since this is a publication produced by [RWW](#) participants and supporters, we have a safe and caring environment so necessary for sharing. Another part of *Releasing The Writer Within™* is to allow for others to connect to your writing from all sorts of perspectives. Feel free, gentle readers, to email me your reactions to the pieces that strike a chord within you. I will post those responses in the next edition of *RAW WRITING*.

As always, our work is in the “raw stage”. Some may have a few grammatical errors, please reserve your judgment.

In This Edition...

In this edition of [Raw Writing](#), we highlight some of the journaling techniques we studied in the spring '09 Master Class. These techniques really force the writer to dig deep. The whole point of practicing such techniques is to allow ourselves to get in touch with the emotions inside, bring those emotions forward in our writing, work on expressing ourselves fully and completely, so that when we compose our novels and memoirs we are able to create fully emotionally developed characters. This edition features “gut” and “throat” voice, along with the never-before-featured “the jump off sentence.” All techniques are available for students to practice online at [our website](#) as well as in [our workbook](#), which you can purchase online as well.

We also want to share with you an excerpt from a work-in-progress from our fall '08 novel/memoir writing class.

Also featured in this volume is newbie Nancy St. Germain, who created a wonderful and liberating assignment for us all. From a journaling assignment and inspired by the movie *The Bucket List*, she pens a “Fuck It” list.

So scroll on down and read the [Raw Writing](#) that our students have created



Interactive
Releasing The Writer Within™
Writing Technique: Gut Voice

All *RWW* Writing Techniques can be found in *Releasing The Writer Within™* practice workbook. To order, email Hannah at: hrgoodman@cox.net.

Writing From The Gut or, as we call it “gut voice”, is the deepest of the techniques in our program. The way to access it is through a “drop sentence”, which always consists of “I” plus a verb. In the following piece, Shakay chose “I feel”, having no idea where this would take her. Notice the intimacy of the piece and the self-questioning and the digging, digging, deeper into herself. She learns something new, reaches a kind of understanding. All this is not in the vain of fixing, solving, or changing herself, but of observing, which the most important skill a writer can have. The powerfulness of the emotions here can be translated into her fiction or memoir pieces. The more comfortable she gets with going deep for herself, the more easily those difficult scenes will be to write. For more information on this technique, samples and instruction, [please click here](#). Try this on your own, and [submit](#) for the next ezine.

“I Feel Exhausted...”
Shakay, Passionate Writer

I feel exhausted.

Like I have run 20 marathons. Yet, I have not left the starting line. I have not positioned myself. I have not heard the gun go off. I have not started to run, yet, I feel exhausted. Drained. Physically and emotionally drained. I feel like I cannot get out of my own way. I see the finish line. I feel the trophies in my hand, yet I continue to put up roadblocks. Me. I do it. Not consciously, but I do. Then when I realize it, I feel the exhaustion. I feel like it is three steps forward and two steps back. I feel like I am moving forward, but it is taking a long time. I feel I am conscious/aware, and I feel fear is keeping me in my comfort zone. I have pushed myself out of my comfort zone several times, felt the excitement and the possibilities, but eventually I make my way back...

Why? Fear. It is too much. Too much what? Happiness? Possibilities? What would happen if my life had more ups and downs? If I allowed my life to flow versus hitting on self made roadblocks? What would happen if I truly lived my life truthfully followed my passion fully and realized my potential? I feel what I know to be true slipping away. On the surface, I feel rejuvenated, and deep down, way down, there still lies the murkiness of lack of self worth, deserving, and questioning my abilities. I feel exhausted because of the constant pull/tug of war within me. I do sabotage myself. I do not give myself the space/time I need ...to be...to complete.

I feel exhausted because, on some level, there is a raging internal conflict. Part of me wants to stay hidden and hibernate and another part, the bigger part of me, wants to rip off my clothes and run naked down the street. I want to tear down the walls and let the people in. Not all...a select few...really in, beyond my protective shield. I am still haunted by a comment Terry made a few weeks ago about the similarities between my piece and Nancy's. The similar thread was that we are both survivors, and we both have a shield/protective guard around us. *Ouch*. I am open, but Terry saw it/heard it. I still have a protective shield around me. In many ways, it is layers and layers...but protecting me from what? What I needed protection from no longer exists. I am exhausted from the emotional turmoil...the burden of the memories. When I let them go, I feel light, giddy, school girlish, but then I raise the roadblocks again.

What is underneath the exhaustion? Fear. And what is fear? False Evidence Appearing Real.

Sometimes I feel like this will never end. I see the light at the end of the tunnel, and then someone throws the switch. *Me*. I feel shame. So much *shame*. Like, what is wrong with me? I feel like my brain needs to be rewired. I feel like my nerves are raw and exposed. I feel exposed, and, yet, I am doing all I can to cover up again...cover up what?

I know my truth. I have seen it. felt it. heard it. *held* it. I need to find a way to embrace it and not let it go...again.

Releasing The Writer Within™

Writing Technique: The Jump Off Sentence

This technique is comprised of several steps, more of a “process” than a simple technique. First, write in your journal about anything you want. Then, when you feel like the entry is finished, go back and reread. As you reread, look for the line of writing where you start a topic, but then, you back off. Now, take that line out and rewrite it in a separate entry and start the new entry there.

Doing this forces you to specifically address something, a line or phrase you have written but not delved into. Why is this important to do? I believe that writers become stronger when they face a challenging topic and stare it right in the eye. Writing from a “jump-off” forces the writer to really practice self-awareness. However, the idea is not to judge or analyze the topics or issues that arise from this type of writing. Rather, the idea is to observe— to keenly observe—and, in this case, it’s to keenly observe your own emotional landscape, the valleys, hills, and mountains.

“I had only to depend on me”

D.W.

I had only to depend on me.

They’re simple words – seven of them, actually – that shouldn’t create the physical reaction they do in me. I feel it in my chest. My throat constricts. I feel blood pumping to my head, and I want to cry. I’m not a crier. I cry maybe once every five years, and then I’m good for another five. So right now I’m forcing myself to think why this bothers me – why these words prompt this reaction in me, and you know what just happened? A surge of adrenaline just flooded over me. What the fuck? I’m taking a break.

3/30/09

OK, it’s the next day. Since I’ve left class on Saturday, since I’ve been thinking about this stupid prompt, my head has been dizzy. I’m not dizzy – like about to pass-out dizzy – it’s on the inside of my head. Like the inside of my head is cloudy and foggy and splitting in half. Like a little whirlwind is funneling in the middle of my brain. I don’t know why those words do this, but they do.

Several years ago I went to a therapist. I felt like crap and didn’t know why. I’d go sit in this woman’s office and cry for an hour (which is NOT like me, because, like I said, I hardly ever cry – so maybe I was making up for lost time, I don’t know.) So I’d just sit and cry and she’d ask me why or to tell her how I was feeling and I sat there and said, “I don’t know. I don’t know.” It was probably the most boring hour of her day, but also easy. Easy money. Just hand the girl having a nervous breakdown a Kleenex and get paid for it. Not bad, but not a job I’d want. To be honest, I’d leave feeling unbelievably lighter and a little baffled as to why the session had turned out this way yet again. This continued for about two months and then I quit. I’m not good at the talking about what’s bothering me thing.

But this topic makes me think of that, because I didn’t know why those words made me feel the way they do. I don’t know, I don’t know, I heard myself thinking. But I figured it out. So maybe I’ve matured or something (which is amazing, if you think about it, since I’ve been stuck in junior high for fifteen years). I don’t know. OK, so my head was feeling better for a couple hours then, but now it’s like that whirlwind’s picking up speed. I’m dizzy again. I do this to myself. Isn’t it amazing that your brain and your emotions can make you physically feel like you’re having a stroke or something (or maybe I am – who knows?).

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OK, so when I think of the times I had to depend on myself, I don't think of being independent and self-sufficient and whatever. I don't think of those "good" things – I think of times that I was alone and out of control. I was thirteen when I first realized that "alone" didn't mean no one was around and you were bored; it meant you felt empty and scared and small, and you could be alone even in a room packed with people. I remember feeling that way again when I was seventeen or eighteen. But the time that makes the adrenaline begin to seep again was in the mid 90's. I had successfully blocked this out for a long time. It's not something I like to think about. And as you've probably figured out by now, I'm really good at blocking things out. A+ for D.W. She exceeds the standard there.

A lot has changed since back then.

I hate having things I've said twisted and shoved back at me. I hate being told I can't do something and I hate being doubted. I'd learned to go out of my way not to ask for help when people thought I couldn't do something. I'd be hellbent on proving them wrong.

Maybe if I'd learned to ask for help, I wouldn't have ended up in the position I was in. I had to prove I could do this on my own though. Single mom, young, with twins. I needed to work, make ends meet, afford Christmas and presents and summer camp. When the kids were with their father on Saturdays, I'd work a twelve-hour shift at my part-time job. When they slept over there, I'd sometimes work a 24-hour shift. This was, in addition, to my regular job. But I was doing it. Making ends meet. Keeping things together. Or so it seemed. Appearances, I'd learned early, count. Maintain appearances at all costs. On the surface, things looked fine. I didn't realize that in addition to burn-out taking a physical toll, it could take an emotional or mental one as well. I didn't know that that could be worse than getting physically sick, that it could last a hell of a lot longer. I don't know how long I felt like crap, and I don't remember what it took to begin feeling better again. But I remember feeling like there was no way out.

Darkness, aloneness, and no way out. It lasted for months. I was scared; I didn't trust myself. I felt like everyone that looked at me could see what was going on in my head. Even sleep didn't help – because my dreams were disturbing. There was no peace anywhere. To make a long story short, I was spiraling into a self-destructive funk and it wasn't pretty. I never want to feel the way I did back then – ever again. And it might be easy to think I have control over my life now, that that'll never happen again, but how much control do we really have over anything?

And I know you'll say there's more to this story, and I should have gone deeper. And there is more, but it'll be a hell of a lot easier to go deeper in a fictional account.

D.W.'s last line rings true for so many of us who prefer to write fiction, and therein lies, what I think, is a process many writers go through. Tap into our own lives, see stuff we can't control, then take all that and become the "god" of another "world", our fiction world. If some journal writing can take you to a place uncomfortable, I think all that journaling wasn't in vain. It was to get you to "here", the place to begin to create that fiction world where you can be a god, if only for a few hundred pages.

Releasing The Writer Within™
Work-In-Progress

Blue Baby
from a collection of essays for a memoir
Joy Csanadi

I was born at home—one month early—feet first and blue as a night sky.

In those days doctors made house calls. Ours came. Old Dr. Schwartz looked me over and pronounced that there was no point in doing anything extraordinary because I could not possibly survive. My grandmother, never one to take any doctor's opinion, set about proving him wrong. She had, after all, raised seven healthy children, and thought that she knew a thing or two that wasn't in the medical books.

Even though it was an unbearably hot August day, she improvised an incubator by heating up antique flatirons on the top of the wood/coal stove and packing them around me in the oven. Since my mother was too weak to nurse me, Grandma began to force feed me with her own special formula. She walked the floor with me, rocked me, talked to me and hummed to me. She rubbed my body with olive oil and massaged my chest. And every day, no matter what the weather, she devised a way to get me out of doors into the fresh air for several hours. As soon as I could keep down a bit of milk, she insisted they begin feeding me fruit and vegetables that she pureed by pressing them through a sieve. By the end of my first winter, I was such a round and robust child that no one would have guessed I had had anything less than a perfect beginning.

I did not know any of this in the earliest days of my relationship with my grandmother. From my vantage point she was so taken up with my sister Joan that I barely seemed to exist. Joan was the first born grandchild. She had beautiful long blond curls, a captivating smile and abundant charm. Both sets of grandparents came by almost daily to take her on little outings and to vie for her attention. One of them always had a camera trained on her so as to not miss her latest adorable pose.

I was intensely aware that I was not nearly as photogenic or appealing, with my tight pigtails and shy, solemn demeanor. It did not help that we were often dressed in identical dresses of different colors and that Joan always got the prettier color. She would get the red dress, I would get the navy blue. She would get the green dress, I would get the brown. She would get the pretty blue plaid, I would get the dull green. I would sometimes get her hand-me-downs, but that only meant that she got something newer and prettier.

My mother always insisted that she put us in the color she thought was most becoming to each of us. While her response did not necessarily appease me, she was so sincere in her conviction about this that I trusted she would not betray me. Also, she tried very hard to give me extra attention to fill the void when my grandparents were fussing over Joan. She silently validated my feelings that I was being unfairly ignored, and helped me to feel that these folks were missing an opportunity to know a special child.

Grandma did eventually discover my existence and began to make a point of including me in her invitations, but my shyness and unease with her persisted for years. While Joan could have taken up residence with her and Grandpa quite happily, I never once managed to spend an entire overnight at their house. By bedtime my father would have to be summoned to bring me home.

I did wander down the short path to my Grandmother's house most every day on my daily rounds, but I was wary of letting her be the only one responsible for my welfare through the long night. Perhaps I was not quite sure I could trust that she would remember that I was there.

Interactive

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Writing Technique: Throat Voice

Writing From The Throat or “throat voice” is a technique that is easily used for both personal journaling and story development—both plot and character. [Click here for instructions](#). You can adapt this to a character development exercise by writing this “poem” from the point-of-view of your character. This can help you discover a character you may be struggling with. You can also try the exercise to help you develop your plot by writing the poem in such a way that you capture the character from the beginning, middle, and end of the story. For a sample of this, [click here](#).

“Throat Voice”

Joanne Carnevale

<http://joannecarnevale.blogspot.com/>

I am afraid throat voice will be hardest for me.
I am afraid I might have exhausted my possible throat voice topics.
I am concerned I might become blocked when I try to think of another one.
I am afraid that having already done two about myself, then one as Holden Caulfield, and finally another as that black man from Texas who spent 29 years in prison for a murder he didn't commit have spent all my throat possibilities.
I am afraid I have already run out of things to say in this assignment.
I am also worried that I might start trying to recycle those previous throat pieces and resubmit them this year.
I am pretty sure that doing so would be unacceptable.
I am of the opinion that it is, indeed, unacceptable to me and, therefore, my options are few. But even if - out of fear - I wanted to try it anyway, I am pretty sure that, with the possible exception of Terry, none of us could get away with it.
I am suddenly aware of something Hannah said in class today. It was something about throat being a good voice for understanding the place one is in at a particular time.
I am wondering if I might be able to tap into that in order to come up with a new and different throat piece.
new day/new piece
I am afraid.
I am also excited.
I am about to start a new chapter of my life.
I am worried this journal session will deteriorate into more of those clichés.
I am willing to try a few more lines.
I am wondering how long it will take to find a job once I'm in Seattle.
I am depressed over being unable to generate much interest in my resume since December.
I am a college graduate.
I am disappointed that being one does not lead to interviews.
I am disillusioned by that.
I am still a student, however.
I am a student of writing.
I am a student of Spanish.
I am a student of proofreading and copyediting.
I am a student of life.
I am wondering how long before the final exam.
I am also wondering if "student of life" might be another cliché.
I am going to miss so many people when I go to Seattle.
I am afraid that part will be painful.
I am hoping to entertain lots of visitors from RI once I have my own place.
I am afraid that visitors will be few and far apart.
I am afraid that I might get a job like the one I recently lost and I'll be poor and unhappy in a new place instead of a familiar one.
I am hoping for a "good" job, whatever THAT is.
I am looking forward to new experiences in a new environment.
I am afraid, but also excited.

Interactive
Releasing The Writer Within™
Homework Assignment

In our classes, I have a reputation of coming up with spontaneous, personalized, homework assignments for students. I am not sure how it all began, but the end result was the assignment inspired by the talented, high spirited, newbie to RWW, Nancy St. Germain. We give you all the “Fuck It” list. I invite you to pen your own and [submit to me](#) for the next edition of Raw Writing.

Fuck It

Nancy Harris/ Nancy Fletcher
my birth name and to honor my granny

FUCK. IT.

Nancy’s FUCK. IT. LIST.

Fuck. It.

A pretty powerful word, but sometimes only Fuck it ...well, is appropriate to convey the correct meaning. Of disgust, disdain or frustration!

Many people have a list of words never ever to be used due their “meaning”.

But, my question is who gave these words “their meaning”? But, I digress from writing my own, “FUCK IT LIST”.

Fuck.

The selfish and greedy bankers and Wall Street traders who put their own wealth above anything or anyone. How much money is enough?

Fuck.

Nasty people. Yes, women and men who can sometimes “be nice” and other times, cannot manage to control their inner beasts and utilize the excuse, “I am tired or I had a bad day”. Who doesn’t? Everyone, no matter what profession has tension. Especially today. But, a smile doesn’t cost a penny...so don’t take out your insecurities on anyone or me!

Fuck.

The medicine bottles that I can’t easily open. Childproof? They are also nearly impossible for anyone to open. And while we are on this subject. Fuck the packaging on most items! Ever try to open a brand new CD? A bottle of water?

Fuck. It.

The drivers who talk on their cell when driving. And the drivers who read the paper or a book while attempting to drive. And let’s not forget the drivers who trash our environment with tossing out their butts out the window!
Is Mother Earth your ashtray?

Fuck it.

Mothers and fathers or any adult who doesn’t see the wonder in their child’s eyes and nurture it.

Fuck.

Slow drivers. Yes, I said it. Especially those who drive in the fast lane on 95.

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Fuck it.

That our country, once the richest nation on Earth, still does not have Universal Health Care for all of its citizens.

Fuck

the Republicans who provide no concrete solutions to our nation's problems. But, instead have become the party of not only NO, but even worse, trying to stop any of the programs and budgets and even appointees of President Obama.

Fuck

people who have no sense of humor.

Fuck

people who are uptight about time. I feel that unless it is a planned business meeting...my being 10 –15 minutes late, well; don't get all "postal" about it...

Life is too short.

Fuck

bullies

Fuck

abusers of women and even more those who would abuse a child

Fuck

making this list...

when Hannah first gave us this assignment I thought, wow! That will be easy to do. But once I sat down to assemble and write my FUCK IT list...and really thought about the words and the assignment ...I hit a fucking blank screen with nothing on it and nothing, no words sprang into my mind...

Because as Hannah has said repeatedly in class, I OVER THOUGHT IT.

And became focused on whether she meant a FUCK. IT. List or a FUCK IT List

Separating the words seemed to be an insurmountable in my own mind...a writer's dilemma!

Releasing The Writer Within™

Homework Assignment 25 Things About You

The Write Touch:
Writing Services &
Programs.

Contact us

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Hannahgoodman.com

Linda's homework challenge was to take one of her 25 things and use it as a writing prompt. Notice the story-telling the naturally occurs when she uses one of her 25 things, "I miss my breasts".

I Miss My Breasts

Linda Fiorenzano

I step out of the glass enclosed marble shower and reach for a brown fluffy towel. I dry off my arms, chest, and legs, and then holding the towel in one hand, toss it behind me and catch the other end of the towel in my other hand, pull it tight and rub it against my back and butt to dry off my backside. I bend down and towel dry my hair before wrapping the towel tightly around my head, like a turban, and toss my head back letting the towel hang down against my neck.

Standing in front of the mirror, naked, with only the towel on my head, I stare at my chest and am immediately reminded how much I miss my breasts. It is coming up on six years since my bilateral mastectomy, and this is the day, the feeling, I dreaded when I made the choice to remove my breasts. I knew in my heart that I needed to have the surgery to remove any fear of getting diagnosed with breast cancer again. But, the other side of that fear was the chance that I would miss my breasts. Before this day, I was peaceful with my decision, but today I feel differently. I finish blow drying my hair and applying a small amount of makeup and get dressed into my comfortable brown velour sweat suit - wearing no bra, but an ultra soft t-shirt that feels wonderful right up against my chest. Funny thing is, I have no feeling in my breasts - another thing I miss - but I can feel the soft t-shirt up against my shoulders and belly. I fix a warm cup of tea and settle into my new sofa as I stare out beyond the balcony over the city of Providence.

I moved here only two weeks ago after a seven and half year relationship ended. I was in a committed relationship when I had my surgery, and although I did a lot of thinking before making my decision to have the mastectomy, I don't think I ever thought about what my decision would do to our relationship - our sex life. I had so much confidence in my partner's love and respect for me and thought he'd always love me - with or without natural breasts. But I also knew he agreed with the doctors when they told me that having the surgery would not give me a better chance of survival than conventional treatment would. Sitting up in our bed one night, I explained to my partner that I simply could not believe the doctors - that if I removed my breasts, I was certain I would not get a recurrence of breast cancer - but I know he did not have the same passion for my decision that I did. I still felt - in my heart and soul - that there was no other choice for me.

Now, as I sit on my sofa, single and alone, I am so scared of how my decision will affect my ability to have another intimate relationship. The truth is the intimacy disappeared from my previous relationship after my surgery - maybe even in the days leading up to it. So now all I can wonder is if there really is a guy out there that will love me for me and love me without breasts. Sure, I have reconstruction, but I do not feel sexy - I do not feel real - they are not real, they do not feel real. And, actually, they have no feeling at all.

I am starting to think I miss my breasts because I fear I will never have another intimate relationship again. I cannot sit here and give credit to the arrogant plastic surgeon - the one I first interviewed - that tried to discourage me from having the surgery because "breasts are important to men." I thought to myself what a selfish son of a bitch - breasts are important to men? How important are they if I'm dead? I hate that I may miss my breasts because I may not be attractive to another man. I know I made the right decision, medically, for me. I had to do the most I could do - in case I was ever re-diagnosed - I would know that I did everything I could possibly do to prevent it from coming back. But, I'm starting to realize that I have sacrificed much more with my decision. I will live, but I may have a very lonely sexual life ahead of me.