



Just Write!

*“Running from practice to practice or guru to guru,
keeps us from ever having to take off our shoes and stand on holy ground.”*

Writing as a spiritual practice will reveal some of your greatest fears, but don't let that stop you, because it can also reveal your deepest passions. Writing is a solitary spiritual discipline and, like meditation and prayer, no one can do it for you. Writing is a form of therapy and it can be cathartic and liberating. It is healing. Research has shown that when a person describes the details of a traumatic experience, the simple act of putting words down on paper often brings considerable relief. In fact, it's so effective that many enlightened practitioners, such as Carl Jung, were known to treat the private journal with a great deal of respect.

The idea is to keep writing no matter what comes up. Some things will surprise you and some things will simply amaze you and, yes, some things will frighten you. But don't stop. Keep writing until you find something in your writing—something that reveals more about you to your self—something that might help you to make a significant contribution to the world or cause you to be kinder, compassionate and more authentic.

Write until you're totally naked and raw and bleeding because you have gotten down to the bare bones of your soul. Write until you have crucified old habits and you no longer recognize the person in the mirror because he/she has been transformed. Write for goodness sake. Write until you know that God is everything—God is the turd and the totality. When you get to that point, you will be free. However, don't *try* to go there or else you will miss something crucial—something juicy and mysterious that may surprise you. Don't *try* to go anywhere. Just write!

Write until you are standing barefoot before God—full of the agony and the ecstasy of writing as a spiritual practice. Don't stop at the pretty words that comfort and inspire and give you a false sense of security or, as some would say, a big head because you're so full of yourself. No! Go for the deep—the troublesome, irksome, pesky things that reveal those nuggets that have been buried under years of self-degradation and contempt. Write it out of your system.

Spiritual practices don't always feel good. Often emotions arise that we would rather not deal with—unfulfilled dreams, a sense of failure, loss, sadness, shame, etc. But that's the whole idea. The practices help bring those things up and, once you're aware of them, you learn how to deal with them appropriately.

Where to start? For those who know me, you know that I highly recommend writer Julia Cameron's process, the *Morning Pages*. That typically results in three pages of *stream of consciousness* writing first thing in the morning before coffee, and all the other things you do to start your day. And although you may have heard this before, the instructions bear repeating.

To be effective, your journal needs to follow three simple rules.

1. It must remain strictly personal; don't read it to anyone, except perhaps your therapist.
2. It must be honest, don't waste any time lying to yourself.
3. And it must be updated on a regular basis.

Do your writing at times and at lengths that suit you— say, 20 minutes three times a week—and stick to your timetable with discipline and dedication. You'll soon find that the journal itself takes over.

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