

Got Lots of Unfinished Work?



Amy Suardi
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We humans tend to think we're on stage, instead of part of the massive endlessly creative whole



Photo by Rita Astravich on Unsplash

I am a creative writer who writes a lot but submits very little. I have folders bursting with marked-up drafts, drawers jammed with forgotten journals, and files littering my computer desktop like amber leaves in November.

Autumn usually starts with excitement about new projects — I'm going to really do something this time, I say: start a new blog, submit personal essays, write a memoir.

And then something happens — maybe the writing starts feeling hard, or I get too many constructive comments, or the book starts looking like a mountain I'm not equipped to climb, and then I wander off to sign up for yet another writing workshop.

Anna L. Benson

This fall, as the same pattern began to reveal itself, I saw that every season of unfinished writing is like a tray of seedlings. I plant the seeds, water them, and coax them to grow under ultra-violet lamps. But I never push them out into the sunlight and fresh air. Kept down there in the basement, eventually they turn yellow and flop over.

I often assume that old writing can be dusted off and revived, but when I look at stuff I wrote even just a few weeks ago, it feels stale. As if the work — and the person who wrote it — is now covered with a layer of powdery mildew.

Ross Gay, who decided to write an informal essayette every day for a year in The Book of Delights, says that his delight is multiplied when he shares it. For a piece of writing — or any creation — to realize its full potential, it must be let go to shine forth in the world.

My son was teaching a gardening song to his little sister on a long car trip, and as he repeated the song over and over in his high voice, its wisdom seeped in:

*Plant four seeds
In a row
One to rot
One to grow
One for the pigeon
and one for the crow*

The farmer fully expects most of the seeds not to take off, and yet he plants them anyway. Most of nature's products get reabsorbed and dissolved, but plants keep producing fruit, seeds, flowers — trillions of them. Writers keep writing, because life is always unfolding and there is always something new to examine, to celebrate, to share.

But keeping baby plants inside because they're too tender, or not planting seeds because most won't germinate, is allowing fear to halt the creation process. Maybe an article will reach a lot of people, maybe it won't. Maybe a crow will eat it and poop it out in a more suitable location. Maybe it will rot, enriching the soil for a family of worms.

So don't create as if you were performing in a stadium. Create like a maple spawning thousands of winged seeds — and letting them all fly.

Anna L. Benson

Create like the Nature that you are. The massive quantity of writing out there is as bountiful as the leaves that drop in fall, composting into the earth for spring buds.

Shontae Rea

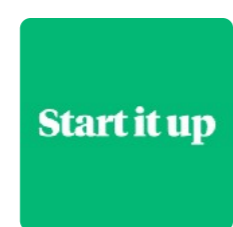
Keep creating, and pushing it out into the sunlight. You have plenty more where that came from.

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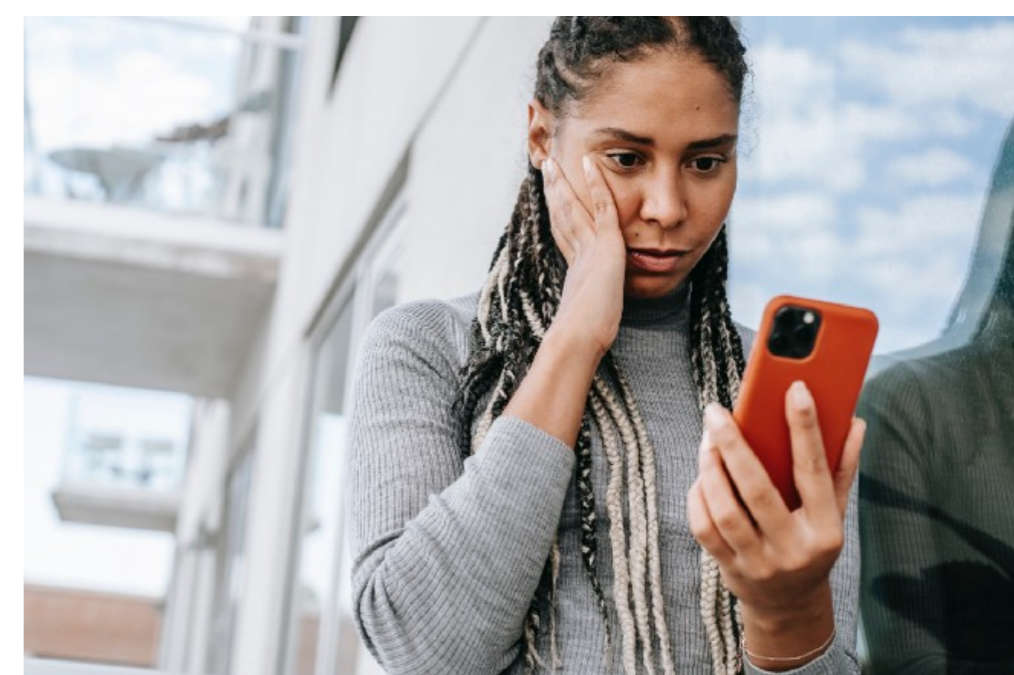
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