

MINDFUL WRITING
Myrna Patterson
Teacher, Consultant, Editor, Writer, Meditator
writing2@earthlink.net
howtowrite.org
508-648-6032

Do you have the patience to wait
until your mind settles and the water is clear?
Can you remain unmoving
until the right action arises by itself?
Lao-Tzu

Using the spiritual tools of not knowing, single-minded effort, non-judgment and mindfulness, we learn to make writing a habit, creating stories that are individual and universal, ordinary and divine. My writing exercises build on one another, adding layers of depth and detail. Meditations help to free up thoughts and memories, transforming them into vibrant, well-rendered stories. You'll be encouraged to see from within and to express your distinctive voice, be heard, and awaken to yourselves.

MINDFULNESS AND WRITING WITH ADOLESCENTS:

Use of mindfulness meditation and creativity techniques:
i.e. concentration on the breath, followed by
freewriting, clustering and brainstorming

- With adolescents, distraction and lack of focus diminish as concentration deepens. As the mind becomes quieter, images, memories and feelings arise, naturally. Students begin to understand the connection between stillness and creativity, and become more confident and daring in their self-expression.

They learn to focus on (negative) feelings, letting them surface so that they can USE them in their writing, creating cause-and-effect stories with multi-dimensional characters.

By practicing mindfulness in the context of writing, a certain objectification and awareness take place, resulting in greater understanding and better written expression.

"The snow goose need not bathe to make itself white; nor must you do anything but be yourself."

Lao-tzu

Integrity means being *integrated*, knowing ourselves, so that our actions are authentic, consistent with our highest intentions- so that our body, mind emotions, and attitudes complement one another, forming a whole that is greater than the sum of the parts.

First we must understand our innermost drives, values, and motives- until we accept who we are rather than who we hope or pretend to be. By writing, we unmask ourselves, peel away layers of adaptation and reactivity, and say, "This is who I am" and then live that truth. Integrity becomes effortless as we accept our humanity, our imperfect perfection, acknowledging weaknesses and drawing on our inner strengths by **saying** who we are through our stories, our characters, our dialogue, and our creative process.

We learn revision, NOT as correction, but as a means of discovery. As we realize our power to choose and to change directions in any given moment (without regard to external pressures or ideals), we come to participate more fully and intentionally in the writing process. The heroic choice often means taking responsibility for where you are **now**.

I encourage my students to state their intentions around their writing, and to view it as a non-negotiable practice about honoring the self. As a writer chooses a goal and goes toward what attracts, excites, and inspires him, a sense of commitment deepens, and writing is then accepted as **process**, moment to moment, one step at a time.

One of the ways in which we learn how to work with the Inner Critic is through compassion. We suspend judgment, learn to see errors as lessons from which to grow and evolve, to trust what we know and to **stay** with the writing. We adopt an "as is" attitude and the willingness to stretch ourselves, make mistakes, and learn from them—much like having confidence in our daily lives.

Like any creative craft, writing needs guidance and nourishment. By providing a safe structure within which the individual gets to sound more and more like herself, I share what I know by maintaining my "beginner's mind", by offering opportunities for expression and feedback, and by honoring different styles with flexibility and honesty.

