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**Seeing Purple: On Pens and Paying Attention**

**By Maya Talisman Frost**

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It's back-to-school time once again, and purple is IN. I'm not talking about fashion trends--though the September issues of most magazines are singing the praises of plum and berry shades. No, I'm referring to the hottest item at Office Depot, Staples, and other school supply meccas.

Purple pens.

According to a recent article in The Boston Globe, many teachers are giving up their infamous red pens and turning to purple. Although some stalwarts are gripping their crimson felt tips, others are embracing the royal shade in all its jewel tones.

Red is aggressive. It suggests danger. It makes us stop. A returned assignment covered with red corrections is a hallmark of humiliation. If "seeing red" is a euphemism for rage, seeing red marks is a sign of failure.

Bring on the purple. Purple is friendlier. Violet checks aren't as likely to cause cringing. Lavender circles are easier on the eyes. Purple gets your attention without increasing your heart rate, and according to color psychologists, it is therapeutic for those suffering from nervous tension or mental anguish.

I feel like dancing in the streets in my orchid boots, tossing my lilac beret in the air and twirling my dozen iris scarves. You see, I am known as the "woman who wears purple" and I make it a big part of my work.

I use purple to make a statement, but I'm borrowing the idea from Alice Walker, author of The Color Purple, who said: "I think it pisses God off if you walk by the color purple in a field somewhere and don't notice it."

## Seeing Purple: On Pens and Paying Attention

Purple makes perfect sense as my color of choice. There's nothing woo-woo about it for me. It's not favored by my guru (I don't have one). It isn't about connecting with my chakras. It happens to be in style this season, but believe me, if I am considered a fashionista, it is purely by accident.

No, I use purple as my black because of Alice Walker and chromotherapy. If boysenberry walls stimulate deeper concentration in monks who spend all day meditating, it's good enough for me. Besides, I look good in it.

I hand out custom-ordered purple M&Ms in my workshops as part of a mindfulness exercise. I encourage clients to consider grape-colored items as triggers for paying attention. Would red work just as well? Possibly, but it's more glaring. Red reminds us of sirens—and blood.

Red says "gotta" while purple says "please". Red means business, but purple hints that there's a party down the hall when you're finished.

Critics of the pen switch say that educators should be more concerned with teaching skills and less worried about bruising feelings. They say that those traditional red pens create tension and that's what motivates students to get it right next time.

Hmm. Tension doesn't help me learn better.

I don't like paying bills, but using purple ink to write my checks makes it all a bit more festive. I'm guessing teachers would benefit from the color switch as much as students.

Purple is the color of mindfulness. I can't think of anything more likely to prevent mistakes than a friendly reminder to pay attention. Purple pens could turn out to be effective triggers for learning, and at the very least, make those corrections more palatable.

Now, where's that party?

Maya Talisman Frost is a former teacher and mother of four teenage daughters. She offers specialized mindfulness training in Portland, Oregon. Her work has inspired thinkers in over 90 countries. To subscribe to her free weekly ezine, the Friday Mind Massage, visit

### **Is the Pen Mightier than the Sword?**

**By Maxine Greco**

We all know that the pen is mightier than the sword. But do you know that a pen is also a fine writing instrument that says a great deal about the person using it? In business, as in most areas of life, we all agree that first impressions certainly do count. We try to be well dressed because we know that we are judged at first by our appearance. Clean, polished shoes are a must. A briefcase in good condition is another important accessory. Some jobs require a more polished appearance than others. Think about the pen that you take from your pocket or from your briefcase to jot down pertinent

information. Does that also say something positive about you? Is it giving the impression you want to convey to the public?

Just as you "dress to impress" your pen says a lot about you. It says you respect your profession and are someone to be taken seriously. It shows your attention to every detail. It says that you perceive yourself as an important person with something important to write. Whether your pen of choice is the well-known Mont Blanc pen from Germany, or a gold or silver Cross pen, it is making a statement every time that you use it. There are fine pens that also include highlighters, or can write in several colors. Some pens also have a pencil built in. Think architects, accountants, editors, penciling people in, being able to erase errors out. Today pens are also available with a stylus included so they can be used on palm pilots and all forms of PDA cases.

People that have been in the corporate world for sometime know the importance of using a fine writing instrument. That is why pens are so often chosen as graduation gifts. They are especially impressive when engraved with your name or initials. They always make a fine impression, and are quite popular as corporate gifts. Fine writing instruments are recognized for the value they represent.

When you are going on a job interview, or meeting a client for the first time you'll try to be organized and have your presentation ready. The pen you choose to write with is part of that presentation. If you are using something funky with flashing lights, you may not be taken seriously. If you are using a pencil, or an inexpensive disposable ballpoint pen, it is probably not giving the impression you'd like to convey. Bright colored pens may be fun, but they do not give a professional appearance. You always want to present the best overall impression.

When something is out of place it is always the first thing you will notice. People go to a great deal of time and energy to get their presentation exactly right. It's one of the reasons the finer pens are known as "writing instruments." Pen companies are conveying the importance of using the right tool along with your briefcase and clothing. Many people collect a wardrobe of different pens and they are available in every price range from \$20.00 to several thousand dollars.

Maxine Greco has been in the luggage and travel business for over 35 years. She currently works at

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