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*Tips for the Lifewriting
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The Business Corner

Students Need More Than Presentation!

by Denis Ledoux



For reasons that are easy enough to understand but hard to accept, many lifewriting teachers withhold useful information from their students. It's not that they want to keep their students dependent—far from it! Most teachers want to help their students achieve independence. And yet...

They don't make a lifewriting text available to their students by selling them one.

Does this sound familiar: "I can't sell books and tapes and workbooks to my workshopppers. It feels too..."

Whatever word a teacher chooses to complete the previous sentence, it has the effect of convincing him/her (over and over again) that s/he can't possibly sell something of value to students. These words and phrases make a teacher anxious and reinforce the feelings of lack of power to take charge of our professional lives and the development of our workshop businesses. In addition...

People in student roles regularly say they prefer to have a workshop text to not having one. And...

Why, if a teacher wants to continue presenting workshops, would s/he eliminate a valuable avenue of income by repeating negative words and thoughts ("I can't") that have a negative impact on the ability to support him/herself doing wonderful work s/he loves? Actually...

There's a logic behind this! Our negative words and thoughts are a means of not permitting activity to betray a deeply-held value that most lifewriting teachers hold: to nurture others, to be creative, to support the growth of community, etc.

Huh?

Existing with our values are personal rules of conduct that dictate to us what we must do to implement these values. We tell ourselves, "If I do (or don't do) this means that I..."

When we follow these rules—however arbitrary they may be, we feel we are acting in integrity. These rules come to override the values. When we follow our rules, we feel good; if we don't, we feel bad.

While it may seem that our rules are rational (we often call them beliefs), they are often not so at all. They can be responses to people in our lives—especially when we were young. Take for instance the boy who hears his father shout, "Ralph calls himself caring and yet he charged me \$25 to plow my garden." The boy learns: 1) that caring is an important value and 2) that one does not charge anything, or at least much, when one is caring. The boy now has a rule about how to behave when he has the value of caring. The boy does not question his father's rule—instead he most likely adopts it. When he grows up and becomes a workshop leader, he finds it difficult to be caring and also to charge enough for his workshops and to market resources to his clients even when he knows they need these resources to continue lifewriting on their own—which his value of caring for others would have him help his clients with. This person has come to believe that when he is conscious of creating a positive cash flow for himself, he will not be able to be sensitive to the needs of people. This would be uncomfortable for him. To uphold his value of being

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caring and nurturing, he is prone to be negligent of his finances.

"I just can't sell," he tells himself, enjoying the praise he gives himself for following a rule he has learned about demonstrating he is a caring person.

By limiting yourself to "I can't sell", what rules are you implementing to preserve what core value? This is a rule of behavior that constricts you everyday in what you can do and still be nurturing and helping. However...

If you could broaden the range of responses you use to implement your value of caring, could your rule system then function BOTH in favor of your value AND in favor of your finances? If you could convince yourself that business can function as a support for caring and nurture, then wouldn't that ease your life a whole lot!

YES!

In fact, by being focused on generating adequate income from your work, you create a future for yourself as a workshop leader—and ironically open yourself up to pursuing your core values because...

A positive cash flow will enable you to continue to help people and to nurture them. On the other hand...

A negative cash flow, over a period of time, will land you right back in the old 9-to-5 routine, working for someone else who does believe she can and should nurture success. So...

Align your values and your rules. Learn to support yourself as you implement empowering rules that align positively with your life values. So how can you effect this change over?

One way to change rules is to create affirmations that alter the conflicting messages you have been giving yourself...

- ◆ "I enjoy making quality resources available to people. My sales make it possible for them to write the best stories they are capable of."
- ◆ "I find it both easy and compatible with my values to nurture my finances."
- ◆ "Making quality products available to workshopppers for purchase is nurturing thing to do."
- ◆ "Permitting finances to be a gentle part of my relationship with others will enable me to be an even more caring and creative person."
- ◆ "Sensitive people who take care of their income make promoting the general welfare even more likely."

The choice is always yours. You can maintain "I can't sell books and tapes and workbooks to my workshopppers" or...

You can acknowledge and address your need to support yourself in part from making resources available to workshopppers and, in so doing, align your rules with your values. And if you do...

Both you and your clients stand to win big time! Remember: you need to support yourself and your students need more than your presentation. They need a text.

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