



Tending the Writer's Emotional Health

- ◆ **Organization**— an organized physical space = an organized mind
- ◆ **Physical Comfort**— you need a better chair, good lighting, the right keyboard
- ◆ **Room of One's Own**— failing that... *space* of one's own. You deserve a place to spread out and a spot that appeals to the five senses.
- ◆ **Social Networks**— keep yours varied with cyber groups, real life writer friends, clubs or special interest groups with interests outside writing
- ◆ **Entertain Your Muse**— experiment with what maintains your creativity by keeping a writer's journal, finding a creativity coach, engaging in alternative arts
- ◆ **Schedule Breaks**— small ones throughout the day, days off in a week, weeks off in a year
- ◆ **Sleep**— your body requires it for good health, your brain needs it to work out story problems
- ◆ **Rewards**— good managers offer incentives and so should you
- ◆ **Balance**— know when to shut down the computer

The Organized Home Office

Whether you're working from a spacious room or a desk in the corner of your bedroom, creating and maintaining functional office space is critical for productivity. If furnishing and decorating aren't up your alley, enlist the aid of a friend to help you plan your space. Give yourself the gift of dedicated file drawers or bins, a pleasing desktop where you can surround yourself with whatever inspires you, and easy access to your printer, laptop, phone, etc. Ideally, you'll need enough desk space for paperwork as well as your computer.



The Chair—there's nothing else as important in your office as the chair. Ask any writer who's suffered from shoulder/neck/back strain—a good chair is worth every penny. Check out ergonomic models for the best support. Some of the highest rated models include Herman Miller Aeron, Humanscale Freedom, and Steelcase Leap.

The Keyboard—as with the chair, there are health risks to skimping on your keyboard set-up. Carpal tunnel is a real risk for writers, as are numerous other thumb/wrist/hand ailments. Test out ergonomic keyboards, wrist rests, and varying desk/chair heights to find your ideal writing position.

The Lighting—you'll need task lighting and ambient lighting. Consider full-spectrum lighting to decrease eyestrain. Some writers like the effect of a salt lamp as well.

The System—insist upon some form of order in your office to keep down the clutter and maintain your space's usefulness. Separate the incoming from the outgoing, install shelves and corkboards, create bins customized for the way you work so that your most frequently handled materials all have homes.

Need help planning your space? Check out IKEA's office planning tool:

http://www.ikea.com/ms/en_US/rooms_ideas/office/download1.html

Don't miss Martha's tips on the home office:

<http://www.marthastewart.com/article/the-ultimate-home-office>

Check out reviews of the best office chairs:

<http://www.consumersearch.com/www/office/office-chairs/>

If you've never looked into full-spectrum lighting:

<http://www.naturallighting.com/web/shop.php>

Stay organized:

<http://www.organizetips.com/office.htm>

Managing Stress

Maintain physical health—take your vitamins, have a checkup, exercise daily, don't resort to junk food as a reward for writing.



Seek out social support—schedule lunch dates, make phone calls to a writer friend for brainstorm sessions, meet with friends who have interests outside writing, see family, make a date with your significant other, volunteer your time.

Don't ignore the spiritual—breathe in the new day, admire the sunset, indulge in the rituals of your personal beliefs, find ways to remind yourself the world is bigger than the manuscript.

Set deadlines—while thinking about work might sound counterintuitive to de-stressing, sometimes coming up with a plan for how to tackle whatever is causing anxiety is the best solution. Set manageable goals, divide your work into segments and create a calendar to remind yourself that you have a plan in place when your anxiety level starts to climb.

Schedule relaxation—spend some quality time on the porch swing, use that stash of luxurious bubble bath still unopened from last Christmas, get a massage, play with your pet, call a friend to join you on for a day of antiquing... whatever relaxes you.



Implement the power of “no” — turning down new commitments is crucial to staving off stress. Prioritize your “must do” activities and don't feel guilty about refusing everything else.

Surround yourself with positive people—stay away from emotional vampires who drain you of confidence and forward career momentum. It's tough enough to keep a positive outlook in a rejection-filled business without “friends” to naysay your efforts. Maintain connections with people who believe in you and your goals.

Monitor stress triggers—avoid putting yourself in the same stressful situations over and over again by being aware of what frazzles you most. If you can't handle juggling your line edits while writing a new proposal, set down one project until you finish the other. If you can't finish a book over the holidays, don't ever give yourself a Dec/Jan deadline.

Channel Stuart Smalley—remember the SNL character who preached the power of positive affirmation? Tack inspiring quotes above your computer and repeat empowering phrases like a calming mantra.

No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.
Eleanor Roosevelt.

You can't wait for inspiration. You have to go after it with a club.
Jack London

Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm.
Ralph Waldo Emerson

Great works are performed not by strength but by perseverance.
Samuel Johnson

Did you ever hear of a man who had striven all his life faithfully and singly toward an object and in no measure obtained it? If a man constantly aspires, is he not elevated?
Henry David Thoreau

The better work men do is always done under stress and at great personal cost.
William Carlos Williams

Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover.
Mark Twain

Affirmation
Inspiration
Motivation



Three-time RITA nominee **Joanne Rock** turned a passion for writing into a career when imaginary characters kept her awake at night, demanding she tell their stories. The author of over thirty romances in a variety of subgenres, she enjoys writing medieval historicals and sexy contemporaries along with the occasional romantic suspense. Joanne traces her passion for all things medieval to an early brush with John Keats' poem "The Eve of St. Agnes" and a rapt fascination with the Pre-Raphaelites' depiction of medieval themes. FMI: <http://joannerock.com> or http://myspace.com/joanne_rock.

Steamy contemporaries from HQ Blaze:

<i>She Thinks Her Ex Is Sexy</i>	2/09
<i>Always Ready</i>	3/09
<i>Sliding Into Home</i>	8/09

Lush medievalists from HQ Historicals:

<i>A Night of Wicked Delight</i>	3/09
<i>The Knight's Return</i>	4/09

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