

WRITE YOURSELF INTO YOUR *Dreams*

Chapter 9 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. Read your ELS Intention aloud, and update it, if needed. Then, complete the following:

1. Create a new document titled, *My ELS* (and include today's date in the title).
2. Assemble your ELS, using The Instructions for Using the Copy-and-Paste ELS Template.
3. Edit your ELS, using the Instructions for Basic Edits to Your ELS.
4. Spend some time reversing old patterns that you see manifesting in your writing.
5. Have a trusted friend or writing partner provide you with feedback to ensure that you followed the instructions for this ELS Written Exercise.
6. Add any new breakthroughs or results that you experience while assembling and editing your ELS to the Breakthroughs and Results area of your *My ELS* document, beginning with the date they occurred.

Instructions for Using the Copy-and-Paste ELS Template

The process of assembling the first draft of your ELS is a little awkward; it will feel messy and disjointed and—at the same time—exciting and full of potential. As you follow the instructions below, you can expect to experience additional breakthroughs and big shifts in your perspective.

1. SET UP THE BASICS.

Create a document titled *My ELS*, and include today's date in the title. Open the document, and at the top of the page, write "My Commitment Statement," and copy your most current Commitment Statement underneath (from your chapter 1 ELS Written Exercise). Then, skip a line and write "My ELS Intention," and copy your most current ELS Intention underneath. Skip another line and write "Completed ELS Letters," followed by each of the names of the people with whom you have completed ELS Letters. On the next line, write "ELS Letters Yet to Complete," followed by the names of people you haven't yet completed ELS Letters with (from your ELS Letters List in your chapter 5 ELS Written Exercise). On the next line, write the header "Message List" and leave the space underneath blank for now (your messages will be added under this header in the next chapter).

2. ADD YOUR 5-PAGE FREEWRITE AND STORY CORE.

Below the space under "Message List," write the heading "My ELS" and then copy and paste your entire 5-Page Freewrite from chapter 3 underneath. If you're working with a writing partner and they made comments on your story (about confusing areas that need clarification, for example), make sure to include those comments in your *My ELS* document, so you can address them. Next, go back to your Chapter 6 ELS Written Exercise and copy all of the content from your Story Core freewrite *into* your 5-Page Freewrite, where it happened chronologically. For example, if your Story Core experience happened when you were twenty years old, paste it into the part of your story where you were around that age. When you see your Story Core *inside* of your 5-Page Freewrite, the contrast between the "dark" and "light" elements of your story will become more apparent, and you'll likely experience additional breakthroughs.

3. ADD ESSENTIAL STATEMENTS ABOUT YOUR PARENTS.

Revisit your Chapter 4 ELS Written Exercise and copy and paste each of your Parent Freewrites into the beginning of your 5-Page Freewrite. The first few sentences of your ELS need to be about *you*, not your parents. So, place your Parent Freewrites *after* where you talk about being born and *before* where you discuss your childhood. Then, distill your Parent Freewrites down to a couple of sentences each, including only what feels most important about your parents—information that will help your Ideal Reader understand how your parents' backstories have influenced your own.

4. ADD THE ROOT EXPERIENCE BEHIND YOUR GREATEST CURRENT CHALLENGE.

Look at your response to #2 from your chapter 7 ELS Written Exercise, in which you describe the Root Expe-

rience that is underlying your Greatest Current Challenge. If that experience is *not* already described in your 5-Page Freewrite, describe it now in a couple of sentences, wherever it happened chronologically in the story.

5. ADD YOUR ALREADY REALIZED DREAMS.

Look at your response to #5 from your chapter 8 ELS Written Exercise, in which you list your dreams that have already come true. For each of your Already Realized Dreams, insert a sentence into your 5-Page Freewrite about the first time you remember having that dream (before it came true). Then, insert a sentence into your 5-Page Freewrite describing how and when that dream manifested (wherever it happened chronologically). For example, if one of your Already Realized Dreams is having been in a movie, you can write a sentence about having had that dream in elementary school, in the early childhood part of your story. Then, you can describe the experience of watching yourself on the big screen later, whenever *that* happened chronologically. Make sure that you include a sentence in the story about when you first had the dream *and* a sentence about when it came true for each dream on your Already Realized Dreams List.

6. RELOCATE YOUR BREAKTHROUGHS AND RESULTS.

Go to your *ELS Written Exercises* document and cut the “Breakthroughs and Results” header and all of the content in that section—which you’ve been collecting throughout the process—and paste it at the bottom of your *My ELS* document. From now on, you’ll record additional breakthroughs and results here, starting each entry with the date it occurred. If you notice any breakthroughs or results missing from your list, add them now.

7. MAKE A HOME FOR ORBS.

I borrowed the term “orbs” from Diana Gabaldon, author of the *Outlander* novels, who uses this word to describe pieces of a story that come to mind as she’s writing, that don’t have a home yet. After your “Breakthroughs and Results” section, you’ll write the header “Orbs,” and follow it with bulleted notes about pieces of your story that come to mind as you edit—that aren’t currently in your ELS—such as, *Camp-out with Dad when he taught me to make a fire*. These memories will be “parked” in the Orbs area in case you want to integrate them into your ELS later.

8. CREATE YOUR ELS OVERFLOW DOCUMENT.

Lastly, create a document titled *ELS Overflow*, which is where you’ll place content that is more appropriate for a longer version of your story, such as a memoir. As you’re working on your ELS, there will be times when you feel inspired to write more about a memory or time period in your life than is appropriate for your ELS. For example, if you feel inspired to write a few paragraphs about the first play you were in, you can keep a few sentences about that experience in your ELS and move the rest to *ELS Overflow*.

Instructions for Basic Edits to Your ELS

Moving forward, I won't talk about your 5-Page Freewrite (which will always exist in its original form in your *ELS Written Exercises* document), because the version you're working on now has already evolved into the first draft of your ELS! After assembling your ELS, you'll spend a couple hours editing it in *only* the specific ways described below. You *won't* be fine-tuning or wordsmithing. That kind of editing is a waste of time at this stage of the process, because you won't yet have identified the messages that will dictate what stays in your completed ELS and what gets cut (that will happen in the next chapter).

1. KEEP YOUR ELS TIDY.

It's amazing how often I have to (gently) encourage my clients to tidy up their *My ELS* documents... I once even had to ask a client for example, to stop writing in all caps, because it was challenging for me to provide helpful feedback when it felt like I was being screamed at! A messy ELS filled with editing no-no's is an excellent way to prevent yourself from experiencing the breakthroughs that inherently come at this stage of the process. So in addition to *not* writing in all caps, keep your ELS neat by making sure that all the text is in the same font and size, that spelling and punctuation errors are kept to a minimum, and that random notes in the story are moved to Orbs or your *ELS Overflow*.

2. MAKE SURE YOUR ELS IS IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER.

It's important that your entire ELS be in chronological order, because jumping around in time will prevent breakthroughs, and it will also interfere with your ability to use the editing techniques (in future stages) that I designed to help you believe in your dreams. For example, if you have a paragraph in your ELS about all of your experiences that involve riding horses (from early childhood through high school) and another paragraph about what school was like (from early childhood through high school), much of the content in both paragraphs will be out of chronological order. While it may seem like a good idea to arrange your story by topic, re-arranging these subjects according to chronological order will help you to integrate your life experiences more fully and bring new awareness to important connections in your story that you couldn't see before.

3. MAKE SURE THAT REALIZATIONS ARE IN THE RIGHT PLACE.

Make sure that all realizations in your story are in the correct place chronologically, according to *when they happened*. It's incredibly common to immediately follow a description of a childhood experience with a realization that you had about that experience, as an adult. For example, let's say you have this passage in your ELS: *My sister and I were physically and psychologically abused by our father throughout our entire childhoods. That's probably why I became such a great therapist. After graduating high school, I moved as far away from home as I could.* The realization about why you're a good therapist would need to be moved to a later time in your ELS, when you had that realization. If you experienced that realization *after* starting the ELS Method, you would move it to the Breakthroughs and Results section of your ELS so that it could be properly integrated into your story later. One important reason for this rule, of keeping realizations in chronological order, is that it helps

the younger aspects of you to feel honored and validated. Realizations about the meaning of a past challenge, at the time you're first describing the challenge, can make the younger parts of you that are still experiencing that challenge beyond time feel as though their experience is being dismissed, diminished, and devalued.

4. GET FEEDBACK ON YOUR ELS TO CLARIFY CONFUSION.

It's very important to receive feedback in this stage of the process, because it's so much easier for someone else to see the parts of your story that are unclear than it is for you to see them. For example, say you wrote, *I had a recurring nightmare for 10 years*, in your ELS without mentioning what the nightmare was about. In this case, *you* would know what the nightmare was about, but your Ideal Reader wouldn't have a clue, so they wouldn't understand the significance of the nightmare in your story. When you clarify each part of your ELS that is unclear to your Ideal Reader, your story will become even more clear to *you*.

5. FILL THE HOLES IN YOUR ELS.

When you read over your newly-assembled ELS, you'll notice obvious gaps, especially before and after content that was moved into your 5-Page Freewrite from other places. In some cases the inserted content will flow nicely with what's around it, but other times, it will need a transition statement before or after it. For example, you may jump from talking about getting married to talking about getting divorced, without mentioning why your marriage ended. Without any explanation, your Ideal Reader might wonder whether there was abuse, or cheating. You wouldn't have to add an entire page about all of your marital problems to fill that hole; a sentence or two about the primary issue that led to your separation would suffice, such as, *We had happy moments here and there, but she was never affectionate with me, and I felt unwanted*. Or you may notice a larger hole in your story, where you skipped an entire decade, perhaps because you feel like it was a wasted one. You could fill a hole like that with a single sentence: *There was a lot of sex, drugs, and rock and roll for the next ten years*. It's okay if these transitions are rough and ineloquent—they just need to be there. Also, you may notice that the ending of your story feels like a “hole” in and of itself right now, because it ends randomly; that's normal and it will be addressed in chapter 12 when you craft your Ideal Ending.