

Write to the Heart of Motherhood
connecting to our true voice in the middle of our messy lives

Week 2. 'WHAT and HOW'



1) Assignment + Artistic Prompts

2) A Technique to Practice

3) Methods for the Mother-Writer

Hello, wonder Mama :)

Welcome to your *What and How* toolkit for week two!

I wish you tenderness and tenacity as you set forth on your unique adventure of experimentation and play, and a warm reminder of this week's theme: **LISTENING and VOICING**. Enjoy giving space and time to settle and listen, and then writing from that deeper knowing!

1) ASSIGNMENT + ARTISTIC PROMPTS:

Your assignment this week is to write yourself a LETTER. It can be one stanza or an epic poem. Wild and free in your journal, or rigorously crafted into an essay or poem. The key points I want you to explore are:

- This letter is **written to you exactly as you are right now.**
- This letter **has two parts, two perspectives.**

- **The first part/ perspective** of this letter written to you, exactly as you are right now, **is written from your elder self.** This could be you on your deathbed. It could be you, healthy in old age, joyfully drinking a cup of tea, looking back and reflecting. It can be any you that you want to journey forward into, inhabit, and write as... to your current self. Share anything you want to from that future perspective, that could heal, teach, delight, surprise. *Listen and Voice*, from this elder you, and see what you discover.
- **The second part/ perspective** of this letter written to your current self, **is from a younger self.** In the womb, young child, older child, teenager self – any younger you that calls you to journey back, inhabit, listen as, and write from, to your current self.
- **You can integrate the two perspectives however you like, or not at all.** Craft it, or leave it raw. Share it with others, or keep it just for you. Enjoy this yoga of perspective taking and all that it teaches you!

Additional Artistic Prompts:

After listening from different perspectives and writing your letter to yourself, here are some additional artistic prompts and contemplations to spur your writing:

- 1) Create a list of “50 Things that Truly Feed Me”
- 2) Free write from the question: “What do I want?” Then, “What do I really want?” Then, “What do I really, really want?”
- 3) What is one lyric from a favorite song right now? Use that as a first line, and then listen and voice, to playfully build on that line.
- 4) Write down your highs and lows from each day this week, and weave some of them into your writing.
- 5) Articulate 10 sounds you hear outside yourself, and 10 sounds you hear inside yourself. How would they speak to each other if they could?

- 6) Find an ordinary object nearby and make a list of 100 other uses (real and absurd) for that object.

2) A TECHNIQUE TO PRACTICE:

Our technical prompts will always be relatively simple and fun to engage. You can practice them on their own, like practicing scales on the piano, simply to develop the skill, or you can include them as a cue and prompt within whatever writing you are exploring.

This week's technique is *simile and metaphor*. You may already be familiar with these, but they are always fun to play with more. Simile is comparing one thing to another, using *like* or *as*. For example, "My toddler is as destructive as King Kong." Metaphor compares two things directly, without using *like* or *as*. For example, "My toddler is King Kong," or "My toddler, King Kong, takes down 3 dinner plates and 3 glasses of water with one swift swing of his right arm." :)

Simile and metaphor are fun because they require and induce our imagination, and allow us to be both wild and precise with images that really elicit and transmit the core essence of something or someone more than they even can in and of themselves. Finding the right simile or metaphor to capture the ineffable or ridiculous or very unique quality in something requires the kind of listening and waiting that this week's teaching is all about. Have fun, experiment, listen deeply, and try some new images to bring spice and range to your writing.

3) METHODS FOR THE MOTHER-WRITER:

These are sneaky tricks for connecting to your writing in the middle of your mothering, which I've discovered work for me, and I hope might work for you. I'll keep adding two per week for you to experiment with – I hope they help!

- 1) **Listening does not always mean sitting in silence.** Sometimes for me, listening is listening to other writers I love. I often begin a writing session by reading a couple poems from my favorite anthologies, to tune my own self to that writer's locus of perception and expression. One of my favorite poets, Billy Collins, recommends "writing under the influence" of the writers we most admire. So, as part of your listening practice this week, I recommend nourishing yourself with wisdom that inspires you. The method for the mother-writer is to have one or two books you love at any station you might end up with a brief moment to yourself: on top of every toilet, in your purse, near any place you might nurse your baby, next to your bed, stored in your phone, etc. All you need is two minutes, so wherever you land for a brief moment, read, listen and fill with some of your favorite writing!

- 2) This is more of a tip or a trick for us mother-writers, than a method. This tip is to **stop and check how and when you really want to share your work.** I noticed when I was in a phase of getting up early every morning to work on my book, that if something came that I liked, I would get excited and later in the morning try to share it with my husband in the middle of our routine while he was trying to get ready to go to work, and we were tending to our first baby. I always ended up so disheartened because he couldn't really hear me, and he couldn't really respond. It was so frustrating! But I couldn't stop force-sharing for some reason. Finally, I realized I had to curate the moments I shared for when a) I truly felt ready and resourced to expose this new creation, and b) the listener was fully available and interested in receiving it. So, be brave in your sharing, but also be skillful, caring and attuned to yourself and the moment, to make sure you're set up for a genuine exchange. (Side note: whenever I shared with my husband and had his full attention, he always gave the best, most loving feedback. Waiting for the right moment paid off!)