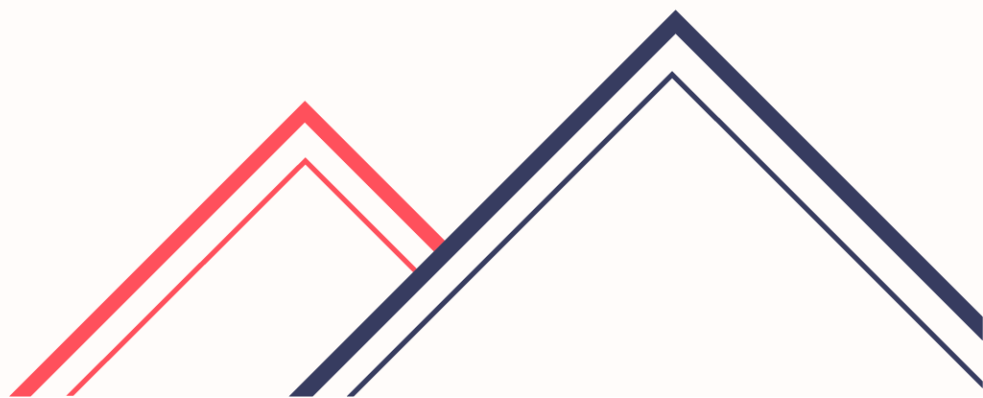


How to beat
**WRITER'S
BURNOUT**

a guide



Diagnosis



RECORD YOUR SYMPTOMS

ACTION STEP #1



MY STORY

The word "symptoms" might convey sterility and clinical definitions, but my burnout was never that clear. It was a nebulous, sneaky thing. I wrote for years without a problem, and one day I looked up from my keyboard and realized I hated what I was doing. I was tired, depressed, and unmotivated, and I was confused that those feelings could have just burst into life. But of course, they had been growing for a while, and writing them down made me realize how far back they stretched.

WHICH "BLOCK" SYMPTOMS DO YOU HAVE?

- Stagnation in your writing projects
- A paralyzing changing of mind regarding the story
- Inordinate difficulty inventing ideas
- Inordinate difficulty telling your story (more than usual :P)
- Selective creativity

WHICH BURNOUT SYMPTOMS DO YOU HAVE?

- Resentment of your writing
- Lack of motivation
- Writing losing its luster, becoming shallow/unexciting
- Writing projects take longer than they used to
- Mild or severe depression
- Irritability
- Chronic lack of energy
- Feeling like you've been running on sheer willpower

WHAT OTHER SYMPTOMS DO YOU HAVE?

DECIDE BETWEEN BLOCK & BURNOUT

ACTION STEP #2



MY STORY

After coming to terms with my burnout and writing down my symptoms, it was time to make my diagnosis. Maybe I was just having trouble with one specific novel (at the time, a business-thriller about the founding of a smart contact company). I didn't know if I had the fabled writer's block or something else. So I did some research and found the rules of thumb listed to the right. The first rule highlighted my unmotivation, and I officially diagnosed myself as burned out.

REVIEW YOUR SYMPTOMS AND THESE RULE OF THUMB

After reviewing the categories of your symptoms, take a look at these rules of thumb to differentiate between block and burnout.

- If your writing project is at a standstill and you're motivated to get it going again but can't, you're blocked. If you're unmotivated to move forward with your writing, you're burned out
- If you can be creative in non-writing activities but not in writing, you're blocked. If you feel incapable of creativity in all activities, you're burned out.

WRITE IT DOWN

"I am blocked." "I am burned out." Those are your options, whichever one it is, it's important to accept how you're feeling. Only then can you make a change.

Realign



STOP WRITING

ACTION STEP #3



MY STORY

While reading articles on how to beat writer's burnout, I found some really unhelpful advice. "What should I do in order to beat my burnout?" "Don't be silly! Just keep writing!" No, that wasn't going to be my plan. Maybe it's just my monotrack mind, but I find it difficult to analyze a problem from the inside. I first need to separate myself from the problematic context and consider the thing from the outside. Taking my 50-day road trip helped me do just that.

CHOOSE THE LENGTH OF YOUR HIATUS.

"I will not write for two weeks." "I will not write for a month." For how long will you give yourself permission to break? Write it down below.



CONSIDER YOUR ALTERNATIVES

ACTION STEP #4



MY STORY

I started rethinking my life a few days into my road trip in a Kansas state park. In the days I'd spent on the road up to that point, I'd had several great experiences that had nothing to do with writing. That got me wondering what else I was missing out on. I hadn't been spending time with friends. I hadn't been going outside (lol). I hadn't, in short, been living. So my list of alternatives to writing was pretty long.

WHAT WOULD YOU RATHER BE DOING THAN WRITING?

WHAT CLUTTERS YOUR MIND WHEN YOU TRY TO WRITE? WHAT ARE YOU THINKING ABOUT?

CONSIDER QUITTING

ACTION STEP #5



MY STORY

What is it about sunsets that makes our dreams seem so depressingly unattainable? Just me? Okay. Then that sunset in Santa Barbara must have been a different breed. I'd driven 2,000 miles across the country promoting my book. I'd hit this big goal of my trip: to make it to California without my old car giving out on me. And I was devastated. It all just hit me in that moment. Is any of this worth it? I wondered. Should I give up?

DO YOU WANT TO QUIT? DOES YOUR DESIRE FOR THE "ALTERNATIVES" FROM THE PREVIOUS STEP OUTWEIGHT YOUR DESIRE TO WRITE?

IF YOU DON'T WANT TO QUIT, CONTINUE ON. IF YOU DO, ALSO CONTINUE ON :)

REAFFIRM/FIND YOUR WHY

ACTION STEP #6



MY STORY

From the very beginning of my road trip, I had a weird goal: spend a night in my car in a Wal-Mart parking lot. Did I refer to my mind as "monotrack"? Maybe I'm just unhinged. Anyway, there's no better place to get you thinking about your future than a snow-dusted parking lot in Ogalalla, Nebraska. I started peeling back the psychology of my motivation for writing, and I uncovered some pretty messed up stuff. You can check out my example on the right.

ANSWER THE QUESTION ... WHY DO YOU WRITE?

Here's an example of the 5-why exercise with my one-time toxic motivation for writing. Read as follows: "Why do you write?" "Because I want to be published." "Why do you want to be published?" "Because ..."

WHY #1 *Because I want to be published.*

WHY #2 *Because I want to be a bestseller.*

WHY #3 *Because I want to be great.*

WHY #4 *Because I want to feel special.*

WHY #5 *Because I want her to know she made a mistake.*

WHY DO YOU WRITE?

WHY #1 _____

WHY #2 _____

WHY #3 _____

WHY #4 _____

WHY #5 _____

DETERMINE THE ROOT CAUSE

ACTION STEP #7



MY STORY

As you can see from the previous page, my "why" was super warped. That was good and bad. It was bad because ... well, my god. But it was good because the root cause of my writer's burnout was obvious: I was writing for the wrong reason. I knew that if I could change my "why", my entire approach to the craft would change along with it.

EVALUATE YOUR WHY

You saw my why. Not very pure. Now it's time to consider the purity of **your** why. Are you proud of it? Would you be willing to post it over your office or email it to all of your readers?

WHICH ROOT CAUSE RESONATES WITH YOU?

WORK

- Lack of recognition or reward for good work
- Unclear or overly demanding job expectations

LIFE

- Lack of recognition or reward for good work
- Unclear or overly demanding job expectations
- Misbalance of work, relaxation, and socializing
- Lack of close, supportive relationships
- Too many responsibilities
- Not enough sleep (or other poor health habits)

PERSONALITY

- Perfectionism
- Pessimism
- A need to be in control
- High-achieving, Type A personality
- A need for harmony (not wanting to disappoint anyone)

Enjoy



CREATE A WRITING HABIT

ACTION STEP #9



MY STORY

After that rainy day by the Thames when I re-rooted my "why" in my love for stories, I got serious about writing again. But I didn't want it to feel like a job. I didn't want to expend all my willpower right at the very start when I *forced* myself to start writing. The easiest way I found to eliminate the need for willpower was to establish a habit. When I woke up in my cousin's house, I would go out to the little balcony and start writing. It was how I started my mornings. Always. I never had to decide what to do, and I therefore didn't have to muster any willpower to do it.

WHAT'S YOUR CUE?

What do you see or do on a daily basis that could make you think of writing? Make it obvious, and ideally "stack" your new writing habit on top of an existing habit.

WHAT'S YOUR CRAVING?

When you see or feel your cue, how can you make yourself crave the keyboard? If you can't crave the act of writing, try creating a writing environment in which you crave to be (w/ candles, decorations, etc.)

WHAT'S YOUR ROUTINE?

Now that you're thinking about and craving writing, structure your routine. For how long will you write? Where will you sit? When will you take breaks? What will you avoid doing?

WHAT'S YOUR REWARD?

After your writing session, what small indulgence could you treat yourself with to create a positive feedback loop?

ALTER YOUR HABITS

ACTION STEP #10



MY STORY

After a long series of writing Groundhog Days, I felt myself slipping back into a rut. Luckily this coincided with my return to my own house in America where I had no balcony, and where I heard no clinking of dishes from the village pub. It was all unfamiliar again, and I used that unfamiliarity to my advantage. I started writing at night instead of in the mornings. I started doing more fantasy than science-fiction, and I pulled myself out of the rut before I could slip back into it.

FOR ONE WEEK, CHANGE ONE THINGS PER DAY ABOUT YOUR ROUTINE.

What could you change about your ...

PLACE?

SCHEDULE?

MEDIUM?

FORM?

GENRE?

YOURSELF?

ENJOY THE PROCESS

ACTION STEP #11



MY STORY

In addition to creating an enjoyable framework for my writing (the schedules, habits, and anti-habits), I took measures to ensure my work *within* that framework would be fun. Among the short-term tactics on the right (my favorites of which are working with a partner, taking walks, and decorating my desk), I did a fair amount of journaling about the big four mental shifts. Personally, my biggest struggle was separating my writer-self from my self-self. With time, however, I began to disentangle my personal worth from the worth of my writing.

JOURNAL ABOUT THE BIG MENTAL SHIFTS.

The below bullet points (probably) aren't the sort of thing you can flip a switch and start implementing right away. I would recommend doing a longform journal entry about each over the course of the next four days.

- Focus on how your writing can help others
- Accept that writing might not be enjoyable all the time
- Separate your writer-self from your self-self
- Increase your competence

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING TACTICS WILL YOU IMPLEMENT TO ENJOY YOUR WRITING?

- Find a partner
- Take walk breaks
- Decorate your desk
- Dress better
- Reward yourself
- Downsize your goals
- Rescue (or spend more time with) a pet
- Smile
- Keep your work in perspective

DESTRESS

ACTION STEP #12



MY STORY

For me, stress and burnout went hand in hand. The more stressed I was in general, the more burned out I felt with regards to my writing, and when I started to beat my burnout, my stress decreased. I took advantage of this relationship by giving conscious effort to stress reduction. The two biggest de-stressors for me have been meditation and lighting candles. Who can be stressed about writing while inhaling the calming scent of eucalyptus? ;)

TARGET AND ELIMINATE STRESSORS.

Which of the below avenues for decreasing stress resonates with you? Check those that do, then create a stress-destroying habit with the framework above.

- Work less
- Play more
- Identify and solve small recurring problems in your life
- Lose yourself in mindless tasks (cleaning, etc.)
- Clear your desk
- Meditate
- Light some candles
- Reduce your caffeine intake
- Have sex
- Spend time in nature
- Keep a gratitude journal
- Say 'no' more often
- Unplug from social media (and all tech)
- Export all of your thoughts and worries into a notebook
- Volunteer for a good cause

BE INSPIRED

ACTION STEP #13



MY STORY

One of the tenets of modern creative canon is that you should never wait for the muse. You should just get down to work. But I had been "getting down to work" for years, and it was time to replenish my well of inspiration. My travels helped with this replenishing, but the habits on the right helped me even more. Just ask my roommate how many times he walked into our apartment to find me hanging upside down off of the couch, scribbling notes in my notebook :)

OPEN YOUR MIND TO FREE ASSOCIATION

JOT DOWN YOUR
THOUGHTS

READ WIDELY

TRY A DIFFERENT
ART FORM

OPTIMIZE YOUR CREATIVE THINKING

KNOW YOUR
CHRONOTYPE

SCHEDULE
THINKING TIME

OPTIMIZE YOUR
THINKING TIME

CLEAR YOUR MIND AND START FRESH

MEDITATE

EXERCISE/PLAY

CONSUME ART

BE HEALTHY

ACTION STEP #14



MY STORY

There was a time in my life when I took the phrase "writer's cave" to a whole new level. In my cave, the sun was a rare thing. Days would go by when I simply wouldn't leave the house. I knew that had to change. I started doing five minute workouts outside first thing in the morning, then doing my meditation outside, then going for walks outside. Even just those brief experiences under the sun made me feel like a real person again, and who better to right about people than, well, a person?

TARGET AND PRIORITIZE HEALTH REQUIREMENTS

In which of the following ways could you be healthier? What could you change about your lifestyle in order to make that positive health change?

- eat right
- hydrate
- exercise
- see the sun
- sleep

YOU CAN BEAT WRITER'S BURNOUT

but first ...



WHAT'S THE #1 THING HOLDING YOU BACK FROM BEATING YOUR BURNOUT?

I want to understand *your* struggle with burnout. If you answer a quick two-question survey, I **know** I can help you love the craft again. Plus, if you're willing to share your answers, I have a really cool gift for you. All you have to do is to follow the link below :)

ClimbWrite.com/burnout-survey



ClimbWrite

