

The Happy Balanced Writer
Workbook Three: Overcoming Roadblocks



Table of Contents

Chapter One: What Is the Happy Balanced Writer?	2
Chapter Two: Overcoming Roadblocks	4
Chapter Three: Overcoming Writing Slumps	8
Chapter Four: Reigniting Your Passion for Writing	12
Chapter Five: Closing Thoughts	16
Acknowledgements	17
Bio	18

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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.

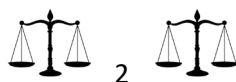
“But wait, Holly, you just said you don’t have much time for anything else.”

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: 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? Hmmm...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?

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

Chapter Three: 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?

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

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

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

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

Chapter Four: 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

www.Sparkpost.com

www.Picframe.com

www.Pinterest.com

www.Unsplash.com

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

Quotes:

www.quotescreator.com

www.Canva.com

www.Sparkpost.com

www.Quozio.com

Music Playlists:

www.Spotify.com

www.YouTube.com

www.Itunes.com

 *End of Chapter Exercises*

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

What did you do to find the spark again?

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

Chapter Five: 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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Thank you to my Mastermind Group: Savannah J. Goins, Brittany Wang, and Alicia Grumley, for giving me all of your wisdom and advice to make this workbook the best it could be! You girls are the best!

Thank you to my twin sister, Heather, for motivating me via Skype to work on this workbook. I couldn't do any of this without you.

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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