

WAG Digest

Volume 12—Issue 5

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WAG President Jess Elliott presents: “The Classic Ghost Story Tradition”

Sept. 9, 2022 2:30 pm—4:00 pm—Millhopper Library

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Many of the ghost stories that thrilled Victorian and Edwardian audiences were lost and forgotten. But the classic ghost-story tradition has recently enjoyed a resurgence, thanks to dedicated anthologists and publishing houses. Hundreds have been republished.

Supernatural tales are often dismissed as pulp fiction—not

considered literature. But did you know that Harriet Beecher Stowe, Charles Dickens, Arthur Conan Doyle, Edith Wharton, Henry James, Rudyard Kipling, Frances Hodgson Burnett, Virginia Woolf, and Agatha Christie penned ghost stories? Or that Thomas Hardy penned a zombie poem? Did you know that Freud wrote a thesis on the uncanny?

What exactly does uncanny mean, anyway? It's deep and fascinating! Far beyond a tingle or a jump scare, there are psychological, historical, and sociological layers to a solid ghost story.

- Fear of death
- Desire for safety
- The uncanny



Jess Elliott presents “The Classic Ghost Story Tradition”

Sept. 9, 2022,
2:30 pm–4:00 pm

Millhopper Library, Meeting Room A
3145 NW 43rd St,
Gainesville, FL 32606

- The haunted house
- The ghost wants justice, acknowledgment, or revenge (It's about POWER.)
- Leave the relics alone



Elliott is president of the Writer's Alliance of Gainesville and the author of three collections of short, uncanny stories: *Ghost Lite*, *Tales from Kensington & Other Macabre and Unsettling Offerings*, and *Uncanny Stout*. Her humorous “Monkey” series about a Buddhist albino with a mid-life crisis, is set in Alachua County, Florida. *It's a Haint Blue Christmas* follows *Monkey Heart* and *Monkey Mind*. Elliott is an artist, author, and mom to Basset hounds. Check out her website: <https://hedonistichoundpress.com>. Additionally, her character Haint Blue has a blog at <https://haintsretreat.com> for all things related to Haint's world.

This talk may be accessed via Zoom at the link below. Note that all in-person talks are subject to change to Zoom-only talks, based on pandemic issues—Zoom link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89973131287?pwd=UWc4WXRaaDI0OWVQWmgwbTBiNHdVQT09>

Meeting ID: 899 7313 1287

Passcode: 316819



Writers Alliance Meeting:

Debut of the 2022 *Bacopa Literary Review*

Sunday, November 13
2:30 pm–4:00 pm

Millhopper Library, Meeting Room A
3145 NW 43rd St,
Gainesville, FL 32606

Come hear readings from the 2022 *Bacopa Literary Review*, the international print journal published annually by the Writers Alliance of Gainesville (www.writersalliance.org).

[The Bacopa Literary Review Editors' blog](https://bacopaliteraryrevieweditorsblog.blogspot.com/) (<https://bacopaliteraryrevieweditorsblog.blogspot.com/>) shows the quality of writing we seek each year by highlighting work we respect from previous *Bacopa* issues as well as other sources. The Bacopa editorial committee accepted submissions from April 25 through May 30, 2022. There was no submission fee.

From the hundreds of submissions received, the editors selected the best of the best in the following categories: fiction, creative nonfiction, humor, formal poetry, free verse poetry, and visual poetry. The 2022 winners are:

- Fiction Award — “An Act of Kindness” by Murzban F. Shroff; Honorable Mention — “Benny & Bjorn” by Lilia Anderson
- Creative Nonfiction Award — “Girl, Sunsplit” by Neethu Krishnan; Honorable Mention — “Waiting” by Miki Lentin
- Humor Award — “How Busy I Was” by Marjorie Drake; Honorable Mention — “Show and Tell to Remember” by Victoria Lynn Smith
- Formal Poetry Award — “Amelia’s Freckle Cream” by Shauna Osborn; Honorable Mention — “All love poems are horror poems when you are the creature” by Richaundra Thursday
- Free-Verse Poetry Award — “Listen to Gala’s mutterings” by Sylvia Anne Telfer; Honorable Mention — “In the Name of the Name” by Sunyoung Kay
- Visual Poetry Award — “A Change in Mood II” by Karla Van Vliet; Honorable Mention — “NEWS” by J. Nishida

If you are unable to attend the November “Readings” program in person, you may access it via Zoom at this link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89973131287?pwd=UWc4WXRaaDI0OWVQWmgwbTBiNHdVQT09>

Meeting ID: 899 7313 1287

Passcode: 316819



WAG BRAGS



Thank you to all those who came out to Museum Nights at the Harn Museum on the University of Florida campus to support The Writers Alliance and local Gainesville authors. A great evening of advertising for our association. Photo by Red Pepper Photography. (Annie Morien, Photographer)



And thank you to all who came to the Marketing Coalition meeting on Sept. 10.

Reminder— Another meeting is coming up on Saturday, October 8, 2022, at 1:30 p.m. — **and bring your laptop!**

(More info on the following page...)

Photo by Red Pepper Photography. (Annie Morien, Photographer)

WAG BRAGS

E-Mail Marketing Software Workshop



Would you like to email attractive newsletters to large groups of people to get the word out about your books or your speaking engagements?

If so, attend the Marketing Coalition meeting on Saturday, October 8, 2022, at 1:30 p.m. — **and bring your laptop!**

The Marketing Coalition is open to all WAG members and meets once a month at the Library Partnership, 912 NE 16th Avenue, Gainesville, FL.

Susie Baxter and Ellen Chulak, who have been sending WAG's emails, will lead the workshop.

WAG BRAGS

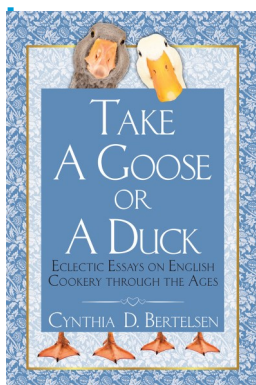


Congratulations to Cynthia Bertelsen who sent us this great review:

Cynthia D. Bertelsen's memoir, *Stoves & Suitcases: Searching for Home in the World's Kitchens*, recently won the designation of Best in the World in Food Writing from the

Gourmand World Cookbook Awards.

Founded by Edouard Cointreau of the famed French liqueur, **Gourmand** is the only international award for writers focused on all things foodwise, not just cookbooks. Of *Stoves*, *Kirkus Reviews* states: "Bertelsen's novelistic prose features dynamic scenes and vivid detail"



For more information, check out Cynthia's Web site:

<https://gherkinstomatoes.com/>

W*R*I*T*E

Sorry we had to cancel the Meet and Greet on Sept. 29, but Hurricane Ian wouldn't cooperate. This will be rescheduled soon. Stay tuned for more information.



WAG BRAGS

Thornebrook Arts Festival

October 22, 10:00 am - October 23, 2022

10:00 am to 5:00 pm

WAG members, sign up now to participate in the Thornebrook 17th Annual Fall Arts Festival to be held October 22-23, 2022, in Thornebrook Village.

The Thornebrook Festival is a fun event with art, crafts, and books on sale — and with live music, restaurants, and food trucks on site.

To sign up to work in WAG's booth to disseminate information about WAG and sell books written by WAG authors, send an email to [President Jess Elliott](mailto:PresidentJessElliott@writersalliance.org) (president@writersalliance.org)

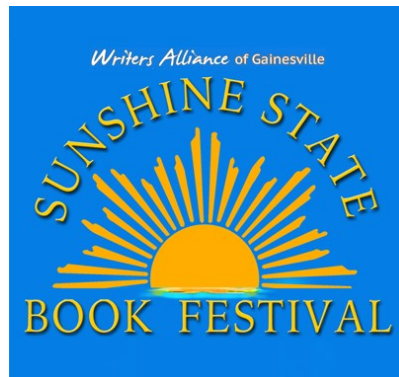
After you let her know you wish to participate, she will follow up with you, asking for the hours you can assist and, if you are an author, the books you would like to place in the booth.



WAG BRAGS

SUNSHINE STATE BOOK FESTIVAL

Want to Volunteer? (Great for your résumé!)



The fourth **Sunshine State Book Festival** will be held on Friday evening and all day Saturday, January 27-28, 2023, in the Education Building of Trinity United Methodist Church, 4000 NW 53rd Avenue, Gainesville, Florida.

Authors—see page 21 for a great opportunity to be interviewed in advance of the festival..

We're still looking for volunteers. Volunteers are needed now!

***NEEDED* Volunteer coordinator:** Need one or two people to recruit volunteers, contact UF and Santa Fe and ask for students. Other areas to reach out to: book clubs, Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Club, sororities, other such organizations and anywhere you can think to recruit from. (Volunteers should be 18 or older.)

***NEEDED* Same person, or a second person:** At the actual festival, greet and assign volunteers to tasks (you'll be given instructions.)

***NEEDED* Promo/Advertising:** two people to assist Cindy Bertelsen. Cindy will give you tasks.

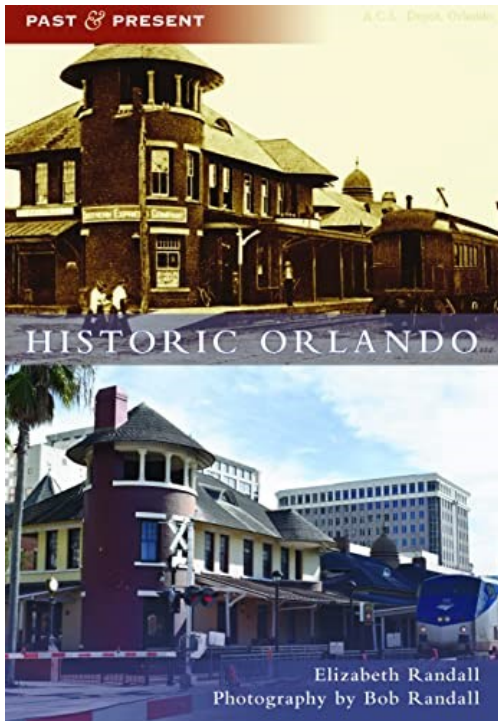
***NEEDED* Speakers coordinator:** Communicate with speakers before festival. Be kind of a host/baby sitter to speakers on day of. You will be given instructions.

***NEEDED**Program layout/Typesetting:** You won't be on your own, laying out the program.

***NEEDED* Mailchimp sender** to send out edited notices to WAG members re the festival.

If you're interested, please sign up here: <https://sunshinestatebookfestival.com/ssbf-vol.html>

WAG BRAGS



Congratulations to WAG Member, Elizabeth Randall, (and photographer Bob Randall) for publication of their new book, *Historic Orlando (Past and Present)*:

For local history lovers, *Past and Present, Historic Orlando* is a discovery of Orlando's eclectic architecture and the Historic Preservation Commission's success in saving buildings, landmarks, and memories. Rich in diversity, *Historic Orlando* provides a fascinating pictorial time line of Orlando's economic and social progression from the 19th century to the present day.

Bob and Elizabeth Randall work together as a photojournalist team. Bob runs a car stereo repair business, and Elizabeth is a retired English teacher. This is their sixth book about Florida.

The book is available Amazon here:

<https://www.amazon.com/Historic-Orlando-Present-Elizabeth-Randall-ebook/dp/B0B7P772KR/>

Congratulations to the Randalls!

W*R*I*T*E

From I'm not right in the head.com : [NOT RIGHT QUOTES](#).

These insults are from an era before the English language got boiled down to 4-letter words.

"He has never been known to use a word that might send a reader to the dictionary."-William Faulkner

(about Ernest Hemingway)

"Poor Faulkner. Does he really think big emotions come from big words?"- Ernest Hemingway

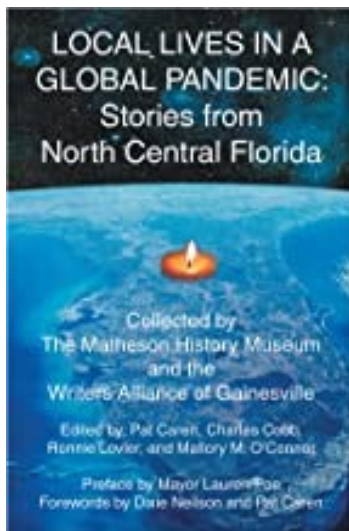
(about William Faulkner)

WAG Brags

The following review from Literary Titan is about *Local Lives in A Global Pandemic*, a book the Writers Alliance of Gainesville created in connection with the Matheson Museum. Limited copies of the book will be available at the Thornebrook Art Festival in October and the Sunshine State Book Festival in January. **They retail for 13.99.**

<https://literarytitan.com/?s=local+lives>

Local Lives in a Global Pandemic



Local Lives in a Global Pandemic is a thought-provoking compilation of stories conveying the real-life experiences of the residents of North Central Florida. Readers get an honest look at what different residents of Florida experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic. The book includes interviews from an array of people, from a local inmate, to medical personnel, a retired resident and many more. Readers also see how these residents dealt with the loss of loved ones due to COVID-19, showing just how different our experiences were during the peak of the pandemic.

This illuminating memoir is a powerful read that took me on an emotional rollercoaster since we are all still recuperating from the pandemic. During the lockdown many of us felt alone, but reading this book showed me that we were all going through the isolation together. I enjoyed reading about the medical personnel and their thoughts and experiences since they were at the front line witnessing the effects of COVID-19 and putting their lives at risk. While some people finally found the time to take a break and reconnect with themselves, others were unfortunately separated from their friends and families and some even lost the lives of their loved ones. The constant state of isolation and agony was mutual and this book has preserved that struggle not only for the victims and survivors to read, but for future generations as well.

This is an evocative and relevant collection of true stories that will help readers work through the grief brought on by COVID-19 and sympathize with other individuals who suffered in different ways. Eloquent, emotional and elevating this is a collection of stories that must be told, should be heard, and opens your eyes to the kaleidoscope of pain that the pandemic brought to our lives. While this can be deeply emotional, the stories also let us know that we are not alone, even when it feels like it.

THE BOOK WILL BE AVAILABLE AT THE UPCOMING ART AND BOOK FESTIVALS.

WAG Brags



Congratulations to Sharon Ketts, whose middle-grade novel, *The Boys on Mars*, is being published on Kindle Vella. Her Royal Palm Literary Award-winning Novel is now available in various episodes. As Sharon says, "The Kindle Vella format was a fantastic option for the book to get read. I really just wanted to get it out there. One of my friends has read it aloud for 2 years in her 5th grade classroom and the kids loved it."

Here is the book description:

Eleven-year-old Gregor Volkov didn't want to move to Mars, but his scientist parents volunteered to work at the first international family colony on that planet. Ethan Adams had spent half of his ten-year life there. Would they ever find a way to get along? When they think

they've discovered sabotage, can they overcome their differences to work together? They'll have to. Their parents' lives may depend on it.

This would be a great present for your kids or grandkids. Check it out here:

<https://www.amazon.com/The-Boys-on-Mars/dp/B0B7QHS88Z/>

W*R*I*T*E

Congratulations to William Snyder on some prolific work during the past spring season:

The Now of Stroke and Jab, Review Americana, Volume 17, Issue 1 (Spring 2022)

https://americanpopularculture.com/review_americana/spring_2022/snyder.htm

And also, the following poems were published in the listed journals:

I Wanted To Be Famous Once, Hiram Poetry Review, Issue #83 (Spring 2022): 30

Green Grub Joint, The Sandy River Review, Volume 42 (2022): 26

Lovely Cold; The Hard Stuff of Steel and Heart; Pietà (After Delacroix); and; *Electric*, Weber, Volume 38, Number 2 (Spring/Summer 2022): 130-134

Corridor in the Asylum, Evening Street, Number 33, (Spring 2022): 145

Snyder has an impressive bio:

William Snyder has published poems in Atlanta Review, Poet Lore, and Southern Humanities Review among others. He was the co-winner of the 2001 Grolier Poetry Prize; winner of the 2002 Kinloch Rivers Chapbook competition; The CONSEQUENCE Prize in Poetry, 2013; the 2015 Claire Keyes Poetry Prize; Tulip Tree Publishing *Stories That Need To Be Told* 2019 Merit Prize for Humor; and Encircle Publications 2019 Chapbook Contest. He retired from teaching writing and literature at Concordia College, Moorhead, MN, in August, 2021.

How to Write a Self-Help Book (That Actually Helps People)

Posted on Apr 18, 2022 By Reedsy authors—<https://blog.reedsy.com/how-to-write-a-self-help-book/>

. You've overcome an obstacle or problem and learned some important life lessons — now you want to write a self-help book and share your experience and wisdom with other people. You're ready to give them the tools they need to grow and improve their lives.

This post walks you through the whole process, sharing some tips from expert self-help editors on the Reedsy marketplace. Here's how you can write your own self-help book:

1. Identify a specific problem your book will remedy
2. Make your readers believe you can help them
3. Don't forget that you're telling a story
4. Give your readers specific actions they can take
5. Pick an appealing and informative title (and subtitle)
6. Always cite your sources
7. Give readers something extra at the end

1. Identify a specific problem your book will remedy

To some extent, all [nonfiction books](#) (with the exception of memoirs) are about identifying a problem and offering a solution. This could mean practical, step-by-step advice or a deeper, more nuanced understanding of an existing situation that changes the reader's perception. Self-help books are no different: your job as a writer is to zero in on a particular problem, and provide your reader a way to deal with it.

Accept that you need to limit your scope

Many self-help writers begin with a very general idea, like overcoming mental illness or becoming a happier person. Broad, abstract topics like this are great as a first instinct, but you'll need to refine the scope of your book for the sake of your readers, your sanity, and your commercial potential.

Abstract concepts are hard to comprehensively address in a helpful way that provides concrete insights and advice. They're also notoriously difficult to sell to a traditional [self-help publisher](#), who will be looking for something new and unique with a defined target audience. As of March 2022, there are over 70,000 titles in the Self-Help [category on Amazon](#) — so writing a generic book about “finding happiness” won't quite cut it.

How to Write a Self-Help Book (That Actually Helps People) (cont.)



"This book will make you so happy, you'll absent-mindedly eat flowers." (Photo by Pablo Merchán Montes)

Distill your idea

A good way to focus the scope of your book is to fill in the blanks of this imaginary pledge to your reader:

If you are _____ and your problem is _____, I can help you by _____.

This pledge helps you identify your audience, the problem they're facing, and its solution. We'll use *ParentShift: Ten Universal Truths That Will Change the Way You Raise Your Kids* by Wendy Thomas Russell, Linda Hatfield, and Ty Hatfield as a vehicle to explore all three.

Audience

Understanding your target audience is crucial when writing any type of nonfiction. Not only will it help you market your book, but it will also be the driving force that shapes your book and helps you write it *well*. After all, how can you help someone if you don't know who they are and what they need? So ask yourself who will gain the most from the material in your book. The answer should be as specific as possible. Let's look at *ParentShift: Ten Universal Truths That Will Change the Way You Raise Your Kids*.

How to Write a Self Help Book (That Actually Helps People) (cont.)

It's safe to assume that this book is aimed at parents — but what *kind* of parents? Well, the heart of this book is about transforming how parents approach temper tantrums and timeouts, so we might say that this book is specifically targeted at new parents who've run out of options.

And don't just stop there, think about location, cultural context, and occupation: parents who work full-time might especially need fast solutions — with triple shifts, play dates and a mountain of housework to stay on top of, *ten* universal truths might be as much as they can handle. The more detail you have on your demographic, the easier it will be to target them.

Problem

“pain point”) and identify the many shapes they might take. *ParentShift*, for example, immediately sets up a problem: you're struggling with raising your children, you know it, and common parenting methods aren't working for you.

When you've identified your central problem, make it visible in the title, subtitle, or blurb, so that your audience can tell that this book is for them right away.

Solution

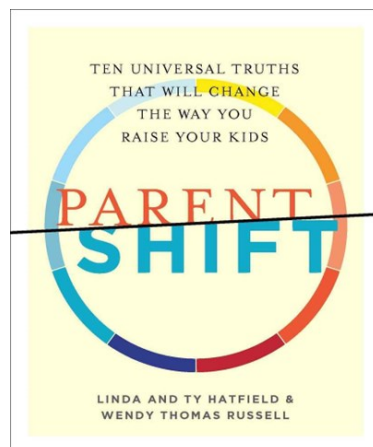
How does a book on terrible teens and toddlers solve the problem of mediocre parenting? Well, as *ParentShift*'s blurb notes, it “challenges some of our most popular disciplinary tools and replaces them with more than a dozen ‘toolkits’ designed to help parents solve virtually any household without sabotaging their long term goals.” In other words, this book helps you analyze your problem in new ways, and shows you alternative courses of action.

Presumably, this is the kind of insight that made you want to [write a book](#) in the first place, so we'll assume you have a good understanding of your own ideas here — but just in case the thoughts are getting jumbled in your mind, try talking out your ideas with a friend to make sure they're easy to understand and you're able to communicate them clearly. Then put pen to paper, and repeat the process!

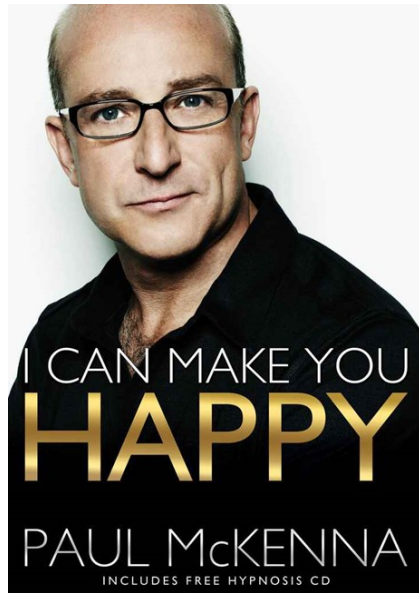
2. Make your readers believe you can help them

The success of a self-help book hinges entirely on your credibility and authority as a writer. After all, you wouldn't wander down the street asking random people to help you improve your life, would you? That's why you'll often see beloved media personalities publish self-help books: they have an inbuilt audience of people who already trust them.

But how can you create trust with prospective readers if you're not [Russell Brand](#) or [Oprah Winfrey](#)? Two ways to do this involve sharing facts about yourself — the third, and sometimes forgotten one, has to do with style and structure.



How to Write a Self Help Book (That Actually Helps People) (cont.)



Qualifications tell readers others can vouch for your knowledge

One way in which authors can show that they're authoritative sources is by noting any relevant qualifications. For example, Brené Brown regularly cites her work as a researcher and psychology professor when examining the kinds of people who struggle to be vulnerable in her book [Daring Greatly](#). But university degrees aren't the only qualification that matters — take Matthieu Ricard, for example, whose book [The Art of Meditation](#) is infinitely more appealing because of the fact that its writer is a Buddhist monk, and so someone the reader trusts to know meditation well.

Stare into the eyes of hypnotist-turned-author Paul McKenna... and believe.

Personal experiences say “I’ve been there”

By opening up and sharing stories from your personal past, you show readers you're speaking from real, first-hand experience — not just theorizing from a distance. For example, Louise Hay's self-help classic, [The Power Is Within You](#), followed her many years of work with HIV/AIDS patients and her own experience of cervical cancer, and focuses on how positive thought patterns can help lead to improved wellbeing. Were Hay not speaking from experience, skeptical readers might struggle to see why they should read her book — but by letting millions of readers walk a mile in her shoes, she gave them a reason to listen to what she had to say.

Persuasive style and structure matter the most

While it's important that readers can see that you are worthy of their trust, resist the urge to turn your book into a LinkedIn page of your Expert Qualifications. [Elaine O'Neill](#), a former Hay House Commissioning Editor, points out that self-help writers often miss a trick in getting readers to believe in them by neglecting style and structure:

"One mistake that I find new self-help authors make more often than anything else is forgetting their reader. They believe they have to include everything they've learned into their manuscript, without thinking about what the reader needs to learn, and how to feed it to them bit by bit. Authors can show their authority by really knowing their reader inside out and speaking to them directly, by sharing their own recovery from the same issue.

"You want the reader to feel seen by you, and once they do, they'll trust your expertise because you've been there — and you can see they are too."

How to Write a Self Help Book (That Actually Helps People) (cont.)

Avoid didacticism. Or, as Madonna would say: "Papa, don't preach."

Fiction readers are notoriously intolerant of didactic narratives — self-help books are a slightly different story, because the writer is, by default, in the position of a teacher. That said, no one likes to be spoken down to, and a superior tone will not help you assert your expertise. You aren't running for president of the Nobel committee — you just want a reader to like you enough to *listen*, so make an effort to communicate your knowledge in a style of language that speaks to them.

3. Don't forget that you're telling a story

Self-help books rarely follow a single, overarching [narrative arc](#). Typically, they're guided not by a narrative but by an argument or thesis — with chapters structured around stories that help illustrate the points made.

Marie Kondo's chapter subtitles in [The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying-Up](#) suggest what topic will follow without giving too much away.

How do you make sure your book is readable, compact, and flows logically from chapter to chapter? By committing to [a detailed outline](#) before you even start to write. In traditional publishing, you will almost always first draft [a book proposal](#) which will serve as an excellent plan. But even if you're self-publishing, making a plan is well worth your time to ensure that every chapter is necessary and contributes value.

As with novels, [good beginnings](#) can make or break a self-help book. Your introduction should tell readers a little about you and why you're writing a book. It should also give them a quick, at-a-glance summary of what will follow. Chapter 1 is where you'll start getting to the meat of things, sketching out the complexities of the central problem. After that, it's up to you how the rest of the book will be structured.

Solidify through anecdotes and emotional storytelling

Ideally, you should structure each chapter of your self-help book around a specific point or insight — and the best way to illustrate each point is through a story or anecdote, whether it's personal, hypothetical, or entirely fictional. Stories have the great effect of eliciting an emotional response or more active interest by involving a [character](#) that readers can empathize with or watch with curiosity.

Need an example? Think of the way Christianity's teachings are shared through the parables Jesus taught lessons with: the story of the good Samaritan is infinitely more memorable than "be kind." Storytelling also creates interest and [suspense](#), keeping readers invested — take a look at Dale Carnegie's [How to Win Friends and Influence People](#), the first chapter of which starts as follows:

"On May 7, 1931, the most sensational manhunt New York City had ever known had come to its climax. After weeks of search, 'Two Gun' Crowley—the killer, the gunman who didn't smoke or drink—was at bay, trapped in his sweetheart's apartment on West End Avenue."

How to Write a Self Help Book (That Actually Helps People) (cont.)

Only tell stories that add to your message

Self-help editor [Danielle Goodman](#) emphasizes the need to only tell stories worth telling: “When it comes to self-help books, proof of concept is absolutely necessary. That’s why story-telling can be so powerful. It lifts your advice from the page and places it in the real world of real people, like yourself and your readers.

“The main question to ask yourself when telling pieces of your story is: Is what I’m writing in service of my message? In other words, how does this story underscore what you want the reader to feel, understand, and act on?

“Once you know the answer, be explicit in connecting the dots for the reader. Tell them exactly why you included this story and what you want them to get out of it. And if you can’t quite figure out why this story is important to your message, leave it out for now.”

'In self-help writing, storytelling lifts your advice from the page and places it in the real world of real people.'
Great tip from [@hushimreading!](#)

4. Give your readers specific actions they can take

The self-help genre is often more abstract than, say, how-to guides or even memoir, so your book may run the risk of being too woolly in its advice. And if you’ve ever tried to get travel directions from someone who *sorta kinda* knows the way to the library, you’ll know how frustrating vagueness can be. Self-help editor [Kate Victory Hannisian](#) says that “one indicator that you haven’t made your self-help advice completely clear is a comment from editors or beta-readers like this: ‘Great, but how does someone actually DO that?’

'Even in nonfiction writing, it's important to "show, don't tell.'" Great advice from [@katebluepencil](#)

“Sometimes the solution is to see if you can break that advice into bite-sized, actionable steps. Other times, adding specific examples and vivid anecdotes with a few well-chosen details can help make your advice real and relatable for your target reader, and thus more useful to them. Depending on the type of self-help book you’re writing, these examples may come from your own experience or other sources, but the key is knowing that it’s important to [show, don’t tell](#) — even in nonfiction writing.”

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How to Write a Self Help Book (That Actually Helps People) (cont.)

You've probably heard this classic piece of writing advice a thousand times. But what does 'Show, Don't Tell' actually mean?

To make sure your actionable points aren't lost in the storytelling, you can offer a recap at the end of each chapter. Heather Heying and Bret Weinstein's [A Hunter-Gatherer's Guide to the 21st Century](#) reiterates each of its chapters perfectly, summarizing the main takeaways in bullet points — but you can go a step further and offer a checklist of actions to take or questions the reader can ask themselves to diagnose their own needs.

5. Pick an appealing and informative title (and subtitle)

Self-help titles are generally pretty formulaic, and nearly always include a subtitle:
[Attention-Grabbing Phrase]:[Description of the Book]

You can see this formula in action with self-help titles like:

- *The 4-Hour Work Week: Escape the 9-5, Live Anywhere and Join the New Rich*
- *The Self-Love Habit: Transform fear and self-doubt into serenity, peace and power*
- *The Mindful Self-Compassion Workbook: A Proven Way to Accept Yourself, Build Inner Strength, and Thrive*

So what do you need to bear in mind when you [title your own book](#)? Let's do a super-quick linguistic analysis of this genre's common title elements. 🧐

a) Direct address

Many self-help titles address the reader directly with the second person pronoun 'you'. As with fiction written in [second person point of view](#), directly addressing your reader has an immediate and personal effect, especially if the title catches a reader's eye on a store shelf or online. Here are a few examples:

- *You Are a Badass* by Jen Sincero
- *Make Your Bed* by Admiral William H. McRaven
- *Declutter Your Mind* by S.J. Scott and Barrie Davenport
- *Your Money or Your Life* by Vicki Robin & Joe Dominguez



There's a reason recruitment posters often use the second person.

How to Write a Self Help Book (That Actually Helps People) (cont.)

b) Imperatives

Authoritative statements are attention-grabbing in the same way that second person is: by being immediate. Titles that use imperatives put this most powerful of grammatical moods to use in order to command the reader's attention. Can't think of any? Here's a few:

- *Stay Sexy & Don't Get Murdered* by Karen Kilgariff and Georgia Hardstark
- *Stick with Exercise for a Lifetime* by Robert Hopper
- *Find Your Artistic Voice* by Lisa Congdon
- *Keep Going* by Austin Kleon

c) An inspirational tone

Whether they evoke a sense of magic, or are simply a sweet combination of words that offer a momentary glimpse of *possibility*, self-help titles are particularly prone to taking on an inspirational tone. Inspirational titles might mention happiness, success, or a whole host of other positive abstract nouns: growth, change, improvement. How do they work? By promising wonderful things ahead. A few examples for you:

- *Big Magic* by Elizabeth Gilbert
- *Radical Acceptance* by Tara Brach
- *The Magic of Thinking Big* by David J. Schwartz
- *Street Smart Disciplines of Successful People* by Mark Mullins and John Kuhn

d) Search-optimized subtitle

When self-help covers feature these inspirational titles, they often need a subtitle to contextualize the contents of the book. These relatively prosaic second titles give a more informative description of what readers can expect.

That much is obvious — what fewer people realize is that titles are often search-optimized, meaning that they are written to contain some important [keywords](#) or terms related to the topic being discussed. This helps the book be found by readers searching for those terms on Amazon. Take a look at the titles below, and notice the keywords in their subtitles — bolded for your convenience:

- *The Power of Now: A Guide to **Spiritual Enlightenment*** by Eckhart Tolle
- *Deep Work: Rules for **Focused** Success in a **Distracted** World* by Cal Newport
- *Stolen Focus: Why You Can't Pay **Attention** — And How to **Think Deeply** Again* by Johann Hari
- *Tired as F*ck: **Burnout** at the Hands of **Diet**, **Self-Help**, and **Hustle Culture*** by Caroline Dooner

Confused? It's got to do with the way [Amazon's algorithms](#) work, as Reedsy co-founder Ricardo Fayet explains in his [free book *How to Market a Book*](#).

How to Write a Self Help Book (That Actually Helps People) (cont.)

“If your book is ‘indexed’ for a keyword, that means it will turn up as a result when a customer enters that term into the Amazon search bar. For example, more than nine thousand [e-books](#) are indexed on the Kindle Store for “herbal remedies.” [...] The closer the match between your title, or a part of your title, and the search keyword, the higher your book will rank.”

Looking for more marketing insights? You can download Ricardo’s book for free:



6. Always cite your sources

It’s unlikely that you’re the first person to ever write about your topic, or even give advice about your topic. That’s okay — different people can give different, and still useful, advice on the same issues, so don’t feel like your idea is “taken.”

The important thing is to acknowledge those who have informed your research, clearly giving them credit for ideas they have contributed. By all means add to these or expand them, but, as many a disgruntled undergraduate can attest, you should never present them as your own: that’s intellectual property theft at worst — and at best, very uncool.

Instead, be gracious: cite your sources, describe their positions if they differ from yours, and situate yourself as one of the many voices in this dialogue. Take Cal Newport as your example — his introduction of previous contributions on the subject of technology being distracting is a masterclass in sketching out an existing discussion and clarifying your place in it:

“[This idea] is not new. [Nicholas Carr’s] *The Shallows* was just the first in a series of recent books to examine the Internet’s effect on our brains and work habits. These subsequent titles include William Powers’s *Hamlet’s BlackBerry*, John Freeman’s *The Tyranny of E-mail*, and Alex Soojung-Kin Pang’s *The Distraction Addiction*—all of which agree, more or less, that network tools are distracting us from work that requires unbroken concentration, while simultaneously degrading our capacity to remain focused. Given this existing body of evidence, I will not spend more time in this book trying to establish this point.”

7. Give readers something extra at the end

Consider this a bonus step, particularly useful to those writers who hope to make a living from their writing careers. Supposing a reader has finished your book, you know that you have an interest in common with them — so there may be more they can learn from you.

How to Write a Self Help Book (That Actually Helps People) (cont.)

If you're active on social media, teach a video course, or offer further resources on similar topics freely available on your platform, mention this in your book. Even if you have none of these things at the moment, you can offer a simple and free resource that complements your book, like a printable checklist the reader can download for easy reference. The idea is that you'll point the reader to your [website](#), and offer them a "reader magnet," in other words allow them to download something in exchange for them signing up to your mailing list... which you'll need to set up if you don't already have one!

Thank you to Reedsy for permission to use this article:
<https://blog.reedsy.com/how-to-write-a-self-help-book/>

Check out the Reedsy Web site for more writing tips:
<https://reedsy.com/>

Crafting beautiful books is at the heart of everything that Reedsy does. We're changing the way books are published by giving authors and publishers access to talented professionals, powerful tools, and free educational content. Reedsy was founded in the summer of 2014 by Emmanuel Nataf, Ricardo Fayet, Vincent Durand and Matt Cobb. Since then, we've proudly built a community of over 1 million authors and 2,500 freelance professionals — helping them bring more than 15,000 books to market each year.

W*R*I*T*E

A Unique Opportunity

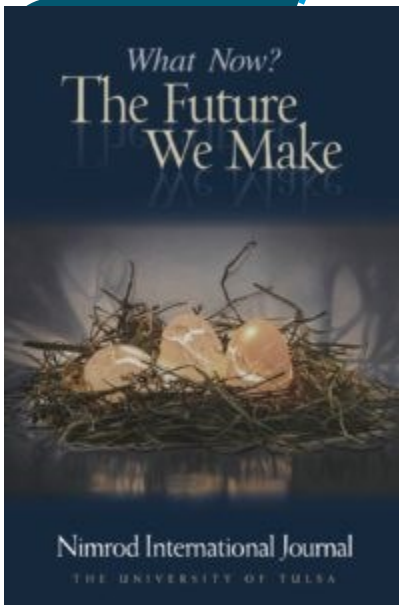


One of the Sunshine State Book Festival sponsors, At The WELLness Network (ATWN), is offering a unique opportunity for all the authors participating the 2023 festival. On a first come first served basis, they are able to offer you a spot on their weekly *ATWN YouTube/FB Live Show*. The 30-minute program on Friday evenings at 7:00 p.m. (Eastern Time) will include interviews with 3 or more authors.

Authors will have the opportunity to post this video to your social media outlets, thus helping promote your book as well as inviting existing and new fans to meet you in person at the Sunshine State Book Festival on January 27–28, 2023.

If you are interested in being interviewed by ATWN, please contact Pat Caren, Festival chair, who is scheduling the interviews.

Pat Caren – pmrc423@gmail.com



Calls for Submission

Nimrod International Journal is offering Craft talks and Q&As for \$5. You can find out more information about the journal here:

<https://artsandsciences.utulsa.edu/nimrod/>

Or go to their Submittable page to sign up:

<https://nimrodjournal.submittable.com/submit>

Craft Talks and Q&As

Craft talks and Q&As have a \$5 participation fee, which includes a digital copy of our fall issue, *Awards 44*. Payment is via the registration form on Submittable.

Thursday, October 27th, 7:00 p.m., Central Time

Surprise in Fiction — Christopher Murphy / *Craft Talk*

Sunday, October 30th, 2:00 p.m., Central Time

The 2022 Katherine Anne Porter Prize for Fiction: A Reading with Toni Jensen, Ellen Rhudy, and Treena Thibodeau / *Reading and Author Chat*

Saturday, November 5th, 1:00 p.m., Central Time

The 2022 Pablo Neruda Prize for Poetry: A Reading with Kaveh Bassiri, Lory Bedikian, and Angela Kirby / *Reading and Author Chat*

Saturday, November 12th, 2:00 p.m., Central Time

Collaborative Writing: Poetry — Francine Ringold / *Craft Talk*

Thursday, December 1st, 7:00 p.m., Central Time

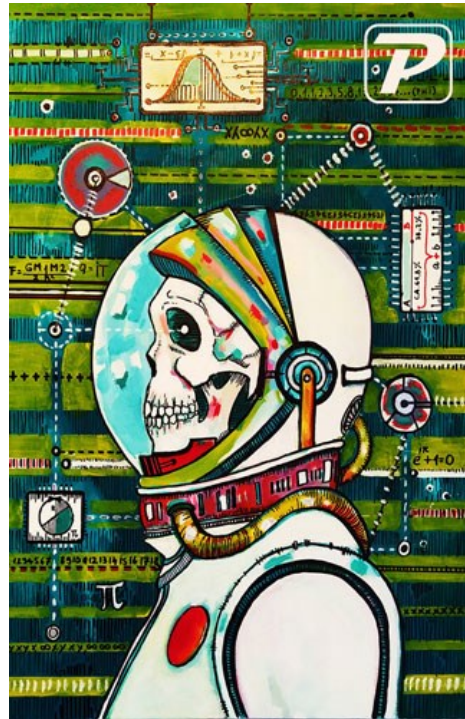
BIPOC Women: Claim Your Voice, Empower Your Writing — Jackie Graves, Sandra Hunter (moderator), Marianela Medrano, Lynne Thompson / *Panel Discussion*

Craft talks

Calls for Submissions

Posted September 28, 2022
Palooka Seeks Chapbooks, Prose, Poetry,
Artwork, Photography
Deadline: Year-round

Palooka is an international literary magazine. For over a decade we've featured new, up-and-coming, and established writers, artists, and photographers from around the world. We're open to diverse forms and styles and are always seeking unique chapbooks, fiction, poetry, nonfiction, artwork, photography, and graphic narratives. Submissions open year-round.



W*R*I*T*E

WhimsicalPoet Seeks Poetry/Art/Flash Fiction for the January 2023 Issue
Deadline: Rolling

WhimsicalPoet seeks all forms of poetry, art, and flash fiction that surprises, challenges, chills, endears, and evokes a strong emotional response from readers. We love word mavericks, independent thinkers, and creators who strive toward mastery and truth to expose threads of the human experience. Send up to 5 pieces in a Word or Google Doc to or submit through google forms via the link on our submission page (see below). Art will be considered for the cover of our print journal and our website. Published poetry and fiction will appear in our journal, and a smaller selection will also appear on our website. Please include a short bio. Full details: WhimsicalPoet.com/submission-guidelines/.

Calls for Submissions



ISSUED: stories by active-duty military, veterans, and family members
Deadline: November 11, 2022

ISSUED is looking for stories by active-duty military, veterans, and family members—specifically, poetry and flash prose (fiction or memoir) that expresses the spectrum of experiences within military life—e.g. gender and sexuality, BIPOC experiences, physical and mental health, combat, enlisting and separating, family and relationships, and reintegration into society. We're also accepting visual art in any genre (up to 5 pieces). Submit up to 5 poems or 2 pieces of flash prose (1000 words or fewer) in a single word doc to by **November 11, 2022**. Please include a bio (100 words or less) that includes your military affiliation. issuedjournal.wordpress.com

W*R*I*T*E



Calls for Submissions

The Hamilton Stone Review Is Open for Submissions 9-8-22 through 10-8-22
Deadline: October 8, 2022

The Hamilton Stone Review opens for poetry and prose submissions for the Fall 2022 Issue #47 on September 8, 2022 and closes Saturday, October 8, 2022. Submissions may close early if the issue fills. Poetry submissions should be e-mailed only to Kevin Stein at with "HSR" in the subject line. Fiction and nonfiction submissions should be e-mailed as an attachment only to Dorian Gossy at . For more information, please see www.hamiltonstone.org/hsr.html#submissions.



*W*R*I*T*E*

- Book of Matches Seeks Submissions
- **Deadline:** December 1, 2022

In an age dominated by our worst tendencies for tribalism, it's more important than ever to celebrate the best in humanity through the very real magic of words. *Book of Matches* is always interested in protest—interested in protest against the unknowing alive in human existence, in protest against the knowing, too. In essence, *Book of Matches* celebrates what burns in the dark, and too the assurance of how little this illuminates before going out. Send your most meaningful lies, real lives, and poetry of both that we may see a bit more clearly the stormy seas around us all. www.bookofmatcheslitmag.com

Contests

North American Review
James Hearst Poetry Prize
November 1, 2022
Entry fee: \$23.00

<http://northamericanreview.org>

A prize of \$1,000 and publication in *North American Review* is given annually for a single poem. Paul Guest will judge. Submit up to five poems of any length with a \$23 entry fee, which includes an issue of *North American Review*, by November 1. All entries are considered for publication. Visit the website for complete guidelines.

W*R*I*T*E

Kurt Vonnegut Speculative Fiction Prize
November 1, 2022
Fee \$23

<http://northamericanreview.org>

A prize of \$1,000 and publication in *North American Review* will be given annually for a work of speculative fiction. Brian Evenson will judge. Submit a short story, work of flash fiction, or novel excerpt of up to 10,000 words with a \$23 entry fee, which includes an issue of *North American Review*, by November 1. All entries are considered for publication. Visit the website for complete guidelines.

W*R*I*T*E

Fiction Collective Two

A prize of \$1,500 and publication by Fiction Collective Two is given annually for a novel, short story collection, novella, or novella collection. U.S. writers who have not previously published a book with Fiction Collective Two are eligible. Kiik Araki-Kawaguchi will judge. Using only the online submission system, submit a manuscript of any length with a brief bio and a \$25 entry fee by November 1. Visit the website for complete guidelines.

<https://www.fc2.org/prizes/>

Fiction Collective Two, Ronald Sukenick Innovative Fiction Contest, University of Alabama Press, P.O. Box 870380, Tuscaloosa, AL 35487.
(773) 702-7000.

Contests

***Conduit* is a biannual literary journal that is at once direct, playful, inventive, irreverent, and darkly beautiful. Despite common sense and the laws of economics,**

<https://www.conduit.org/book-prizes>

Minds on Fire Open Book Prize

Awarded annually and open to any poet writing in English, regardless of previous publication record, the prize seeks to represent the best contemporary writing in high quality editions of enduring value. Prospective entrants are encouraged to familiarize themselves with *Conduit*, which champions originality, intelligence, irreverence, and humanity. All manuscripts welcome, be they first books or last books.

Previously unpublished manuscripts of 48-90 pages should be submitted through our Submittable page.

Because the prize is judged anonymously, the author's name should not appear anywhere in the collection, i.e., neither on the title page nor in the body of the manuscript. If applicable, please include an acknowledgments page, listing any previous publication for the individual poems in the collection.

The winning poet will receive \$1,500 and 30 author copies. The *Conduit* editorial board will select the winning manuscript. Current and former employees and interns of *Conduit* are not eligible.

Submission period: August 1—October 31, 2022.

\$25.00 Entry Fee





Writer's Alliance of Gainesville
A not-for-profit Florida corporation

P.O. Box 358396

Gainesville/Florida/32635-8396

352-336-8062/wagmail@cox.net

The Writers Alliance of Gainesville (WAG) promotes, encourages and supports aspiring and experienced regional writers. This goal is accomplished via WAG monthly meetings, public readings, ongoing small critique groups, a literary journal, writers' contests, and collaborations with schools and civic organizations to foster creative expression through the written word.

