Self-belief and giving yourself permission

'The most regretful people on earth are those who felt the call to creative work, who felt their own creative power restive and uprising, and gave it neither power nor time.' Mary Oliver, poet

Developing self-belief: I AM A WRITER!

We all have it, the little gremlin that sits on our shoulder and says, 'You can't do that', or 'That's not good enough' or 'Why on earth did you ever think you could give that a go?' This can mutate into a real writing curse of 'No one will want to read what I write, why am I bothering to sit here and scribble away?' What to do? Just start writing – push that gremlin off your shoulder, out into the hall and close the door tight.

We can be our own worst enemy at the very outset. We want our writing to get out there. We want people to read what we have to say and be moved by it. We want to be published.
I hate to tell you but this is the best way to undermine your confidence. Starting out with these things in mind is too much to put on yourself, way too soon in the process. Rather than think about the end result, focus on the here and now. *Get words on the page.*

It's so easy to start doubting yourself, so don't listen to it. It's not helpful. Develop a careful and quiet determination towards your writing, not too serious though because that can take the fun out of it, and remind yourself that this is important work for you to be doing and it is the right thing for you.

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Then there's the risk of exposing ourselves. What will Mum think? If you're writing a family history and let's face it, we all have some dark secrets, and you expose them, is that a good thing? Pretty soon this undermining of confidence leads to a lack of motivation, a loss of self-belief and this is one of the primary reasons writers don't finish writing projects. We lose motivation. Don't worry about all that – keep writing. Worry about getting sued later (just joking) because that fear will cause you to write half-heartedly and this will show through in your manuscript Write with truth and honesty and initially, write just for you and no one else. Say what you want to say.

Build Confidence. When I say 'I lack confidence', am I really saying, 'I need approval, I need permission? How do we gain confidence anyway?

- by doing, by persevering
- by learning
- by taking risks, exposing ourselves
- by not caring what other people think of our writing
- by focussing on what we want to say, not what we think people want to hear
- by taking constructive criticism and learning from it
- by not hiding your light under a bushel. 'The reason 99% of all stories written are not bought by editors is very simple. Editors never buy manuscripts that are left on the closet shelf at home.'

Give yourself permission to write

The only person who can give you permission to write is you. As author Dani Shapiro says, *'If you're waiting for the green light, the go ahead, the reassuring wand to tap your shoulder and anoint you as a writer, you'd better pull out your thermos and folding chair because you're going to be waiting for a good long while.'* As Mary Oliver suggest in her quote, it is a great sadness if we don't give ourselves the time, opportunity, self-belief and encouragement to write.
And remember: even experienced writers get anxious, you're not alone, and by giving yourself permission to write, you can move past it. Don't wait around for someone else to tell you it's OK for you to write.

Make that decision yourself. You are a writer. Go for it.