

[songwriting zen]

Presents

When songwriters block hits you, hit back with...

**11 Ways To
Eliminate Writers
Block FOREVER!!**

By Corey Stewart © Copyright 2008

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G'day,

My name is Corey Stewart and I want to thank you for downloading my e-report "**11 ways to eliminate writers block forever**".

One of the most common complaints I hear from songwriters are about the times when they **can't** write songs. You know, those times where you're staring at a blank piece of paper and your mind is as empty and lifeless as the Sahara Desert.

I think for any writer, having writers block is the most frustrating thing to **ever** experience.

What do you reckon happens to most writers when they get blocked? They just stop and stew over it. They are in essence letting the block take control over them. With this e-report I will reveal to you my **11 ways to eliminate writers block FOREVER!!**

With these techniques at your disposal you will be controlled by writers block **NO MORE!**

Just think of it, no more worrying about where the next line of your song is going to come from and no more sleepless nights *wondering if you are ever going to write another song ever again.*

With these **11 simple but powerful techniques** you will be able to blast your way through writers block once and for all just like creative dynamite. The way will be made clear the way for smooth songwriting ahead.

Before we get into the techniques I wanted to share with you my personal opinions on writers block. I believe that writers block isn't a tangible thing and it's also something that is *not created from an external source.*

To me, writers block **is all in your mind**, and therefore, *you can use your mind to start writing again.* It's all in how you look at things.

I believe a songwriter has writing block for two reasons. Either they have no songwriting process (or are not adhering to one) or they have an overactive inner critic chipping away at the songwriter's *creative vision of themselves*.

It seems to me that writer's block is a *fight between a songwriter's ego and the muse*. Most of the time our egos are much stronger and, at the expense of the muse will win the fight. This therefore, gets manifested as a "*writers block*".

If this is the case then by *developing a songwriting process of your own and neutralizing your inner critics hold over your creative vision* you can eliminate writers block from your life.

These techniques however, are not absolute. Nor are they the only ways to defeat writers block. I'm sure there are as many block destroying strategies as there are songwriters in the world but in my experience of 20 plus years as a singer/songwriter/musician and in discussion with many other songwriters, these 11 points keep coming up time and time again.

Some of these techniques will work better for you (or make more sense to you) than others. If this is the case then that's great! As long as you are able to keep writing songs that is all that matters.

I use all of these techniques myself so I know that they work **for me**. After each technique you will find my own personal comments in *italics*. I sincerely hope that this e-report will be of great benefit to you and your songwriting

So now, ladies and gentlemen (insert drum-roll here...), here are the...

11 ways to eliminate writers block FOREVER!!

1. Just walk away

One of the best things to do when things are slowing down to a complete stop is to take a break and walk away. This strategy will detach your brain from the agony of trying to come up with something new and in turn will give it a well-earned rest. The trick here is to not put your self under any pressure. The more pressure you put yourself under, the less creative you will be.

Have a cup of coffee, go for a walk, watch some TV, have a snack, do anything to take your mind of the task at hand. **Leave the song and come back to it later.**

Most importantly, make sure that the break is not an excuse to procrastinate. Make it a *'proactive rest'*. Give yourself a time limit of say, 20 minutes but don't be too hard on yourself if you go a little bit over.

If you go back to the song and you are still blocked then try it again. Maybe leave it for the day. Remember, you can always come back to the song at a later time.

I personally find the **'go for a walk'** option the best one for me.

It's like the natural rhythm of my feet hitting the ground gives me a solid foundation to just dream, observe my surroundings and be open to any new songwriting idea that comes my way. As I am walking I carry around a hand-held recording device or (at least) a notepad and pen.

I am constantly amazed where ideas come from. More often than not I will be walking, enjoying the view and I would overhear a conversation and a phrase would suddenly pop into my head.

A number of songs have come out from walking. And just think, *I was walking because I was feeling blocked.*

2. Sleep on it

If you're finding that walking away from a song does nothing to remove your writer's block, just stop writing all together and sleep on it. Did you know that your subconscious mind is a very powerful tool for gathering ideas and concepts?

Here's how you do it (remember this for the next time you become blocked)

Before you go to bed, get a clear image in your mind of what you want to 'unblock' (writing that dreaded second verse for example). Keep that image alive and tell yourself that your subconscious mind will take care of it for you. Once you do that, try to forget about it and go to sleep. Have faith and trust that your subconscious mind will be working it out for you as you sleep.

I call this the **24 to 48 hour test**.

If I am halfway through writing a song and I can't seem to go any further I give the song a break for **up to a couple of days**.

Coming back to a songwriting idea the next day or two with a fresh set of ears and eyes always gives me a whole new perspective on the song.

More often than not I am able to finish that particular song in that same songwriting session.

3. Talk to someone about it

Call someone, talk to them about your dilemma.

Generally, if you have a problem about something, talking it out with someone that you trust tends to speed up the solution. A problem shared is often a problem solved.

In regards to songwriting, bouncing ideas off of someone else and getting another person's point of view on things is one of the most powerful ways to break out of a 'block'.

Talk about the song with them, give them a run-through of where you're stuck and what you want to unblock. At the end of the conversation you will feel much better

If you work with a co-writer or two, this is probably a good time to get them on board. *Sometimes it takes two heads rather than one to finish a song.*

Most of the time I am working on my own but I do have a number of co-writers that I call on from time to time to bounce ideas and gain a fresh new perspective.

To me, it doesn't matter at the end of the day who writes the song with me. What matters is that **the song is completed.**

Many songs that I have written have only been able to come into existence with the help of a co-writer or two.

4. Have a hot bath/shower

The main point here is to find an activity that will help you to **RELAX**. Having a hot bath or shower is a pretty good start.

For some people (me included) the act of having a shower actually stimulates idea generation. It must be the feeling of hot water on the body.

Relaxing doesn't mean doing something that distracts your mind like, watching TV or even listening to the radio.

Solitude and silence is the key to this technique. Enjoy the peace and quiet and let your mind wander to its hearts content. Go into yourself and try to find what is in there.

Hmmm, a bath right now would be a great idea 😊

I don't know about you but I am always coming up with melody and lyric lines while I am having a shower (it becomes a problem when I want to write things down with wet hands).

Meditation is also an option that I use with really good results. As I have been practising meditation for a while I am able to clear my mind and become very relaxed and still.

Every now and then I have to stop my meditation because a songwriting idea jumps out of the void and into my consciousness. Once I write down the idea I go back into my practise with no ill effect on my state of mind.

5. Don't stress about it

One thing is for sure. *The more you're stressed and uptight about songwriters block the less creative you're going to be which will in turn make you more stressed and uptight.* Can you see the vicious circle that is developing here?

Who says that we have to be creative all the time and that every song that we write has to be a hit song? Don't stress about it.

There are going to be days in which you are not going to be able to write anything (not even a shopping list) no matter how hard you try. If this happens to you don't stress about it

We live in a world of constant change.

Buddhists call this concept 'impermanence'. Nothing lasts forever, especially writer's block.

Remember, **writers block will only last as long as we allow it too.**

I find it hard to sleep sometimes and in days gone by when I would experience my bouts of insomnia I would get really upset and you know what? It's really hard to sleep when you are upset.

It's the same with songwriting.

6. Clean the house

Taking your mind off of the song and putting it onto the everyday, mundane activities that you know you can complete (with your eyes closed and your hands tied behind your back) *can do wonders for your self esteem and to your creative environment.*

If a song is driving you 'round the bend' then diffuse the situation by doing some household chores.

Clean the house, vacuum the floor, do the washing, do the dishes, catch up on some errands that you have been putting off. Do anything to take your mind off the song.

Set either a time limit or an activity limit. Decide on how long you want to spend doing the chores or what chores (and how many of them) you want to complete before getting back to the songwriting task at hand.

Do the washing, get back to the song and see what happens.

I always believe that a clean creative space equals an organized artistic process.

I always perform at my best when I know that the environment that I live in is free of clutter and that I know where everything is.

There have also been times that in my 'catching up on errands' I get inspired by something and come home with another songwriting idea.

It doesn't matter what you do and where you do it, ideas come from the strangest places. **Everything that you do has the potential to be a songwriting idea gathering moment.**

7. Listen to music

If you are feeling stuck, put on some of your favourite music or music that you think is similar to the type of song that you're writing.

The object here is to put you in a *positive frame of mind*. When the music is on, really listen to it. Listen to the layers of sound, one above the other, and immerse yourself in the music, totally focus on it. This is another way of taking your mind off of the 'block' and onto something else.

If you play an acoustic guitar put on some music that you could play along to and go for it. Get your mind concentrating on something else

Listening to music that inspires me is one of my favourite things to do. I generally have the radio or a CD on for most of the time and for fun I sometimes put the volume down just enough so I can hear that something is being played but not enough to recognize it.

It's amazing what ideas you come up with by allowing your brain to fill in the missing gaps of the barely recognizable sounds that are coming out of your stereo.

(The next two activities are particularly useful if you are staring at a blank piece of paper).

8. Brainstorm

Think of the first word or phrase that pops into your head and write it down. Don't think just do. From there start automatically writing anything that come into your mind either in longhand, random phrases, bullet-points, anything that you like.

There are no rules in a brainstorming exercise. You can literally do anything that you want

Brainstorming requires the songwriter to let go of any concept of good and bad and just 'be'. What you write is what you write. In essence you are clearing out the dust and stuff from your brain.

Set yourself a time or page limit. Start when you start and stop when the limit passes. Sometimes you get into a trance like zone when you do this exercise.

When you read back what you've written you either can't remember writing it, don't believe what is written or both.

When I do this exercise **I give myself 30 minutes** and in that time I just write frantically. I am not concerned with what it reads like or what it sounds like in my mind. I am only concerned with getting, as much down on paper in 30 minutes and that's it!!

I look at this as an exercise of finding the gold in the rock, the diamonds in the rough. To find the good stuff you sometimes have to wade through a lot of crap to get there but when you do stumble across some of that songwriting gold...

Oh it's so sweet.

9. List 'possible song titles'

This is a specialised brainstorming activity based on the premise that a good title will write the song for you.

Start off this exercise exactly as you would for #8 but instead of looking for whole sentences and free-writing a story, just write what you would consider to be 'possible song titles'.

Imagine yourself making a song titles list for your next CD release and start writing

I do this a lot and the *time/page limit that I give myself is 30 minutes or 10 pages, whichever comes first.*

Once I finish I normally leave it and go onto something else, preferring to come back to it in a day or so. Of course you don't have to do that but I do guarantee that you will be pleasantly surprised with the results no matter what time you get back to it.

Many songwriters will tell you that a good song title will write the song itself. There have been times where in my notebooks a phrase for some reason has leaped off the page and grabbed me by the throat and yelled, "Write me!!" Whereas, on any other day that same phrase would just be that, remain a phrase.

(Once you have completed the "possible song titles" exercise you might want to try technique #8 "Brainstorm" again with the fictitious song titles as your template and see what happens).

10. Re-read/listen to your old stuff

I hope that you don't throw away anything that you write. It is a good idea to keep everything that you do. It will make this technique work at best.

It's always good to re-read your old lyrics, listen to old songwriting tapes or read past entries in your journal (if you keep one. If not, it's a really good idea to start).

Looking at something with fresh eyes or listening to something with fresh ears can conjure up different images, refresh forgotten memories and set your creative mind down more tangents than anything else.

When re-reading or listening to your songwriting archive, try to maintain a “zero” mind.

Don't let the reasons why a past idea was left unfinished haunt you again.

Approach what you hear and see as if you were hearing and/or seeing it for the first time.

I worked out pretty early on in my songwriting life the benefits of not throwing anything away.

I have piles of notebooks, papers, journals, and songwriting tapes and archive CD's of me recording song ideas and old band rehearsals stashed away for that rainy day when I have nothing to do.

I have written many songs by re-discovering something that I have forgotten about. Do you have an archive that you can dig around in?

And finally...

11. Just write anything (and I mean anything)

What does a professional athlete do when they are in a slump? **They just keep on going until their slump disappears.**

Did you know that technically, as soon as you put your pen to paper you have eliminated the writer's block that you've been experiencing? You are writing again.

What you write however can be as limitless as your imagination.

Write out a shopping list, a letter to your Mum, and the lyrics to your favourite song or even what your inner critic is telling you at this particular moment. **I literally mean, "Write anything".**

This last point is so very simple, it actually seems a bit trivial but for a solution to a problem to be taken seriously it doesn't have to be complex and/or hard to understand.

I've always believed that **simple is best**. *Remember the K.I.S.S. principle (Keep It Simple Stupid)*

If you are going to just write and plough through the doubt and stress that you're experiencing whilst in the throes of writers block don't be concerned with achieving an end result. Force yourself to write and more importantly give yourself permission to write badly.

In situations such as this it doesn't matter how good or bad the end result is. What matters is that you are writing.

Songwriting is an acquired skill just like any craft. However, it does come easier with lots and lots of practise. That is what your songwriting process is, a means to practise your craft.

Epilogue

There you have it!

My **11 ways to eliminate writers block forever**. It is my hope that you use this information to fight the battle that rages between your ego and the muse and ensure that the muse always wins.

If you have any further questions or any feedback (good or bad) feel free to contact me through my website or through my Songwriting Zen songwriting blog.

Until next time, happy writing,

Corey Stewart

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