

Crutches support you. You can lean on them and they help you to be able to walk. They stand in for your own muscles, while your bones are too weak to fulfill their regular function. But, what happens when you get better, and your bones are strong enough to support your weight? What if you still used crutches even though you didn't need them? They would become a hindrance to your recovery, to your progress in becoming whole.

I find that many times I use crutches in my writing far longer than they are necessary. I have certain words, phrases, tones of voice, characters, thoughts, and images that I keep returning to if I can't find anything else to write about. These get me going in my writing again, which is why I keep using them. These are my crutches. The problem comes when I have developed beyond these simplistic lines like, "the world will not come crashing down upon you unless you let it" or words like "truth" and "love" or images of music and water. I still use them because they are comfortable and familiar. They are the easiest way I know to create something, but I end up creating the same things over and over. This exercise is going to be all about getting rid of your writing crutches and trying to find new ways of expressing yourself.

Let's start by filling in a crutch profile that we can later use to figure out what we want to avoid (You may look at your previous writings in order to fill in this crutch profile):

Crutch Genres (type of writing):

Crutch Words/Phrases

Crutch Themes (main ideas in your writing):

Crutch Images (Visual, Auditory, Physical):

Crutch Characters:

Now look at this list and figure out which ones of these you have outgrown. Which of these crutches are things that you can wean yourself off of and learn to stand and walk on unraveled ground. Circle these things.

Write a piece (short story, poem, memoir, etc.) without using anything that you have just circled. You may write about anything as long as it doesn't include any of your crutches. See what develops.