

*The Happy Balanced Writer*  
*The Complete Guide to Work/Life Balance*



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## *Chapter One: What Is the Happy Balanced Writer?*

*"Never get so busy making a living  
that you forget to make a life."  
— Dolly Parton*

### *Who I Am*

Hello and welcome to the Happy Balanced Writer! My name is Holly Davis, and I wear many hats. In real life, I work full-time as an outpatient physical therapist, drive forty minutes to and from work every day, take care of my fur babies, spend time with my fiancé, do household chores which include all things “adulting,” spend time with my mom and older sister for “fam night” once a week, try to see various friends once a month, annnnd that’s it. Phew. Pretty busy life, huh? It seems like I don’t have too much time for anything else.

But you see, I have a not-so-secret life as a middle grade/young adult fantasy writer aspiring to be a published author. This dream consumes most of my brain space as I try to squeeze my writer life into any spare moments I have.

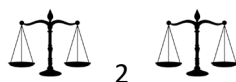
“But wait, Holly, you just said you don’t have much time for anything else.”

Not quite.

What does my writer life entail? I outline, draft, and edit a novel about once a year; stay engaged and current on my social media platforms, which include Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter; post one or two videos a week on my YouTube channel (which includes scripting, setting up my recording space, filming, editing, making thumbnails, descriptions, etc); watch YouTube videos and read writing craft books to improve my craft and learn from fellow writers; read books both inside and outside of my genre; and work on side projects like this workbook! Okay, now what did I say about all that time I don’t have?

Forget about needing more time. What about energy? What about needing to sleep, eat, relax, and just chill, so that I can do ALL of the things? The thing is, we’re not meant to do all of the things. Trying to do all of the things will lead to you not wanting or being able to do very much at all.

Forget about everything else I’m doing on the writerly side of things. Let’s say all I do is work on my novel. Well, that’s still a struggle. It’s hard enough to balance just work and



writing, which is why I call writing my part-time job. Sure, it's fun, but it's also work! It takes time, energy, and talent. It also requires discipline, perseverance, and determination, all of which I've acquired (and tried to maintain) throughout the past four years.

## *Why I Created This Workbook*

I'm eager to teach you the strategies I've learned from my experiences in life as well as from those around me to help you achieve work/life balance and become a HAPPY BALANCED WRITER. I want you to find the time to write without neglecting your daily tasks, to be happy, fulfilled, stress-free, and productive. We already endure enough stress without all the craziness of the writer life. Stress, self-doubt, laziness, and fear are what stop people from reaching their dreams. I don't want you to be one of those people. I want every single one of you to have your book on the shelves, and I want every single one of YOUR books on MY shelf. ☺

I, too, want to achieve Happy Balanced Writer status. I'm not always there. Sometimes I reach it, but I quickly fall back. I'm constantly faced with challenges which help me learn and grow. I'm not perfect, which is why I've created this workbook—not only to help you, but to help myself as well. Because I believe in these workbooks 100%. If you want to achieve Happy Balanced Writer status, keep reading. You'll be grateful you did.

## *Who This Workbook Is for*

This workbook is for:

- Full-time and part-time workers who write on the side
- Full-time writers looking to organize their life and increase productivity
- Students who try to balance classes and writing
- Writers looking to self- or traditionally publish
- Writers at all points in their journey towards publication
- People whose productivity suffer due to poor mental and physical health

## *How to Use This Workbook*

I recommend printing out this PDF so that you can handwrite your answers. If you'd rather not print the pages out, you can always write your answers in a journal. Lastly, DO THE EXERCISES. You can read all about my tips, but if you don't apply them to your life, you can't truly implement these strategies and exact lasting changes. So, grab a pen, have a seat, and let's dive in.

## Chapter Two: Achieving Work/Life Balance

*"You will never feel truly satisfied by work  
Until you are satisfied by life" – Heather Schuck*

### Struggles with Work/Life Balance

So, you guys just read about all the things that occupy my time, and therefore, disrupt my balance of work and life. For me, and most of us, our lives are like tipped scales. We're giving so much to one area of our life (probably work) that we neglect other areas (probably writing). We get frustrated because, let's face it, we love writing, but we also want to make money off of our writing. We want to be able to write full-time and fully sustain ourselves off our writing. But we can't do that without time and energy. And thus, real life "gets in the way."

Here are some common things that take time and/or energy away from your writing:

- Working your full- or part-time job
- Caring for a family member (elderly)
- Caring for your children
- Spending time with your significant other
- Getting chores done
- Spending time with friends
- Cooking
- Working out
- Commuting

Now tell me, would you look at this list and say, "Well, guess I can't do the dishes or call my mom back because I have to write." No, of course not. You NEED to do the dishes. You need to call your mom back. But in your mind, you also NEED to write. That's why this workbook will help you find balance. It'll show you how to do everything you both want and need to do, all while staying sane and avoiding burnout.

Now that we know the things that take up our time aren't necessarily bad, but just a part of life, you might still struggle with that fact. This can manifest in many ways.

Your struggles might include:

- Not understanding the balance between discipline and rest
- Not giving things up to write instead



- Not recognizing when to rest and refuel and when to be productive
- Not writing after a stressful, busy day at work
- Not waking up early enough to write
- Not giving writing the proper amount of time and attention
- Having a narrow focus and burning out quickly
- Resenting your job because writing is what you really want to do for a living
- Not getting enough sleep in order to get things done

## *How Having Balance Affects Your Writing*

So, we see all the things that put us off balance. Well, some of those are things you need to do, like chores and work. They aren't going away anytime soon, so how can you find the time and energy to write despite everything else you've got going on? Part of it is realizing all the benefits of having work/life balance.

Having work/life balance leads to:

- Improved performance at work and in your writing life
- Higher quality of life
- Higher productivity
- Less stress
- Less fatigue
- Better health
- Better time management
- Ability to focus on the activities that make you happy
- Letting go of perfectionism
- Being able to unplug and let go of time-wasting activities

Okay, so now you know all the benefits of having balance in your life. How can you gain these benefits, crush your goals, and achieve Happy Balanced Writer status?

## *Ways to Achieve Work/Life Balance*

Finding balance can be tough. That's why you need to evaluate your life and see what is taking up most of your time. Are you mindlessly scrolling through Facebook or Twitter in the morning, then scrambling to get ready for work and cursing yourself for not waking up earlier and writing? Then you come home after work and are too tired? Yeah, sounds familiar to me, too.

You can avoid these pitfalls by setting commitments for both home and work and sticking to them. When you write them in your calendar or in a list, you have a visual reminder of everything you must do, which can help ensure you don't overcommit or stretch yourself too thin on a project. It's okay to say no. You'll know that every day doesn't have to be a

writing day. You're going to be busier one day? Okay, then make that you're off day. Just make sure you've planned your next writing day/session. Setting priorities is the key to finding what you value most in life and where you want your time to go. Is scrolling social media not a priority? Then you can cut the time that you're on by posting your own post, engaging in a couple other peoples' posts, then moving on.

Part of sticking to your priorities—aka writing—is having the discipline to focus on that one task, even if you'd rather be binge-watching a Netflix show or sleeping in. It's all about regaining control of your life. But of course, you need that down time and can't always be "on." So find the times you're going to be in beast mode and the times you won't. In those downtime moments, you need to relax. Have a social life. Have "me" time. Enjoy the weekend. Take a vacation. This will leave you satisfied and not feeling like a work-a-holic with your job or writing life.

Interesting enough, another way to achieve work/life balance is to realize that there are going to be times you won't have work/life balance. You might be temporarily busier than usual, such as when moving houses or states, planning a wedding, getting sick, or dealing with the loss of a loved one. This is completely normal. When the craziness settles, you can jump back on the wagon with the tools you've gained from this workbook.

Remember, goals are things you have control over. Hopes are the things that you don't. So give yourself compassion.

"You'll have good days, bad days, overwhelming days, too tired days, I'm awesome days, I can't go on days. And every day you'll still show up." -Unknown

 *End of Chapter Exercises*

*What is your definition of work/life balance?*

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*List the activities you do most often and how long they take*

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*Are these activities necessary?*

Is there something you can shorten time on or cut out altogether?

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*List the top 5 priorities you want to focus on in life*

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*How will you commit to these priorities?*

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*How will you de-stress and avoid tipping the scales?*

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## Chapter Three: Distractions and Procrastination

*"Never do tomorrow what you can do today.  
Procrastination is the thief of time."*

*—Charles Dickens*

### Common Distractions/Ways to Procrastinate

Oh technology, how I both love and loathe thee. Just kidding...kind of. Phones and computers are both a blessing and a curse, making everything accessible at our fingertips, yet also making it harder for us to stay focused on our goals because of the ease of falling into their time-consuming trap. Of course, technology isn't the only way we writers become distracted and procrastinate. Here are some common reasons besides the internet:

- Your own mental state (downward spiral from stress or anxiety)
- Not having a structured routine/not scheduling in writing time
- Managing your household/daily chores
- Taking care of your marriage and/or children
- Taking care of fur babies
- Sleeping in
- TV
- Wanting to read instead

Any of these sound familiar? Write your top distractions down below.

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How does it make you feel when you procrastinate? Lazy? Undisciplined? Weak? Maybe you feel that way, but that doesn't mean you ARE that way. Don't beat yourself up because getting distracted is a common problem. That's why I included it in this workbook! Sure we all love writing, but sometimes it IS hard to sit down and get the words in. Sometimes it feels like work. And so, we're more likely to procrastinate. Let's see how it affects your writing.

## *How Distractions/Procrastination Affect Your Writing*

Obviously, if you're procrastinating, you're not getting things done! You're not meeting your word count, finishing that draft, sending your self-edited manuscript to beta readers, etc. This is going to shift your timeline and make it take even longer to accomplish your goals. This can lead to you feeling disheartened and cause a cycle in which you beat yourself up and don't write/edit even more.

## *Ways to Overcome Distractions/Procrastination*

The first step in overcoming procrastination is to recognize that you're procrastinating. Once you notice you're not doing what you originally planned to do, ask yourself: What are the reasons you're procrastinating? Is it because you're bored with your current project? Are you feeling burned out? Once you find the root of your procrastination, it can help you determine next steps. Some people will realize they are just getting distracted per usual and will refocus on their desired task. Others will try and try to focus, but their minds keep wandering or their heads feel heavy and blocked. That's when you know you might need some structured down time to recharge and refuel before getting back to the words.

Other ways that will help include making a to-do list, whether on a physical calendar, in a planner, on Google calendar, on a post-it note, etc. Batch the activities so that you stay in the mindset for those tasks. For example, set aside a block of time to write, another block of time for chores, another block of time for your author platform, etc. This will keep you focused and in the zone.

Another tip is to set deadlines. If you set deadlines, it's easier to prioritize those tasks related to that project. And with a specific date in mind, you're less likely to become derailed by shiny new ideas or the distractions you listed above, because hey, who doesn't want to meet their goals and tell the world about it?

Speaking of prioritizing your activities, I learned this excellent strategy from my good friend, Savannah J. Goins. The gist is to write down two "mission criticals" each day, meaning if there are only two things you can accomplish that day, what would those be? This helps you zero in on what's really important and stay focused. When you complete your two mission criticals for the day, bam! You automatically feel like a BOSS. Then anything extra you accomplish is a bonus. ☺

Avoiding distractions may be impossible in the environment you're in, no matter how disciplined you are. Therefore, it might help for you to change locations. If you get distracted by the internet, write outside, or in a place where you won't connect to the Wi-Fi. Getting interrupted too many times at home? Go to a café. If you must stay at home, is there a quieter place inside you can stow away to be less distracted? Maybe throwing a pair of headphones or even ear plugs can help you focus a little better.

And lastly, procrastination is not a self-control issue. You have self-control. It's your self-management and emotions that can push you towards procrastination. Sometimes we push through distractions, but we're more so forcing ourselves to get back on the saddle instead of understanding our bodies need that small break. In this case, it might help to actually "unschedule" your time. Do something for 15-30 minutes to help you recharge that brings you joy. This can help you feel less overwhelmed by your to-do list and help you look forward to returning to your writing naturally and effortlessly.

 *End of Chapter Exercises*

*How do you procrastinate?*

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*How can you overcome these distractions?*

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*What are your top 3 goals you want focus on right now?*

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*How will you hold yourself accountable for these goals?*

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*When/how will you give yourself grace if you are distracted?*

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## Chapter Four: Setting Yourself Up for Success

*"Get out of your own way. Often, we're our own worst enemy when working towards our goals."*

*-Robert T. Kiyosaki*

### *Setting Routines*

Having a routine is the key to setting yourself up for success with work/life balance. Creating structure and planning your schedule will help you maintain a well-balanced life because you can specifically block the time you need for both work and relaxation, for both writing and your author platform.

So, do you have a routine/routines? If yes, what are they for? And if not, why not?

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### *How Not Having a Routine Affects Your Writing*

No routine can lead to a lack of direction, leading to procrastination and distraction, which we hopefully conquered in the last chapter. It can make you feel undetermined and unorganized. You need to have a clear direction for your goals just like you would for studying for a test or practicing for a sports competition. You prepare before you dive in. You need to do the same for your general life and your writing life.

## *Ways to Set Yourself Up for Success*

Know that in order to accomplish your goals, you don't need to multitask if that doesn't work for you. Give whatever your number one goal is for that day your complete attention before moving on to the next task. On the flip side, if you're able to multitask, make sure you're multitasking activities that are easy to overlap. Can you brainstorm ideas for your manuscript or what you're going to write for your next session while doing dishes or driving home from work? Can you talk on the phone while responding to a couple emails? Find what works for you to get things done and free up your time.

Speaking of time, setting a routine and to-do list greatly increases the amount of time you have, because you're actually setting intention for the time you have instead of letting it waste away with something you didn't plan on doing (like sleeping in, watching more episodes than you wanted to, etc.)

Ways you can set a good routine:

- Put tasks on your digital or physical calendar
- Use digital or physical bullet journals
- Track small goals within larger goals for motivation
- Make a daily/weekly/yearly to-do list
- Set alarms
- Give yourself incentives in your routine
- Keep your planner out in the open so you can easily refer to and update it
- Create very specific checklists for each task
- Organize your to-do list by similar tasks

Another essential way to set yourself up for success for the day is to create a “wake-up” and “wind down” routine. Here's how mine looks:

Wake Up Routine: 5:15 AM

- Don't press snooze (and don't scroll on phone!!)
- Do some light stretching
- Take care of pets
- Make tea/coffee
- Make/eat breakfast and read daily affirmations
- Brush teeth
- Meditate
- Shower
- Get ready for work

Wind down routine: 8:30/9 PM

- Have nighttime tea
- Change into PJs
- Brush teeth

- Prepare for next day (clothes, lunch, schedule)
- Read
- In bed by 10 PM
- Don't scroll on phone!!

Obviously, I have a wake up alarm, but I also have a “get ready for bed” alarm on my phone at 9 PM to remind myself to start winding down. This will ensure I don't stay up too late, mindlessly watching Netflix and playing games on my phone, then going to bed later than I wanted to, waking up groggy and crabby in the morning, and getting a rough start to my day. My alarm tells me, “Hey Holly, start on track!” In the morning, I start my day off feeling accomplished and refreshed, ready to tackle writing or work.

You'll want to choose consistent times for your routine, whether you're a morning or evening person. Then find your keystone habit, the one thing you want to get done that day that you will choose to do during your prime productive time, which will create a domino effect on other habits you want to instill.

Of course, you can also set alarms to remind yourself when you want to write. Set them according to your schedule each day, then when that music starts playing, get to your words!

Other ways to set yourself up for success include creating accountability. Whether that's finding a writing buddy to sprint with online or posting your word count on social media every day, find a way to be held accountable and responsible for your goals. It's okay to ask for help!

Lastly, make sure you have a kick-butt writing space. Make it your own, with positive quotes or character art on the walls, bookcases with an ever-growing TBR, plants, a nearby window for sunlight, a comfortable chair...the possibilities are endless! You want to enjoy your writing space, which will make you more likely to sit down and well, write!



 *End of Chapter Exercises*

*What kind of routines do you want to adopt and why?*

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*Plan your routines here! What will you do and when?*

Writing Routine:

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## *Chapter Five: Stopping Self-Sabotage*

*"Get out of your own way. Often, we're our own worst enemy when working towards our goals."*

*-Robert T. Kiyosaki*

### *Common Lies You Tell Yourself as a Writer*

I don't know why we writers are so mean to ourselves, but we are. We say horrible things that we'd never say to our writer friends. So, why do we do it? I think it's natural and normal for people, especially writers, to sabotage themselves with their own self-doubt. We know that this is a tough industry and that rejection is inevitable (even though we see success around us and know it can happen to us). But we get scared. We think it can't possibly happen for us. And so, the doubt remains.

It's crazy, how many dreams have been stifled because of a simple thought. That thought grows, that LIE festers, until we start to believe it as truth. Yes, you heard me. LIES. This isn't a list of things writers say to themselves that are sometimes true. They're never true. So read the list of lies below. Maybe you've said one or all of these to yourself at one point or another.

### *List of Lies:*

- I'm not good enough
- I'm not doing enough
- No one cares
- I'll never publish anything
- I'm taking too long to finish
- I'll never reach my goals
- I'll always be a hobby writer
- No one will ever take me or my passions seriously
- Writing or editing for only ten or twenty minutes isn't worth it
- Nobody will like my writing
- My writing isn't interesting
- I'm not good, so why try?
- I'm not a real writer
- My story isn't as great as I think

## *How Self-Sabotage Affects Your Writing Goals*

Wow. I don't know about you, but that list of lies is quite the Debby-downer. Imagine saying all those lies to yourself day after day. You're going to start to believe them, right? And if you're telling yourself you're not good enough and that no one will like your writing, do you think you're going to continue writing? Probably not. Or it'll take you longer to finish your manuscript because you'll hold yourself back.

Your inner critic holds you back because you think you need to skip to the end when you're at the beginning or the middle. But that's not how this journey works. Writing is hard. No one said it would be easy. But you don't want to miss out on creating greatness just because it's difficult to do.

## *How to Silence Your Inner Critic*

Many times, self-sabotage comes from a place of jealousy and playing the comparison game. You see someone else succeeding and think that can't be you, too. But remember, you should not compete with other writers, only the writer you were at the beginning of your draft or your last manuscript. Reframe your envy in a positive way and use that as motivation and fuel to work on your novel. It's okay to be a beginner. It's okay to make mistakes and re-make the same mistakes. It's okay to go at your own pace. It's going to be hard, but hard is not impossible. If you stop, then you're getting in your own way. You are your only limit. Read that again.

*You are your only limit.*

Success takes hard work and sacrifice, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't do it. It's okay to learn along the way and grow with your WIP. The universe has given you permission. It's okay if you're a Work-in-Progress, too.

That leads into the other part of where self-sabotage comes from—perfectionism. Perfectionism sucks the joy out of living and creating. You tell yourself you aren't good enough, but even if you achieve “good enough” status, it won't be enough, because you'll still feel like you aren't perfect. You might even feel imposter syndrome and think you're in over your head, or that you were just one of the lucky ones who slipped through the cracks and don't truly belong here.

What I've found really helps to silence my inner critic and combat self-sabotage is to refocus with positive thoughts. I firmly believe affirmations and inspirational quotes will help you realize your full potential. If you ever need a pick-me-up, try reading these quotes for inspiration and to reframe your mindset:

“There are people less qualified than you, doing the things you want to do, simply because they decide to believe in themselves. Period.” -Unknown

“You owe it to yourself to become everything you’ve ever dreamed of being.” -W.H Murray

“Many of life’s failures are people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up.” -Thomas A. Edison.

“Worry is a misuse of your imagination.” -Curiano

“Remember that guy that gave up? Neither does anyone else.” -Unknown

“Thinking ‘here goes nothing’ could be the start of everything.” -Drew Wagner

“The thing is—fear can’t hurt you any more than a dream.” -William Golding

“We all have our moments of doubt, but how we react and overcome is what defines us as writers and as human beings.” -Sara Francis

“Knowing is not enough. We must apply. Wishing isn’t enough. We must do.” -Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe

If you believe it will work out, you’ll see opportunities. If you believe it won’t, you will see obstacles. -Wayne Dyer

“I do not regret the things I’ve done, but those I did not do.” -Rory Cochrane

“Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts.” -Winston Churchill

“Magic happens when you do not give up, even though you want to. The universe always falls in love with a stubborn heart.” -J.M. Storm

“Your faith can move mountains and your doubt can create them.” -Ryan Medina

“Please ask yourself: What would I do if I weren’t afraid? And then go do it.” -Sheryl Sandberg

“Life is short. If there was ever a moment to follow your passion and do something that matters to you, that moment is now.” -Unknown

“Never give up on a dream just because of the time it will take to accomplish it. The time will pass anyway.” -Earl Nightingale

“Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can.” –Arthur Ashe

“A professional writer is an amateur who didn’t quit.” –Richard Bach

“We tend to forget that baby steps still move you forward.” –Raison Dexist

Wow!! How do you feel after reading that? Inspired? Empowered? Write your feelings down now:

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What about those lies you told yourself earlier? Do you believe them anymore?

No?

I thought so. You’ve begun to stop believing the lies. It won’t be easy and it will take time. You’ve been subscribing to them so long. But you can break past the negativity and false talk.

Remember, words have power. Give them the right power. You were born to be real, not perfect. You are not your negative thoughts. You are not your lies.

Choose 1-2 quotes each week that you’d like to focus on to internalize these truths and sustain lasting effects. Write them in your planner, on your calendar, or leave a post-it note on your desk. Or you can make the quote your computer or phone background! In fact, I’ve chosen my three favorite quotes to combat self-sabotage and made images for you to use if you’d like to make them your phone background. See the last page of this workbook for all the awesome graphics! Cause we all know how much we check our phones. Imagine seeing these inspirational quotes every time you do!

 *End of Chapter Exercises*

*Which 1-2 quotes will you focus on this week?*

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*What lies do you tell yourself?*

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*Turn your Lies into Truths*

Example: "I'm flawed" becomes "I'm growing"

"I'm not good enough" becomes "I'm evolving and improving"

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*Analyze where your inner critic comes from. Are you a perfectionist? Do you play the comparison game?*

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*What will you do when you hear your inner critic tell you lies?*

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### *Implement the Power of Yet*

Write down the most common lies you tell yourself. Take a deep breath. Then add a “yet” at the end of your sentence.

Example: “I can’t do this” becomes “I can’t do this yet”

“This doesn’t work” becomes “This doesn’t work yet”

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## *Chapter Six: Mental Health Awareness*

*"We are all broken...that's how the light gets in."  
-Hemingway*

### *Common Mental Health Illnesses*

We've heard people call all writers introverted hermits, depressed people, and starving artists. Stereotyping writers into these categories is a huge fallacy that needs to end. But, that doesn't mean that some writers aren't struggling with mental health issues—some severely life-altering, while others are mild, less frequent, and easier to combat. Here are a few common disorders:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)
- Schizophrenia
- Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)
- Bipolar Disorder

Psychologists and researchers have found a positive correlation between artists, writers, poets, and musicians and mental illness. And yet many successful creatives have no evidence of a disorder. Therefore, everyone must realize that their lives are different. Some writers struggle with mental disorders, while others do not. If you do, know that of course, you're not alone, and most importantly, that it does not define you.

### *My Mental Health Illnesses*

This section is all about my mental health story. I want you to know where I'm coming from as I give you advice, though my experiences are only about anxiety and depression. I was diagnosed with mixed anxiety and depressive disorder a couple years ago. I believe I always had these underlying conditions, yet they revealed themselves more and more as my writing journey evolved.

When I realized I wanted to finish my first novel in fall 2015, I only suffered from crippling self-doubt. I'd say to myself, "What do you think you're getting yourself into?" and "You're

in over your head.” Pretty much I said all the self-sabotage talk we discussed in the previous chapter.

As I went through periods of rejection and success, this ebbed and flowed. The one thing that only got stronger was my passion for writing, and my dream of becoming a traditionally published author. Thus, my anxiety and depression reared its ugly head. If I didn’t write or edit one day, or one week, I’d beat myself up about it. I was a failure in my eyes. Getting upset at myself for not writing only made things worse, because then it felt like a mountain too high to climb and took even longer for me to get out of my slump and back into the groove.

I am now on medication for my mixed anxiety and depression. It’s helped a lot, and I’ve been able to cut down my medication to half a pill a day, but I still get mad at myself that I even need that medication to function. The days I have tried to wean myself off are the worst. I fall into a borderline panic attack and can’t stop crying. It’s prevented me from going to work a couple times because I become stuck in my own head, and then I get so upset that I can’t get out of it.

Something I haven’t done yet is speak with a psychologist or licensed clinical social worker. I have seen one in the past for other issues, but never for my anxiety and depression. I will look into this in the future, but for now, I am managing my illness with my medication and self-care strategies (see the next chapter!).

## *How Mental Health Affects Your Writing Goals*

Okay, so now that you know what you’re struggling with, how do you know if it’s even affecting your writing? Is it truly putting a dent in your goals? For many people, it does. Mental health disorders put people into writing slumps and ruin your momentum of writing and reaching your goals. The times I have fallen into a depression and couldn’t write or edit or do anything productive, it’s taken me over a month to get over it and back into a routine. That messes up my flow and pushes my timeline for editing and publication even further away. Of course, some people’s depression lasts shorter, others longer. In any case, it can lead to those lies our inner critic tells ourselves.

With anxiety, you might think that everything you write is bad. With depression, you might become paralyzed and unable to write, or you might not even want to write. OCD, schizophrenia, and bipolar disorder can also add to one’s self-doubt and cause people to panic when things don’t go as planned. Mental health illnesses stifle our dreams and suffocate our creativity. They can cause us to focus on the negative and not even see the beautiful things happening around us and all that we ARE accomplishing.

But it doesn’t have to be that way. And if you end up there, you don’t have to stay. Your mental illness is not your home.

## *Ways to Overcome Mental Health Issues*

First things first, if you have not spoken to your doctor or been diagnosed for your mental health disorder, I would urge you to see your doctor. They can direct you to the best forms of treatment, whether that's medication, seeing a psychologist, etc.

No matter the severity of your illness, you'll want to combat it yourself as well. You don't want to solely rely on these other things. So before we begin, I want you to realize two things:

- You must be gentle with yourself  
AND
- You're doing the best you can

It's only when you give yourself grace for your falls can you pick yourself back up and start again. There's beauty in the breakdown, because you learn from yourself each time and come out stronger than before. So whenever you feel caught inside yourself, read these reminders:

- You're more than what you make
- Your productivity does not determine your value
- It's okay to do nothing sometimes
- Not everything you do has to result in a product
- Not everything you make has to be important, significant, or even good
- You can make things just for yourself
- You can keep secrets for yourself
- You're allowed to say no
- You're allowed to rest

Which two reminders will you choose to focus on this week?

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Another way to combat mental illness is to perform self-care. The next chapter will guide you through creating your ultimate self-care routine to take care of your body, mind, and spirit.

 *End of Chapter Exercises*

*What mental health illnesses are you fighting to overcome?*

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*How do they affect you and your writing specifically?*

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*How can you spin these issues to help you with your writing?*

Example: "I am too emotional" becomes "I can write real, emotional scenes that my readers will connect with"

"My illness gets in my way" Becomes "I am more empathetic with people going through what I am going through. I can support others in the writing community and in turn gain support myself"

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*How will you overcome your mental health illnesses?*

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*Decide when and where you will seek this help. Be specific!*

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## *Chapter Seven: Incorporating Self-Care*

*"Self-care isn't selfish"*

*-Ashley Judd*

### *Self-Care*

Self-care is a hot topic nowadays, but I think it's because it's bringing to light just how important it is for us, especially as writers, to slow down. We are ambitious people, motivated, determined, full of dreams and goals. We know that we will finish our book with hard work, and hopefully, become published. Or become a full-time author. Or whatever we hope for in life. But so many of us don't take enough time for ourselves each week to relax, to breathe.

We think, "I can't spend time for myself. That's selfish." But the above quote rings true.

Self-care isn't selfish. Self-care is a priority and a necessity, not a luxury, especially for the work that we do, and especially if we have others we are caring for in our lives, whether it's babies, fur babies, family, significant others, or friends. Yes, it's okay to care for others. But you must also take care of yourself. You come first in your life.

Remember, self-care means giving the world the best of you instead of what's left of you.

### *How Lack of Self-Care Affects Your Writing*

What happens when we lack self-care? It means you're always in go-mode. You're always "on." This can lead to severe burnout. You try to do everything and end up leaving nothing for yourself, for your soul. That can lead to worsening mental, physical, and emotional health.

When you don't take the time away from your projects, you can't fill your creative well. Then when someone asks one more thing from you, it's like trying to pour from an empty cup. You have nothing left to give. You become spiteful towards anyone or anything that "wastes" your time and takes away from your goal.

But I believe that is an exhausting and sad place to be. I was in this place last year. I didn't take care of my body. I fell into two depressive writing slumps last year because I was too

ambitious with my goals and didn't give myself enough self-care time. I gave myself one day a week to relax and focus on myself, but I didn't realize that I needed a bit of time each day to do at least one thing for self-care. I needed to work out more. I needed to eat healthier. I needed to stretch in between writing sessions and walk. I needed to meditate and live in the moment instead of always reaching for the future.

For some people, when they finally take some time for themselves, however that may look, they might feel guilty because they're not used to it. They think about all the things they could have been doing instead to be productive and check another box off their to-do list. But that's just crazy. Don't feel guilty for taking the time to re-charge and make yourself a priority. You should be at the top of that list.

### *Ways to Incorporate Self-Care*

"Health does not always come from medicine. Most of the time it comes from peace of mind, peace in the heart, peace of soul. It comes from laughter and love." -Unknown

Self-care looks different for each person. That's why I gathered a long list of ideas for you (that aren't writing)! Find what works for you and is your ideal "me" time. It might take some trial and error to find what you like best (and that's okay!):

- Go for a walk outside, near a park, trail, or body of water
- Draw
- Color in an adult coloring book
- Journal
- Play board games or video games
- Cook/bake tasty and healthy foods
- Work out (home or gym)
- Do crafts
- Read
- Have a date night
- Take a shower
- Take a bubble bath or Epsom salt bath
- Light a candle or fireplace
- Use a face mask
- Paint your nails



- Watch TV/movies
- People/nature watch out the window
- Take a short nap
- Get a good night's sleep
- Drink a cup of tea/coffee
- Drink enough water
- Take a day off work to relax and focus
- Take photos
- Call/talk with friends or family
- Play with your pets
- Take your dog to the dog park
- Meditate
- Do yoga
- Dance to your favorite music

Getting sleep is an important part of self-care. Writers tend to sacrifice sleep to be more productive, yet that leads to a foggy brain during the day, resentment at your job or tasks that don't involve writing, and physical fatigue. I recommend setting "get ready for bed" and "go to bed" alarms to remind yourself each night when to start winding down.

Research has shown that meditating or doing yoga before bed increases your ability to achieve a good night's sleep. It also shows that you sleep worse when you're on your phone. So place your phone in the next room and get an actual alarm clock so that you're not tempted to stay up late mindlessly browsing social media. Instead, here are a couple ideas of things you can do before bed that promote a good night's sleep:

- Headspace app
- Simple Habit app
- Audible (free meditation guides)
- YouTube videos (search meditation or guided sleep)
- Instrumental music
- Body scans
- Read (a physical book!)

If you're a fellow "self-spa day" lover, I wanted to let you know that I'm an affiliate with Story Salts, a company that makes bookish bath salts and facial scrubs for fellow writers and book lovers for their self-care routine! Check out the products at <https://storysalts.com/>. If you're interested in anything, use my code WRITEHOLLYDAVIS to get 10% off your order! 😊

Want to work out but don't know what to do? Although I love gym memberships, they can be pricey and it can be hard to motivate yourself to leave the warmth and security of home. That's why I love free, at-home workouts. Check out some of my favorite YouTube channels:

- The Fitness Marshall
- Yoga With Adriene
- POPSUGAR fitness
- Blogilates
- The Betty Rocker
- MadFit

If you DO like gym workouts, I can't sing the praises enough of any of the New Rules of Lifting books by Lou Schuler and Alwyn Cosgrove. Their routines are amazing!

And last but certainly not least, here are some of my favorite YouTube channels for healthy recipes:

- Tone it Up
- Liezl Jane Strydom
- Liv B
- HealthNut Nutrition

 *End of Chapter Exercises*

*Your Self-Care Plan:*

*Who?*

Is there anyone you'll include in your self-care? Who? Why do you want to include them?

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*What?*

What will you do for self-care? Choose from the list above or come up with your own!

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*When?*

When will you incorporate your self-care routine? Decide whether to do a little every day as a daily routine and/or set aside one day a week.

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### *Where?*

Where will you incorporate your self-care routine? Will you have to plan to drive somewhere? Plan your locations to set yourself up for success!

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### *Why?*

Why did you choose this self-care routine for yourself? What do you hope it will do for you? Look back on your “why?” when you find yourself straying from self-care.

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### *Changing Habits*

What healthy habits will you adopt to promote a healthy life and a good night’s sleep?

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## Chapter Eight: Overcoming Roadblocks

*"Obstacles are put in your way to see if what you want is really worth fighting for."*

*-Unknown*

### Common Roadblocks to Writing

Whether you peg yourself as a writer, aspiring author, debut author, or seasoned veteran, we all need a boost every now and then to put butt in chair and hands on keyboard. We all know it—writing is hard. If it weren't, then everyone would be doing it. Some people give up. They call it quits and throw in the towel (pen?). Why does that happen?

Many times it's because of roadblocks they encountered in their writing life that they deemed too high to overcome. But that's not going to happen to you. I can feel it. You have the determination and the drive to push through any obstacle to reach your goals. That's why you're here, reading this. Go you!

Okay, so we know roadblocks will come and that we are willing to fight them. But let's identify the stumbling blocks we might encounter along our writer journey:

- Life responsibilities
- Having too many ideas
- Laziness
- Wasting time with other activities
- Never completing your writing goals
- Self-doubt/insecurities
- Negative self-talk
- Overwhelm
- Lack of support from family/friends
- Not feeling like writing
- Lack of time (or feeling like you don't have time to write)
- Lack of money
- Procrastination
- Being good at making excuses for not writing
- Lack of discipline
- Lack of energy
- Feeling stuck with your writing (plot holes, drained creative well, etc)

Well...those certainly sound like totally legitimate reasons to stop writing. Wait, huh?

That's right. Those are all perfectly legitimate reasons to stop writing. BUT. That doesn't mean that you should. We've already tackled self-doubt, procrastination, lack of discipline, lack of time, and more. So what does that mean? It means that just because we are confronted with these obstacles does not mean we turn around and walk the other way. No, if you see the light at the end of the tunnel, the top of the hill, the finish line, why would you ever turn around? Why would you ever stop?

If writing is truly your passion and your dream, whether it's to do this part-time or full-time, you need to make writing a priority. And that means climbing over these obstacles.

### *Ways to Overcome Roadblocks*

First things first, you need to acknowledge when you're being lazy. If you set a schedule for yourself, it will be instantly recognizable and you can nip it in the bud and get back to your routine. You also need to recognize the difference between being lazy and needing to rest and refill your creative well. Have you been working nonstop for a week? You probably need a break. But if you were watching Netflix all day and then realized at 6 PM you need to write but don't want to? You probably got bit by the lazy bug.

What about life responsibilities? If those are scheduled into your day, then you should know the free moments you have when you can schedule in your writing time.

You don't need money to write. You don't even need a computer. Just a pen and paper. What about lack of support from family or friends? Why do you need that to write? You are carving out time for yourself, and that will include writing. It's a part of you, likely similar to breathing if you're like me. So, wouldn't you do anything to breathe?

What about feeling overwhelmed and doubting your creativity to implement the vision you have in your head on paper? Hmm...I think I see a trend here. Most of these roadblocks are mental roadblocks. We build them up in our minds to be so legitimate. We peg them as truth. But they're just excuses we've learned to tell ourselves to get out of what feels uncomfortable. Writing after a long day at work? No, that doesn't sound like fun. But I bet you've written when you were tired and thought you couldn't write. And I bet you wrote a lot of words. I bet you were proud of yourself and thanked yourself for pushing through and getting the words in. And so, the obstacle was of your own creation. So write for five minutes or write twenty words. I'm sure you'll surprise yourself and write more.

Imagine all the times a successfully published author hasn't felt like writing. Well, if you only wrote when you felt like it, it'd take you a really long time to finish that novel. The muse will come if you provide the time and space for it. As Ernest Hemingway once said, "There is nothing to writing. All you do is sit down at a typewriter and bleed." People who

persevere and finish their novel often talk about their novel being written with blood, sweat, and tears. Hm, I see another trend here. Sounds like these writers had discipline and self-control. They wrote when they were tired. They wrote while raising a family. They wrote when they'd never finished any other manuscript before. They wrote scared. And so they wrote strong.

You can do it, too. It's all about adopting a positive mindset and being confident in your abilities. You're still worthy of holding your published novel in your hands despite knowing there's so much more you can learn and how much more you will grow as a writer. You're still worthy despite giving in to these roadblocks every now and then. The trick is to get back up. To know that every master started off as an amateur, and that many of these obstacles are of your own creation. So don't get in your own way. Successfully published authors could do it before they became successful. Why can't you?

 *End of Chapter Exercises*

*What roadblocks keep you from writing?*

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*Debunk these roadblocks. How many are of your own creation?*

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*Create a game plan to combat these obstacles when they come up.*

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*Write down your long-term goals as a writer and some of your favorite affirmations. When you don't feel like writing, return here and read these first. Do you feel like writing now?*

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## Chapter Nine: Overcoming Writing Slumps

*"There is no failure except in no longer trying."  
— Elbert Hubbard*

### *Writer's Block and Writing Slumps*

I'm just going to say it right here. Writer's block is real. Writing slumps are real. I've been in them multiple times myself, and I think every writer will encounter this at some point in their life. But, the causes of these ruts and ways in which they manifest can look different for everyone. Some people don't write as much as they usually do. Others don't write every day like they used to. And others won't write at all. For days. Weeks. Sometimes months.

When that's the case, you need a healthy dose of positivity and self-care (ahem, Chapters 5-7, I'm looking at you!). Slumps can be caused by real life stressors, depression, overworking yourself, exhaustion, and more. No matter the reason, there's a way for you to overcome it.

### *Ways to Overcome Writing Slumps*

Here are my go-to writer's block busting tips:

- Switch up your writing method and where you're writing
- Set a timer to write for at least 10 minutes
- Talk to your inner critic and tear down the lies
- Do writing sprints with friends online or in a writing group
- Refocus with positive thoughts
- Talk to a friend or family member
- Talk it out with an alpha reader or critique partner
- Push through if you realize it's laziness OR
- Take it as a sign to rest and take a break to refill your creative well (cook, play games, work out, go for a walk)
- Write a different part of your story (new chapter, new act, or even the ending!)
- Read (both in and outside of your WIP's genre)
- Watch a TV show or movie to get your inspired and motivated for your own WIP
- Find inspiration (positive beta feedback, positive reviews, inspirational quotes)
- Watch AuthorTube videos
- Silence imposter syndrome
- Pretend you're doing NaNoWriMo and bust out those words!

- Revisit your outline. Do you need to change a scene, character, or plot point?
- Fix that plot hole. Yes, right now, don't leave it for later. You'll thank me
- Read a writing craft book
- Leave editing for later if you're drafting. Just get the words down OR
- If you're currently editing, tell your beta readers when they should expect your edited draft to give yourself a deadline and accountability
- If you're editing, realize you're making your book baby the best it can be, and that everyone has to edit and improve their manuscript for multiple rounds
- Get into a routine
- Use your creative energy first (aka in the morning before you do anything else or before you get tired at the end of the day)
- Reward yourself for even small accomplishments (they're actually bigger than you think!)
- Revisit your writing goals (or if you don't have any, set short- and long-term goals to give yourself a vision for the future)
- Give yourself grace and pace yourself. Don't go running through the gates and expect to bounce back from a rut right away. It might take some time (and that's okay!)

 *End of Chapter Exercises*

*What does writer's block look like for you?*

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*How will you combat these slumps when you're drafting?*

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*Choose at least five ways in which you'll combat writer's block from the previous list.*

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*Come up with your own ways to combat writer's block!*

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*Who will you contact to help pull you out of your slump?*

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## Chapter Ten: Reigniting Your Passion for Writing

*"Follow your passion.  
It will lead you to your purpose."  
— Oprah*

### *Ways You Might Lose Your Passion*

Losing your passion for your WIP or writing in general is similar to getting into a writing slump, but it's something that's more short-term and easier to get out of. This is when you've been pushing on and triumphing, but are reaching a point of burn-out. You've been doing too much for too long and are starting to resent it. You might even start to dread every single writing session.

In this case, you need a little oomph to get those juices flowing so you feel motivated to return to your WIP. It also allows you a break from writing but is still productive to your writing and your novel. Sounds a bit like having some write/life balance, doesn't it? ☺

### *How to Reignite Your Passion*

Make writing fun again! Sure, we all love writing. But sometimes it DOES feel like work. So, are there ways you can still be productive in your writer life while also reigniting your passion, whether it be for your current WIP or writing in general? You betcha! Here are a ton of fun things you can do to get that fire burning again:

- Create aesthetic boards for your WIP
  - Characters
  - Setting
  - Quotes
  - Relationships
- Create a WIP or writing playlist
  - Specific songs related to scenes in your WIP
  - Songs that vibe with the theme and feel of your WIP
  - Songs that get you pumped to write (without distracting you)
- Draw your characters or commission character art
- Draw a map of your world
- Create a story binder or series bible
- Find actors and actresses who'd play your characters in a movie or Netflix series :P

- Create Pinterest boards
- Create a physical WIP board or wall in your writing space
- Write a prequel scene to your novel
- Write from a side character's POV
- Act out a conversation between two of your characters
- Write down all the things you love about your WIP
- Write down all the things you love about your writing

**Website/Application Resources:**

Aesthetic boards:

[www.Canva.com](http://www.Canva.com)

[www.Sparkpost.com](http://www.Sparkpost.com)

[www.Picframe.com](http://www.Picframe.com)

[www.Pinterest.com](http://www.Pinterest.com)

[www.Unsplash.com](http://www.Unsplash.com)

<https://pixlr.com/express/>

Quotes:

[www.quotescreator.com](http://www.quotescreator.com)

[www.Canva.com](http://www.Canva.com)

[www.Sparkpost.com](http://www.Sparkpost.com)

[www.Quozio.com](http://www.Quozio.com)

Music Playlists:

[www.Spotify.com](http://www.Spotify.com)

[www.YouTube.com](http://www.YouTube.com)

[www.Itunes.com](http://www.Itunes.com)

 *End of Chapter Exercises*

*Have you ever lost your passion for writing? What happened?*

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*What did you do to find the spark again?*

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*What will you do if you lose your passion for writing in the future?*

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*List websites and applications you'll use to bring the fun back to your writing life! Update your favorites as needed.*

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## *Chapter Eleven: Closing Thoughts*

*"First, say to yourself what you would be;  
And then do what you have to do."  
— Epictetus*

You made it! You've completed this workbook, hopefully with more mental clarity and inner strength, and with a lighted fire that will burn forever and help you crush your writer goals. I want to remind you that this workbook is not for one-time use. It's a sustainable tool that you can use to continuously improve your life. The writer life is filled with ups and downs, and you might find yourself struggling with different things along the way. So, you can come back to a specific section and use it as a magnifying glass to inspect and change the certain aspect of your life you want to work on. Whether or not you notice any specific struggles, I recommend checking-in with yourself with this workbook every couple months to make sure you stay on track and remain what I hope you have become:

*A Happy Balanced Writer*



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And thank *you* for purchasing this workbook and for believing in this tool to improve your work/life balance and help you reach your goals.

## Bio



Holly Davis is currently working as an outpatient physical therapist in Chicago. She is engaged to a great guy (wedding date TBD) and is a fur mom to a pitty and two kitties. She began her writing adventures as a young child and has grown from writing Kingdom Hearts fanfiction to writing stories of her own. She is currently querying her third manuscript, a YA urban fantasy with light sci-fi elements called *The Celestial Code*, which she hopes to traditionally publish as her debut novel.

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