

## Online Workshop Etiquette

*During Covid-19 isolation we've all had to learn a lot of new procedures and practices quickly. Because working together online is somewhat different than all being in a room together, please read these guidelines before coming to the workshop.*

1. Normally when you walk into the room to attend Sanctuary, you would find a poem waiting for you on your chair (We call these "On Chairs" poems. ☺ ) I will send that out a day or two before the workshop. We're not going to do anything with it – it's just a gift, to begin to get you in a writing mindset, to uplift your spirits, to get you thinking.
2. The day of the workshop I will send you copies of any prompts we're going to use in the workshops. I will read them when we're about to use them, and share them on my screen. But because technology can be glitchy you might like to print out and have handy. If you can't print it off, don't worry. As I say, I will be reading it.
3. If you are using a laptop, please try to stabilize it so it is not moving every time you move. Also, if you have ceiling fans, please try to position yourself so that they are not visible behind your head – moving fans can be a migraine or seizure trigger for other viewers.
4. Also, please try to position yourself where there is light on your face so we can see you, rather than being a silhouette with the light behind you. We want to see your dear face!
5. We want everyone to feel like we are present in the workshop. To that end please minimize distractions by keeping pets off camera and turning off cell phones.
6. Confidentiality of material shared in this workshop is a priority. For this reason, please make sure you are in a space where family will not be walking by. If, because of living conditions, that is not a possibility, then please wear headphones so that you are the only one who can hear what others are reading.
7. If you need to leave for any reason, please turn off your audio and video until you return.
8. Please refrain from eating on-camera, unless you bring enough for everyone to share. ☺

If there are any last minute problems, you can email me [sue@inkslingers.ca](mailto:sue@inkslingers.ca) or text me at 905-985-8389. In all my online workshops I will have the Zoom room open 15 minutes before the workshop starts. Once the workshop has started, however, I may not be able to help, so please come early if you're unsure of your internet, or unfamiliar with Zoom technology. Actually, if you're unfamiliar with Zoom, please contact me a day or two before the workshop and we can do a test session and make sure everything's working.

This is the link for my Zoom Room:

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8833552667?pwd=eFM2ZkdZWtlaDdNTENYeXN3T0Mvdz09>

By Computer:

Meeting ID: 883 355 2667

Password: TBurnet28

## **Sue Reynolds leads her workshops using the AWA Method, designed to keep writers and their work safe. Here is a quick overview of what that method entails.**

### **THE FIVE ESSENTIAL AFFIRMATIONS**

1. Everyone has a strong, unique voice.
2. Everyone is born with creative genius.
3. Writing as an art form belongs to all people, regardless of economic class or education level.
4. The teaching of craft can be done without damage to a writer's original voice or artistic self-esteem.
5. A writer is someone who writes.

### **THE FIVE ESSENTIAL PRACTICES**

1. In the workshop we maintain a non-hierarchical spirit regarding how we treat the writing (e.g. the facilitator is not the “expert” & no one’s writing is treated differently than anyone else’s); at the same time we keep writers safe through a series of guidelines and practices which we adhere to in a disciplined way. These practices are simple to follow and have been demonstrated to be effective for the safety of the members of the group through thousands of workshops.

2. Confidentiality about what is written in the workshop is maintained at all times, and the privacy of the writer is protected.

We maintain confidentiality by treating all writing as story, as narrative, as literature – we do this by referring to the main character or the “I” voice in the piece as the speaker, the narrator, the character, etc. Feedback is offered to the writing itself, we don’t assume that what we’ve heard is from the life of the writer.

At all times, writers are free to refrain from reading their work aloud.

The work is only open for feedback at the moment it is offered. Once the discussion has moved on to another piece of writing, no one refers back to it again. This means that no one will question or address the writer about their piece afterwards in any way, particularly any way that breaches the contract that all work offered here is story.

And finally, of course, we don’t talk about any work we’ve heard here to anyone outside of the workshop space.

3. Absolutely no criticism, suggestion, or question is directed toward the writer in response to first-draft, just-written work. A thorough critique is offered only when the writer asks for it, and only when he or she has distributed work in manuscript form.

When work has been offered in manuscript form, critiques are balanced; there is as much affirmation as suggestion for change.

4. The teaching of craft is taken seriously, and is conducted through exercises that invite experimentation and growth.
5. The leader writes along with the participants, and reads that work aloud as well. This practice is absolutely necessary, for only in this way is there equality of risk-taking and mutuality of trust.

## Basic Guidelines for Writing Practice

- 1. Set yourself a time** for this session of writing, **and for that entire time, keep your pen moving on the page or your fingers on the keyboard**, regardless of the output. You are not a good judge of what you're writing in the moment of creation. Grab the topic, run with it, get out of your own way. Get in a condition of mindfulness and capture what's going through your mind.
- 2. Be specific.** Not "car" but "purple Honda" or "rusty Chrysler". Not "drink" but "cranberry juice" or "Scotch over ice". Paint a picture with your words. Writing is a visual art. Writing is also a kinesthetic art. Include sensuous detail from all five senses.
- 3. Lose control.** Just because you've been given a trigger to write from don't think you have to stay with that. When your mind veers off on a new tack – or leap frogs to another place entirely, follow it and get it down as fast as you can. If your mind seems to veer off in a new direction, let it go! Go wherever the energy is – and that often means going "fearward".
- 4. Don't think.** Don't try to be overly "writerly". Don't use words in your writing that you wouldn't use in ordinary speech (like "adorn" instead of "wore" or like "stature" instead of "height".) Don't plan your writing to impress or to have a logical flow. Don't wonder where you're going with this. Just follow your mind as it leaps, hop-scotches, ducks and crawls through it's own landscape.
- 5. Don't worry about spelling, punctuation, syntax, grammar.** You can fix those up later. Worrying about getting them right at this point would be like trying to put down carpet and paint the walls of a house still under construction. Just get it down the way it's spilling out of you. The creative act and the editorial act are **TWO SEPARATE THINGS**.
- 6. You are free to write the worst junk in Uxbridge, Ontario, Canada, the Western Hemisphere, the world, the universe.** If you're not willing to write mediocre stuff or even "bad" stuff, you won't have the spaciousness to let the hot fantastic writing flow. This is a really important rule: otherwise the Judge will grab your hand and squeeze it too tight to write.
- 7. Go for the jugular.** If something scary comes up, write it down. If you start to get deep into something and your internal editor is yelling "Stop, stop! Don't you dare say that!" it's your signal to really go for it. Don't worry about whether it's polite or proper. Say what you really want to say. It will be one giant step toward authenticity in your work. Otherwise you'll spend all your energy writing around it, and your writing will be polite, and nice, and pretty, and bland, and boring.
- 8. Write and read.** Write. Read. Breathe in and out. Reading aloud is a huge step towards just accepting whatever comes out of your mind. Always be very kind to yourself and to those you're writing with. Remember the guideline about being free to write the worst junk in Uxbridge. It's true. Give it space.

*This principles are closely based on Writing Practice as developed by Natalie Goldberg.*

## Practice of Feedback for On-the-Spot Writing

- 1) We are free to write what we want --- exercises are offered as a prompt or a jumping off point, not as something to restrict the writing.
- 2) We are invited to read. Anyone at any time is free to pass up their turn to read. (Some sensitivity is needed around this – sometimes writers pass because they are intimidated by the voices they have heard and think they won't "measure up". In that case we may offer a gentle nudge – but never force – to share.)
- 3) We honour the writer and the writing by listening carefully.
- 4) Everything shared in this room stays in this room. Confidentiality is key to creating a safe space for each writer.
- 5) We treat everything as fiction. In responding, we refer to the narrator/speaker/ main character, not to "the author", as the voice of the piece.
- 6) We respond by giving back to the writer, in words as close as we can to the way the author wrote them, "what stayed with us" or "what was strong in that piece for us". Sometimes what stays with us will be an emotion or a bodily sensation. That can be offered back as well.
- 7) We concentrate on the writing being offered, not on our own similar experiences.
- 8) We remember that, while writing is often therapeutic, this is not a therapy group. If the writer begins to cry, as sometimes happens, we do not rush to comfort them – we trust that they are moving through their process as they need to. We breathe and wait until they are able to finish the reading.
- 9) We remember that, while other writers may express in their writing sentiments with which we disagree, this is not a discussion group for content. We focus on the craft of the writing, not on what is being said.
- 10) Our responses to another's writing consist of what stays with us, what is strong in the piece. At this stage, when the writing is unpolished and the author still vulnerable, we do not make suggestions about what might make the piece stronger.