Navigating Your Interior Life While Writing

Vinita Wright / October 12, 2021

For a writer, writing is always interior work. You process your life through words, so any time you are working with words, you likely are tapping your interior world: thoughts, beliefs, emotions, memories, intuitions, dreams, desires, fears, and so on.

There are many advantages to the close connection between creative work and spiritual awareness and growth.

- Spiritual awareness adds depth to your writing.
- Your writing makes your spirituality more vivid, real, and personal.
- Spiritual awareness adds wisdom to your writing.
- Writing adds experience to your wisdom.
- Spirituality becomes a safe container for artistic exploration.
- Creativity leads you into exploration; it often leads you to the margins of understanding.

Your creative work will lead you to yourself—your true self—although this rarely happens quickly or easily. How can you navigate through this interior world as you are writing?

1 **Assume that all writing is personal.**
Why this story or assignment, and why am I the one writing it?
What do I bring to this story or topic, and what does it bring to me?

2 **Assume that your personal life will influence your writing.**
You cannot divide yourself into Personal and Creative compartments. These two areas of your life are drawn to each other and function best when working together.

3 **Take from your writing clues about your interior life.**
What themes, words, phrases, questions, etc. keep popping up in your writing?

4 **Take from your spiritual life the strength and patience to handle your creative work.**
Faith, hope, and love apply to creative work as well as the rest of life. Practices that help you pray and be mindful might also help you write and pay attention.

5 **Expect discomfort, challenge, and unknowing.**
Your writing might unearth an issue in your life you have managed to ignore before now.
Your spirituality might urge you toward more honesty in your writing, whether it's in the way you flesh out a character in fiction or the way you approach a thorny topic in your essay.

6 **Allow growth in one area to trigger growth in another.**

- The writer learns to trust the writing process and often does not know where the writing will go.
- Can that same writer learn to trust her life's process, even when she does not know where it's taking her?

- The spiritually aware person trusts that Divine love works in many people in many different ways.
- Can that same person experiment with her writing, using different viewpoints, tenses, and plot points?
- The wise writer knows that sometimes her characters allow her to know them only by degrees, as she writes them.
- Can that same person see her children in the same way?

7 **Go toward resistance, not away from it.**
There's a reason you don't want to pray right now. What is it? Sit with yourself until you understand your resistance. Then you can overcome it and resume your prayer life.
There's a reason you have put off writing this scene or chapter. What is it? Sit with yourself until you understand your resistance. Only then can you get back to writing.

8 **Pay attention to where the energy is.** This is true in spiritual growth and awareness, and it's true in creative work. Your mind may have its plan for today or for this hour of writing. But the real energy in you is not where you have planned to be. Change your plans and go where the energy is.

9 **Remember that emotions are indicators.** When they occur, try to identify them and then trace them to the source. Perhaps the writing has made you anxious. Why are you anxious? Are you worried that this section is not going so well? Does the topic or scene you're writing take you back to a memory you need to process? Is there some part of this writing that feels false to you but you're not sure why?

10 **Make mercy your default.** Show yourself mercy when it's a bad writing day. Show yourself mercy when the end product is not as stunning as you had imagined it would be. Use mercy when writing your characters—this will ensure that you flesh them out and make them more complex than simply good or bad. Apply mercy to the topic of this essay; then you will have to consider other opinions.

11 **Find more and more practices to help you focus, get quiet, pay attention, and solve problems.** A practice may work now but not a month from now, which is why it's good to have a variety of writing practices.

12 **Tend to your interior life.** Writing will require that you become honest with yourself, and as that happens, you will be able to face fears, hurt, sadness, and confusion. Allow the writing to help you bring to the surface the wound that needs healing or the memory that needs revisiting. Tend to your soul's needs, and you will become freer to do your writing. Your writing will become freer of your personal biases and grudges.

Vinita's books on writing and creativity, both available through Amazon:
The Soul Tells a Story: Engaging Creativity with Spirituality in the Writing Life
The Art of Spiritual Writing: How to Craft Prose That Engages and Inspires Your Readers