

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

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Week 3. '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 three! 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: **Privacy and Company**. I hope you enjoy playing in and clarifying these realms of your creative practice, alone and together. Enjoy!

**1) ASSIGNMENT + ARTISTIC PROMPTS:**

**Your assignment this week is to write another LETTER, this time *from yourself* as you are right now, to your child or children, in their current age and stage – or, imagining them at a different age that feels like the right time for them to receive this letter.**

Just like last week, this letter can be crafted and refined into an essay, tiny poem, or any form you feel drawn to, OR it can be completely raw in your journal or as an actual letter you will give to your child or save away for them later.

**Here's the topic and task of the letter: teach your child(ren) about privacy and company.**

About solitude and connection. About autonomy and community. Teach them what you know about these domains of living — what you want to hand down to them. Be specific and share stories and personal experiences if you are moved to. Let yourself be (appropriately) candid, revealed, and generous as a gift to your kid(s).

**Additional Artistic Prompts:**

You may wish to explore these writing prompts within your letter to your child(ren), or as separate inquiries:

- What do you most long for in solitude?
- What do you most fear about being alone?
- What do you most long for in connection/community?
- What do you most fear about connecting with others?
- When you were pregnant with your kid(s), or perhaps preparing for their arrival through adoption, together/alone was quite a unique experience... what are your most vivid memories of solitude/connection with your child during that chapter?
- Write a self-portrait. David Whyte has a lovely poem called "Self-Portrait" he wrote in response to seeing one of Van Gogh's self-portrait paintings, and Rilke says in his poem *I Am Too Alone in This World*, "I want to describe myself/ like a picture I once saw,/ up close, for very long,/ like a word I finally grasped,/ like the pitcher of water I clasp each day" — how would you write yourself in a self-portrait at this phase of life?

## 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 it as a cue and prompt within whatever writing you are exploring.

**This week's techniques are *consonance, assonance, and alliteration*.**

All three of these techniques purposefully play with sound to achieve a certain visceral or aural experience for the reader. They can each affect the rhythm, tone, and mood of a sentence or line. I'd suggest to not think too much about these tools, just play and see how the sound affects you intuitively when you read it, silently or aloud.

**Consonance is the repeated use of a consonant in multiple words, anywhere in the word.**

For example, "All's well that ends well," and "Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers."

**Assonance is the repeated use of a vowel sound in multiple words (anywhere in the word), which are close enough together that you can notice the echo.** For example, "go slow over the road."

**Alliteration is the repetition of the same letter or sound at the beginning of multiple words close to each other.** For example, in a playful poem I wrote called *Looking*, about the millions of things inside Lundin's diaper bag when he was a baby, I wrote, "sippy cup spilling in slow motion," partly to elicit a ssssss sound like slow flowing water.

### 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!

- Break the rules of trying to fit your writing in and around your mothering. This week, as we explore solitude, be audacious and make an explicit, perhaps even slightly inconvenient for others in your family, *date* with yourself and your writing. *GET YOURSELF ALONE*. Go somewhere you know you can really hear yourself think, and/or feel yourself fully. For me, this is the library at Naropa University where I teach, or this one specific trail near Chataqua open space. Both places are dead silent, but also energetically quiet and calming, and I always feel like I can really meet myself and hear myself in those places. Set aside however much time feels right – 20 minutes, 2 hours, whatever works, and bring your writing stuff. Maybe you'll use it, maybe you won't. But honor and perhaps even ritualize a time and place where you will actively have a date with yourself. (Use this course as an excuse if this feels indulgent! "I have this homework I really have to do...") If this practice is fruitful for you, start implementing it on a regular basis.

- 1) On the opposite side of the spectrum, be on the lookout for poetic or intriguing things that get said in conversation with a close friend, an intimate partner, your child, or a mama friend. While you are in connection, see if anything ripe for your writing spills out, and if so, just quickly jot it down or record it on your phone right away so you don't forget. I once saw a poet friend out with her girlfriend at a coffee shop, recording their conversation, and I asked if they were doing an interview. She said, "Nope, I just have it on in case we say anything I could use in a poem."