

Writer's Block: Headache or Misunderstood Partner

By Tricia Sparks

Well it's been six months now since I posted my first article on the site and I must admit it's been a learning experience along the way. When I first started this process it was not just to use for filler for the page. It was my intent to contribute something both informative and entertaining to all our readers as well as to help challenge the aspiring writers out there. I wanted to get you thinking outside the normal bounds of your craft, inspire you to look beyond the idea of the novel to all forms of storytelling and see the power of the different medias. Weather I've succeed or not only you, truly know the answer but I hope that as you read this the answer is yes.

I've posted an article regularly now each month and gotten into a rhythm of working on my various writing projects then switching gears to put together the article but as the deadline for this month's article drew near I found my mind to be a blank page. No ideas were forth coming and even after consulting with Lisa and Doris for ideas nothing sparked for me. The more I considered the matter the harder it got to think of anything creative. After a few days of trying to think of something and stressing myself out I admitted that I had a case of writer's block.

Most writers dread this annoying inability to create and some even claim it to be painful. In the past when I was a young writer I was among this crowd. I'd sit down with a pen and paper and fight my way through it. Using tactics like writing whatever entered my head or taking the character's I was working with and imagining them in everyday situations. Sometimes I even cut out images in catalogs to create a character morgue. I did anything I could think of to press through the mental block and for all that hassle I usually wrote something that was very rough and needed lots of work. Pieces that inevitably would get the ax because they just didn't measure up to the rest of the piece I was creating.

However over the years as I've matured in my writing style I've learned not to view writer's block as an enemy but an ally. Writer's block is not something to dread it is normally your body or mind telling you to slow down for one reason or another. Rather than battling with it I work with it. When I hit my wall these days I step back from the work and let my thought process slip into the back of my mind.

This is exactly what I did with my recent bout of writer's block. Instead of continuing to stress myself out needlessly, I informed both Lisa and Doris I was taking a week off. I was not doing anything pertaining to my current writing projects. When I mentioned this to my husband Dustin he offered to write this month's article so that I could take what he felt was a much needed vacation from writing. This however backfired as Dustin himself also ended up with writer's block.

With both of us stuck I went back to the girls and again asked for ideas as the article needed to be posted for the month. One of Doris's suggestions was an article on the need for a writer to take a vacation and at first I was less than inspired but after a few minutes the block broke and I saw how to write the article. As I've learned over the years when I step back from my work for a bit upon hitting on a dry spell when I come back to the table I'm usually able to move on and the material created is stronger for it.

So if writer's block is as I've suggested the body and mind warning you to slow down what causes it? The answer is that our personal lives cause it. As writers most of us have other obligations in life that can and does affect our work. Some of us, like myself, have day jobs we hold to foot the cost of living while we wait for our break in the industry.

If you're anything like me you probably work 40 hours a week then you sit down upon getting home and write for a few hours. I must confess when I'm pushing myself I write an additional three to five hours in the evening after putting in an eight hour day at work. My name is Tricia Sparks and I am a workaholic most of the time. This kind of schedule can quickly take its toll and burnout becomes a strong possibility. I've come close to it several times over the years.

Other writers are probably taking classes be it high school or college and writing when time allows. I've been here as well. There are assignments to complete be they writing or reading and deadlines to meet. The stress of the daily grind can often lead to writer's block.

Another source is that of frustration which is where Dustin's case came from. He'd typed an interesting opening to an article on the subject of the Vengeance plotline. Dustin fought with my laptop as he's not used to the touch pad. He'd type words and it would overwrite previous segments. This is a headache I can easily relate to as I had similar issues when I first started using my laptop.

After his struggle to write the paragraph he let me read it and I informed him that a few lines might be cut in a bid to avoid upsetting our readership. At this note he got very upset because Dustin does not believe in being politically correct. As a result he ended up with writer's block.

Beyond these influences on our writing our personal relationships and even our health can affect our creativity. When things in our personal lives aren't peaceful in our social circle this too can make writing and creativity near impossible. Also when you're not feeling your best physically it can cut off the imagination and cause writer's block.

A last reason I've found for writer's block to occur is that I'm trying to force the plot to go in a direction based on my bias and not staying true to the work I've begun. All of these can be causes for writer's block.

So next time you find yourself stuck in your work rather than stressing out, worrying about it and cursing your writer's block. Take a step back and ask yourself how you are feeling. Consider how much you've been working lately and you may find that the mental block is there for a reason. When writing feels like just another chore rather than pushing on be content to take a short vacation from writing. It's better to take a short break than to reach burnout and quit. The important thing to do is trust that you'll find your stride again after the rest and that your work will be the better for it.