

Ten Top Tips For Silencing Your Inner Critic

By Eve Menezes Cunningham

Do you ever worry that your writing is no good? That it's all a waste of time? That you'll never make it?

You're not alone. But these thoughts can be damaging if you give them free reign. The following simple NLP, Life Coaching and Business Coaching tips will help you over-ride any unhelpful negative inner voices.

1. Pay attention to when you feel most vulnerable

Some writers get stuck at the blank page or screen. Others write through their fears of not being good enough but panic when it's time to submit their work. When do you feel most vulnerable? Even the simple knowledge that you've been here before and it's part of the process will relieve some of that stress and panic.

2. "Do the Bart, man"

What is your inner critic telling you? "This isn't any good?", "You'll never make it?" Listen to the voice for a moment and identify its message. Listen closely. Whose voice does it remind you of? Your own? A critical teacher's or parent's? Who's criticism have you internalised? And what kind of tone is it? Angry? Authoritative? Threatening? Do you believe it?

It's time to change it and disarm it. How would you feel if you heard those same words (e.g. "You'll never make it") coming from Bart Simpson or Daffy Duck? Would you believe it then or would it make you laugh?

Every time you hear this inner critic, remind yourself that it's not real and play around with the sound. You'll be amazed by how quickly you stop believing it.

3. List your achievements

I bet if someone asked you, you'd be able to reel off all your past disasters and disappointments quite quickly. But what about all the things you've done well? List your writing achievements (anything from school to the present day). Write them all down. Feel free to expand them to include other achievements (family, work and so on) but start

with at least ten. Add to this list each day and keep it so you can pull it out to re-read it whenever you need a boost.

4. Avoid negative comparisons

Have you been reading - insert writing idol's name here - instead of writing? Are you psyching yourself out with comparisons to the genius you worry you'll never be as good as? Many successful authors avoid all other fiction while writing themselves (no-one is immune from self doubt). Do the same. If certain journalists and columnists make you feel unworthy, inferior and uninspired when you're on deadline, save them for your holidays or for when you've completed the assignment.

5. Let it all out

Sometimes (maybe you've been chasing up payment to no avail or have received some harsh feedback) writing can be quite isolating. If you're feeling low, call or email a supportive friend and let them help you put things in perspective. If you don't want to talk to anyone, write out all your bad feelings and release them into a diary or onto a piece of paper. If you're feeling really dramatic, burn (safely!) the paper and let all your concerns vanish.

6. Remember all your resources

Sign up for free e-newsletters to keep up to date about staff changes, new launches and so on. If there's not a "real" writers' group in your area, join a "virtual" one. You can share inspiration and advice with other writers around the world. If you write about a specialist area, you'll probably find many forums geared to help you. Or visit one of the many journalism forums (like journalism.co.uk, journobiz.com and the NUJ Freelance Branch etc). Ease yourself in by reading some of the comments posted. If you don't find the answers you want, post your own questions.

7. Picture success

What would success mean? Getting that elusive commission? Having the piece accepted? Seeing the

“Many successful authors avoid all other fiction while writing themselves (no-one is immune from self doubt).”

feature in print? You're taking all the practical steps you need (sending out queries and improving your writing and pitching each day). Now picture the outcome you want and make it vivid. Imagine receiving the email or phone call telling you you've got the commission (with really great terms and a lucrative fee). How do you feel? What can you see around you? What sounds can you hear? Are there any tastes or smells? Do the same for receiving that acceptance call or seeing it in print. Visualise, visualise, visualise. And feel how happy you'll be. The more you can bring that feeling of success into your present, the faster you'll manifest your success.

8. Read writers' and other artists' autobiographies

Reading autobiographies can humanise writers you've long admired. How did your role models handle their self doubts and other setbacks? What can you learn from them? What can you apply to your own writing life? Don't limit yourself to writers. Read (and watch biography documentaries) about other artists, actors and so on. Visit your local library, bookshop or amazon and get inspired.

9. Keep writing through it

Take it one word at a time and keep telling yourself (especially if you have perfectionist tendencies) that it's only a draft. Once you gather momentum, you'll

find yourself back in "the zone". You're a writer - this is what you're good at. So many people feel fantastic when they write and terrible when they worry about their writing. Solution? Keep writing!

10. Imagine yourself on Parky or Oprah

You've been invited to talk to your favourite chat show host. What advice can you share with viewers who want to know how you made it? Have fun - imagine your future self is there. How did you do it? What worked best for you? Write it all down (no one will see this but yourself so don't be shy). Then bring yourself back to the present and re-read what you've written. What next steps do you need to take? Step by step, you'll get to wherever you want to go.

If you found these tips helpful, sign up for a FREE Coaching Writers e-newsletter at: www.CoachingWriters.co.uk

Eve is a coach for writers (www.coachingwriters.co.uk) and a writer herself (www.EveMenezesCunningham.co.uk). She offers telephone coaching across the UK and face-to-face coaching in areas of Essex and London. She also runs free teleseminars.

Writers' Web

Here's your chance to contact other writers, exchange ideas and tips, or sell writing-related books and equipment. Just send details of yourself or the goods you wish to sell/exchange in no more than 50 words. In addition, provide us with your name and address. THESE WILL NOT BE PRINTED. We will allocate you a Box Number and the initial contact will take place through us. If you wish to reply to the entries below, write to the Box Number at Freelance Market News (usual address) and we will forward your correspondence.

I am a 26-year-old writer in India looking to interact and make friends with fellow writers from different countries and cultures. **Box No. 5/446**

Lady part-time writer of short fiction and articles. Wide interests include history, travel, antiques, gardening and the countryside seeks sounding board for mutual encouragement/criticism, discussion, maybe even co-writing. **Box No. 5/447**

I would like to make friends with other writers to exchange ideas, tips and knowledge. I am a 29-year-old female from Malawi, married with two daughters. **Box No. 5/448**

A 34-year-old female from the North East of England seeks friends from anywhere to exchange ideas on writing or just to chat about life in general. My interests include reading, sanity and well being and generally embracing new things. I will reply to all letters. **Box No. 5/449**