



## Feed the Right Wolf!

I saw a bumper sticker the other day that said “If you’re not outraged, you’re not paying attention.”

I’m often outraged. That outrage fills me with energy, but I don’t know how to channel it into meaningful action. I vote, I donate, I speak out, I write, I sign petitions and donate some more. And it doesn’t seem like enough. I struggle with my impotent anger. And I’m fortunate enough to be safe and secure in my home. What must it be like those who are not?

What are we as a nation, as a people going to do with our outrage? How will we get past the anger that divides us?

The Cherokee tell a story of a young man who was struggling with anger and aggression. An elder spoke to the young man, telling him his anger was understandable because each of us has two wolves inside us: a good, loving wolf and an evil, hateful wolf. The evil wolf attacks the good wolf all the time. But the two wolves are fairly well matched and neither can get rid of the other completely. “So which wolf will win in the end?” the young man asked. The elder told him, “The one you feed the most.”

The most valuable thing I can do is ask myself “Which wolf will I feed today?”

### The Dog in Sheep’s Clothing

I completely agree with the idea that there are opposing forces inside myself, but I rarely see my choices or actions as evil. Few people ever recognize their own “evil.” Even Hitler rationalized what he did, when clearly what he did was nurture his hatred on an



obsценely grand scale.

Recognizing our own capacity for good and evil is usually too big for us to get a useful hold on. Our minds sidle away from the big question and we hide in thinking “I’m just one ordinary person. What I do doesn’t matter much one way or another.”

What lets me get a working grasp of the Cherokee teaching story is to call the good wolf the Wolf of Integrity. That’s a title that makes me straighten my shoulders and call up the fortitude to honor my commitments. Calling that force inside me the Wolf

of Integrity reminds me that small things matter. It’s the small things that keep me centered and feeling right with myself.

I call the contrary force the Dog of Self-Destruction (DSD for short, which can also stand for Dog of Self-Doubt). Because I’ve been paying attention to how resistance can become sabotage or self-doubt for me, my coaching clients and students, I know self-destruction when I see it. Remembering that all humans have two opposing forces and calling the negative one the Dog of Self-Destruction keeps me from feeling overwhelmed by remorse or denial (“Oh, this little indulgence, that’s not so bad”). ‘Evil wolf’ sounds overwhelming or irrelevant. It sounds too big to fit little ol’ me. A “dog,” on the other hand, sounds like something I have some control over.

What keeps me feeding the Dog of Self-Destruction (DSD) is its ability to disguise itself as no big deal. I’ll tell myself that even though staying up late watching stupid TV may not be the best thing I could, it’s certainly not that bad. Not really.



But here's the thing: every action I take either feeds the Wolf of Integrity or the Dog of Self-Destruction. If I take a moment to ask myself which it is, I always know. I know that staying up to watch TV I'm not even interested in is about distracting myself from some uncomfortable emotion. I know that it will make it harder to wake up the next morning. I know I'll be tired and feel rushed the next day and that will make it easier for the DSD to talk me into doing "just a little bit less" of my workout or to skip my creative process time altogether "just this once." Then because I feel crappy about those choices, I'll want to distract myself and I'll feed the DSD stupid TV or some other mindless activity again. And again. And again.

Any time I feed the DSD, it's a subtle form of sabotage and self-abuse that makes it increasingly harder to return to the patterns that make my life truly enjoyable and satisfying. With a few more days and nights of whatever form of sabotage the DSD has picked out for me to indulge in this time, the self-destruction becomes more blatant.

### We All Slide Sometime

Sound familiar? We all do it from time to time. Even when things are going well, when our lives are full of great experiences, we can slide out of doing what we need to do to keep living the life we want without noticing that the ground is shifting beneath our feet.

Why do we fall into these short-term downward spirals? Often it's because something has shifted our routines. The DSD seizes that opportunity to dress itself up in the sheep's clothing of crooning "Why not? This little thing won't matter. Just this once." By the time we do notice, the wrong wolf has taken up residence, seized control of the remote and is running the show.

The Cherokee teaching story tells us this happens because the DSD (or evil wolf) always attacks the Wolf of Integrity (the good wolf). It happens because DSD is an expert at disguise and deception. And because some part of us doesn't want to see to the disguise for what it is.

Isn't it amazing how we manage to keep ourselves unaware of what we're thinking and what we're doing? That we should try to hide part of who we are from others is sad, but understandable. That we try to

disguise ourselves from our own self is amazing. Outrageous, isn't it?

### Increasing the Good Wolf's Metabolism

The Wolf of Integrity requires regular, daily feedings. If I forget to do the things that feed the loving force inside me or I postpone self-care for "just a day or two while I'm so busy," the Wolf of Integrity reminds me to feed it, but its reminders are gentle nudges.

The DSD, on the other hand, goes into a frenzy at the slightest deviation from my healthy habits. It seizes those opportunities in its jaws and won't let go. The Dog of Self-Destruction has a remarkably efficient metabolism. The smallest morsel will rouse it from slumber, stimulate its ever-ravenous appetite and keep it going for days. It demands attention, howling away in my mind, slaving and drooling all over the place, insisting I attend to it.

It's important to recognize what kind of traps your DSD sets for you (see below) and to anticipate what it might try in the future. It's also vital to learn to recognize the sound of your own DSD's voice, the way it speaks to you and the appeals or threats it's

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## What is Your DSD Selling?

You've heard how my DSD entices me – with late night TV, overscheduling myself so that I'm so busy, I "need" to let go of my workout or my creative process time.

My DSD is also a junk food pusher. That part of me knows that when I'm filling my body with food that doesn't really nourish me, my brain just can't function as well and I'm more inclined to indulge in other things that feed the evil wolf. It's enticed me with computer solitaire in the past and the new sudoku craze lately.

So what does your DSD offer you? What traps does your DSD set? It pays to notice these in advance. The good wolf inside you will help you avoid traps when you notice where and what they are.



inclined to make. The “Please Don’t Feed the Saboteur” workshop coming up October 15 will guide you with this (see page 4 for details).

As important as it is to keep the DSD leashed, it’s even more important to nurture and exercise the Wolf of Integrity. Just asking yourself “Will this action feed the Wolf of Integrity or the Dog of Self-Destruction?” is powerful. It reminds you how important each and every act of intention and integrity is. It probably doesn’t matter much on any given day whether you workout for 50 or 60 minutes, but when you’ve told yourself you’d do the whole hour, skipping the last ten minutes feeds the DSD. Those last ten minutes become a defining moment of the day.

Which is why it is so powerful to have creativity habits. When a practice becomes habitual, your brain goes on autopilot. You don’t have to think about it. You don’t enter into a debate about whether or not you’re going to do it. That keeps the DSD from even getting a toehold in your thinking. I recommend building habits around three basic practices.

**Process Time:** Do something fun that puts you in

the creative flow. Do it with no expectations about the outcome. Process is about surrender and sacrifice. It’s the time you sacrifice to open yourself to whatever inspiration the Divine gives you. Just show up and surrender to the joy of creative play. I recommend 15 to 30 minutes a day for 5 to 7 days a week.

**Self Care:** Make time to take care of your body and pamper yourself. A healthy, strong body and a relaxed, flexible mind are necessary for creative expression. Walk, exercise, take a nap, get a massage, meditate, luxuriate in whatever means self-care to you for at least a half hour a day 6 or 7 days a week.

**Product Time:** Even though this is the time you spend creating a tangible product, it’s important to evaluate your accomplishment only by whether you put your time in, not by how “good” the outcome is. Doing research, gathering materials, incubating and figuring out how it all fits together are just as significant as the production of tangible results.

Ultimately, it’s your life you are creating and the only way to create a wonderful one is to consistently feed the right wolf.

## Sing with the Right Wolf at the Right Time

Wolves sing at night. Humans need to “sing” first thing in the morning and last thing in the evening. Your singing might be actual singing or it might be journaling or coloring or working out. It’s whatever reconnects you to your creative core, your spiritual center. It’s the three basic practices of process, self-care and product time described above.

If you’ve been in one of my classes or done coaching with me, you’ve know about the basic practices. **Here’s the bit that might be new:** the more I do the practices, the more I talk to students and clients about the practices, the more I read about creativity in general, the clearer it becomes that it is essential to bracket the day with one or two practices in the morning and one or two in the evening.

That’s not to say that if you can’t do that, don’t even bother (that’s DSD talk!). Or that you might not be the exception who benefits most from doing the practices at other times of day. But for most of us, most of the time, the combination of morning and evening is the best bet.

Why? Well for one thing, doing your practice in the morning feeds the right wolf and sets the tone for the whole day. No matter what happens later, you have the solid grounding that comes from having proven to yourself one more time that you are committed to living your life well. You’ve embraced spiritual generosity – your own as you surrender yourself to the practice and the Divine’s as you receive the gifts of that surrender. You have embraced love. That makes it so much harder for the DSD to talk you into self-doubt, self-destruction and self-abuse.

Given the persistent nature of the DSD, reinforcing the Wolf of Integrity twice a day is practical wisdom. Notice when your DSD gets active and commit yourself to one of your practices just before that time. My DSD tends to rear its ugly head at night, which is why doing my Product Time writing on my novel around 9:00 p.m. worked so well. Now that the first draft of the novel is finished – WAHOO! – I need to find some other evening Product Time writing project to balance my morning practices of process and self-care. How do you want to sing morning and evening?



# Last Chance to Deepen Your Creativity! At least this year!

The first Deepen Your Creativity workshops were exciting, inspiring and engaging. It's been tremendous fun and simultaneously humbling and inspiring to facilitate workshops with such marvelously creative people. Like all the workshops in the Deepen Your Creativity series, these last two are designed to help you take your creativity to the next level. You'll be fully engaged and actively participate in a variety of techniques like brainstorming, partner processes, freewriting, discussion, polarity mapping, etc. We meet on Saturdays from 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the Open Book.

**Special Discount for the last two workshops in this year's series:** If you've taken any of the previous workshops, you're entitled to a \$7 discount on either or both the October and November workshops! Even if you haven't take any of the others, you can get a \$7 discount by taking both the remaining workshops. First workshop: Only \$50! (\$43 for previous participants!) Apply the last 2 workshops to your creative life for only \$93! (\$86 for previous participants!)

## October 15: Please Don't Feed the Saboteur

Practice keeping the Saboteur, aka the Dog of Self-Destruction, aka nasty inner critic that is never satisfied, from eating you alive.



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

## 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 [www.RosanneBane.com](http://www.RosanneBane.com) or call 612-722-4139**

## Loft Fall Classes

**Improv Fiction:** We'll play improv games to spark your imagination, interspersed with lots of in-class writing to capture the great ideas you'll discover. Thursdays 2-4 pm Sept 22 thru Oct 27.

**Writing Habit:** Everyone has talent; what really makes a writer is the habit of writing. Get support and encouragement to develop the habits to feed the right wolf. Wednesdays 9:30-11:30 am Sept 21 thru Oct 26 OR Thursdays 2-4 pm Nov 3 thru Dec 15.

**Mastering the Writing Habit:** Explore how to use Urgency, Allies, Vision and Strategy, Action, Milestone Maps and Change Anchors to transform the dream of a writing project into pages you're proud of. Wednesdays 9:30-11:30 am Nov 2 thru Dec 14.

**For more information or to register, visit [www.Loft.org](http://www.Loft.org) or call 612-379-8999.**



*When you or your organization needs a boost to improve your performance or when you need motivation and information to find how to feed the right wolf, check out my coaching and speaking services at [www.RosanneBane.com](http://www.RosanneBane.com). Or call 612-722-4139!*