



How to Smash Your Writing Roadblocks

A Damn Fine Words Casual Conversation Interview and Worksheet Package

*brought to you by James Chartrand of Damn Fine Words
And special guest Peter Shallard, The Shrink for Entrepreneurs*

Peter Shallard is THE shrink for entrepreneurs, a leading business psychology consultant helping people make phenomenal mindset changes so they achieve greater success. He knows your psychology has massive impact on your bottom line... and your ability to write.

And when your business depends on you to generate blog posts, newsletters, website copy... any content it needs for marketing purposes, you need a healthy psychology.

You can't afford writer's block. It could grind your income to a halt.

So I sat down with Peter Shallard and had a casual conversation about how to create effortless writing and smash away writer's block forever. Together, we debunked mysteries, told it straight, shared stories and techniques, and talked about common writer psychology myths – including the cold, hard truth about writer's block.

We knocked it out of the park. The call was jam-packed with valuable advice, psychological tactics and sneaky strategies to help you write with a positive, stress-free psychology that lets the words flow.

I won't lie – this call is big. Big ideas, big philosophies. And Peter and I only skimmed the surface of writing psychology.

You can listen to the call by [clicking here](#).

And to help you put those psychological lifesavers into action right away, I've put together an action worksheet for you. It includes a summary of the big ideas on this call, tasks to help you eliminate writer's block forever and some straight talk for you to think over.

By the end of this call, you'll be ready to take charge of your mind... and of your writing.

The Big Idea

This call's main theme was "how to smash through writer's block", but the biggest takeaway message is that writer's block is all in your mind. And you're in complete control.

But when you're feeling stuck with writer's block, how can you shake free? Peter and I both agree you should:

- Stop making excuses and start seeking solutions to the root cause
- Be honest about your self-sabotage and inability to write
- Improve your skills to build freeing self-confidence for your writing

Ready? Use this worksheet to get started!



Mission #2: Decide Who's In Control

Writer's block doesn't exist. It's not a disease you can catch. It's not a physical problem you have, like a limp. Believing in writer's block is about as useful as believing in fairies.

Maybe you can't write. Fine. But there's nothing external in the air that floated along and froze you up, physically preventing you from writing. *It's all in your mind.*

You've effectively allowed an abstract concept to take control of your actions, behaviours... and even your business.

That's a scary thought.

Here's another scary thought: The Muse.

Many writers love to talk about the Muse. They imagine her a sexy beast in leather boots or a whimsical spirit that sparks their creative mood.

But the Muse is another abstract, intangible imaginary concept. And if you believe you have a Muse, you've effectively given away your creative power to the whims and wishes of your new imaginary friend.

Scary, right? Told you so.

I refuse to believe in the Muse. I believe I have complete control over my mind and my ability to write, as long as both hands are in good physical shape. (And even then I could write with a pen in my mouth, given enough practice.) I'll never wait for some imaginary spirit to grant me momentary ability to write – and you shouldn't either.

You have full control. Of your business, of your ability of write and of your mind.

That means the Muse is just an attractive, fantastical excuse. You can easily blame your lack of production and laziness for any given day on your Muse. "Sorry! I had writer's block!"

Try that on a paying client.

The honesty starts here. List 5 truths why you're allowing yourself to get jammed in the writing process, whether it's in the beginning phases of coming up with ideas or the end phases of anxiety over what readers will think of your work.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Good. Now we're getting somewhere.



And don't think you're alone in this. I've had my share of Museless days, and my truths were that 1) I was bored, 2) I felt overworked, 3) I hadn't been sleeping or eating well, 4) I hated the work, 5) I lacked confidence, 6) I thought I sounded silly.

And that's just to name a few. But once I named my true problems and reasons for not being able to write, I could do something about them. I ate, slept, took a break, wrote something fun instead, learned a new skill and got real about sounding silly. (That last one was just me being a wuss.)

There's power in names – because when you know the name of what's really bothering you, you can immediately start solving the problem.

All done? Move to the next step!

Mission #3: Get a Game Plan

Not knowing what to write or how to write it is a common reason people have for blocking up on writing. Have you ever sat down at your desk, opened up a blank document and then sat there sort of staring at it, wondering what to say next?

I have. You type a few sentences and then discard them. Your thoughts skitter about. You don't feel sure about any of them. And you slow down in your writing.

Soon you're just staring at the screen. It's blank-page syndrome... otherwise known as "no game plan".

You always need a game plan when it comes to writing. If you don't know why you're writing something or why it's important to write this, then there's not much point in writing at all.

With a good game plan, you know what to write and why you should write it. And even better, you also know what to write next, and what to write after that.

A good game plan keeps you writing for *years*.

So if you're staring at the blank page more often than not, maybe you need a game plan – or a new game plan.

Sometimes this game plan involves your entire business – maybe you feel you don't really know what you're doing or where you're going or what you want to achieve. You may not even be sure you're in the right business!

If that's the case, take a step back. Get clarity on why you're in business, what your goals are and the steps you need to take to get there. A good consultation with an expert can help, and you'll find yourself realigned with better goals that excite you.

From there, have a game plan for every piece you write. Why are you writing this blog post? Why is this important to readers? Why is this website copy crucial? What do you want it to achieve?

What's the game plan?

Think about the next piece you'll be writing right now. Know what you want it to accomplish. Decide why it's important – to you and to your readers. Get a clear game plan going so you know exactly what to do by using the next page:



The piece I need to write: _____

Why this piece is important to my business? List 3 reasons:

Why this piece is important to my readers? List 5 reasons:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

What goal should this piece accomplish for my business?

Use this sheet each time you need to write. Decide the main important points before you begin drafting your piece. Get your game plan firmly in place.

Then make it happen. You can do this.

And to give you an extra boost of confidence, move to the next step.



Mission #4: Grab Some Confidence

On the call, Peter Shallard mentioned, "People don't realise that confidence is a state [of mind]. Everyone can experience it and have moments of confidence."

Think about what this means. How did you feel the last time you washed a load of laundry? Were you confident? Did you know what you had to do, and how to do it?

Of course you did. (Unless your wife does the laundry, in which case you can think about the last time you cooked hot dogs on the barbecue.) You felt confident because you felt confidence in your ability to handle the situation.

You knew what you were doing.

Think back way, way in the past, to that very first time you had to do your own laundry. Was this a small or large load? Cold water or hot? How much soap? Was that too much? Not enough? And what was that little cup supposed to hold... uh oh, did you forget something?

You weren't confident at all. But actually... you were. Because you knew that even though you might screw up, you'd be fine at the end. No one would come screaming at you. You wouldn't get a fine for "worst laundry ever".

You might have pink socks instead of white. But hey. You'd learned not to mix reds and whites for next time, right?

Confidence is a state of mind. You create it yourself. You live, you learn, you survive. You can handle this. Because believe me, writing can't kill you, and no one's going to come hunt you down with pitchforks screaming, "Bad comma! BAD COMMA!"

You may need to work on improving your writing skills, and that's fine. No one is born with the natural ability to pen tomes of classics – even the great writers. Everyone learns how to write, and through practice, training and observation, we improve our skills.

Improved skills, improved confidence.

And improved mindset.

Imagine that instead of thinking, "Ohmigod, I'm so nervous, I'm a terrible writer... what if people laugh?" you sat down and thought, "Okay, I can do this. It may not be the best writing ever and I might have to work at it a bit, but hey. It's not going to be horrible. In fact, it's probably going to be pretty decent."

Anyone can sit down to write with that mindset in place. It's the same one you used the first time you had to do laundry... and look how that turned out!

Keep that encouraging, positive mental self-talk going, and you'll be able to write. Nurture it, and you'll write the rest of your life.



Mission #5: Write to One Person

The fastest way to jam yourself up is to imagine you need to write a stellar piece for 40,000 people. Believe me, I know; that's the kind of performance pressure I face every day.

And yet, it doesn't bother me... anymore, that is. It used to. I used to sit down thinking about that sea of people, all reading my work and judging me and my competence. And I didn't just think about that faceless, muttering sea... I nurtured the mental image so much I began to believe it was real.

I couldn't write for weeks. My blogging career? Over.

Until I realized I'd let my imagination get the better of me. 40,000 people waiting to take me down with pitchforks and angry fire? Puh-lease. People have better things to do. And 98% of them are actually pretty decent folk.

I began applying a technique that let me feel very comfortable and secure each time I wrote: I never write to my entire audience; I always write to one single person.

Each time I sit down to write, I call to mind the face of someone I'd like to write to. A friend. A client I just got off the phone with. A business owner in town. A fan or a follower who emailed me a question.

I write directly to that person, and to that person only. I feel fully confident and capable of speaking to this person one on one... and I bring that state to my writing. This keeps me focused on answering that one person in a personal way and writing in a way I know this person will understand.

Just like I'm writing to you, right now.

If you find yourself feeling nervous about your readers, forget them. Sit back and think about one person, and one person only.

Use your imagination and get a good visual image going in your mind. Who is this person? What does he look like? What does she sound like? What is this person wearing and doing right now?

Imagine this person leans forward and asks you a question. What would that question be? What does she need to know? What would he like to understand? What explanation has she asked for?

Stop. Write this question down:

Now write the reply. Long or short doesn't matter. Just pull up a blank document at this very moment and start writing directly to this one person you see in your mind.

You see? You just wrote – quickly and easily. It was a question you knew the answer to. You had full confidence in your knowledge and skills. You know exactly what to say.



Try to think up more questions this client would ask you, either about what you do or the product you sell. Pretend he or she is sitting in your office right now.

What 10 questions would this client have? Write them down:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Guess what? You now have 10 potential blog posts, all ready and waiting for you to write with full confidence. Just pull up a new document, pick a question and answer it for this person. The job's done!

Move on to the next step.

Mission #6: Go for "Good Enough"

Each time I hear someone proudly proclaim, "I'm a perfectionist!", I raise my eyebrows and think, "Uh oh..."

Perfectionism never means "seeking perfection" in its simplest form. It always signals something else – fear of letting go of control, fear of failure, fear of success, fear of embarrassment... the list goes on.

And in writing, there's no definition for "perfect". Writing is subjective. One man's treasure is another man's trash.

So when is a piece of writing "perfect"? The answer is never. It's an unattainable standard, and "good enough" is all there is.

I like "good enough". It's certainly good enough for me. I'd much rather write and hit publish, warts and all, than to have written something no one will ever see.

Besides, perfectionism is extremely bad for business. At some point, you *have* to let go and get that piece out the door so it can do its job of bringing back clients, income and sales.



One great way to avoid the perfectionism trap is to have a "good enough" checklist handy. Write up a ten-point checklist that gives you specific, measurable criteria you can hold up to each piece of work.

What tells you this piece is "good enough" to let go of so it can go to work for you?

Don't be vague or trite or loose in your definitions. Be extremely specific. You might have a list that includes "typo free" or "strong how-to headline" or "stays on topic" or "covers three points".

What 10 items would you put on your checklist? Write them down:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Measure everything you write against this checklist. If you have every point covered, the piece is "good enough" to go. Hit publish, and let it do its job!

Good. You're all done. Whew! Now check out the next step.

Mission #7: Forget Comparison

You probably have a favourite writer and wish you could write like he or she does. Maybe you'd love to write as boldly as Brian Clark or as wonderfully as Patrick Rothfuss or as succinctly as... well, whomever writes succinctly.

But when you start comparing your writing to that of other people, you start sliding down a slippery slope. "I wish I could write like so-and-so. This doesn't sound like them at all. It's garbage." And to the trash goes yet another not-so-bad-at-all draft.

Here's the truth: You'll never write like so-and-so. Of course not! You're not that person!

You're you, with your own special way of writing that makes your work distinctly unique from everyone else's in the world. And that's a pretty cool advantage to have. *No one* can write like you do.



Even better? You can learn writing skills that make your work even more awesome. Love great analogies? That's a skill you can learn. Bold, short, concise language? It's a skill you can learn. Great grammar? Succinct points? Descriptive words?

Skills. And you can learn them.

So why not look at what your favourite writer does well – the skills you wish you had. Think about what you could learn and bring into your writing toolbox.

Who would you like to write like? What skills does this person have that you could work on learning? List five:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Now think about what you can start doing right now to learn these skills. Are there books on the topic you could read? Techniques you can practice? Courses you can take? Mentors you can work with?

Write down what you can do to learn these new skills. Jot down book titles, course names or people you're going to get in touch with:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Then commit to doing it. Pick one of those skill-improvement steps and start learning today.



Extra Mission-Survival Tips:

The biggest message that Peter and I wanted to get across in our call is that writer's block is all in your head – and you're in complete control of your mind. You have your success as a writer and business person in the palm of your hand.

Choose to own that. Decide you're not going to let your own crazy ideas hold you back and get the best of your ability to earn income, clients and sales.

And try these extra tips to keep writing:

Know why you're writing. Many small business owners start blogging because they think they should or they have to... but they don't have any clear game plan as to what each piece should accomplish for their business. Build your game plan and start deciding what to write to help you reach results.

Take back control. Each time you feel writer's block creeping up on you, seize the opportunity to examine what's really going on in the back of your mind. What are you nervous about? Afraid of? Stressed over? Be honest and truthful with yourself – and then get help to get over this success-crushing obstacle.

Bring power back home. Don't nominalize. Don't give away power to intangible concepts that don't exist, like writer's block and the Muse. Neither are real. But you and your skills are quite real indeed, so build confidence in your ability to write by improving your skills, learning more about writing and staying focused on the task.

Stop being lazy. Not being able to write is a form of procrastination – self-sabotage that allows you to indulge in never stepping out of your comfort zone. It's the lazy way out... people who have no choice but to do the work never get blocked up by the mindset that they can't. They have to!

Your mind is very powerful and working on improving your psychology can keep you generating ideas, drafting good work and publishing pieces that help bring you results.

Know that if you ever feel stuck with your writing, there's always a solution to the problem, and you have plenty of strategies to cope so you get back on track - fast.

Good luck!