



## Writing with Intention

by Lisa Tener, Writing Coach

As a writer, do you think of yourself as spontaneous, tapping into the ever-present flow at a moment's notice? It's a pretty image, but how often do you find yourself blocked or stuck when you try to create something from nothing? Let me share with you a shovel that can dig you out of this hole—the shovel of intention.

Working with intention does not have to mean knowing exactly what you want. What intention does require is just one or more of the following:

- knowing how you would like to affect those who come into contact with your art/writing
- knowing what effect you'd like your work to have in the world
- knowing what qualities you'd like to work with

In this framework, your goals can be as focused or broad as you like. You can be very explicit (I want to write a description of the view of bay and maple trees from my bedroom window). You can provide a broad focus to your goals (I want to create a piece of writing that conveys my hopefulness that we can reclaim the sanctity of nature and become good stewards of the environment). Or you can give a very broad brush (I want to write something that gives people a sense of joy and playfulness, and that makes them laugh).

If you're starting a new project and are unsure what you want to create, you might just think about the qualities you want to bring into your work. Do you want to be playful? Passionate? Irreverent? Wild? Provocative? Joyful? Soulful? I encourage my clients and students to invite these qualities (out loud) into their creative session. Often as we begin to invite such qualities they show up in our process, as well as the product.

When I first began collaborating with Peaco Todd on the anger book we eventually wrote with Jane Middleton-Moz (*Good and Mad: Transform Anger Using Mind, Body, Soul and Humor*), Peaco and I hit a few bumps in the road. Working on an anger book, perhaps we should not have been surprised when anger showed up in our collaboration.

In the process of improving communication between the two of us and developing a process for working together, we stumbled upon the idea of inviting certain qualities into the process and the book itself. We invoked qualities of healing, transformation and playfulness. Not only did the book take on a playful quality, but we found ourselves laughing and having fun as we worked. Dolphins showed up in our dreams. I bought a rose quartz dolphin to place by my computer. Peaco gave me a dolphin necklace. Because of the intentional way we worked, our collaboration and friendship deepened in a lasting way. In addition, I'm convinced that this lively dolphin energy made it possible to write with lightness on a heavy subject, to have fun doing it and to inject some fun for our readers as they explore and transform their anger. What qualities would you like to invite into your work? Try something new for you—juiciness, serenity, sassiness, sexiness—make a list and have fun with it.

### Exercise:

Ask yourself these questions:

1. **What would I like my audience to experience as they read this piece?** For example, perhaps you want people to feel empowered so that they are emboldened to take action.
2. **What effect do I want this project to have on the community and what qualities might support such results?** For example, if you want the work to contribute to a spirit of tolerance in your community, perhaps tolerance and peace are qualities you can invoke.
3. **What qualities would make this project fun to work on, would enliven it and make it inspiring?** In the example above, perhaps invoking humor would make it fun and help you reach your objectives.

Invoke those qualities from your answer to questions two and three. Invite Spirit or your Muse to support you in your intention and clearly state what you would like your project to accomplish. You may want to write an intention or mission statement for each project you work on. Read the statement aloud whenever you work on it. In this way, you reinforce your mission and goals and strengthen your ability to create something of profound effect.

Creativity Coach Gregory Huff tells me that he often invites qualities by putting on music to create the mood he wants to be in for the art he is creating. Other times he relies on the weather to set tone. I sometimes draw with pastels and place the drawing above my computer to invoke a quality. Other times, I place a rock or object nearby, my rose quartz dolphin being an example of both. Perhaps you can think of other ways to invite your chosen qualities.

When your work is viewed, read or experienced, notice what people say to you about your art or writing and how it affects them. Does their feedback often support the qualities you invoked when creating? Many people have told us that they were surprised to have such fun working with *Good and Mad*. Little did they know the dolphins were at work on that.

You may wish to keep notes about how the process of intention and inviting specific qualities affects your work. And, by all means, drop me a line and let me know how it works for you. I'd love to hear your stories of working with intention.

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*Lisa Tener is a writing coach who teaches students five steps for creative flow and success which she terms, "Magic for Your Muse." She is co-author of Good and Mad: Transform Anger Using Mind, Body, Soul and Humor (along with Jane Middleton-Moz and Peaco Todd) and founder of the South County Writer's Seminar.*

*Lisa has appeared on ABC World News with Peter Jennings, PBS-TV Rhode Island and WCVB-Boston's Chronicle and HealthBeat. She has been quoted in Glamour, Family Circle, the Boston Globe and more. She is currently working on a series of books for artists and writers to help them complete creative projects successfully. Visit her website at [www.lisatener.com](http://www.lisatener.com).*