

WRITE YOURSELF INTO YOUR *Dreams*

Chapter 11 ELS Written Exercise

Version 1.20

Before you begin, create a sacred, comfortable space to work. Turn off your devices and make sure you won't be interrupted for at least an hour. Open your *My ELS* document, read your ELS Intention and update it if needed, and then complete the following:

1. Weave your messages into your ELS, using the Instructions for Weaving Your Messages.
2. Balance your ELS, using the Instructions for Balancing Your ELS.
3. Have a trusted friend or writing partner provide you with feedback to ensure you followed the instructions for this ELS Written Exercise.
4. Write down any breakthroughs or results you experience in this stage of the process in the Breakthroughs and Results section of your *My ELS* document, beginning the entry with the date.

Instructions for Weaving Your Messages

In your ELS Written Exercise for this chapter, you'll use editing techniques to weave each set of messages on your Message List through the beginning and middle of your ELS. The beginning of your ELS includes all content leading up to your Story Core, the middle includes all Story Core content, and the end includes everything that follows. You don't have to be a screenwriter, playwright, or novelist to understand, or successfully use, any of these editing techniques. With a little practice, these techniques will become fun, simple, and second-nature to you.

1. ESTABLISH YOUR OLD MESSAGES.

There are two steps to establishing an Old Message: state it word-for-word and then convey it with a vignette, or a mini-story, to provide context. You need to mention each of your Old Messages in the part of your story when you first learned them, which—with rare exceptions—will be in the beginning of your ELS, before your Story Core. When establishing an Old Message, you may find that you already have a vignette in your ELS to support it. If so, great! But if not, ask yourself, *What short story from my past communicates how and why I started believing this Old Message?* Then write the vignette that comes to mind into your ELS, chronologically.

If your Old Message is, *Life is unfair*, you could establish it by writing the vignette: *My sister always got new clothes, and I got her hand-me-downs. Life is unfair.* If your Old Message is, *I'm a black sheep*, you could establish it by writing: *I'm a black sheep. At family gatherings I used to sit in the corner wondering if I'd secretly been adopted, as people wore hideous sweaters and made bad jokes.*

Here's an example to help you understand how establishing Old Messages in the beginning of your ELS will lend strength to your New Messages later on in the process. Let's say your Old Message is, *I can't grow up*, and your New Message is, *I'm a powerful grown woman*. If you simply removed all the content from your ELS about the Old Message, the New Message would feel weird and out of context when you mention it later in the story. Your Ideal Reader would wonder, *Why does she need to proclaim that she's a grown woman?* But if the Old Message were properly established in the beginning of your ELS, your New Message (which will be mentioned in the end of your story, never in the beginning) will make complete sense and feel compelling to your Ideal Reader, in the end.

2. EVIDENCE YOUR NEW MESSAGES.

After you've established each of your three Old Messages in the beginning of your ELS, you'll provide evidence for each of your three New Messages, in the middle of your story (your Story Core), or shortly thereafter. You'll evidence your New Messages with empowering vignettes that I call Mini Power Stories. You'll write a couple lines describing each Mini Power Story—chronologically in your ELS—in a way that supports the New Message, without yet stating the New Message explicitly (that will happen later, in your Ideal Ending).

Remember, you can *always* find supporting evidence in your own personal history for any New Message to be true. One of the easiest ways to find evidence for your New Messages is to revisit your List of Positive Memories

from chapter 6. You can also simply ask yourself, *What examples from my own personal history prove that this New Message is true?* Asking yourself this question will cause memories to spontaneously arise that can serve as Mini Power Stories. The potential Story Core freewrites that you crafted in chapter 6 can also be distilled down and turned into Mini Power Stories that support your New Messages.

Your Story Core itself will also serve as evidence for at least one of your New Messages, if not all of them. If your Story Core *doesn't* feel supportive of any of your New Messages, you'll need to either revise your Message List until at least one of your New Messages is evidenced by your Story Core, or consider choosing a different Story Core that *does* support one or more of your New Messages.

One of my clients had an Old Message that, *It's really hard to get acting work*, and a New Message that, *Acting work comes easily to me*. Her New Message felt impossible at first, but when she asked herself what evidence she could find to support it, her mind automatically started coming up with all the times in her life that acting jobs *had* come to her easily—and it was a long list. Yet, none of the abundant evidence to support her New Message was currently in her story (which is *why* she was always focusing on how hard it was to get acting work). Once she added the supporting evidence for her New Message, the power of her Old Message melted away, and she got more acting gigs in the following week than she had gotten at one time, ever before.

The more Mini Power Stories you integrate into your ELS, the more your mind will naturally look for—and find—additional evidence for your New Messages. In turn, Source will send you even more experiences that provide further evidence still. Like snowballs rolling down a hill, your New Messages will continually amass more evidence and grow stronger with time.

3. EDIT YOUR MESSAGE LIST AS YOU WEAVE.

In the last chapter, you largely worked on your messages, independent of your story. As a result, when you're weaving your Message Sets throughout your ELS, you will realize that some of them don't "fit" your story as much as you thought they did. If you find it difficult to establish an Old Message, it's because it's not actually an Old Message, but rather, a pattern you fall into, or something you say to yourself as a subconscious way to stay beholden to a deeper, hidden Old Message.

My client Jana had an Old Message on her list that, *I'm not enough*, and a corresponding New Message that, *I am more than enough*. However, while she was trying to think of a vignette to establish her Old Message, a vignette came to mind that supported an entirely different Old Message that wasn't even on her list—an Old Message that was actually significantly tied to her Greatest Current Challenge. A boy at her school (who was popular, but not very hard-working) wanted to join her team for a project. When she spoke up for herself by saying, "You just want me to do all the work," he got angry and told all of his friends to stop talking to her. The Old Message tied to *that* vignette was, *If I stand up for myself, I'll get kicked out of the herd*. After replacing the first Old Message with this more essential one, Jana was able to evolve it into a New Message that was much more relevant to her story and her Greatest Dreams, which was, *I am embraced by my herd when I stand up for myself*.

This dance between clarifying the messages on your Message List and weaving them into your story is a vitally important part of using the ELS Method. You can update your messages as you edit, either by re-wording them or by replacing them entirely. In the end, the messages on your list will be the same as the messages in your ELS—word-for-word—and the more you embrace this dance, the greater your results will be.

Instructions for Balancing Your ELS

The balancing techniques you'll use in this stage of the ELS Method will reveal and address the interconnected imbalances in your story and your life. Several years ago, a couple of friends read my ELS and reflected to me that Justin, the man I was dating, took up *way* too much space in my story. I knew intellectually that they were right, and that I should follow the rules of my own method—which said that no part of your story should be longer than your Story Core—but I was so attached to every sentence about Justin that I couldn't bring myself to cut any one of them.

My resistance to paring down this Trouble Spot in my story made me realize that I was hiding something important from myself. After repeatedly trying—and failing—to distill the Justin parts of my story, I desperately pleaded with my story out loud, “Please just show me the truth! I'm ready now and I want to see it.” Within minutes, I had a breakthrough where I realized that I was much more invested in this man than he was in me. It wasn't a particularly fun realization, but it was definitely an empowering one. Then suddenly, it became really easy to take most of the content about Justin out of my story. After Justin faded out of my story, he faded out of my life, as well. So, as you use the following techniques to balance your ELS, be ready to experience significant realizations that will forever change the story of your life.

1. MAKE SURE THAT YOUR STORY CORE IS THE STAR OF YOUR ELS.

Ideally, no single relationship description or experience in your ELS will be longer than your Story Core. So, if you notice any area of your story that *is* longer than your Story Core, spend some time distilling it until it is *shorter* than your Story Core; balancing your ELS in this way will ensure that your Story Core is the “star” of your ELS and that it uplifts you as it's meant to.

2. DISTILL THE CONTENT THAT SUPPORTS YOUR OLD MESSAGES.

After establishing your Old Messages, you'll notice that you still have lots of additional content, later in your ELS, that shows how your Old Messages lived on and dominated the story of your life after you learned them. It's important to keep such Old Message content in your ELS, but to distill it down to only what is essential. So, for example, if you have an Old Message that, *Nice guys are boring*, and your story describes in detail three times you got bored with a nice guy and left him for a jerk, you can keep the details surrounding the *most significant* of the three relationships, and then cut all but a couple of sentences about the other times you got bored with a nice guy and left him for a jerk. Or, you could simply remove all but one of the relationship descriptions and then add a line like, *I kept repeating this pattern for the next 20 years*.

3. IDENTIFY AND DISTILL TROUBLE SPOTS.

A Trouble Spot is any part of your ELS that feels heavy, confusing, or excessively long, and it's almost always difficult to clarify and pare down. The easiest way to distill a Trouble Spot is to use what I call "The Expand and Distill Technique." First, you'll write *more* about that Trouble Spot, describing it in *greater* detail, until you experience a breakthrough in your awareness (which may involve a hidden Old Message) that dissolves your confusion. Then, you'll distill the Trouble Spot back down to no more than a paragraph, since you'll no longer need most of the content that was necessary to arrive at that breakthrough. Leave only what's essential.

4. REVISIT ELS LETTERS, AS NEEDED.

If you still find it difficult to distill a Trouble Spot, you may have unfinished business with someone who's involved with that part of your story. If so, it's best to write a set of ELS Letters with that person, before trying to distill the Trouble Spot further. If you've *already* written ELS Letters with that person, you may need to write an addendum to that set of letters. Ask yourself, *Is the way in which this person hurt me or what they modeled (that is showing up in my Trouble Spot) specifically addressed in my ELS Letters with them?* If not, write a new, mini-set of ELS Letters with that person, addressing only what was left out of the first set of ELS Letters, following the instructions in chapter 5. After you've completed (or refreshed) your ELS Letters with the person involved in your Trouble Spot, it will be much easier to distill.

5. EXPLORE HOW THE CHALLENGE IN THE TROUBLE SPOT PREPARED YOU FOR YOUR DREAMS.

Another helpful way to distill a Trouble Spot is to ask yourself, *How has the challenge I'm experiencing in this Trouble Spot uniquely prepared me to realize my Greatest Dreams?* Write the answer to that question in the Breakthroughs and Results area of your ELS. Doing so will make it easier to bring the Trouble Spot into balance.

6. IMPROVE HONESTY.

As we discussed in chapter 2, you could write a million different versions of your story that are all true, and by now, you have an experiential understanding of that truth. The more you edit your ELS, however, the more you'll find that there's a *spectrum* of truth. Any moment of your life can be described in various true ways, but certain descriptions will be *more* true than others. And the truest description will always be the one that is most concise, direct, and empowering. For example, I've had multiple clients write about a time when they were sexually assaulted, but they wrote those experiences as if the sex had been consensual. When they had the courage to write the truest version of the experience—that they had been assaulted—they put an end to the painful and confusing cycle of self-blame.

7. COLOR-CODE YOUR MESSAGES.

Color-coding is a helpful way to make imbalances and Trouble Spots in your story more visible, so you can easily address them. You can use colored pencils on a printed version of your ELS, or use the highlighting function

in a digital version of your ELS, to visually measure the amount of space you give to different experiences in your story. More specifically, you can use color-coding to easily see how much space you give to content that relates to your Old Messages, as compared to evidence that supports your New Messages. I recommend using two different shades of the same color for each Message Set—a darker shade to highlight Old Message content and a lighter shade to highlight New Message evidence. Just be sure to touch on each message set at least once in the beginning of your ELS and once in the middle. In the next chapter, you'll touch on each message set again when you create your Ideal Ending.