



You Never Have Nothing!

I went to the Brave New Workshop for improv classes because a friend told me how much fun she was having in her class. I thought it would be a good way to relax, a legitimate way to play (adults always seem to need special permission to play). I didn't think I'd learn powerful lessons that would apply to my writing practice, but I did.

One of the most important lessons I learned in improv was "You never have nothing." The feeling of having nothing is something. There is always a place to start and it's always where you are.



Don't Go Away

Recently, one of my coaching clients, Gordy, said he was bored with a piece of writing. "I just have the feeling of 'what are we doing here?' in this scene." As Gordy told me this, the frustration was evident in his voice. But the claim to boredom didn't ring true to my coach's ear. I've worked with Gordy for over a year as his manuscript has grown to over 50,000 words and bored just wasn't an emotion that fit. Frustrated, yes, every writer gets frustrated; discovering your path through frustration is a big part of the artist's job no matter what media you're working in.

But bored just wasn't right. Gordy has found a voice for the first-person narrator that is right on target. I've read the manuscript over the year it has been developing, and it's never boring. So I suggested that perhaps the emotion was accurate, but misattributed.

"What if it's not you that's bored, Gordy? What if it's the narrator who's frustrated and asking 'What are we doing here?' What would happen if you gave that emotion to your narrator?"

The following week Gordy reported that those questions turned everything around. As soon as he gave the boredom to the narrator, Gordy found renewed energy to write. And he wrote a scene that accurately illustrates the narrator's ennui without boring the reader.

Give It Away

It will work for you, too, you know. The next time you think you're too tired, bored, depressed, anxious, stressed out, 'fill in the uncomfortable emotion of your choice' to express your creativity,

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What's in Your Year?



Every New Year's Eve for the past six years, my friends and I have done a guided imagery about the year to come and then named the year to confirm our intention. For me, 2005 is the Year of Completion.

This year I'll complete Phase I of my retirement plan. I'll also be completing a full draft of the first book in a science fiction trilogy, tentatively titled *The Liminal Path*. As an added bonus, I may also complete the search for a fiction agent this year. (See page 4 if you'd like to read an excerpt of *The Liminal Path*.)

The other big completion in 2005 will be reaching my ideal weight. I lost 44 pounds in 2004. (Applause welcome!) I'm committed to continue with the same steady pattern in 2005 until I'm where I need to be.

You might be wondering how I managed this amazing feat. It was the combination of a clear sense of urgency, a reasonable plan I could follow (Weight Watchers online), a partner who was also committed, and most importantly, two new change management tools: **Motivational Interviewing** and **Polarity Management**. You can learn how to apply these two tools to your creative goals in the June and November Deepen Your Creativity workshops (see page 3 for details).

What is 2005 Bringing You?

What do you want to set your

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don't go away. Give it away. If you're a writer, give the emotion to a character. Describe it fully, which you'll be able to do exceedingly well because the emotional experience is fresh in your mind. Let the character feel it and react to it, and see where that takes you. If you're a painter, give the emotion to a color and let the color/emotion go where it wants to go on the canvas. Artists of all kinds and especially those of you who aren't ready to claim being an artist: put your uncomfortable emotion into the media you work with (your garden, your designs, your yarn, whatever you play with) and see where it goes.

The next time you think you haven't got a thing to write about or paint or sculpt, in other words, the next time you think you don't have anything to focus your creativity on, pick up an object at random in your office, studio or home, or in someone else's office, studio or home. Use that object as your starting point. Writers: give that object to a character. Discover the significance of the object as you describe both it and the character's reactions to it. Visual artists: notice the play of shadow and light on the object and how your focus gives significance to the object. Performance artists and others: Explore the significance of the object. Imitate its movement. If the object made a noise, what would it be? How would you interact with the object if it were animate?

To Move Forward, You Have to Move

The next time you can't figure out how you're going to move forward, get up and move your body. This is natural for most performance artists, but the rest of us can benefit from their example. Move your arms and legs and feet and head and torso until you find a movement that somehow reflects a character, image or a concept. Writers: Keep doing that motion until you know what your character is doing. Describe that in the writing and follow the logical consequences of that action. Visual artists: Explore how you can use that movement in your painting or sculpting or sketching. Everyone: Keep doing the movement until it moves you to a place of certainty, where you know what you want to do next to move your creative desires forward.

The next time you feel stuck, simply describe the place where you are. Keep writing or drawing or moving until something grabs your attention. Follow that as far as it will take you.

You may not produce outstanding art or even sterling results, but you will create something. Undoubtedly, you'll need to revise and refine what comes from these beginnings, but at least you've got something to take to the next step. And something, I'm told, is always better than nothing. I wouldn't know myself because, you see, I've learned that I never have nothing.



intention for this year? Here's a quick quiz to kickstart your thinking. Circle all answers that apply.

I want to:

- a) Complete a creative project
- b) Make progress on a creative project
- c) Initiate a creative project
- d) Discover where to direct my creativity

I express my creativity with:

- a) words (poetry and prose)
- b) visual images and design (painting, collages, clay, sculpture, redecorating your home)
- c) performance (music, comedy, acting)
- d) living things (gardening, training a dog, raising a child)
- e) my professional work as a leader, designer or implementer

In 2005, I'll need:

- a) time and space
- b) encouragement and support
- c) information and new skills
- d) materials and supplies

(No matter which answers you circled, you'll find one or more of the workshops in the Deepening Your Creativity series described on page 3 will further your creative journey.)

After responding to the questions above, I recommend you freewrite about what you'd like most in 2005. Then write about what your intuition is telling you about the coming year. You might want to play some relaxing music or a guided imagery recording to explore the images float to the surface of your mind.

If you haven't got a clue or you want help exploring the clues you do have, I can share with you the Year-End Review and New Year Visioning process that I do with my coaching clients. Just send me an email or call me at **612-722-4139** and we'll talk about how this process can help you discover what 2005 will be about for you.

Deepen Your Creativity!

You have a calling to share your creativity in meaningful ways. Your desire to express yourself is a message from the Divine, encoded in emotion. The message is: “Share these gifts I’ve given you with the rest of the world. Quit worrying about whether you’ll be good enough. Risk being a fool to show your love to yourself, your community, your world. I’m telling you to do this, so get moving!”

It’s time to take your creativity to the next level. These workshops are designed to help you do that. They are all are interactive and use a variety of techniques like guided imagery, brainstorming, partner processes, freewriting, discussion, etc. We’ll meet on Saturdays from 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the Open Book. You can take just one workshop or any combination of the six. The more workshops you register for in advance, the more you save! First workshop: Only \$50! Any 2 workshops: \$93, **Save \$7**. Any 3 workshops: \$136; **Save \$14**. Any 4 workshops: \$179, **Save \$21**. Any 5 workshops: \$222, **Save \$28**. All 6 workshops: \$265, **Save \$35!**

March 5: Clarify Creative Purpose and Vision

Crystallize your awareness of what you’re called to do with your creative talents and desires. You will:



- ⊙ Discover or refine your creative purpose
- ⊙ Animate your commitment
- ⊙ Draft a vision statement for your creative life
- ⊙ Draft a mission statement for a specific project

August 6: Beyond Excuses, Illusions and Obstacles

Discern between excuses and real obstacles. Disengage from beliefs that make it impossible to move forward.



You will:

- ⊙ Identify common excuses and how you use them
- ⊙ Recognize illusions that inhibit creativity
- ⊙ Muzzle excuses and illusions
- ⊙ Develop strategies to eliminate obstacles

April 23: Move Through Resistance

Resistance is not about willpower; it’s about neurology. Discover the true origins of resistance and how to respond effectively to it: You will:



- ⊙ Find out what’s going on in your brain that causes resistance
- ⊙ Identify which of the 6 common forms of resistance you tend to experience
- ⊙ Apply a 4 Step Method to move thru resistance

October 1: Please Don’t Feed the Saboteur

Learn how to keep the Saboteur, that nasty inner critic that constantly complains and is never satisfied, from eating you alive. You will:



- ⊙ Recognize and respect the connection between creation and destruction
- ⊙ Discover the 5 hallmarks of the Saboteur
- ⊙ Develop strategies to feed appropriate destruction and starve the Saboteur

June 11: Motivate Yourself

Motivational Interviewing will get you ready, willing and able to move forward. You will:



- ⊙ Recognize and reinforce what has prepared you to take the next step
- ⊙ Translate awareness into motivation and motivation into action
- ⊙ Identify rewards that excite you
- ⊙ Plan celebrations for your success

November 19: Resolve Unsolvable Problems

Stop frustrating yourself trying to solve unsolvable problems. Learn to effectively manage polarities instead.



- ⊙ Distinguish between polarities and problems
- ⊙ Identify the polarities that inhibit creativity
- ⊙ Create your own personal Polarity Map
- ⊙ Gain insights that transform your perceptions and behaviors

Register at Rosanne@RosanneBane.com or call 612-722-4139

Excerpt from *The Liminal Path*

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The mule scented the intruder before the woman or the dog, though in fairness to Ry, Peregrine had sent him to patrol the downwind slope. The mule stood with his black velvet nose into the wind and bless him, he didn't make a noise, just wagged his ears and stamped his forefoot.

Peregrine scanned the upslope and frowned with concentration, trying to figure out what the mule was looking at from where she stood twenty feet away. She didn't see anything. Nothing moving. No splash of color out of place. If it was langers, the mule would have brayed in alarm. But she didn't doubt him. Baily was solid. If it had been Burly Boy, who was grazing in the paddock on that particular day, she might have had second thoughts. But this was solid, trustworthy Baily, so she extracted herself from the thorny bushes. When she reached the mule, she patted his shoulder and offered him cubed sugar from her jacket pocket. Baily munched the extravagant three cubes with relish, but he kept his head pointed up the hill, flicking his ears at the unseen enemy.

Peregrine carefully poured the soft, reddish-purple berries from the bucket into the pack baskets Baily wore. The biting sweet scent filled her nostrils. She breathed deeply, then shook off the desire to get lost in the smell. Some people wore gloves and masks to pick Essence berries, but not Peregrine. She'd never make the claim aloud, but she knew the Essence that flowed from her still pots was superior because she let her own essence mingle with the berries from the very beginning. It meant her hands got scratched, but to her way of thinking, that was just the beginning of the sacrifices a distiller had to be willing to make.

Ry had noticed her movements and returned silently to her side. She pointed her arm to direct the big dog, whispering, "Perimeter. Hold."

It wasn't langers, so it had to be human. If it was a neighbor, they would have whistled a signal and hoped she wasn't there to hear them trespassing on her berry patch. So chances were, it was Dracos over the hill. She could take the mule and dog and leave, hoping they wouldn't find her. But if they happened over the hill, even Dracos couldn't miss the broken brambles, the berries in one section missing, the tracks of human, mule and dog crisscrossing the soft ground.

Dracos pushed for more information about Essence all the time. Did chemical analysis. Dropped in unexpectedly to inspect distilleries throughout the fall and winter. Questioned people. Hell, they'd set up their own distillery in several Population Centers and forced Pathians to work there. They made whisky, but they'd never make Essence. Even if they did discover Essence berries, they couldn't make Essence.

Kara Foxworth, the eternal cynic, opined that the Dracos already knew about Essence berries and it was pointless to go through the effort of keeping that a secret any longer. Fortunately, Kara wasn't in charge of the Foxworth family yet. In Peregrine's opinion, letting Dracos know berries were a key ingredient would give them one more piece of the puzzle. And one more piece of leverage against every distiller on Path because they'd control access to the berries. As it was, no one was allowed to keep a distillery intact without a Draco license. So she had to take Ry and go over the hill to do what she could to keep the Dracos from discovering this berry patch and getting curious about what she, a known distiller, had been doing there when she should be home sprouting the malt.

She picked up the picket rope and led the mule away from the hill Ry had been sent to defend. There was a cave entrance nearby. They had to travel through the thorns that thrived where Essence berries grew, but Baily, sweet cooperative Baily, didn't protest, though he did balk if she didn't push the thorns far enough aside. Peregrine slipped on gloves for this duty. Once past the thorns, they moved more easily through lush rhododendrons to a cave no one would have seen if they didn't know where to look.

When they reached the cave, Baily waited just inside while Peregrine quickly unfastened the panniers and set them behind a rockfall. A serious inspection would find them, but a casual glance would miss them. She turned the mule into the small corral and he contentedly thrust his head in the water bucket. He wore only a

halter without a bit, so he could eat and drink without interference. He didn't mind wearing the light harness the baskets attached to, nor did he object to being left alone in the dark, damp cave. Burly Boy would have been braying his fool head off by now and Peregrine blessed the fates that made this Baily's shift.

She pulled the camouflaged, soundproof door into place behind her. With a twist of the hidden wheel at the base of the door, she locked it. There was always a twinge when she did that. If something happened to delay her, there was no one else on the holding to come find the mule and bring him home. She had nightmares about Baily and Burly starving to death in the dark because she forgot they were there, because she couldn't remember the combination, because the Dracos held her captive.

But she didn't have time for sentiment. She shouldered the rifle she'd kept hidden in the cave and moved quickly to hide any traces of her and the mule's passage. Fortunately the resilient rhododendron had sprung back into place. Crouching, because the intruder could top the hill at any moment, she ran up the slope as fast as she could. It occurred to her, as her hip began to protest, that if this was one of the Foxworth clan trespassing without giving the whistle announcing their presence, she'd flay them for inconvenience. Young snots. Didn't have any appreciation for what it was to be alone. How could they, the Foxworths bred like rats.

When she reached the crest of the hill, she saw the figure. Draco, no mistake about that from the uniform and the flash of sunlight off the heavy rifle, but through two hundred yards of rhododendron and scrub under the yellow varsh trees, it was hard to tell if it was a man or a woman. Not that it mattered. She scanned, searching for the rest of the plague.

What she did see was the flash of sunlight again. A flash of black movement through the brush. The Draco's rifle swinging round at Ry. Without thinking, she stood and screamed, "Ry, drop!"

The rifle flared. The dog dropped motionless. Peregrine swung her own rifle up and pointed it at the Draco.

You'll find the rest of this excerpted chapter at www.rosannebane.com/main/novel-excerpt.htm.



*Check out my coaching and
speaking services at
www.RosanneBane.com.
Or call me at 612-722-4139!*