

## How to Write When Stressed and Running on Empty

by Chazda Albright -

<http://greatstorybook.com/how-to-write-when-stressed-and-running-on-empty/>

This entry is part 11 of 12 in the series [Creative Exercises](#)

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**These days, I've been feeling stressed about - well, everything. And it affects my writing! For a couple of weeks now, I've been running on empty. So this is about how to write when stressed - more specifically how I manage to write when stressed.**

**As I prepare for the [Book Fair in Frankfurt](#) (the largest book event worldwide), I am reaching a point of overwhelmment (it's actually overwhelmment, but I don't like that word so I'm changing it).**

**I'm not sure I can perform:**

- to sell these manuscripts to various publishers.
- get a new agent.
- be a superstar in the publishing biz. Yah!
- bring my plans for a publishing business that much closer to reality.

That is my aim, but I just don't *know* what will happen this mid-October when everyone is there, buzzing and bustling about with people to meet and deals to close.

I've written all of my manuscripts on *spec* (read: speculation, which means I write for nothing and then try for something other than [rejection](#), that miracle of miracles that seems so incredibly unlikely in today's fervor of [self-publishing](#)).

I have to go into the fair **prepared** (all materials together and looking sharp) and **brave** (remember all the names and faces I've been studying, who has published what) and **attentive** (as they talk, look and listen to what it is they need). I have to be **ready to pitch**: my stories, my products and me.

My near future on a platter, shiny.

But this isn't the only thing I'm working on these days. It's just the BIG thing, what is coming all too fast over the horizon. And oh yeah, I need to lose weight too. And get my hair done, get four great outfits together, get my brows tweezed... so much. Business cards! ACK.

Meanwhile, I have teaching gigs every day of the week save for Sunday. This time of year is high season for me and I'm feeling – emptied out. I teach, I have physical therapy (for my back – a common writer's ailment), I write, I record for online classes and I am exhausted.

I feel like I'm running on empty, needing to crank out more material (and be clever as I do it) when all I really want to do is... I don't even know.

I don't know what I really want to do, but I imagine it has a lot to do with [doing nothing in particular](#). Maybe eating a fine chocolate cake and drinking a cappuccino. Listening to a string quartet. Watching people stroll by. Maybe writing notes as they come, if they come. [No pressure](#).

Yes, actually that sounds about right. I want to take a walk that isn't in a hurry and also isn't especially for my health. I want to maybe flip through pages of a silly magazine with lists that don't have any meaning or a catalogue knowing I will never order anything from it. Something useless, shallow even. [I want to waste some time](#).

### **This is how I get over the hump.**

I wrote the above segment yesterday morning, but only after realizing I couldn't do anything else.

It was early enough to still be dark. I was about to step foot into the shower and was suddenly struck with an urgent desire to just *not* take a shower. In fact, the thought of doing anything at all turned my stomach into knots.

Everything in my life, all the little things, had suddenly become too much. I didn't even want a hot shower. *Just more energy down the drain.*

I so badly didn't want to do anything that I had to get done, I felt random hurts just thinking of doing –

things.

So I stepped back out of the shower. I put on my PJs again. I dragged myself to the dining table with some paper and pen.

### **I gave myself five minutes. I put on the timer. It would ring after 5 minutes.**

[I wrote whatever](#) came into my head. Whatever it was, I jotted it down. Didn't matter what.

After five minutes, I had written what you see above, along with a bit more that was particularly about an annoying student of mine. I felt better. I don't know why. But I felt much, much better.

I gave myself another 5 minutes. On the clock: Set. Go.

I wrote more, and realized that I needed to write what I'm essentially writing to you *right now*. I needed to write about *this, this writer's booster*. It's what I do when I feel like brushing my teeth is a massive chore. It's how I get back to writing when I am really stressed.

### **How it works.**

I came up with my bleh-antidote out of desperation several years ago. I had to write and I didn't want to write. I wanted to toss my laptop out the window. I wanted to howl at the cars burling by.

But I *had* to write, so I did.

I started, quite out of illness and a bitter nastiness I just couldn't overcome, to write down complete garbage. I did it on purpose.

I thought to myself, "I've only got garbage in my head, I might as well put that on paper and see how They like it. After all, They all bought (fill in awful best-seller here)!" And I just wrote the dumbest stuff I could possibly muster - and with poor grammar. That part really bothered me, though.

As ridiculous as it sounds, it helped. After about three paragraphs of garbage, I was cured. I felt ready to write [something worth reading](#).

I've been using this, regardless of doubt and reluctance and frustration (which always comes back), very successfully. If I make a deadline for myself, I manage to keep it.

### **Not just one kind of writer's block.**

To be clear, there are a lot of reasons for writer's block. So there are some very clear ways that you can overcome these different types. This is simply how I overcome the type of writer's block that is really more about stress and pressure.

This is how to overcome the same type of mental nonsense that makes you feel like you don't want to get out of bed.

Write it down. Whatever it is. Give yourself a specific time - say 5 minutes. The reason you do this? Because it's really hard even for your bitterest, worst self to say phooey to writing for *just 5 measly minutes*.

Then you can go forward. Get the block out, and then go. Get on with your life; get on with your writing.

Keep creating, no matter what.

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