

23. Start all over again.

You may decide not to follow the advice in the previous article, and continue to send your work out to publishers and agents, and you may, when the responses are slow and result in continued rejections, start to feel like you're in a vacuum. You are still deeply involved with your completed novel, and if you add the disappointment of rejection to your already sombre mood at having to put the characters you've spent so long getting to know and love, to rest, then you won't be feeling creative. How do you counter this? The best way to reconnect with the world and your creativity is to get started on your next project.

There has to be a period of grieving. Take the time to say goodbye to your previous work. Distance yourself from it. Continue to send it out to publishers and agents by all means, but accept that emotionally, it is done. Recognise what you are feeling and integrate it. Denying it, or trivialising it will not help. Just as writing the novel brought you to new levels of awareness, so too will saying goodbye. Every emotion is a valid emotion. And each one has a place in your personality. In order to complete this novel you had to learn to take yourself seriously. You had to face your demons, listen to the subconscious voices, and embrace them. Well, the completion of the novel, and the farewell to the characters you've nurtured for some months, demands the same level of consciousness and the same commitment to your emotional world. Using exactly the same tools as were employed in reaching your authenticity, the journal, the time management, the solitude where appropriate, you can say goodbye.

Having said goodbye, you can, with less torment, take the rejection on board, and even choose to publish in one of the ways mentioned in the previous article, while using the emotional and psychological space you have created through this mourning phase, to start soaking up new ideas, new inspirations.

If writing a novel took solitude and a retreating into self, then this period should have you reconnecting with the outside world; it should have you observing and participating all at the same time. Your notebook should be close at hand, and all and any observations should be written down. Remember nothing is too silly, too insignificant, or too trivial. As I illustrated way back in my first article, the mundane is only mundane when not used properly. Washing dishes, doing housework, talking to your local grocer can all be incorporated into your novel. Be aware, be fully conscious, because the next novel might be just around the corner.

And the most important thing to remember is, that you can be working on these two projects at the same time. In fact my experience has taught me that moving on and allowing the seed of a new story to take root in your head and heart is probably the healthiest thing you can do, while waiting for your previous work to be published. If you 'get stuck' on only finding a publisher then being a writer will cause frustration and disappointment. Even self-publishing, though taking time and determination, will not give the same satisfaction and peace of mind that writing itself does. So, combine the two, by all means. Or at least, give yourself permission to do both, even if the new project is no more than jotting down notes, and journaling. This is your mental well-being.