

# A WRITER'S TRUST

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**Any act of** creating begins with trust.

You trust—you know in your heart—that you can combine words in a way that will relate a story *worth telling* and lift characters from the page, beaming them directly into your reader's imagination.

You trust that by mentally reaching out to the ethos, you can create something in your imagination from literally “nothing.”

You trust that you've breathed undeniable life into your tale, which you can confidently entrust to your fabricated characters who become real and authentic to us as we assimilate them.

Think your work is not yet the best you're capable of writing? You can trust that SCREENTALK will show you a variety of ways to reach the pinnacle of your potential—one word, one character, one sentence, one page, one plot, one act, one theme, one premise at a time.

Trust means relying on your gut. Having faith in your “instinct,” your ultimate center of trust.

If you're not in tune with your gut, or you don't acknowledge the role trust plays in your creative quest, a topnotch writing career can become very tough, if not impossible, to pursue.

Writers and all artists must have a level of self-trust beyond others because we have to believe we can create something out of nothing, day in and day out. That's what art is—creating something definable out of “nothing.”

## BLIND TRUST

There are two types of blind trust.

The blind trust that works and the blind trust that does not.

The blind trust that enhances your writing and the blind trust that can sabotage or butcher it.

Blind trust that works can be seen through the darkness of the newborn puppies and kittens whose eyes are not yet open. They trust there will be milk and that they can find its source without the benefit of eyesight. They have no doubt about what they want, where they're going, or what they're doing. They may stumble and stagger; they may walk on their brothers or sisters on the way to their mother's tasty, nurturing spigot.

They **trust** they're in the right place, at the right time, doing the right thing with all the right creatures for all the right reasons.

Blind trust that does not work is suffered by those incapable of discerning people who want to take advantage of them, abuse them, rip them off or literally destroy their talent. These people refuse to recognize the bad guys for who they are.

Interestingly, people who consider themselves sharp, intelligent and rational can experience irrational blind trust. They continue to live in “denial,” refusing to see the truth despite clear and obvious evidence that (1) the choices they make in this state are self-destructive and (2) the people whom they trust blindly do not have their best interest at heart—and never did.

Blind trust that works relies only on faith in yourself and a belief that you can do the work.

## TRUST, FAITH AND BELIEF

It's difficult to discuss matters that do not exist materially, yet play a significantly tangible role in your development and career as a writer.

One of the most important functions I have as a coach is to help my clients attain and continue to experience the *faith* that they are capable of doing the work. More so, they have the *belief* they can do the job well (or learn how) and ultimately *trust* that they can innovate in their own inimitable way.

*A quick side comment:* If you think with all this talk of faith, belief and trust that I'm leaning toward mentioning the “r” word (religion) I am not!

The atheist will benefit from this column as much as the most spiritual or religious among us, because even the least trusting person does not realize how much he or she trusts, believes and experiences faith throughout every day and evening.

## UNACKNOWLEDGED TRUST

The best definition I can come up with for an artist's trust is an unexpressed and usually unacknowledged expectation.

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Here's how it already exists in your life:

- You trust the sun will rise in the morning and set in the evening.
- You trust water will flow from a spigot when you turn it on.
- You trust fire is hot.
- You trust ice is cold.
- You trust you can brush your teeth.
- You trust how a specific food will taste.
- You trust that when you turn your key, your car will start.
- You trust that the money you spend actually has value.
- You trust that when you fall asleep, you'll wake up—whether it's a nap or at bedtime.
- You trust that when you press your remote control, a TV will respond appropriately.

And more complex:

- You trust that when you reach for a glass of water, you'll pick it up and drink as you always have. And you trust that you can put on your socks, pants and shirt.

## TRUST AND MOVEMENT

When we reach to pick up a glass—or anything for that matter—hundreds, if not thousands of adjustments are made in this “simple” movement. Instead of a “straight” movement, even if you “see” your hand move directly toward the glass and pick it up easily, your brain, eyes, arm, hand, and fingers are making hundreds, if not thousands of adjustments between the thought and the targeted activity.

And after you've picked up the glass, just as many, if not more, adjustments are made to bring the glass up to its target—your mouth—and then your mouth uses a couple hundred imperceptible movements to drink it.

Our minds and bodies are in a constant state of adjustment, most of them miniscule. But together, they create the larger movement that we can see and therefore understand. Interestingly, the human body is constantly changing on its own as well. The child's arm is longer than it was the day before because she's growing.

The adult's arm is changing because it is aging. Yet, for the most part, we adapt to these inevitable physiological and psychological changes naturally, without noticing.

Bodies and their parts never move in a neat, tidy line. They are in a constant mode of accommodation, responding to the task requested by your mind.

As writers, even a “simple” task requires hundreds of adjustments—physical, emotional and mental. We're deciding which words to use, in what order, how to spell, punctuate and isolate them (pages, acts, chapters). Our minds, heads, arms, wrists, fingers and eyes, are making many, many adjustments between the original thought and tapping keys.

What does this have to do with trust?

You trust you will be able to press the keys, create words, print the pages, and create a format “naturally” without thinking about it. You can do all of this without a second thought only because you trust you can.

Anything you do without deliberation, or do easily after deliberation reflects a certain trust in yourself to perform the function. A faith that you can do whatever it is. You even take your ability and skill to complete these actions for granted.

Stop reading and write down all the activities—mental and physical—you do without thinking in a day. Make that an hour; you'll never finish a list that includes your entire day.

## THE NEXT LEVEL

What's my point? If you're already in at state of trust by simply living your life, doing so many “ordinary” tasks, why not consider expanding it into the realm of creativity?

Trust that you can find what you need to tell the right story the best way—your way.

You may ask yourself what you don't trust about your process. Is it that you don't feel you have amassed enough facts to write the story or perhaps there is more character research needed?

One writer—half of a team that wrote one of the summer's big hits—did relatively little research on the script he wrote. But he believed—trusted and had faith—that he could incorporate what he did know in a way that would add something unique and substantial to the project. And by golly, he did.

I'm not discouraging anyone from researching or doing lots of background work (I do), but some writers use it as a ruse to prevent themselves from writing; they expend far too much time and energy preparing until they finally decide they can start writing.

Likewise, people who should do more research and background work—who dive in writing when they would be helped immensely by something as elementary as

preparing an outline—need to examine their own preparation process so they can come up with something to enhance their script.

Those who don't do enough proper preparation run dry in the middle of Act II. Sound familiar?

## HOW TO TRUST YOURSELF

Believe it or not, trusting yourself is a conscious choice. Do you want to trust yourself?

If you do, ultimately you will figure out how to make self-trusting choices. Like anything else, it's a matter of constant adjustment.

Every person I've coached that has claimed not to trust other people comes to realize the person that they don't trust is themselves. They're afraid. They don't trust themselves to know how to respond to untrustworthy people or those who may create a problem. They learn how to trust the choices they make in those challenging situations.

## SIMPLE SUGGESTIONS

1). Make a list of five things you can trust yourself to do every day. Like get up, brush your teeth, breathe, eat, drink water, pee, anything you trust you **must** do.

2). Check each one off, without fail, as you perform it each day. Do this for at least 21 days.

3). Gradually, add another task that you **want** to do and check it off as you do the others. Keep the list short; don't promise yourself to do too many things because you'll end up where you were before—not keeping your word to yourself.

Each day you check off each item on your list, you'll feel more trusting of yourself because you **kept your word. To yourself.**

That is what trust is all about. Keeping your word to yourself and others.

Every time you don't keep your word to yourself, you weaken your self-trust and self-esteem and feel like a loser.

People can become very angry with themselves for constantly letting themselves down. Depression is anger turned inward with no relief. Learning to trust yourself can help you in more ways than just helping you to become a better writer.

I trust you can do it! ■

This Screenwriter's Café column is adapted from Colleen Patrick's new book in progress, *An Artist's Trust*.