

THE
STRATEGY
AND
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When it comes to writing and writing easily and naturally, 1994 was the turning point for me. That was the year that I discovered the Meta-States Model and applied the Meta-State pattern of “accessing the genius or engagement state of writing.” Prior to that event, I struggled constantly (nearly every day) with “writer’s block.” I’d get some idea and think that I could really write about that idea, but then I couldn’t find my words. Stuck. And when I did manage to write something, I found the process itself a tremendous struggle.

The Meta-States Model changed all of that because it provided me a way to *turn on and off at will* the engagement state of writing. After that, when I needed that state, I simply stepped into and accessed the frames, the resources, the state of mind, etc. of my best writing state. Similarly, when I stepped out, I would do so cleanly so that I left that state intact ... ready to be re-accessed. In doing so, I did not

contaminate it by dragging it along as part of my consciousness when doing other things. A full description of that state is in the book, *Secrets of Personal Mastery* (1997) which is the text for the *Accessing Personal Genius* training that is now the flagship of Neuro-Semantics around the world.

So how do I write 2 or 3 books a year and have since 1994? How have I consistently written 3-plus articles every week for a dozen years? Plus articles for publications in various journals? I credit it first of all to the flow-state of absolute engagement that the Meta-States Model has allowed me to access. Secondly, I attribute it to the strategies that I have learned over the years for writing itself.

Writing Strategies — There are Stages in the Writing Process

At the heart of the writing experience, and the beginning, is *an idea*. This *idea* can be a thought, a feeling, an experience, a story, an understanding, a belief, etc. It is something that has arisen within you as the writer which needs to be expressed. This is the *pre-writing* stage.

In this pre-writing stage, your writing is a creative art. In NLP we have a strategy of creativity that Robert Dilts modeled from Walt Disney which is an excellent set of steps from dreaming, making it realistic, and testing it. In this first stage of writing, when you get an idea, it is like having a lightbulb go off in the mind. You then experience a feeling that excites and delights and which has to be told. At first, writing is accepting and being with the creative experience as we give birth to something. Writing is therefore embracing ambiguity and confusion and chaos as all of the wild and undisciplined thoughts flash in and out of consciousness. Writing is coping with all of the thought-balls

that bounce in and out of the court of our awareness.

Writing is tolerating the glimmer of a new thought or feeling and accepting the stress, distress, and even pain of not-knowing what it is or how to say what it is. Writing is being with such rollercoaster feelings and going for a ride. Writing is a love affair with an idea. It's dating, courting, and seducing the idea or the feeling so that it invites you in to make love and stay the night. In this stage we organize our thinking, frame our ideas, research, explore, and interview.

The second stage of writing is the *free-writing* stage. Here aim simply to get your thoughts down on paper. Forget about being neat, grammatically correct, etc. Just get words down on paper! Now your writing as a communication process outside of your head will typically become a pretty wild process. This is where most people suffer writer's block and which shuts down the whole process. It is in the second stage that we simply have to do *the mind-to-paper act* and to write down the wooly thoughts. In this free-writing stage the point, the goal, and the outcome is one and only one —*write it down*. At this point, grammar, spelling, structure, format, clarity, etc. does not matter, all that matters is that we *write it down*.

What is writing at this stage? It is the translation of wild chaotic ideas to paper. Here writing is like a mental whirlwind of unstructured thoughts. The purpose and focus is entirely single-minded, to get it out. Writing here will have little to nothing to do with the final product.

What frame of mind supports this stage? The belief, the value, and the decision that, "I'm going to do it wrong the first time and have lots of fun making a mess of it!" Of course, without that frame of mind, without that inner permission to

mis-spell and to write our *confusions*— “dragons” arise and would-be writers become blocked. Another supporting belief at this stage is, “I can and will correct things later. Revision comes after I have something down on paper to revise.”

Ah, relief! The idea, the dream, the vision, the feeling, etc. is out. Most writers feel an amazing unburdening after the free-writing stage. The relief is the unburdening of the inner energy, it is the relief of having given birth and delivered something wonderful and precious—well, messy too. But new life has been given birth!

Now comes the clean-up work. After the delivery comes the third stage, *revision*. Like parenting, this is the work of shaping, forming, restructuring, reforming, training, and honing. I like what E.B. White wrote, “There is no great writing, only great rewriting.” No one, not the best, most famous, or most successful of writers write it right the first time. That’s the structure and strategy for writer’s block. It is in re-writing again and again that excellence and mastery emerges.

In recent years I have developed the practice of doing six-revisions, each one for a different theme. This came about through my exploration and research into the field of writing. As part of that study I began exploring the structure of best sellers. What is the strategy that writes a best seller? What are the qualities and features of books that are best sellers? As I identified them, I began *revising to those features*. This now is part and parcel of the prolific writing workshop. It’s a way to benchmark the particular qualities in specific terms and to craft one’s writing product so that it meet that level of quality. In brief, this means revising for structure, for energy, for state induction, and then for the specific feel, mood, and style with which we want to texture

our text.

What is writing at this stage? Writing here is a meta-skill, the skill of stepping out and beyond the content that you've written to work at the structural level. Writing here is meta-structural thinking and processing. Writing is parenting the unruling and untamed child. Writing is discipline and disciplining. Writing is patience and persistence and the willingness to cut ruthlessly. In fact, the best writers say "Cut one-fourth of everything!" Here writing is wielding the sword; it is butchering that which you've given birth to.

Writing in the revision stage is "tough love." I know many authors, even NLP authors, with decent manuscripts that could be refined and honed into excellent books but they refuse to take up the knife. They lack the courage to cut, to plummet the sword into their brain-child.

The last stage of revision isn't revising at all, it is *proofing*. It is cleaning up the final revised text and examining the text for mis-spellings and grammatical problems. Again, this is where many people waste lots of time and energy. They inefficiently waste time and energy by proof-reading (or *proof-seeing* as Jacobson and Hickman, 1998, call it in their book, *The power process: An NLP approach to writing*) before the revision steps are all complete. What is writing? Writing is the meta-detailing of examining a text without seeing or caring about the message. Writing is pulling every mote out of the eye of the text. Writing is the tedious minute and time consuming task of caring about grammar and spelling.

Afer that comes the stage of *selling* one's product. This entails the business smarts of working with and through people to get to the editors and publishers who will buy what

we have written. This means being able to package, present, market, and sell the specific article, book, screen play, novel, short story, etc. What is writing at this stage? Writing is passionately selling the romance that your work creates. Writing is standing up and standing out and doing a song and dance so that people will give it attention. Writing is the business intelligence that can and will negotiate a deal so that all can win.

As you can see, writing is a lot of things and calls upon the writer to step in and out of a lot of states. That's why I make "impeccable state shifts" in and out of the "genius" state. As a writer, you will need to sequence your states so that you can play the various roles and wear the different hats as appropriate to where you are in your writing.