



7 EXCEPTIONAL MINDSET STRATEGIES

Every Writer Must Learn

TO BECOME A PROLIFIC MACHINE

I was a secret writer for decades, depositing my thoughts in a journal with dreams of becoming an author one day. But writing a book? That was different. I struggled to commit. I just kept saying “someday...”

My husband had done it. He was a successful screenwriter for television and film. From the moment he decided to become a writer, he committed to becoming a success.

I was in awe of his ability to sit down day after day and bring story ideas and characters to life. It didn’t matter if he was under contract with a studio or not, he wrote for the sheer joy of it. He was as prolific as it gets, with a career that spanned 3 decades, and there was never a time he didn’t write.

“Prolific: marked by abundant inventiveness or productivity- Merriam-Webster Dictionary”

And isn’t that what we desire as writers... to be abundantly inventive and prolific?

Early in his career, David figured out a no-fail strategy for being consistently productive; going to the office with intention and producing work every single day. I passionately loved writing, but I resisted writing a book as though it was the thing that would turn my joy into drudgery. Yet, I feared the regret if I *didn’t* do it.

“Are you a writer who doesn’t write, a painter who doesn’t paint, an entrepreneur who never starts a venture? Then you know what resistance is... The resistance you feel is a force of nature.”

*–Steven Pressfield, author, **The War of Art***

I remember the day my desire to write was stronger than my resistance. I finally sat down to write my first book. It was the greatest first step of my writing career, and I could do it because I had a compelling reason why.



My daughter was born with a birth defect, a cleft lip. At the time, I was doing advanced studies in literature, and in particular, fairytales. I decided I wanted to write a children's book that would give my daughter the courage and the words to start her first day of kindergarten. It's not easy being the new kid in school, especially with a different face.

So, I wrote her a fairytale, found a publisher, and on her very first day she became the hero of her own story. Her teacher let me come in and read the book to the class, and the children asked my daughter numerous questions. I could see her eyes transform into this courageous, unstoppable little girl.

That was the launch of my book writing passion.

Other books followed, but I never had a system for writing, so there were long spaces of time between projects. Because of this, I never felt like a "real writer."

My last book was the worst. I procrastinated forever. I kept hearing myself say... "someday I'm going to write my next book, and I could hear my son's voice in my head saying, "Do it, Mom."

That voice was everything to me. It was my beautiful son who had his life ripped away by meningitis at just 16.

Grieving and recovering was a long and arduous journey of self-discovery. I documented all of it in my journal. I was living proof there's life after loss, and I had the strongest desire to write a book about it; to share what I learned for other parents going through such a tragedy.

It was years before I stopped avoiding it. I knew what I needed to do. My husband was proof that you can have a fulfilling and prolific writing career... you just have to go about it in a strategic way.

YOU HAVE TO TURN PRO.

What does "turning pro" look like? It's not the money, nor the fame. It's an attitude with which you approach your writing. It's saying you'll do it because you're finally trusting yourself to fulfill that dream. But it doesn't come without work.

"When we turn pro, we give up a life that we may have become extremely comfortable with. We give up a self that we have come to identify with and to call our own."-Steven Pressfield, author, **Turning Pro**

Turning pro is the moment you stop saying, "Someday, I want to write a book..." and you sit down and do the work.

It takes a strategy and a commitment, and there's no turning back. You either do it or you don't.



The moment I decided I was turning pro with my fourth book; I structured a plan, using David's strategies. Even though I had a J.O.B. schedule, I booked time in every day to write. I completed my book within six months, including the editing. I had my published book in hand a year from the date I sat down to begin writing.

I promise you, if you approach work with this "pro attitude," you will have launched the successful writer in you.

CREATIVE MINDSET STRATEGIES FOR ABUNDANT INVENTIVENESS & PRODUCTIVITY

1. The Intentional Mindset

The key to successful creation is to make it important enough to think of it as non-negotiable.

David didn't wait for inspiration; he planned for it. If he didn't write, there wouldn't be anything for the actors, directors, and crew to film. Waiting for inspiration was not an option.

He used growth mindset strategies before the term was even popularized by the work of Carol Dweck, Stanford University Psychologist in her book *Mindset, The New Psychology of Success*:

"In a growth mindset, people believe that their most basic abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work—brains and talent are just the starting point."

And that's exactly what David believed... hard work and dedication. David banked everything on becoming a successful writer. He never gave himself any other option, and he showed up to do the work every single day.

*I was fortunate to be his editor and collaborator on everything he wrote. We had a creative partnership! We visualized success from the very beginning. We lived and breathed the entertainment business as though it had already happened until one day it did... he sold a script to **Disney**. It was the beginning of his long career until the day he died.*

2. The Ritual and the Strategy

Create your unique ritual and strategy and stick to it.

How much time can you devote to writing? Is it one hour a day? Four? Eight? Whatever it is, make it consistent. Put the schedule in your calendar and stick to it.

David started each writing day after going to the gym. Once at the office, he'd brew a cup of coffee, sit at his desk, and read a few chapters of a book. He loved westerns, mysteries, and biographies.



Sometimes he wrote handwritten letters, finding that the process of handwriting opened the flow of the mind-body connection. This lasted no more than 20–30 minutes.

Once he finished his pre-writing ritual, he was ready to start work on his scripts. Even if writing wasn't going well, he committed to the entire 8-hour workday, never cutting it short. More often than not, something worthwhile came from his diligence.

A "good day" was one where he completed at least 10 pages of a script. Even if it needed massive rewrites, it was still a creative accomplishment. "The Ritual" is the tool you can use to press go every single day.

Make your creative time as necessary as showing up to work on time. Set your writing schedule by setting a time, days of the week, and a place.

One of my writing clients chose to write in a coffee shop, another in the park. I love writing in my office at home. I created a beautiful space with colors I love, a cleared desk, candles, quiet music, and my beloved cup of coffee.

Build creativity into your week and stick to your schedule. It's the key to a completion date for your book!

3. The Declaration

Lack confidence? Pretend you're already a writer until you believe it.

If you don't declare yourself a writer, it makes it too easy to let yourself off the hook. When you hear yourself say, "I'm a writer." It helps you follow through with that goal.

David called himself a writer from the moment he wrote his first page. He had to fulfill his contract, not only the one with the studio but the one with himself.

It took me a lot longer to feel comfortable labeling myself a writer. It wasn't until I started acting like a writer that I felt I'd earned the title. Acting like a writer means following through with what you say you're going to do... write that book (or blog).

If you struggle with declaring yourself a writer, you're not alone. Studies show that 70% of the population feel like a fraud at one time or another and tend to downplay their gifts and accomplishments, and most of them are women.

Stop those negative feelings right now! That belief is not real! It's your inner "bad guy chatter" that's undermining your writing success.

How do you combat this fraud syndrome? You write. You do the work.



*"You are a writer; you just have to write."– Jeff Goins, bestselling author, **The Art of Work***

Write out your declaration to include your intentions for completing your project.

Setting your intentions as a writer drives you to finish your project. Replace the self-doubt with declaring yourself a writer. The more you hear it, the more you will kick that creative brain in gear.

4. Know Why

Knowing why you're writing is as important as what you're writing.

I write because it helps me make sense of my life. I ask for words to tell me things I don't know until the words flow out of me. I look to it as an inner GPS, guiding me to a greater understanding of myself and others.

Writing carried me through the time of my greatest sorrow and lifted me up when I thought I could only look down. It makes me more alive and brings me hope for the future. It makes me feel like I'm making a contribution to others by sharing my stories and what I know.

My words shape my life. I ask, and it suddenly comes out the end of my pen. Words have incredible power! Become the writer you always wanted to be!

"Our job in this life is not to shape ourselves into some ideal we imagine we ought to be, but to find out who we already are and become it." — Steven Pressfield

5. Keep Creative Time Sacred

Commit to the time you allotted as though you are being paid for it... someday you will.

In the beginning, David wrote purely on spec. It didn't matter that he wasn't receiving an hourly wage for his time in front of the computer. His enthusiasm for writing on spec was coupled with his undying belief in himself and his stories.

He never believed in writer's block. It was always just an opportunity to re-think the script in a new way.

He wouldn't let the confusion of the script be an endpoint, but a turning point. Just keep working. You can change things up a bit by working on a different act, or chapter, or a blog.

You've committed yourself to the time, so keep your creative time sacred.



If you're still struggling, brainstorm with someone who knows your work, draw a map of your story, research your subject. Don't get distracted. Just stay on the topic of what you're writing.

David would often say, "If you just sit down and do the work, it can all change in a day." And just by sitting in that chair and making an effort... it always did.

6. Write Ugly and Believe in the Power of the Edit

Get your words on the page; let them flow.

Your mind's ability to create your work is a different part of the brain than the part of your brain that will edit the work. Allow yourself to write that ugly first draft and let it sit for a day.

When you go back to edit, you'll set a different intention for yourself. The intention is to refine your work. This is how you become the master.

This part of the writing process is like what Michelangelo did to finish his beautiful sculptures. He began by carving the marble with small pick and chisels, carving out the rough form. He used a rasp for the small details. The refining of the sculpture came at the end as he smoothed the edges with abrasives like pumice stones. Finally, he'd flush the masterpiece with water.

Everything is rough in the first draft. As you edit your work, you chip away the unnecessary sentences, thoughts, and words.

Then, you'll read your work out loud and hear where the glitches lie. Finally, you'll put it through an online editor (free apps like Grammarly.com or HemingwayApp.com) and hone away overused words, excessive passive voice, and glaring grammatical errors.

At last, you'll flush it with water by reading it out loud one more time.

Now you have your masterpiece.

7. Don't Wait for Inspiration... Plan for it.

Waiting for inspiration is not a plan for getting it done. Action is.

You have the tools for making your plan, writing your story, and completing your work. Steven Pressfield says, "What we get when we turn pro, is we find our power."

You are powerful. Follow through with your dream, turn pro, and start writing...