

Sharing Jumpstart Resources

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We hope you found your workshop both educational and fun and we hope to see you again soon.

Lucy D. Briand: Okay, so let's get started....

Lucy D. Briand: Sharing Jumpstart Resources with our fabulous host this evening, Hillary Hutchinson!

Before we begin the chat, just a few housekeeping issues

Our focus, as always, is on listening to what our guest has to say. We have a full house tonight! So to avoid walking on Hillary's lecture points or her replies to our questions...

1. Please keep side conversations/comments/interruptions to a minimum.

(That includes jumping in with questions and comments in the middle of our guest's presentation – PLEASE wait until she posts that she is ready to take them)

2. If you have a question for our host, please type and post this: ?

Once you have posted your ?, BEGIN TYPING your question, but DON'T HIT SEND until I type your name and "GA" (i.e. "GA, Kathleen"). Then post your questio .

3. In order to keep the chat easy to read, we ask that everyone except the author and moderator please keep to the black ink. Pick a font and a size that are easy to read.

No need to furiously take notes – a transcript of tonight's chat will be posted on the Savvy Authors site: <http://www.savvyauthors.com/vb/forumdisplay.php?113-Chat-Transcripts-and-handout>

And now, to introduce our guest:

Personal narratives with cultural and mythical themes hold a particular fascination for Hillary Hutchinson. She considers herself a phoenix risen from the ashes because she literally and figuratively recreated herself. After financing her husband's graduate degree and moving across the country for his first tenure-track job, she sadly became sole support of their two children (10 and 8 at the time) when her young husband was tragically killed in a car accident that nearly claimed her life as well. She was forced to use everything she knew reinvent herself and support her family. After 35 years immersed in the world of academia, either as a student, a supportive spouse, or working in academic administration, 2007 marked the rise of a new phoenix, as Hillary took flight, following her own dream of helping others negotiate their unique career paths, with an emphasis on writing careers both in and out of the academic world. Her passion is helping both fiction and non-fiction to move forward after being stuck for a time

Thank you for joining us in the Savvy Authors chatroom, Hillary. It's a great pleasure to have you with us...and now, the floor is yours.

Hillary Hutchinson: WOW. Thanks for that introduction. Let me ask, is there anyone here that took "Resistance is Futile" workshop?

Susan Jessen: Me!

Hillary Hutchinson: Thanks, Susan.

That may mean that we want to begin at the beginning, rather than just jumping in. So, would each of you kindly write why you are here this evening, and if you have any particular issues with resistance that you want to address.

Piper Huguley-Riggins: I run out of steam sometimes after plotting out a story.

Ria Boulay: Exact same issue here

April Dangerfield: I'm having a creative block on how to move forward with my story, can't think of what to have happen next...

Bonnie Forsythe: I start writing, get 3/4 of the way done, and...honestly, I get bored. I know the ending already. So I stop. Three months later, I am in the same place, even though I know how I want everything to end.

Lucy D. Briand: Jumping into writing a new story after finishing the last one.

Callan Cox: I lose interest once I've written the story out in my head. And sometimes, I can't get what's so clear in my head out on the screen or paper.

melusine6619: I run out of steam after starting a story.

Tonette dela Luna: Similar to Lucy, I get overwhelmed with ideas and have many great starts that I want to finish.

Ria Boulay: I have that transfer issue too Callan :)

Susan Jessen: I have issues sticking through when I get stuck. Working through the problems.

Bonnie Forsythe: Oh, I also tend to start another story when an idea strikes me in the middle of the first story...then I get side-tracked with a new story and the first one stalls out.

Callan Cox: Same here. I'm my mom's caretaker and suddenly she needs me and I stop the process and can't get started again.

Hillary Hutchinson: Great! Thanks for sharing. Three big issues so far: Can't figure out the plot; can't stick with writing it down when you've figured it out; getting overwhelmed. And just generally getting stuck, which is what writer's block is all about and what jumpstart is all about getting around.

So, anybody here keep a writer's journal?

Lucy D. Briand: Never tried.

Heather Sheldon: No.

Piper Huguley-Riggins: No.

April Dangerfield: No.

Bonnie Forsythe: No.

Susan Jessen: No.

Talina Perkins: Me either.

Callan Cox: Not anymore. I found myself writing great stuff in the journal, but then not having anything left to write on my WIP.

Tonette dela Luna: I've maintained 67 days of Morning Pages, so far, but I also have different journals for different things. MacJournal has become by Library of Congress.

Hillary Hutchinson: Sounds to me like you are making a writer's journal seem like hard work!:-D

Tonette dela Luna: I'm a masochist. I need to figure out how to journal properly.

Hillary Hutchinson: Writer's journals are your very best friend. I'm going to post the full description here of how you keep one, but first let me tell you why: it's fun (really!) and it will keep your momentum going.

First fun part: You get to find a notebook that appeals to you, and maybe even a writing instrument that appeals to you, to keep it. It's super low technology (yes, you do want to be able to scribble random thoughts no matter where you are). I have a little 5 1/2 inch spiral bound with wild swirly cover and I happen to like using a disposable fountain pen which I keep in my wallet. Both are always with me. So here are the formal rules:

The Writer's Journal:

Maintaining momentum. Keep a writing journal (low hanging fruit)

WHAT GOES IN YOUR DAILY WRITING JOURNAL

Write right from the start of your project. You can set writing appointments as short as 15 minutes, but do write every day. Developing a writing discipline will help you realize how productive you really can be. One way to learn how much you write in a sitting is to keep track. Get a bound journal that will serve as your writing journal. (Why bound? So that you don't have loose papers all over the place. In a color that's easy to find, so when you through it in your purse or backpack, you can find it easily.

Your journal should be portable, so that when a brilliant idea strikes or the perfect adjective presents itself, you can write it down right then, and forget about it, until you are actually writing again. One of my novelist friends often takes notes on menu descriptions at restaurants, to help her remember the "local color" when traveling.

Every day during your writing appointment, note the following information in your journal:

- Time when you sat down to write
- What you did (a phrase or two, no need for paragraphs)
- Progress: word count or page count

- How long you spent
- Where you will start tomorrow (very important): a sentence they know the ending to, but don't write that down. Note this information even on days when you don't write. You can also add other information, if you wish. I call this "outsourcing your brain."
- Notes to yourself about things you want to look up somewhere
- Notes to yourself about restructuring your piece
- Notes about anything else that you are tempted to set your writing aside for (grocery store list, etc.)
- Other? (Your choice!)

Break a big project down into small pieces: reduce anxiety; you can make lists of what you have to do. There is a reason that people quote the old Confucius saying, "Even the longest journey starts with the first step." After all, who wants to start with one thousand steps?

Reward yourself at each step of the way. This means doing something that pleases you after you have accomplished a step along your goals: go to the movies, have tea, spend time with your partner. Be careful, though, because the reward should be commiserate with what you actually accomplished. If you give yourself an entire weekend off for only writing one paragraph, it's going to take a very, very long time to write that novel.

This is where you can put everything that crosses your mind about your writing project and the things that might distract you from your writing project while you're writing. You can keep it next to your computer when you are actually writing, and when you get the idea for that next novel or story, you can jot it there OR if you remember you need to pick up milk, you can jot it there. This way you outsource your brain to free it up for writing. Is this making sense to people?

Talina Perkins: Yes!

Susan Jessen: Yes.

Ria Boulay: Like a paper back up drive.

Talina Perkins: ha! Good one, Ria!

Tonette dela Luna: *nods in awe like I'm at a TED talk*

Lucy D. Briand: Love this idea

Piper Huguley-Riggins: Me too Lucy

Hillary Hutchinson: Back up paper drive: I like that. Momentum, really, it's all about momentum.

Here's what I tell people about journaling in general: thinking is overrated! Keep this really short.

Tonette dela Luna: But is it okay to cross streams--not in a Ghostbusters way--but writing about different projects in one place? I suppose it's just about emptying the well, right?

Hillary Hutchinson: Yes, definitely, keep all your ideas in one place. This is not the same as your project file. That will be different and loads bigger, probably. This is where you go to get the low hanging fruit: for instance, you write down what you expect to happen next, or even a partial sentence, then you know where to start the next time. Yes, it is about emptying the (overflowing) well.

It's sort of like keeping one calendar. If you keep three, you never know which appointment might really be coming up.

Questions?

Piper Huguley-Riggins: When you say short, how short do you mean?

Hillary Hutchinson: a phrase, a sentence, just enough information for you to know what you want to remember. One word might even be enough, like "egg." To you that could be groceries. To me that could be a sci-fi plot.

Piper Huguley-Riggins: So it isn't about journaling for a length of time, just keep it short? Is this so you don't divert all of your writing energy?

Hillary Hutchinson: Yes, indeed, Piper! It's going to help you stay on track, and increase your actual energy for writing.

Piper Huguley-Riggins: Thanks Hillary!

Tonette dela Luna: I like the portability aspect. Aside from files on my computer, I have scrap pieces of paper, napkins, backs of receipts, and my mirrored closet doors that serve as my 'creative grocery list'.

Hillary Hutchinson: Feel free to share your own jumpstart tips, too, as I can always learn from you folks!

April Dangerfield: I've been doing something sort of like this, only I use an Evernote note...I never considered it journaling though, just keeping track of any thoughts I had about what I was working on and other ideas that came to me for other projects to work on later on...

Hillary Hutchinson: Evernote is one way to do this electronically, but for me, old technology is easier for the quick scribble.

This is why a spiral notebook is so important! It automatically keeps your thoughts in the date order (unless of course, you randomly enter information into various pages...but that's another story.) This will eliminate all those scraps and post-it notes that become wallpaper on your computer terminal. Take the post-it and TAPE IT down into the notebook.

Tonette dela Luna: Exactly. I can't recall how many times I've lost a potential novel nugget. It's shameful. And I can't exactly bring my closet doors around for mindmapping or for a quick note.

Talina Perkins: Talking "jumpstart" one thing I've learned about getting back into a MS is after stepping away for the day (or even a few days) is to leave off in the middle of a scene in the previous writing session. For me, when I come back to it I re-read that scene and get right back into it with a fresh energy.

Hillary Hutchinson: Talina, that is an excellent idea...the journal is another way to remember "the middle" point.

April Dangerfield: Yeah, I used to use a small notebook, but I have carpal tunnel and can't do much writing by hand, so Evernote has made me able to do this still...and it's portable on my phone so I always have it with me!

Hillary Hutchinson: Ok, April, you have a solution! Good for you! (Yuk on the carpal tunnel.)

Tonette dela Luna: April, I have wrist issues, too. I use dictation software, sometimes, to rest my digits and wrists. I also use a recording app when I'm out and don't have paper. (Just hope the batt doesn't die)

Talina Perkins: For me I also find electronical journaling a huge help with those midnight ideas that seem to hit right about the time you're drifting off. Those built in back lights on the devices are awesome!

Hillary Hutchinson: Great, you guys are sharing jumpstart resources now!

April Dangerfield: I've thought about using dictation, but I'm embarrassed to have anyone hear whatever I'm trying to make a note of! LOL :')

Talina Perkins: lol! Oh, yes! Me too!

Tonette dela Luna: Haha... time and place. Yes. Fortunately, I'm usually YA, MG, and not erotica.

Hillary Hutchinson: One of my writer friends walks through a cemetery using dictation because he likes getting character names that way...I think in the days of iPodcasts and cellphones, no one pays much attention anymore to people muttering to themselves.

Well, maybe you'd have to be careful with erotica!

April Dangerfield: I'm not erotica, but the lovey dovey romance stuff I write is embarrassing enough that I don't want my hubby to hear me saying it out loud!

Tonette dela Luna: Haha... and so true about the self-muttering. But I do like to check for a Bluetooth headset when I'm downtown with some of the 'local fare'.

Hillary Hutchinson: Ready for some more jumpstart tips?

April Dangerfield: Yes!

Tonette dela Luna: Yes, please *soaking it in*

Bonnie Forsythe: Defintely.

Susan Jessen: yes

Hillary Hutchinson: 1) Do small stuff when you can't figure out the big stuff, at least you get something done; this means writing not editing! Editing is NOT writing. Example: Write about the scene you are setting, the moorish cliffs and the sailing ships, if you can't figure out the conversation your characters are having.

2) List ideas for next section, brainstorming, research you need to do: if you are writing about pirates, do you know the parts of a sailing ship, or the difference between guns (cannons) and pistols? If you need to know more, go find out, then WRITE a note to yourself about what you found out. This way you don't go down the research rabbit hole. And you are still writing. So, "she's holding a Glock?" What the heck DOES that mean?

3) Exercise! A great remedy for writing blocks. Even changing position can help. Dr. Stuart Heller, aka the Movement Doctor ("Step away from your desk.") John Ratey calls exercise "Miracle Gro for the brain." It literally changes the pathways, and helps you get out of whatever neural ruts you are in. This doesn't mean hours and hours either: just a walk around the block, 2 minutes of running around the house or jumping on a trampoline can actually help jumpstart your writing.

4) Speaking of neurons, sit up straight if you find yourself slouching at the computer. Your teachers were right: it does help you think better. Here's why: It activates the reticular system: an area of the brain responsible for regulating arousal and sleep-wake transitions. The RAS is composed of several neuronal circuits connecting the brainstem to the cortex, and helps mediate transitions from relaxed wakefulness to periods of high attention and alertness by increasing regional blood flow in the midbrain reticular formation (MRF).

5) Try writing in a different genre, by imagining your story as a screenplay, a poem, or a letter a letter to your closest friend. You could even try writing it as a non-fiction piece or a magazine article. It's challenging and fun to try this. What if you made your Young Adult novel erotica? Hah. That would blow some minds.

6) Look at a picture that attracts you. Then write about that. Even better, figure out how the scene you are looking at could actually become part of your story.

I've got some more writing exercises, but let's hear from you folks now.

Piper Huguley-Riggins: Editing is not writing. You learn something new every day...

Hillary Hutchinson: Yea!!!

What else have people tried to break their own log jams and get moving again? Especially you folks that get bored, knowing the ending, and never write it down so it can be shared with other people?

Tonette dela Luna: Whoa on #5. haha And noticed the sounds of crickets at the word 'exercise'. Seriously, though. These are great tips. I have gained fresh perspective by stepping away from the screen. It's all that EM glare, methinks. Also, I've tried standing while working. They have expensive desks that elevate, but I just stack things on boxes, etc. They even have a desk treadmill out there.

Ria Boulay: I'm saving for a treadmill for my desk

Hillary Hutchinson: I actually write sitting on an exercise ball. Have to remember not to slouch. But it does wonders for the core muscles.

Talina Perkins: Love standing desks!

Hillary Hutchinson: Standing is another way to activate your reticular system.

Piper Huguley-Riggins: I've heard that helps. Really, if I am stuck it seems that the only thing that motivates me is that someone wants to see it, like a request. It's probably psychological... :)

But I am going to try these tips. Really excellent. Trying these tips makes me excited to get to work.

Hillary Hutchinson: Ah, a request. So, what if you imagined what the finished product actually looks like (the actual cover, colors, picture) and either handing it to someone you don't know, or imagine it listed on say, Amazon?

April Dangerfield: I have an exercise ball, I should really bring that to my desk...

Joining an accountability group has helped me in the past. Knowing I have to report what I've done is a fantastic motivator for me! Especially for my competitive side! LOL

Hillary Hutchinson: Writer's groups are great. I love that. 'Course I love to coach writers, so I suppose it's a given that I would love accountability groups!

Tonette dela Luna: April, I have those groups, too. Very helpful. Keeps me in line with my goals.

Talina Perkins: This may sound weird but when I first started writing I thought I HAD to listen to music as so many other did. *self eye roll* Then I discovered while that might work for others it doesn't work for me while I am writing. Having said that, when I can't figure out how to bring two characters together or how to get that fight scene just right I turn to the appropriate genre in music to get that extra umph or inspiration. I also got a stories entire premise from a song. :)

Piper Huguley-Riggins: I try visualization, but sometimes those negative feelings get to me....

Tonette dela Luna: Talina, I have soundtracks for my WIPs, it really works. :)

Orion: If you listen to New Age music, like Sky FM, it gets your creative brain waves (alpha waves?) engaged.

Hillary Hutchinson: Talina, music is a great idea for allowing those ideas to percolate up. Daydreaming is our minds in an alpha state, and we all do that about 30% of our awake time. Surprise! The good news is that writers can legitimately say when daydreaming, "I'm working." Because you are, and that music help put you in that place.

Anybody tried the online tools to get going?

Piper Huguley-Riggins: What on-line tools? Accountability groups?

Tonette dela Luna: Hillary, online tools? *scratches head* I probably missed something important. *scrolls up*

Hillary Hutchinson: Some accountability groups, like the ones you have here, through Savvy Authors are online. But this is what I mean, just to get you going:

Sites to help you get your words flowing easily:

<http://oneword.com/> one word at the top of the fol-low-ing screen. You have sixty sec-onds to write about it; click 'go' and the page will load with the cur-sor in place; don't think. just write.

<http://www.postsecret.com/> Pictures with words attached that can get you started.

<http://www.rotten.com/> A place to go for the "horrible" things; Rotten collects images and information from many sources to present the viewer with a truly unpleasant experience. Not for the faint of heart.

<http://www.wordthink.com/> Word of the day site. You can take the word, use it in a sentence, then make the sentence into a paragraph. Or use the word in the opening sentence of a novel you are imaging.

<http://dictionary.reference.com/wordoftheday/> Same idea as word of the day, but this site will also give you quotes and etymology which may also spark your imagination.

Piper Huguley-Riggins: Oh wow. Okay. Great job Hillary, thanks!

Tonette dela Luna: Ah, I've trolled for writing prompts. I've also tried that 750 word site for a time, but am too scared to do the write or die one.

April Dangerfield: I've not consciously used those, but I've had ideas pop into my head as I've browsed those sites and ones like them....

Hillary Hutchinson: That went fast! Please get in touch with me if you want more help:
hillary@transitioningyourlife.com

Thank you all for coming!

Lucy D. Briand: Thank you so much! Terrific chat, lots of great information. Let's show Hillary our appreciation, everyone!

Heather Sheldon: Thanks Hillary and the awesome Savvy Ladies! :)

Talina Perkins: Thank you, Hillary!

Tonette dela Luna: Amazing chat. And the first one I've thoroughly been able to participate in. Thank you all very much!

Ria Boulay: Thank you Hillary...some really great ideas :)

Lucy D. Briand: Reminders:

Check out Hillary's blog: <http://www.transitioningyourlife.com/blog/>

Connect with Hillary:

Twitter: @CoachHillary

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/TheChangeStrategist>

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April Dangerfield: Thank you!!

Callan Cox: You rock, Hillary! And Yu Rock Too Lucy!

Lucy D. Briand: Hillary It's been a delight moding for you tonight...your fun!!

Leslie Randall: Thank you Hillary. A lot to consider.

Ria Boulay: P.S. Hillary: Mothers all over the world send thanks for the "Sit up Straight" rule

melusine6619: Thank you, Hillary.

Lucy D. Briand: Thx everyone :)