



## Celebrating Paradox

### Paradox Part I: Scheduling Spontaneity

When was the last time you scheduled time for spontaneity? I know, ‘scheduled spontaneity’ sounds like an oxymoron. But keep in mind that the Saboteur often interferes with our creativity by keeping us too busy to play. Your Saboteur does **not** want you to have the audacity to play around with your creativity.

You’ve probably heard me talk about the power and significance of three basic practices: Process, Self-Care and Product Time. (If not, call me and I’ll fill you in.) Most people expect a creativity coach to tell them to find time to work on their creativity, so Product Time is no big surprise. Writers need time to write, painters need time to paint, gardeners need time to garden; you get the picture.

And you can probably see why Self-Care is so helpful for creativity. Most self-care activities prepare your body and brain for creativity. Moving the large muscle groups of the body in regular rhythm (as in walking, running, swimming, etc.) alters our brain waves and makes us more creative. Meditative practices like mindfulness, yoga or tai chi also change brain patterns in ways that improve creativity. Keeping our body and brain healthy and happy is vital for creativity. And lest you confuse self-care with self-indulgence, remember that putting yourself first on a regular basis keeps you healthy and happy enough to really be there with and for others.

### When is Wasting Time Not a Waste of Time?

The value of Product Time and Self-Care are easy to see. The necessity of Process can be harder to embrace. Process is doing something just for the sake of doing it, not to achieve a particular outcome.

I can always see the wheels turning in people’s minds when I suggest this: “That sounds silly. Childish, even. How can I justify taking time to just fart around when I’m not even going to have some result to show for it?” The idea of playing just to play is too decadent to accept at first.

As I explain the value of Process, most students and clients get an intellectual understanding and are willing to trust me enough to try it. But even the most willing find they are surprisingly resistant to actually doing Process on a regular basis. The Saboteur gleefully and viciously attacks our attempts to have fun and play around with creativity.

“This is silly. What a waste of time! You’ll never get this. Go do something worthwhile! This is getting me nowhere.” are some of the things students and clients report their Saboteurs saying when they start practicing Process. The most insidious self-sabotage is something like “Sure, I’ll do process, but not right now. Right now I have these other pressing things to take care of.” There will always be pressing priorities. If you postpone Process because of that, there will never be time for it. Without Process, the wellspring of your creative energy and inspiration will run dry. Your Product Time will go flat and stale, and your Saboteur will be the only one who’s happy.

But those who persist report that Process is an amazing source of creative energy and insight. Betsy H., who was among the most resistant to the idea of Process, startled herself and me by observing that she genuinely missed her Process when her old practice had to shift to accommodate a new work schedule.

“I never thought I’d say this,” Betsy told me, “but I need to find a new process activity. I’m noticing that

I'm not as free in my Product Time without doing Process."

Ultimately, the willingness to "waste time" fooling around with Process is what gives us what we need to make Product Time pay off.



### Letting Go of Quality

In *Art and Fear*, David Bayles and Ted Orland tell the story of a ceramics teacher who announced that students on one side of the class would be graded on quantity and students on the other side would be graded on quality. The 'quantity' students would receive a grade based solely on the total weight of what they created, so they'd better get busy making pots. The 'quality' students only needed to produce one pot. One perfect pot.

In other words, the 'quantity' group was encouraged to practice Process and was rewarded for it. The 'quality' group, on the other hand, had to focus solely on Product, with no time to mess around.

Guess which group succeeded. That's right. Not only did the 'quantity' group produce more pottery, they also produced the works of the highest quality.

"It seems," Bayles and Orland write, "that while the 'quantity' group was busily churning out piles of work – and learning from their mistakes – the 'quality' group had sat theorizing about perfection, and in the end had little more to show for their efforts than grandiose theories and a pile of dead clay."

This is an awareness we have to bring to our Product Time: ultimately the quality of any day's work is irrelevant. We have to show up, suit up and play the game. This willingness to do the work without a guaranteed result is what allows us to work at all. And the more we work we produce, the better our chances of doing quality work.

You never know on any given day whether that will be a day you just 'crank out pots' or a day you'll create one of those beautiful pieces. The only guarantees are that if you don't show up, you can't produce anything, and the more you focus on quality, the less likely you are to create it.

### Paradox Part II: Holding On While Letting Go

Product Time is time spent in the pursuit of creating art, whether that art is writing, sculpting, music, or a great meal. We do care about the outcomes. We are working on a specific project with a specific end in mind, even when the project we're working on is finding our next project.

We care about the results, and yet, we have to surrender that attachment. Product Time requires that you hold an intention (to produce something wonderful, beautiful, meaningful) while simultaneously surrendering attachment (to producing anything at all). Holding intention while surrendering attachment is a significant spiritual exercise.

Process only requires surrendering attachment. In this way, Process prepares you for Product Time.

### Paradox Part III: Fighting to Surrender

Because the Saboteur is so resistant to Process, the support of a class, group or coach can be instrumental in making this powerful practice part of your creative life. Find a play buddy. Form a knitting circle. Take a class in something that sounds like fun that you have no intention of being good at: origami, juggling, doily tatting, playing the kazoo.

Give yourself enough options (I can play with Play Dough™, color in coloring books, play the harmonica, dance) to keep it fun and interesting, but not so many options that you spend more time deciding how to play than you spend playing. Feel free to call me at 612-722-4139 or send an email (Rosanne@RosanneBane.com) for more suggestions, accountability and encouragement. (Or take a look at the classes I'm offering this summer on page 3).

Whatever you do, schedule your creative playtime. Reserve and respect that vital time. Don't let the Saboteur push you away from what you really want with some flimsy excuse. Fight for your right to surrender – to your creativity, not to your Saboteur – every day.



If you want help figuring what to do for process, self-care and product time, and support and encouragement to hold yourself accountable to those commitments, check out the Loft classes I'm offering this summer (see [www.Loft.org](http://www.Loft.org) for course descriptions and registration information). Or call me at 612-722-4139 to talk about how coaching might work for you.

**The Writing Habit:** Talent is a gift we're all given to one degree or another. Techniques can and must be learned. But what really makes a writer is the habit of writing. In this course, you will identify your writing (or nonwriting) habits and adapt them to fit your writing goals. Our weekly check-in will give you safe and supportive witnesses to help you become accountable to yourself. We'll use in-class writing, two-person processes, and action mapping to explore the creative process, identify your priorities, generate plans, cultivate sustainable habits, and develop a support network to help you maintain your momentum.

Section A: Tuesdays, June 5 – July 31 (no class July 3), 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at Open Book.

Section B: Thursdays, June 7 – August 2 (no class July 5) 12:00 to 2:00 p.m. at the R.H. Stafford Branch of the Washington County Library in Woodbury.

Register online at [www.loft.org](http://www.loft.org) or 612-379-8999.

**Improvisational Fiction:** If you wait for inspiration, you can spend a lot more time waiting than you do writing. If you drive yourself to grind out pages anyway, you may drain your creative energy and not produce the sparkle you want. This class gives you a third alternative. In improvisational fiction, writers don't wait until they know what to write; they discover what happens as they write. We will play some improv games to warm up and inspire the writing. We'll spend most of our time doing in-class writing, generating energy and ideas for both new material and stories you're already working on. You'll share some of your in-class writing, and you'll be given optional homework assignments to further develop what you start in class.

Thursdays, June 14 – August 9 (no class July 5) 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. at Open Book.

Register online at [www.loft.org](http://www.loft.org) or 612-379-8999.

Students on Rosanne Bane:

Phenomenal! I'm writing again. I feel hopeful and capable of moving forward as a direct result of taking this class.

I found the strategies and techniques a great addition to my writing habits.

Rosanne has great energy and kept us all fully engaged.



Rosanne Bane, Creativity Coach and Loft Teaching Fellow on teaching:

We get what we expect. Social science research proves it. I expect all my students to have great ideas and they do. I focus on their strengths and how they can keep growing and they do. I help them eliminate obstacles so they can focus on what they have to give the world through their writing and they give it.

Coaching Client on Rosanne Bane:

E. L. Doctorow says "Writing is like driving at night in the fog. You can only see as far as your headlights, but you can make the whole trip that way." Rosanne's coaching is like tuning into a really good and clear all-night radio station to keep you company.

Rosanne Bane on coaching:

My clients are a fascinating group of creative, powerful people. They are making a difference in their lives and in the world. It is my pleasure and privilege to guide, encourage, challenge and support them. I'd be delighted to work with you, too!