

What keeps you going? Get Busy Supporting Others

Okay. We've talked about balance, and we've talked about embracing the next challenge in your writing journey. I wanted to spend this next article exploring a very, "I'm okay, you're okay," notion that has forever changed my perspective on the world of publishing. So here it is, the thought of the day: if you want personal success, if you want to master how you react to this industry's ups and downs, you have to get busy supporting others.

Of course we support each other, you say. We're one big happy writing family. Well, yes and no. RWA is without a doubt the most supportive bunch of writers I've ever had the privilege to know. It's an amazing place to learn, a great place to be encouraged, because our members care and are always ready to give each other a hand. Okay, now that we've got that out of the way, let's kick it up a notch.

I'm not talking about the kind of support you give an organization or a critique buddy. This is something deeper. A personal choice. Your mind-set, if you will, as you look at the world around you. How do you feel when someone else wins the contest you really wanted to win, snags the contract you'd kill for, or scores the agent to end all agents? How does this affect your energy, your perspective of the industry, and your confidence in your own work?

Where do you fall on the scale of professional jealousy, and how often can you say you're truly, personally excited when someone else succeeds? When another writer shines, is this a plus or a minus for you?

Of course it smarts when you don't win. It's natural to be disappointed if you fall short of a personal goal. But be careful. Don't anchor these kinds of reactions to someone else's victory. That is, don't entertain the philosophy that if someone else wins, you lose. If you let another writer's success become a moment of personal failure, then you're giving something totally out of your control the power to stop you in your tracks. I've seen this happen to others. Heck, I've let it happen to me. Don't go there, because you're diminishing your own capacity to succeed.

Take a good look around. Everyone is banging her head against the same monstrous wall of publishing. It sounds New Age, but it's true. Whenever one of us "makes it," the door is opened a little wider for all those who follow. Personally support the success of other writers--in your head, where you're brutally honest because no one else is around to listen or judge--and you're very much supporting yourself.

Get plugged in. Embrace the good things happening all around you. Cheer others on whenever and wherever you can. Find a way to support instead of feeling threatened, and you're summoning encouragement for your own work. Others' victories are proof that you, too, can succeed. Claim that promise, rather than settling for defeat because it's someone else's turn to shine.

The same holds true if you're the one succeeding at the moment. When you're on top, and you take a minute to look around, sometimes all you can see is how far you have to fall. "Don't look down," some would argue. Keep your focus on protecting what you have. Be careful, because there's always someone else itching to take your place.

Bunk. Once you've attained a certain degree of success, encourage those who want to achieve what you have. Build them up. Teach them what you know, and learn from them as well. Otherwise, you're conditioning yourself to be afraid of the competition.

You're an amazing writer. That's why you've achieved what you have. You've got nothing to protect, because you're moving forward. So why be afraid of the other amazing writers who will one day be where you are now? Build relationships with them. Enjoy their journeys. Make the good stuff they're doing good for you, too.

This may sound like purely selfish motivation, and I don't intend it to be. We are one big writing family, and we already do a great job of taking care of each other. But if you're cheering on the outside, while

inside you cringe and feel smaller with each new victory that's not your own, you're setting yourself up to fail.

How you relate to others shapes your perception of the world around you. Learn to be genuinely happy for another's success, and your subconscious will get the message. That person is a friend, not a threat. You have nothing to fear in that relationship. You're still exactly who you want to be, and supporting her will only make you stronger.

Finally, consider this. What if the entire world of publishing was a place where you had nothing to fear, a place full of friends rather than adversaries? That's a reality you can claim entirely on your own. Make the choice to encourage every success, whether it's yours or not, and your writing world will be the home you always dreamed it could be.