



Resources For  
Uncovering Wonder

# Sharing Our Stories

## Soft guidelines about being a part of The Resources For Uncovering Wonder writing community...

People who have taken my classes have often heard me say, there are no rules. What do I mean by this?

This is not an open invitation to ambush your classmates with triggering essays.

I say this to ensure people feel safe. No one is going to come along with a red pencil and tell them that their title is wrong, or they should insert a comma here. No one is going to tell them that they write like a fifth grader and that they should... (Fill in the blank).

For example:

- If a person wants to sing at a particular moment of their story, that is fine.
- If a person wants to draw pictures to go with their story, that is wonderful.
- If a person wants to tell their story in the voice of a fox or an older person who has been stranded on an island for year, or use props, that is also fine.
- I do not place rules upon peoples' writing styles.

Many have had the experience of a past teacher who shamed or criticized in such a manner where their concluding remark is, "I am not a writer." My proclamation of "No Rules" allows my students to breathe and become excited about their work. We are inspired to grow whilst remaining safe.

There is, however, something that I wish to address:

When people are a part of my writing group or class and we have traveled the way of words for quite a while together, there is a certain trust that is built. This trust not only includes the understanding that others in the group will not take your words and reuse them with their own name now upon it, but also, students trust that when they come to this class, it is a safe environment for them to share not only their own work but to listen to others.

There are enough jagged edges, especially during this time, that we don't need to go to a workshop only to be shocked or traumatized by somebody's work. Writing has great therapeutic value but the classes I offer now are not therapeutic support groups where the depths of our souls are bared.

The works shared are not tales of unresolved murder, molestation or subjects that might make people feel uncomfortable. We all have different tolerances. Knowing who your audience is, is important. These classes should be **family friendly**.

That doesn't mean always writing about sunsets and happy families. I do, however, draw a line when a line is crossed. If people in the group express that they are uncomfortable (or triggered) when certain subjects are shared, I honor that. I don't push the envelope and say everybody has to be willing to listen to whatever is written. I am one who, as a sensitive, do not enjoy certain types of movies or writings. I cannot erase certain pictures out of my mind. I cannot un-see or un-hear them. And I believe that as the facilitator, it is also my job to protect my students from this. We do not need "shock-jocks" in our safe places.

I like to refer to, what I call, scanning the room. If I have a group of firefighters, for instance, who are taking my writing course, their work is going to be different and probably more grisly and traumatic than my regular writing class. This is to be expected, a group of firefighters who are writing traumatic experiences will probably not be reading their work in the regular class. They can all relate to one another's experience. For one who has never known the horrors of fires, it may be overwhelming.

I have taught bereavement classes, journaling classes, and classes for those living with life changing conditions. In each case, the words will be very different.

I have lived through a lot of life and have encountered some very difficult situations. I do not consider myself to be a soft touch at all. But I extend to my classes the security of knowing that there is not going to be writings shared that will make anyone uneasy. I for one have talked briefly about how my husband died of suicide. I do not, however, go into detail.

I know that there are various groups that say, "anything can be shared. "I am not included in that group. To me, this is very different than "no rules."

Rules can be picky and unimportant in the release of a buried creative process. In saying this, I would expect (and assume) that each one will take into consideration that we are a community of writers.

This is a community where you are welcome to share your own work but hopefully, if your work has jagged edges or involves a subject that is difficult to hear, speak first with your teacher and/or fellow writers.

Don't ambush your group with triggering essays.

Be considerate.

If your piece is difficult to hear or inappropriate for this group, you may consider sharing it with another venue. What I shared in a Suicide Survivors Group was not the same as I would share with my local writing group. Your level of maturity and discernment as a writer is a light of both wisdom and consideration for others.

Diane Annie Mathias, MA  
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