

ORDER BUSINESS CARDS
SEND OUT QUERY LETTERS
HIRE AN EDITOR
CREATE A LOGO
TRY OUT SCRIVENER
KEEP MY NETWORKING CALENDAR FULL
SCHEDULE TWITTER POSTS
FACEBOOK MARKETING
FIND A PUBLICIST
WEBSITE UPDATING
WRITE PRESS RELEASE
LEARN TO USE EVERNOTE
HIRE AN ILLUSTRATOR
EDIT MANUSCRIPT
START A SWIPE FILE ON PINTEREST
DESIGN COVER
WRITE AFFIRMATIONS
WRITE A BLOG POST
JOIN WRITING GROUPS
BUILD EMAIL LIST
PLAN BOOK LAUNCH
RESEARCH BOOK FAIRS
FIND BETA READERS

THE ART & BUSINESS OF WRITING

A Practical Guide to the Writing Life

CHRIS JONES

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Introduction

Frustration made me write again.

As I listened to “The Power of Focus” by Anthony Robbins, I decided to take him up on testing the power of something transformational. My first action: I reread the beginning of “The Artist’s Way” by Julia Cameron and committed to rekindling my writing career. Six years had passed since my last full-time writing job and I hadn’t written much in that span. It was time.

At the recommendation of Cameron, I started with morning pages — three pages of longhand, stream-of-consciousness writing — for the next 100 days to which I exposed my fears, my doubts and my dreams to a black, college-ruled spiral notebook. My daily affirmation, “You are a good writer,” went from something I half-heartedly scribbled in the notebook, to words I came to believe and embrace. Within 75 days of daily writing, the idea for a blog showed up on the page.

I launched my blog, *Pedestrian’s Guide to Fredericksburg*, and set out to write profiles about the arts, businesses and culture of Fredericksburg, Virginia, where I lived at the time. Not long after launching, I received an email from *Fredericksburg Parent & Family*, the local parenting magazine. They saw my blog and wanted to find a way to collaborate with me. Having been a freelance writer for them in the past, I was already familiar with the publication. We had a few conversations, but nothing materialized. I stayed in contact with the company’s

director of operations, Heidi, and that relationship eventually paid off months later when she called to see if I knew anyone who would be interested in being interviewing for their soon-to-be opening part-time editor position. In “The Artist’s Way,” Cameron calls events like this — when opportunity responds to our actions — synchronicity. I had put in the work and here was my reward. I told her that I would be interested, which excited her, and then I was interviewed and offered the position. Success!

I was writing again and having fun. In that first year, I interviewed celebrity chef Rachael Ray, HGTV host Sabrina Soto, and Lifetime TV’s Deborah Tillman — known as America’s Supernanny. The following year, I dealt with the challenge of caring for my grandmother who was battling lung and pancreatic cancer. When she passed away, I felt the need to seek solace in a change of scenery. So I scoured the Internet job boards and found an editing position on Craigslist that matched all of my skills. I was interviewed and became the managing editor at a larger magazine called *The Health Journal* —which involved relocation. I worked hard and within a year became the magazine’s editor-in-chief. I also earned my third Virginia Press Association award within my first two years there.

It’s humbling to see what happens when you plot a course in the direction of your dream. Those original morning pages seem so long ago. It’s amazing to think how the decision to accept a challenge from one of the world’s greatest motivational teachers could give my life creative fulfillment. It wasn’t the first time I had listened to that audio. It wasn’t the second or third time either. But I would venture to say that it was the first time that I *heard* that message. A Buddhist proverb states, “When

the student is ready, the teacher will appear.” There is truth to that. I hope that by reading this book, I can be for you what Anthony Robbins and Julia Cameron have been for me. In this book, let’s test the power of your commitment to yourself and your writing and who knows, in short time, you can watch it bear fruit in your life in the same ways I watched it ripen in mine.

SECTION 1

Becoming a Writer

“Writing is an exploration. You start from nothing and learn as you go.” — E. L. Doctorow

CHAPTER 1

Affirmations

The first step I took when I decided to return to writing was to change my beliefs about myself as a writer and what my relationship to the craft was going to be. I achieved this by writing several affirmations that I would read throughout my day starting first thing in the morning. It doesn't matter how talented a writer you are, something within — an unrelenting little voice — will tell you that you are not; that you are unworthy, untalented and unqualified to write. Some refer to this as the Censor and others call it the Imposter's Syndrome. No matter what name you affix to it, it's a troublemaker not worthy of an audience. This small voice brings all of your fears and insecurities about your writing to your attention every time you sit down to create. It will pursue you with thoughts like, "What makes you think you can call yourself a writer or an author?" or "What have you written or published?" It will torment you with words like, "No one wants to read your book!" or "What if you fail?" This small voice which magnifies your inner fears and

doubts is normal. Every writer from J.K. Rowling to Stephen King has dealt with it and continues to do so. The voice never goes away. It just finds a new insecurity to unearth — “Did you read that review?” It’s relentless, but you will learn to recognize its poisonous tongue and silence it.

In the film “Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring” Samwise Gamgee agrees to join his friend, Frodo Baggins, on the journey of a lifetime through Middle Earth to Mount Doom to destroy the One Ring. As they approached the edge of the Shire, Samwise realized that the comfort of his present life would be coming to an end. Stopping in the middle of the field, he says, “This is it. If I take one more step, it will be the farthest away from home I have ever been.” Frodo turns to him, places his hands on his shoulder, smiles and says, “Come on.” And the two take the next step and begin their epic journey. If you’re ready to write, ready to embark on an incredible journey of your own, then it’s time to take that next step. Leave your comfort and security behind and let’s journey together. The little voice will tell you that it’s scary — and it is — and that you have no business “leaving the Shire,” but like Samwise, you have a dream, you crave fulfillment, and that means going places you’ve never been before to do things you’ve never done. That’s the writing lifestyle. And it starts with learning to use, and master, affirmations to silence the Censor and to continue putting one foot in front of the other until we get there.

Testing the Power of Thought

We’re shaped by our thoughts, and the way we process our thoughts gives us the power to create success or produce failure. Try this exercise: Think back to a time when you felt most

confident. Where were you? What were you were doing? Who you were spending time with? What caused you to feel confident? As you thought back to this time in your life, did you feel a shift in your mood? Did you feel that same confidence that you felt that day come over you? Now, think about the opposite. Think about a low point in your life. It may be the loss of a job, a relationship, or the death of a loved one. What happened? How did it make you feel? Who was there? What did you see? Did you feel a change in your state? Did those feelings of pain resurface? How did your body respond? It's a simple exercise, but it's easy to see how much power our thoughts command. During the creative process, we'll want to tap into this power and use it to create momentum. We want to rewire our minds and teach them how to work *for* us and not *against* us. Reciting daily affirmations aloud helps to harness this power. You just felt what your mind could do in a matter of seconds. Let's learn to do it over a lifetime.

Creating Daily Affirmations

Affirmations written right force our minds to see ourselves succeeding in the present and future. They also elevate past outcomes that we may not have been proud of into references instead of shame, which serve as building blocks. This is opposite of the small voice which casts fear into every equation. These affirmations are the basic building blocks that will help you to engage your mind and keep it focused on being productive as a writer. When I started mine, my first affirmation was giving myself permission to be a writer: "I give myself permission to write." You can do the same. I also chose to affirm my talent and support system: "I am a talented writer and my loved ones

support my decision to write.” I affirmed my state of mind for writing, too: “I wake up every morning excited to write.” Whatever you choose to affirm, write three to five of these affirmations and speak them out loud daily, and reread them often. Set an alert in your phone reminding you to read them, if you have to. It doesn’t matter whether you believe them right now or not. You will. As these affirmations take root, you’ll want to create new affirmations to take you to each new level you want to reach. Writing is emotionally taxing. Using affirmations to keep you progressing upward will build strong mental and emotional resolve that will remind you who you are during those low points.

Creating Goal-Specific Affirmations

If your intention is to begin a creative undertaking, you’ll want to develop a series of goal-specific affirmations. I recommend writing them in the future tense. Learn to say, “I *will* finish my first book by February 1, 2016” or “I *will* launch my author’s website by August 1, 2016.” By saying I will, you prepare your mind for daily action towards achieving your goal. By adding a date, you give your mind a deadline, something that calls it to action and sets it on a course to figure out how it will achieve this goal in the allotted time. Next, list every step that you need to take to have a completed book or finished website by the due date. Ask yourself questions to create those steps: What platform will I use for my website? Where will I host it? What will my domain name be? Who do I need to enlist to complete my book (illustrator, page designer, editor, graphic designer)? When will my first draft be due? My second? When does it go to the editor? The designer? Asking questions helps

you to flesh out your goals and makes your affirmation achievable. Once written, read your affirmations and accompanying goals, taking care to orally recite them. Actors learn their lines and become confident through oral recital. Do likewise. Make your affirmations stick. You will feel resistance at first from within (remember, Imposter's Syndrome doesn't sleep), but that's a part of the process.

In addition to attaching your goals to your affirmations, try anchoring them with an emotion. I learned this technique from Anthony Robbins. When you link something you want badly to a strong enough emotion, you increase your likelihood of attaining that goal. Try imagining what your book will feel like in your hands. Crack open and smell the pages of your book (we all do it!). Think about the number of likes and congratulatory comments you may get on your favorite social networks when you share your book online. Visualize the sales and positive reviews. See yourself holding a book signing at a bookstore and signing copies for fans. Imagine the feeling like when someone tells you how much your writing has done for his or her life. Doesn't that put you into a resourceful state? It probably makes you want to put this book down and start writing. Why? Because it's something you've wanted. Do you now see this as something you can realistically achieve?

Keep Your Affirmations Visible

The most important thing to remember about affirmations is that you have to keep them visible. Here are a few places you can put your affirmations and ways to recall them:

- **Voice recording.** Record them and listen to them throughout the day; when you exercise, on a car ride, or

right before you go to sleep. Recording them is as simple as using the preinstalled voice recorder on your smartphone.

- ♦ **Stick them up.** Tape them to a mirror, your computer monitor, your desk, your fridge, or on your car's dashboard. You don't have to list them all in one place. Post one here and one there in areas you find yourself frequently.
- ♦ **Email them.** Send yourself automated emails at a certain time each day. Boomerang for Gmail is one such program (boomeranggmail.com). It allows you to schedule when emails will go out from your inbox. Keep your affirmations in a draft folder and paste them into emails scheduling them to go out during low points of your day to get you motivated.
- ♦ **Reminders.** Use a reminder app with an alarm to remind you of each affirmation, or to read them all. I use Wunderlist (wunderlist.com) and even the native reminders app on my iPhone. Whichever app you choose, use it daily.
- ♦ **Memorize them.** Use flashcards to jot down your affirmations and then commit them to memory. When you remember them, you can quickly recite them when negative self-talk creeps into your head.
- ♦ **Place them in your purse or wallet.** Write them on a small sheet of paper and store them for easy retrieval.
- ♦ **Make a song of them.** It's no coincidence that as children much of our learning was taught through songs. It works. Feeling ambitious? Download jingles from AudioJungle (audiojungle.net) and make a production of it. Music starts as low as \$6.
- ♦ **Use a journal.** Write them daily in your journal or in the margin of the page.

Your First Affirmations

Let's put it to the test and get started with your first affirmations. On the space below, write one goal-specific affirmation and three state change affirmations.

Goal Specific

My goal is to

_____.

My deadline for achieving this goal is _____.

I want to achieve this goal because _____.

What do I need to accomplish this goal? _____

What outside help will I need to accomplish this goal?

These are the steps I need to take to see this goal through:

1. _____.
2. _____.
3. _____.
4. _____.
5. _____.
6. _____.
7. _____.
8. _____.
9. _____.
10. _____.

