

Building confidence as a writer

Do you believe that $1+1=2$?

No, you don't have to believe that because you just know it. You saw it happen so many times in your childhood that this became a part of reality. What about believing in true love or god? When you're a child your parents or society might tell you that those things exist. Just like Santa or Aliens but the fact is that different people believe in different things and those things can change during a life time.

Wouldn't be amazing if you could believe in yourself at the same way? How awesome would it be just believing and knowing that you are a good writer?

How do you build a belief? First they tell you that god/love/Santa exists and they will try to give you "rational" explanations and examples and stories about it. As a child it most likely works but as you grow older you start to doubt these stories because they are stories. You want a proof; you need physical evidence, that's what they taught you in science class.

Rational adults know that love can be interpreted as biological and chemical reactions but they still believe in it. Some people believe in God although they've heard countless of times that man made up God in order to make sense of the forces of nature.

Believing in something requires a story, a little bit of rationalization and a lot of emotional imprint.

Our brain functions, remembers and connects elements that carry an emotional imprint. That's just the way we are programmed because there are survival benefits. The brain's route to deciding between fight Vs flight is much faster and effective through emotions than through logic. Try thinking about if it is logical to run away from a lion when it runs towards you. The same goes for social survival in a tribe. The one who can read other's feelings and react to them or manipulate them can become a powerful member of society and procreate.

In order to believe that you are in fact good writers you need to tell ourselves that story over and over again. I wouldn't call it a mantra but rather a state of mind when you read other people's work, when you introduce yourself and when you look at your professional future. You are a good writer now, at the present. Not a novice writer, not an unpublished author, not a young aspiring writer. That is what you are and you deserve it.

The next stage is giving that story a little rationalization. Remember that short story you wrote and everyone loved? Remember that poem you wrote that got published on the school newspaper?

Remember those love letters you gave to your Ex? Remember the A grade you got in Creative writing class? Try collecting evidence from your past that supports the fact that you were actually a writer all along.

The final and most important stage is the emotional imprint on writing in your brain. I know what you're thinking. You love what you write and after you read it you're still proud and you enjoy writing but the problem is that you don't get enough feedback people your friends and family, or that you got rejected so many times that it crushed your self esteem to the dirt. All of the above applies to me as well.

But still you need to get a positive emotional imprint on your writing experience and on other people's experience while reading your work. Take your best short story, find your friends, family or coworker, sit them down for 5 minutes and read them your story out loud. Tell them they don't have to say anything about it, just sit and listen. You'll be surprised how much emotional reactions you can see on people faces while they hear a story.

The laughs are the easiest to acknowledge, but also the suspense, the thrill and the enjoyment or the catharsis. You can see all those reactions to your story live in front of you and know exactly what works and what doesn't without actually getting verbal feedback. The best part is that you get an emotional response that your brain imprints on the experience of telling your story. Collect as many positive experiences as you can and you will build a belief system that works.

You are a good writer, now go experience it.