

Discipline is \*Not\* a Four-Letter Word

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**Discipline is \*Not\* a Four-Letter Word**

**By Mary Anne Hahn**

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When I sit down to write an article for my ezine, WriteSuccess, and draw a blank as to what to write about, I reread my ezine's mission statement for guidance: "Ideas, information and inspiration for writers who want to launch and/or maintain SUCCESSFUL freelance careers"

For this article, I narrowed the scope by asking myself: "What is THE ONE MOST IMPORTANT TRAIT that a writer needs in order to succeed at freelancing?"

The answer came to me with lightning speed. We must have discipline.

Repeat after me: When it comes to freelance writing, the single most important character trait needed for success is discipline.

Bummer, isn't it? The word "discipline" hardly sends one dashing to the keyboard or searching for one's pen in a heady, heated burst of inspiration. Wouldn't it have been great, even romantic, if I had said that we writers possess a golden, rare gene with which only a chosen few are graced? Or that, in order to succeed, we need to tap into our personal Muse? Follow our calling? Develop the God-given talent that is our birthright?

Okay, maybe not. Maybe you thought I was going to say "talent," "skill," "power of observation," "imagination" or even "self-confidence." After all, talent certainly helps, and the ability to write clearly, powerfully, creatively and/or concisely is important. Even in the wake of rejection, or especially then, we need to believe in ourselves enough to try again and again. And the best writers not only observe, but seem to \*absorb\* the world around

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them, then set these observations free in articles, stories, scripts and poems.

But without discipline, all the talent, confidence, creativity and ability in the world won't get you published.

I can almost hear you say, "Okay, Mom, I get your point" (followed by a roll of the eyes and an expression that says, "Now get off my back, okay?!"). And maybe that's how the word discipline got its bad reputation in the first place—from Mom, or other authority figures in our lives. After all, "discipline" has a somewhat negative ring to it, doesn't it? It reminds us of being sent to our rooms when we

were children, or of school detention, or getting a warning from our bosses at work. And yes, that happens to be one definition of discipline—"treatment that corrects or punishes"—but in my trusty Webster's New World Dictionary, that is not the primary definition. In fact, it's listed at number five!

Discipline primarily means "training expected to produce a specific character or pattern of behavior, especially training that produces moral or mental improvement." Isn't that what we writers really want, to develop the habit of writing daily, submitting regularly, and pursuing our writing dream consistently? To constantly hone our skills and increase our successes? In that regard, discipline is our ally, not our enemy. While our imagination may send us into idle daydreams, and our observations may distract, dismay or entertain us, our discipline is the one trait that will assist us in turning our daydreams into goals, and our observations into finished pieces of writing.

Here's to your writing success!

Mary Anne Hahn is a freelance writer who wants to encourage others to follow their dreams. To subscribe to her ezine, WriteSuccess, <mailto:writesuccess-subscribe@yahoogroups.com>

### **ARE YOU DISCIPLINED?**

**By Rhoberta Shaler**

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For most people, the word "discipline" has an immediate negative connotation. It implies something imposed from the outside,

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doesn't it? It means that someone or something is controlling or demanding, neither of which are particularly appealing. When we do think about self-discipline, it, too, often has a negative spin because it is seen as difficult and contributing to failure. Can you think about it differently?

Self-discipline is nothing more than keeping your commitments to yourself. If you say something is important and significant to you, then take this little test:

Does that something that you SAY is important show up a significant number of times in either your calendar, or your checkbook, or both? If it does not, then, where is the demonstration that it is important to you? Do you regularly do what you say has value to you?

I'm sure you understand the picture. I believe behavior, not words. How about you?

So, self-discipline arises from self-esteem and self-esteem is enhanced by self-discipline. Then, it seems natural that you take a look at your self-esteem. Do you believe that you are worth spending the time and/or money on? Do you get the "left-overs" of time and resources rather than filling your own cup? It is not unusual to feel that you are being a "good" person when you are self-sacrificing. That's because our society often tells us this is so. Oh, good thinking! The society says so because everyone else benefits from your self-sacrifice. In fact, "sacrifice" itself is an interesting concept. The dictionary says it means "the act of giving up or destroying one thing for the sake of something else".

Do you really want to be SELF-sacrificing?

Rhoberta Shaler, PhD Keynotes, Seminars & Coaching for entrepreneurs & professionals who want the motivation & strategies to achieve, to lead and to live richly. Creator of the Living Richly™ Program Host of Living Richly™ on [www.wsRadio.ws](http://www.wsRadio.ws). Author of OPTIMIZE Your Day! Practical Wisdom for

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