

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

---

## Week 1. ORIENTATION, THEME AND GUIDANCE



### **START HERE, WHOLEHEARTED**

*Hello, and Welcome!*

I'm SO happy to be here with you right now, and to welcome you into this course!

We are standing together, right at the cusp of this beginning, right at the threshold. And, as we all know, *beginnings are auspicious*. How we begin matters deeply. To honor this open, dynamic quality of beginning our time together, I actually want to start by stopping. You'll see what I mean in a minute. I want to offer you a poem I wrote for us to step inside of together, and meet each other a bit outside the ordinary context of our daily lives. So, wherever you are, please be so kind as to shift your body-mind into a posture that's a little more alert and a little more relaxed - alert and relaxed, both. Soften your gaze a little bit. Take a couple of deep, full breaths and bring your attention into the space and feeling of your heart. Excellent. Now, simply read, receive, and feel...

### **STOP WITH ME**

Stop. Stop working. Stop trying to stop working.

Stop trying. Stop being lazy. Stop searching for meaning.  
Stop landing anywhere. Stop acting confused. Stop.

Stop locking up your mysteries. Let me in. Stop rearranging the surface  
features of your life. Stop thinking deep is deep. Stop thinking  
blood is red. Stop hoarding the blood-red wisdom unborn in you.

There's got to be a better way. Do you love me? Stop  
loving me. Stop unloving me. Stop tearing me apart.  
Stop with me. Let's stop together. Six seconds. Ready. Set. Stop.

Now let's stop together forever,  
and let the stopping go.

Thank you for going there with me. Go ahead and move your body and breath in whatever way  
feels good to you to transition out of our "poetry space." I wanted to start with that poem  
because I notice that for myself, as a mama, I sometimes (ok, often; ok, all the time, haha!)  
forget or don't allow myself to just simply, entirely STOP. There's too much to get done.  
Someone might get hurt. There might be too much to feel, etc., etc. Obviously, when we're  
responsible for our kids we need to be on in a certain way. But for the chunks of time you set  
aside for this course, both for reading/listening and for creating, we're going to need to practice  
stopping, shifting gears, and opening something in ourselves that doesn't often get invited  
forward. Sometimes it helps my brain to actually imagine a gear shift in myself that I move from  
*Doing* mode to *Being/Creating* mode – to experientially do what we just did with our posture,  
breath, and the poem, but in a simpler, swifter gesture of just visualizing shifting the inner gear  
shift :) Try and see if that might work for you.

Now that we've shifted modes together, I want to thank you from the center of my heart for  
joining me these next six weeks for *Write to the Heart of Motherhood*. If it weren't so clunky, I'd  
have titled it Write to AND FROM the Heart of Motherhood. Because this course is both – it is a

gentle, rigorous training in remembering and cultivating the *pathways back* to this Heart of Motherhood, and it is always also our *expression of* this Heart we share. Not to induce our pride in a separating or narcissistic kind of way, but wow! we earned our way into this particular zone of the human Heart – the Heart of Motherhood. You know what I mean. You know what you’ve been through to conceive, gestate, birth, or adopt, and then tend, tend, tend, through your particular highs and lows, to receive and to lose, to have your heart grown and broken in ways inconceivable to your previous self, to hold and release your beloved littles too many times to count. I see you, Mama. As one of my poems says,

*I see you  
bravely meeting  
what is yours alone  
to meet.*

So this is not about making us better or worse than people who are not moms, but it *is* to name our unique society of warriors of the heart – we who surrender so many desires to receive a deeper desire: being the one he or she or they come home to, in a way they do not with anyone else on earth. Till death do we part. Writing this to you right now brings tears. I feel you across time and space, feeling me, in this Heart of Motherhood. We certainly don’t share all the details, views, or feelings, but we share this Heart. Welcome. This space of flowing tears, untamed, wise power, and luminous joy that our children have birthed in our being, this Heart of infinite, unconditional love, and all the feelings that flow therein, and all the wide open space always available to breathe into here, is our meeting place for the next six weeks, and beyond. This invisible web of sensing each other and calling each other into deeper connection and resilience, is what we’ll invoke each time we practice writing, and in so doing, we’ll feed and witness and grow each other in this Heart of Motherhood. I, for one, feel completely lit up by the possibilities here. Please, let me know how I can host or serve you better in this adventure presenting itself to us. Reach out through email any time.

You may be wondering who I am :) Let me take a brief moment to share a little of my story with you, and I'm sure we'll get to know each other more fully over the next six weeks. Since I was very young, I began training in dance and writing poems, both as very natural processes to experience resonance, play, and inspiration. Let me be real: I was a very freaked out little girl. I had such a loving family, and all my needs met beautifully, but I seem to have come in with a quality of, "What the f\*ck *is* this place? I do not fit in here. And I am a little terrified, so I will just be very quiet and watch how things work for a long time." Through consistent love from my parents, studying the behavior of my older brother – who is naturally a comedic genius – and spending lots of time in dance class, reading, and writing poems, I began to flower out into the world, and realized I could find my own way to do this human thing that felt safe and meaningful to me. I learned how to make jokes that would receive the response of laughter. I learned that in dancing or sharing poems, people more often attuned and responded to me in a way that felt... real. I found these were the ways in which I felt... real.

Basically, I have always been happiest when making and discovering meaning through artful movement and writing. These practices and pathways have never let me down. Through angsty teen years, wild college times, and as a professional dance artist in my twenties, I've always pressed experience through these sieves to find intimacy with, if not answers about, this life-and-death crucible we are in together here.

But what happened to my creative life after becoming a mother at age 32 completely knocked my socks off. I definitely intended to continue my art practices after having kids, but I never, ever, ever, anticipated becoming both more prolific AND less self-conscious. This discovery – of motherhood as a fearsome catalyst for creativity, even with its endless logistical obstacles to getting our voices and work expressed – is why I'm here with you, literally trembling with passion and conviction, today.

Since becoming a mother, I have made a surprising discovery: I have less time than ever to write, AND I need to write more than ever. Why? Because my body and soul got cracked open giving birth and now poems want to be born through that space in me. Because the demands of

motherhood are so deep and wide and endless that I need the release of speaking my whole experience in order to stay well and inspired. Because the wonder of loving my children with such raw potency makes me crave to share the wealth with anyone who cares to read. Because it all moves so quickly, and writing gives me the superpower to slow time and create artifacts that make this precious time \*almost\* re-livable.

I've made an obsession of writing since my boys came to me: I don't care if it's good – I have to do it. I read an article arguing that mothers can't be artists because motherhood essentially requires us to be selfless, and true artistry requires us to be selfish. I thought: Bullshit. I'll find a way. I've made methods, prompts, vows, and cues, all to keep me writing, all to keep me happy. I want to share what I've discovered. Mothers have so much to say and so little time and space to say it! I want to create a little more space for us to listen and be received.

The unique terrain of motherhood is always, already shaping us mamas into ripe and powerful writers, whether we identify as such or not, whether we've formerly or formally practiced writing before, or not. We are tired so we are funny and real; we are in love so we are tender; we are damn strong so we have conviction. Oprah Winfrey said last year in her Golden Globes speech, "What I know for sure is that speaking your truth is the most powerful tool we all have," and beloved poet and professor Nikki Giovanni says, "You have a voice; use it. Never let anybody take your voice away from you. Don't waste what you know, or what you feel." YES.

I want to bring our ordinary, extraordinary realities out of hiding and into view, for ourselves, each other, and the greater public if we so choose. This is my activism. This is a chance to know and be known by each other. I simply crave to hear our voices, quivering and quaking, or bold and unapologetic. One single line, or a trilogy of books. Whatever is alive and waiting to move from your interior, subjective landscapes to the fresh territory of the page and/or the space between us – I want to make space for it. Whether it's brilliant or it sucks, whether it's goofy and funny or edgy and deep, whether it only needs to be heard here for the sake of catharsis, coherence, and healing, or whether it's the seed of your next professional offering, whether it is *only about* motherhood, or never mentions one word about it – whatever is ringing in you to

pour forth in rhythms of silence and words – I hold it as inherently valuable. I want to receive You! And finally, if it wants to be written, but for your eyes alone, I still want to stand and make space for you to do so. *I see you bravely writing what is yours alone to write.*

“Inside, in the very center, it is this nakedness forever, this fragrance. It is a wish without a beginning shining,” begins one of my favorite poems, *I Am The Child of My Life*, by Richard Cronshey. This nakedness, this fragrance – of your honest voice as mama and woman, is what this course takes a stand for. This voice matters. Our voices are sacred. I don’t care if you write every single day during our time together, or craft words just one single time. Finding and using your true voice — the one that gives you goosebumps when you use it, that turns you on, that brings tears to your eyes, that suddenly aligns your body, mind, and heart — matters. It is what connects you to God, Spirit, Mystery, Your Own True Self. It will bring you alive, from the inside out. It will move people, should you choose to share it. It’s like well water, bubbling from the depths, for those who are thirsty, including your own self.

And listen, I know you are busy, and it’s impossible to get everything done as is. And believe me, you will be interrupted. Oh, how many times we will all be interrupted! But, in choosing to take a seat in this course you are making two powerful paradigm shifts:

1) Rather than adding something else to your to-do list or something else to feel unworthy about, you are turning on an inherent superpower. You are opening a floodgate. You are committing to a practice that yields energy, meaning, and connection beyond what you can foresee. This has almost nothing to do with what you produce, and almost everything to do with your willingness to hear and feel the wisdom, immensity, and beauty within you that is your birthright. This is not one more thing to do; it is an inner, essential gesture of turning a portion of your gaze inward, in the midst of all the movement and chaos, and saying, “I’m listening, sweet one,” to your own core being.

2) Rather than perceiving your creativity and your motherhood as two separate functions, you are claiming and leveraging the fertile intersection where they always, already meet and feed

each other. Mothers are already poets, as over and over we return to and attune to our hearts, and speak to our children about life and relationships and food and the earth and love and conflict, in the most direct and wholehearted way we can muster. Direct and wholehearted. That's all good writing is, plus practice. And, in turn, as we practice our writing, it fills the well of our mothering, because in our writing we tend to the inherent soul of our work, we conjure, we sit with our feet dangling into the unknown, listening bodily for the intuitive next move to help our creative work develop. The next gesture with our child, the next word on the page, it's all about courage, listening, and being willing to experiment and then integrate feedback.

So, our six weeks together will be precious time to engage this feedback loop together: showing up bravely for the blank page, when the writing flows AND when it doesn't; showing up creatively again and again for our children, even when we're weary. We'll watch how the two practices weave together, bring insight, energy, and even humor to each other, and ultimately forge us into the most soulful, badass, humble, emboldened kind of being I could ever hope to be: a MOTHER-ARTIST. And the very best part of all? We will do this together, in the inner chambers of our creative workings, and together in community, both.

How? How will we do this?

Let's take a minute to talk logistics:

Every Monday morning at 9:00 am PT you will receive an email welcoming you to the theme and orientations of the week, and reminding you of new pieces of guidance to play with on the member's page of the course:

- A teaching piece (this), offering insights on the weekly theme, in audio and written form
- A "What and How" document for the week, including Artistic Prompts and Contemplations, A Technique to Practice, and Methods for the Mother-Writer
- A document of Poems to Live with and/or Learn by Heart (I will add five each week, so the list will grow to 30 by the end of the course)

Your invitation is to engage the ‘what and how’, leveraging your time and energy well through the methods for the mother-writer, inspired and guided by the teaching piece, but HOWEVER THE BLEEP YOU WANT!! :) Seriously, *however you want*. Experiment. Get up early in the morning. Write during her nap. Write after he goes to bed. Record a voice memo to yourself after you accidentally said something kinda cool. Fail. Play with reverse psychology and refuse to write; watch the ideas and voices start sneaking in through the cracks. Jot it down. Gather the threads. Chop their heads off. Share something in the Facebook group. Watch people be moved. Look into your baby’s/child’s/teenager’s/adult child’s eyes. Voice your love. I could go on and on. And I will :)

But for now, I’ll just reiterate: use the tools you receive in each Monday’s email, plus inspirational quotes I’ll post every morning in the private Facebook group, plus our weekly Zoom live call (you will receive an email with day/time for this) where we can connect and workshop our writing live in real-time, in whatever way supports and challenges you to feel more alive.

I’ll end for now with this week’s theme: START HERE, WHOLEHEARTED. However much you write this week, the emphasis is on attuning to *this moment*, in all its layered complexity and realness, and then going intuitively from there. Starting with stopping, starting with landing, in the concrete and subtle landscapes of form around, beneath, within, and above you right now, and tuning your attention and perception to the inherently poetic nature of this very moment. What do I mean by that? I believe that reality itself is poetic. I believe that motherhood itself is poetic. I believe we don’t have to work so hard to create because we are swimmin’ in it! The necessary step is tuning in, and then simply giving voice to what moves you, tickles you, delights you about what you notice. I always say never try to write a good poem or a good essay or a good anything - write what *you* need or want to hear, or something you need to say, before you die. Tell yourself the words you want to hear to take the next step, or to heal, or to remember how unbearably precious, or difficult – or both – this time in your life is.

And what do I mean when I say reality is poetic? *The Poetic*, for me, is meaning or story, carried on life force itself. How do you know when you feel “life force itself”? Here’s how I know: I cry. I



laugh. I sigh. I relax. I get excited. I get goosebumps. I get turned on. I get mad. I get inspired to make art. I get inspired to apologize. When I feel these cues of resonance, humor, erotic surges, tenderness, and aliveness, I know I am attuned to the Poetic dimension of reality, and this is when I give myself to writing. This is why I say poetry is not something I do, but somewhere I go.

But we have to start here, wholehearted. We have to listen, wholeheartedly. With our full selves, including all our parts. And this act is the most important part, the part that will shift everything in the weeks to come. As Brother David Steindl-Rast, a well-known Benedictine monk and elder, says, “The antidote to exhaustion is not necessarily rest; the antidote to exhaustion is wholeheartedness.” This is why our work during this course will not make us more tired, but instead, more inspired. Or maybe a satisfied, delirious combination of the two :)

So practice and experiment this week with how this all works for you. I’ll see you and feel you in this Heart of Motherhood we’re all working and playing in together, and in the Facebook group, and perhaps in the Zoom call this coming Friday. And I’ll leave you with this gorgeous quote from Buddhist teacher and author, Pema Chodron, because... *she’s just so good*:

“WE ALREADY HAVE everything we need. There is no need for self-improvement. All these trips that we lay on ourselves—the heavy-duty fearing that we’re bad and hoping that we’re good, the identities that we so dearly cling to, the rage, the jealousy and the addictions of all kinds—never touch our basic wealth. They are like clouds that temporarily block the sun. But all the time our warmth and brilliance are right here. This is who we really are. We are one blink of an eye away from being fully awake.”