

WRITE YOURSELF INTO YOUR *Dreams*

Chapter 5 ELS Written Exercise

Version 1.20

Please understand that these instructions are based on thousands of hours of trials. For optimal results, *please follow the instructions to the letter*. Before you begin, create a sacred, comfortable space to work. Turn off your devices and make sure you won't be interrupted. Read your ELS Intention aloud, and update it, if needed. Then, complete the following:

1. Write your ELS Letters List. Start with both of your parents and one romantic partner (past or present), and then add everyone with whom you have unfinished business, in order of the negative impact they have on your dreams (greatest impact first).
2. Write an Expression Letter by hand to the first person on your ELS Letters List, on separate sheets of paper, following the Instructions for Creating the Expression Letter.
3. Create your Response Letter, following the Instructions for Crafting Your Response Letter.

4. Have a trusted friend or writing partner review your ELS Letters to make sure that you followed the instructions and then read your Response Letter to you aloud, as if they are the person it is from. If you can't have someone else read to you, record yourself reading the Response Letter aloud and then listen to the recording.

5. Record any breakthroughs or results that you experience while completing any set of ELS Letters in your *ELS Written Exercises* document in the Breakthroughs and Results area, and make sure you begin by writing the date you experienced the breakthrough or result.

6. Choose the next person on your ELS Letters List and complete steps two through five until you've written a set of ELS Letters for at least the top three people on your ELS Letters List before moving on to chapter 6 (you will be prompted later in the book to come back and complete more ELS Letters, as needed).

Instructions for Creating the Expression Letter

When completing ELS Letters with someone, you will write two letters: an Expression Letter *to* the other person AND a Response Letter *from* them. You'll begin with your Expression Letter, where you'll write *by hand* all of your feelings toward the other person in the following four emotional categories: anger, sadness, regret, and appreciation—in *that order*. The order is important, because your emotions are layered, and heavier emotions like hatred and anger are sitting on top of lighter emotions like love and appreciation (that's why it's so hard to feel the love that you have for someone when you're angry at them).

1. WRITE TO THE OTHER PERSON'S HIGHER SELF.

Before you begin, you'll imagine that you'll be writing to the other person's higher self—the version of them who has suddenly become enlightened and is ready to hear *all* of your feelings—no matter how intense—without getting upset, triggered, or defensive. The other person's higher self *wants* to hear *all* of your feelings, because they're ready to take full responsibility for their own behavior, so there is no need to feel guilty about expressing too many heavy emotions to them! Writing to the other person in this way allows you to fully express yourself without censorship, which is necessary for ELS Letters to work.

2. BE COMPREHENSIVE!

The more feelings you express about things you need the other person to take responsibility for, the better you will feel in the end. Your Expression Letter should be however long it needs to be (I've seen some as long as ten pages), because while “essential” is the name of the game with most of the ELS Method, “comprehensive” is the name of the game with ELS Letters. If you leave a grievance out of your Expression Letter, it cannot be addressed in the Response Letter, so you'll have to continue carrying it around. Before considering any Expression Letter complete, ask yourself, *Is there anything else the other person did, didn't do, said or didn't say that any part of me needs to express feelings about?* Often, the feelings you need to express that hold the greatest potential to change your life come out after asking yourself that question.

3. DON'T WORRY ABOUT CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER OR THE ORDER OF EMOTIONS.

While chronological order is important in your ELS itself, it doesn't matter at all in your ELS Letters. Your feelings about experiences in your relationship with other people will often arise out of chronological order, and that's totally fine! You can express anger about something someone did to you when you were a baby right after you express anger about what they did to you last week. What's most important when writing ELS Letters is that you get *all* of your feelings out. Also, it's common, after you've moved from one emotional category to the next, for more feelings to arise that belong in the *previous* category. That's fine, too. For example, if you feel a spike of anger after you've moved onto sadness, just write your feelings of anger in the sadness section and then return to expressing the rest of your sadness.

4. GIVE ALL ASPECTS OF YOURSELF A VOICE.

Sometimes, when you're writing your Expression Letter, you'll start to write feelings of anger about something, and then another part of you will question that anger. For example, you might write, *I hate you for breaking up with me*. And then another part of you might think, *But I appreciate that they broke up with me, because now I understand that we're not compatible*. When you notice this kind of internal debate, it's evidence that different parts of you feel differently, and they both need to be given a voice! In this case, you would leave the first statement in the anger category, and move the second statement into the appreciation category. You don't have to figure out which part is right or wrong. Simply ensuring that each part of you feels heard will lead to inner peace.

5. DON'T MAKE EXCUSES FOR THE OTHER PERSON!

As I mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, ELS Letters will naturally lead you to feel understanding, empathy, and forgiveness towards the other person. When feelings of forgiveness arise while writing your Expression Letter (before crafting your Response Letter), it's common to want to write statements that excuse the other person's behavior, like, *You probably didn't know any better*. However, writing excuses limits the other person's ability to take full responsibility for their behavior in the Response Letter—so don't do it! Similarly, when expressing regrets to the other person in your Expression Letter, don't apologize for anything you didn't actually say or do to them. For example, avoid statements like, *I'm sorry you had such a hard life*. Doing so is a subtle way to provide the other person with an “out” that prevents them from taking full responsibility for their own behavior.

6. EXPRESS YOUR ANGER.

Begin your Expression Letter by writing your feelings of anger or hatred about anything the other person did to you, said to you, or *didn't* do or say to you that you *needed* them to. For example: *I hate you for cheating on me* (something they did); *I hate you for calling me a bitch* (something they said); *I hate you for not returning my calls* (something they didn't do); and *I hate you for NOT telling me I was beautiful* (something they didn't say). It's very important that most of your statements begin with the words *I feel angry that you _____* or *I hate you for _____*. Leading with your feelings keeps you grounded in the power of your own emotional experience. However, feel free to sprinkle in some statements that *don't* begin with *I feel*, such as *Fuck you, I hate you, or You fucking asshole*, as doing so will lend authenticity to your Expression Letter. Swear as much as you want, because it's natural for intense feelings of hatred and anger to come out that way. And don't be surprised if your Expression Letter has significantly more anger than any other emotion—that's very common and perfectly okay. You'll know when you've gotten to the bottom of your old, buried anger when sadness starts to arise.

7. EXPRESS YOUR SADNESS.

Next, you'll express your feelings of sadness or hurt about anything the other person did to you, said to you, or *didn't* do or say to you that you *needed* them to. Be sure here, too, to lead with your emotions, beginning most statements with *I feel sad that _____* or *I feel hurt because you _____*. For example: *I'm sad that you left*

me (something they did); *I'm sad that you told me you didn't love me anymore* (something they said); *I'm sad that you've never met my children* (something they didn't do); and *I'm sad that you never told me you were proud of me* (something they didn't say). It's natural to feel hurt or sad about many of the same things you already expressed anger about, but you don't have to name those things again in this category, because expressions of anger and sadness will be treated the same way in the Response Letter.

8. EXPRESS YOUR REGRETS.

After expressing your sadness, you can apologize for anything that *you* did, said, didn't do, or didn't say to the other person that is weighing you. If the person you're writing your Expression Letter to was abusive, you may not have anything to apologize for, and that's completely fine. However, you may need to write a statement like, *I regret that I didn't feel strong enough to hold you accountable for your actions*. Conversely, if you played the role of abuser in any of your relationships, you may have a lot you need to apologize for, and that's okay too. Just have love and compassion for yourself as you take responsibility for your own behavior, because doing so takes a lot of courage.

9. EXPRESS YOUR APPRECIATION.

The final category of emotion is appreciation. In the Appreciation section of your Expression Letter, you'll write everything you love and appreciate about the other person. You'll find that it's much easier to get in touch with appreciation after you've released the heavier feelings that are sitting on top of it—especially in relationships where a lot of bad was mixed with the good. If you find that you have little or nothing to say in this category, as is often the case in an Expression Letter with someone who has seriously wronged you, that's completely fine too—just leave it blank.

10. TYPE UP YOUR EXPRESSION LETTER.

After writing your Expression Letter by hand, you'll type it word-for-word into a document titled *ELS Letters with (the name of the person)*. Typing your Expression Letter is essential for making any necessary changes and also for crafting your Response Letter.

11. REMOVE STATEMENTS THAT BELONG IN A DIFFERENT EXPRESSION LETTER.

When writing an Expression Letter, it's common to sometimes express your feelings about things that aren't actually the other person's responsibility—things that belong in an Expression Letter to someone else. For example, when working on an Expression Letter to your mom, you might write, *I'm angry that Dad was so abusive*. While it *would* be appropriate to express anger toward your mom for not protecting you from his abuse (*I'm angry that you didn't protect me from Dad.*), your feelings about your father's abuse should be saved for an Expression Letter with *him*. It's important to include statements in your Expression Letter about *only* things for which the person you're writing to needs to take responsibility.

12. ELABORATE ON GENERAL AND VAGUE STATEMENTS.

In your Expression Letter, you'll notice general statements like, *I'm angry at you for being abusive*, and they're a great way to describe overarching patterns. But it's important to follow such general statements with specific details, such as, *I'm angry at you for slapping me* and *I'm angry at you for calling me stupid*. Similarly, if a vague statement comes out in your Expression Letter, such as, *I hate what you did to me in high school*, you would need to add a statement immediately following it that describes exactly what transpired between you and the other person, as in, *I hate that you always told me to go away when your friends came over*. The more specific you are in your Expression Letter, the more resolution your Response Letter will bring.

After writing your Expression Letter, you will feel a sense of lightness and relief. And you will feel even greater lightness and relief after crafting your Response Letter. Between now and then, you'll be in what I call the "in-between," where you will see evidence of how your relationship dynamics with the other person are already changing, even if only energetically. And, at the same time, because you will not have yet received what you need from the other person in response, you will still feel unresolved. This duality is a normal part of the process, and it's temporary. After completing your Response Letter, and having a trusted friend or writing partner read it to you, you will experience the signature cathartic release that ELS Letters always bring.

Instructions for Crafting the Response Letter

Your Response Letter is where you'll receive the *ideal* response from your *ideal* version of the other person (or, the other person's higher self). You will create this letter directly from your typed-up Expression Letter by copying it into a new document and then converting it line-by-line according to the instructions below:

1. ADD THE OPENING MESSAGE TO THE TOP.

Every Response Letter should begin with: *Thank you for sharing all of your feelings with me. There are many things that I need to apologize to you for.* This opening conveys that the other person is grateful for having heard everything you shared with them in the Expression Letter; it also prepares you to receive the apologies you're about to hear.

2. USE THE RIGHT TENSE TO PROVIDE HOPE FOR CHANGE.

The only time grammar is significant when using the ELS Method is when it impacts the transformational power of your writing, and this is one of those times. Your Response Letter is best written using present perfect tense. That means, when you're converting a sentence like, *I hate you for being so selfish*, you would write, *I'm sorry I **have been** so selfish*, instead of, *I'm sorry I **am** so selfish*. This distinction is important because if you write, *I'm sorry I **am** so selfish*, there's no room for this pattern to change *and* it lacks the acknowledgement of *past* behavior. Remember, you're writing on behalf of the version of this person who has suddenly become enlightened, and that person's poor behavior would not continue. You can also add a statement of planned

action, like, *I'm going to get the help that I need so that from now on, I can be there for you as you need me to be, and make sure that our relationship feels balanced and reciprocal.*

3. CONVERT STATEMENTS OF ANGER INTO APOLOGIES.

Everything you expressed anger about in your Expression Letter will become an apology in the Response Letter. For example, if you wrote in your Expression Letter, *I hate you for cheating on me*, change that sentence to read, *I'm sorry for cheating on you*. Continue converting each statement of anger line-by-line in this way, until each has become an apology. Delete any statements that don't begin with *I feel*, such as *Fuck you* and *Screw you* from the Response Letter (those statements were important to help you release your anger, but they do not require a response). Additionally, it's important to honor the distinction between who someone inherently *is* and how they *behave*. So if you wrote a statement in your Expression Letter like, *I hate you for being an asshole*, you would convert that into, *I'm sorry for **acting like** an asshole*, instead of, *I'm sorry for **being** an asshole*, because the former statement allows room for change in your ideal version of the other person.

4. CONVERT STATEMENTS OF SADNESS INTO APOLOGIES.

Everything you expressed sadness about in your Expression Letter will also become an apology in the Response Letter. For example, if you wrote in your Expression Letter, *I'm sad that you never even said goodbye*, change that sentence to read, *I am so sorry that I never even said goodbye*. If there are any statements of sadness that speak to something you already expressed anger for (and thus, converted into an apology in the previous section), just delete that sentence, because it has already been addressed.

5. CONVERT STATEMENTS OF REGRET INTO FORGIVENESS.

Everything that you expressed regret about, or apologized for, in your Expression Letter, will become a statement of forgiveness from the other person in your Response Letter. For example, if you wrote in your Expression Letter, *I'm sorry I didn't speak up about how I really felt*, change it to read, *I forgive you for not speaking up about how you really felt*. You can also add statements of understanding from the other person, such as, *I know I didn't make it easy for you to share your feelings with me*. If you apologized to the other person for many things in your Expression Letter, consider using the following message in your Response Letter to address all of your apologies at once: *I appreciate all of the things you apologized for. But please know that all is forgiven. The truth is, if I'd been there for you in the ways you needed me to be, none of those things that you apologized for would have happened in the first place.*

6. WRITE STATEMENTS OF APPRECIATION FROM SCRATCH.

Since you're crafting your Response Letter directly from a copy of your Expression Letter, it will initially include the statements of appreciation that you wrote toward the other person. Delete those statements and replace them with the following message: *Thank you for sharing everything you love and appreciate about me—it means so much. Now I'd like to express everything that I love and appreciate about you, too.* Then write from scratch everything you'd like to hear the other person express love and appreciation to *you* for. For example, you may

want to write, *You're such an incredibly smart, beautiful, talented, and loving person. You're the most amazing person I've ever known, and I'm so lucky to have gotten to know you.* Even if you didn't express appreciation toward the other person in your Expression Letter, it's still important that you receive appreciation from *them* in your Response Letter.

7. ADD STATEMENTS OF EMPHASIS.

The Response Letter will primarily consist of statements of apology. However, it's important to periodically break up apologies with brief statements of emphasis, where it feels natural, such as, *That was really messed up; That was really fucked up; That was beyond wrong; I never should have done that to you in a million years; or That was the biggest mistake of my life.* Such statements prevent your Response Letter from sounding mechanical and insincere, and vastly increase its transformational impact by adding depth and authenticity. However, it's important to avoid adding statements like, *I'm such a terrible person* or *I am so disgusting*, because these are derogatory statements about who the other person inherently *is* rather than addressing their problematic *behavior*.

8. ADD A STATEMENT ACKNOWLEDGING THAT AN APOLOGY ISN'T ENOUGH.

It may sound counterintuitive to acknowledge in your Response Letter that an apology can never undo the harm that the other person caused you, since the Response Letter usually does just that. However, if you include the following acknowledgement, it will increase your openness to receiving the apologies: *I know a mere apology can never undo the harm that I have caused you, but I need you to know how truly sorry I am.* It's important to add this message to your Response Letter at least once, immediately before or after they apologize for their behavior that hurt you the most, such as abandoning you, or failing you in some other traumatic way.

9. ADD STATEMENTS ABOUT HOW YOU SHOULD HAVE BEEN TREATED.

Wherever it feels important, follow an apology with a sentence about how you would have ideally liked the other person to have behaved, instead. For example, you can follow a statement like, *I'm sorry I never complimented you,* with, *I should have told you how smart, funny, and beautiful you are every day, because it's true.* You can follow, *I'm sorry I was never there for you,* with, *I should have been there every day, because I love you.* Remember that the Response Letter is from your *ideal* version of the other person, so don't hold back in describing how they would have ideally treated you.

10. ADD THE IT-WASN'T-YOUR-FAULT MESSAGE.

Whenever you have blamed yourself for things that were the *other person's* responsibility, add a clear message to your Response Letter about how their behavior was not your fault. For example, follow a statement like, *I'm so sorry that I hit you,* with something like, *I know you already know this, but I need you to know that I know it now too—it was not your fault. There's nothing that you could've ever done that would've warranted my hitting you. I'm so sorry for taking my pain and anger out on you with violence.* Even if you're not consciously

blaming yourself for the other person's behavior, it's important to include a message like this whenever you were abused, neglected, or betrayed in any way.

11. PROVIDE DEEPER UNDERSTANDING.

When you've been seriously hurt by someone, it's common to be plagued by the following question: *Why did this person treat me this way?* Without knowing the answer to that question, it's difficult—maybe even impossible—to forgive the grievance. The truth is, most people hurt you for fairly simple reasons. One of the most common being that they're in pain, and are taking it out on you. If you feel like that's the case, add the following message to your Response Letter: *I say this not as an excuse, but just for you to understand—I only treated you in such hurtful ways because I was hurting so badly inside myself. But that was my problem, not yours. And I'm sorry for not getting the help I needed, so that I could treat you with the love, kindness, and respect that you deserve.* Another reason someone may hurt you is that they're afraid of losing you, so they're trying to push you away before you leave them. If you feel like that's the case, add the following message to your Response Letter: *I say this not as an excuse, but just for you to understand—I only treated you in such hurtful ways because deep down, I felt like I wasn't good enough for you. I was so afraid of losing you that I tried to push you away before you could leave me. But I want you to know that I'm going to get the help I need so that I can be there for you and love and respect you, as you deserve, from now on.*

12. DON'T LET THE RESPONSE LETTER BECOME FOCUSED ON THEIR NEEDS.

Avoid adding statements to the Response Letter that make the letter about *their* needs, instead of yours. For example, never add a statement like, *I'm so ashamed of how I treated you, please forgive me*, because such a statement is a bid for you to assuage the other person's guilt. It's important for the other person to never ask you for forgiveness—in any way—in your Response Letter. The Response Letter is written from your ideal version of the other person—a fully mature, self-responsible adult who doesn't need anything from you in return for the amends they're making. If you're worried that focusing exclusively on your own needs will make you a narcissist, please know that the opposite is actually true. When the other person takes full responsibility for their behavior, you will naturally feel more understanding, empathy, and forgiveness, as well as clarity about your own responsibility in the relationship dynamic.