



WEED OUT DOUBT AND WATER THE SEEDS OF CREATIVITY AND CONFIDENCE

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FOUR NEW COLUMNS!

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BUILDING CONFIDENCE:

WRITING IS ABOUT MORE THAN WORDS ON THE PAGE



By Lynne Golodner

I've been teaching writing since the 1990s, and while I teach craft, structure, and the business side of book publishing and marketing, I've realized that I am mostly teaching confidence.

After hearing from too many writers who doubt their voice is strong enough, good enough, or compelling enough, I created a class called Finding Your Voice at Midlife. It was intended to help people gain enough confidence to put pen to paper. Writers from age 30 to 85 signed up, so I dropped the "Midlife" part and now just call it Finding Your Voice.

But it's turned into so much more.

RECONNECT WITH THE JOY OF WRITING

When we begin the class, I encourage writers to explore times in their life when they felt most like themselves. They often go back to childhood and write about that younger self—which opens the door for many rich stories. It's powerful to reconnect with the part of the self that was confident and clear on its mission.

About halfway through the six-week Finding Your Voice class, a student inevitably remarks, "This is like therapy!"

I'm no therapist, but delving into the *why* behind self-doubt and lack of confidence is hard, deep work—excavating the soul, you might say, to get back to who we've always been. The first weeks are focused on remembering a time when students loved writing and it was easy and fun; the latter weeks move into free-writes and the stories that students have yearned to write.

In a supportive community, anything a person writes is valid—and this is critical to my students' outcomes. At some point, a switch flips: Writers have an aha moment where they reconnect with the person they are at their core.

"I second-guessed my writing for fifteen years, thinking I didn't have a story to tell," said Laura Lee Ellen Johnson, a student of mine. "This past year has been my discovery of confidence. I finally sent an essay out, and it has been published. The feedback has been phenomenal, and I have touched many lives. That's an honor that has boosted me even more."

FINDING YOUR VOICE TAKES TIME

When I first envisioned the Finding Your Voice course, I focused on the pivots and realizations many people make at midlife, inspired by my own experience. Although I'd always called myself a writer, it was something I did on the side, when I had time, which was not often. Even after publishing eight books between 1996 and 2013, I had to focus on other efforts—marketing, journalism—to earn a living. In teaching, I wanted to help others gather the courage to do what they'd always wanted—and to be the best version of themselves that had been silenced to please other people.

Another of my students, Barb Summers, from Uxbridge, Ontario, Canada, suffered from self-doubt even after completing a creative writing certificate at the University of Toronto. She left her full-time job to write novels and now focuses “on realistic goal-setting and expectation management.”

“The best way for me to build confidence is to just keep writing,” she said. “Going into writing knowing that it isn't always going to be easy has helped with my confidence because then I don't think it's only me struggling.”

CONFIDENCE IS A LIFELONG PURSUIT

I teach a lot of classes—Demystifying Show Don't Tell, Perfecting Line Breaks in Poetry, Building Your Author Brand, and more—and in each one, I teach technique, craft, and how-tos. But under it all, these are courses in self-belief—for me as much as for my students.

“Confidence and desire are absolutely essential to becoming a successful writer, to sustaining the work,” said Barbara Jones, a literary agent with the Stuart Krichevsky Agency.

Jones was an editor at Harper's when I met her at the Iowa Summer Writers Workshop 30 years ago and has been a mentor and friend ever since.

“From a business perspective, agents and publishers and readers are all hoping for writers who are athletes of the word,” Jones said, “who will play a great game and get up and play it again and with increasing mastery. That long-game quality of desire—and having enough confidence to sustain it—are everything.”

Of course, gaining confidence is not an overnight pursuit, and once writers get there, they must nurture their newfound confidence. The best way to do that is to surround yourself with supportive writing peers, mentors, and teachers who appreciate what you're trying to accomplish—on the page and in your career as an author.

This process is powerful and never-ending, but then finding your voice—and your people—is a treasure and one worth hanging on to.

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HERE ARE SOME FREE-WRITE QUESTIONS I SHARE WITH MY STUDENTS. USE THEM TO START YOUR CONFIDENCE-BUILDING PROCESS:

- Where does your origin story depart from its origins and become your own? What is a pivotal moment that allowed this to happen?
- How has your origin story hindered the coming forth of your voice?
- What pieces of your origin story do you want to keep? What pieces might you discard?
- Why do you write?
- What do you hope will be the impact or outcome of your writing?
- What are your writing superpowers—that is, what can you originally and uniquely bring to people from your perspective, experience, expertise?



Lynne Goldner is the award-winning, bestselling author of 11 books, a writing coach and retreat leader, and a marketing entrepreneur. Learn more at <https://lynnegoldner.com> or subscribe to her Substack at <https://lynnegoldnerauthor.substack.com>.