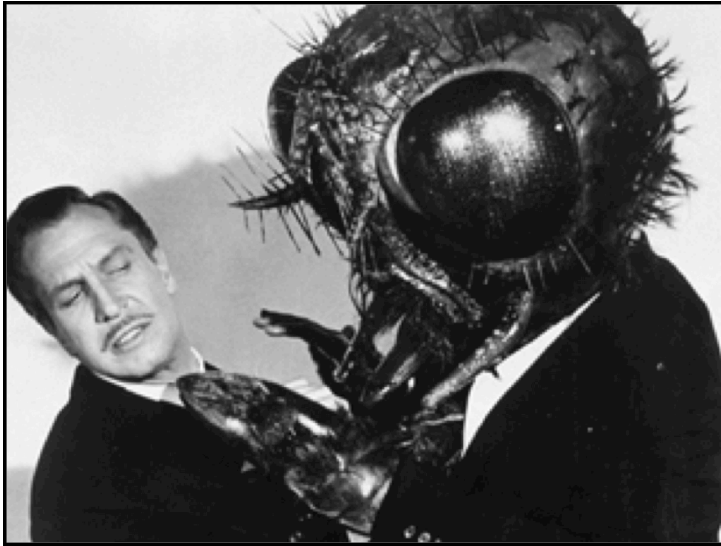


THE RELUCTANT WRITER

TOLERATING DISCOMFORT



Avoidance is a common response to writing tasks. The blank page or awkward sentence feels hostile, impossible to deal with. We suddenly remember an important chore. We bite our nails, decide to do more research, play with phone apps, get into an argument with a family member...anything to get away from the helpless feeling of confronting our writing. Sometimes the only way we can muddle through is by force, just gritting our teeth, often using the extreme pressure of a deadline to threaten ourselves into a battle-stance.

Isn't there a better way to deal with writing anxiety? I think it needs to be acknowledged and understood, before anything else. Unfortunately, school and work don't usually train us to do this. It's something you would be more likely to learn in meditation, yoga, or therapy: how to pause during a moment of tension, observe the source, and accept it. Being able to sit with a problem reduces anxiety, which clears our minds to correct our perspective and strategize. Then we no longer need to come up with elaborate avoidance strategies.

It's instinctual to want to downplay the panic and say, "It's *just* an essay." But in practice, this rarely helps, because we're already in fight-or-flight mode. The next time you get uncomfortable in the writing process, first try acknowledging the problem: "This is pretty hard." If you can, try to name a specific reason: for example, "because I can't come up with a catchy first sentence," or "because I don't have a good quote." Then, instead of *telling* yourself what to do ("Just write a quick conclusion"), ask yourself: What *can* I do? This method of acknowledging the problem allows you to tolerate the discomfort of the confrontation, calm down a bit, and come up with a possible course of action.

If you have kids, you can guide them through this process, and let them see you go through it yourself. Modeling is extremely effective in teaching self-regulation and problem-solving.

CONSULTING

I'm currently scheduling new clients for the Winter session!

Learning profile assessment

Identifies where writing challenges are coming from, and includes written recommendations for parents, teachers, and service providers.

Creative projects

Book publishing, map-making, and diorama-building teach conceptual writing skills in the context of personal interests and goals.

Homework support

Weekly planning sessions, detailed draft feedback, and skill-building workshops.

Individual consultation for adults

Get unstuck with your dissertation or book project, or add focus to your professional reports or website content.

"INSTRUCTION MANUAL":

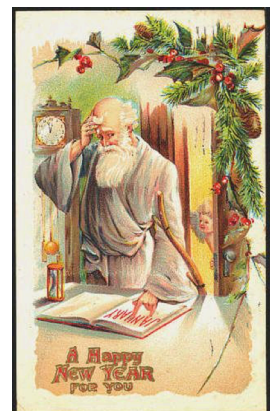
A NEW WORKSHOP FOR PARENTS!

Articulate your child's learning needs and goals in a short document you can share with teachers. See my website for a flyer with more information!

*Sessions take place at my Temescal office:
510 49th St. (@Telegraph), #209
Oakland, CA 94609*

NEW WEEKLY PLANNER FORM

Here's a little holiday gift for everyone on my mailing list: a free, printable weekly planner page, designed to help you focus on priorities. Take a few minutes to fill one out every Sunday, and you'll feel more on top of tasks throughout the week. It's posted, along with instructions and my original *daily* planner page, on the "ARCHIVE" page of my website.



HOLIDAY GIFTS FOR THE NEURODIVERSE & THE WRITING-AVERSE

During the holidays, I like to recommend gifts that encourage creative thinking, articulation, planning, and organization. (I am not affiliated with any of these products or vendors.)

CONE OF SILENCE



NOISE-CANCELLING HEADPHONES

One of the best ways to block out stressful distractions is with big headphones that seal around your ears. There are lots of apps and YouTube videos available that will play calming, ambient background sound like windy caverns, creaky ships, and crackling fireplaces. Headphones can also be used to listen to books on tape or to take a music break when other people are around. (This model: Monoprice SonicSolace Active Noise-Cancelling Rechargeable Bluetooth Over-Ear Headphones, \$60).

NAME GAME



CONCEPT

This board game for ages 10 and up is a little like Charades, but more analytical. Player 1 must communicate a secret word or phrase using only the visual clues on the board. This game develops conceptual thinking (you have to break down the idea into parts), as well as subjective interpretation (because the clues can have multiple meanings) and perspective-taking (you have to imagine what the other players will need to know). To offset these ambiguities, the finite and delimited set of options will appeal to more concrete thinkers. (\$40)

ANALOG TIME MANAGEMENT



TEA TIMERS

I use these timers in my office when working on short exercises, or parsing writing assignments into small chunks. They give you a visible representation of how much time is left, and they're more tactile and fun than a cell-phone app. They come in a set with 3-, 5-, and 7-minute versions. Some kids will find that these timers are too much fun to play with, and don't help them to focus as intended. In that case, they can be used to time breaks. (\$14)

RECOMMENDED READING



The Photo Ark Joel Sartore

Crisp, full-page photographs of animals isolated on white or black backgrounds bring out an unexpected level of detail. This book is great tool for increasing attention to nuance. The juxtaposition of animals with similar markings and postures invites the reader to compare and contrast the images, and to think about the relationship of form and function. (\$35)

Syllabus: Notes from an Accidental Professor Lynda Barry

An incredible collection of hand-written & drawn lesson-plans for Barry's creative writing workshop. Inspirational for those who want to loosen up their thought process, embrace the messier aspects of expression, and learn how to generate ideas through sketching and visual experimentation. (\$20)

