

A Writer's Medicine Bag
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By Dr. Susan Williams Beckhorn, Q.U.A.C.K

Writing is a high risk occupation. There are a large number of diseases and injuries to which one may fall victim. How does one survive these hazards? You've come to the right person!

1. *Bleeding Out*

Symptoms: Pasty bluish-white skin, pool of blood on floor. It has been said that *writing is easy—you just sit down at the keyboard and open a vein.*

Treatment: Plenty of gauze and pressure bandages. Remember: you can't write if you are dead. And: there is always more inspiration in the well.

2. *Time-o-lackia*

Symptoms: Hand wringing, pouting, feelings of frustration.

Treatment: "Big Rocks" magical time expanding exercise. If you put the big rocks in a bucket first, the small ones will fit in around them, but not the other way round. Try it.

3. *Writer's Block*

Symptoms: Vacant eyes, vacant brain, blank expression, blank computer screen.

Treatment: Oil block liberally. Drink "Brain-O," not booze—it didn't work well for Hemingway, O'Henry, or Faulkner. Write three pages, even if it's crud, and call me in the morning.

4. *Rejectionitis*

Symptoms: Shattered ego, weeping, cursing, sometimes violent or despondent behavior.

Treatment: Do something creative with your collection: Fold 1000 origami rejection cranes, wallpaper your bathroom, use them instead of pages from the Sears catalog. Read *Rotten Rejections*. (My personal favorite rejection that I ever received was one where the magazine editor rejected my story and finished by telling me that he'd just got his first book accepted.) Boil contents of one package of spaghetti and throw at wall, one strand at a time, until you are convinced that *if you throw enough spaghetti at a wall, some of it will stick.*

5. *Scrivener's Palsy, Head Ache, Eye Strain, Stiff Neck, Carpal Tunnel Syndrome, Arthritis, Fanny Fatigue, Submissioner's Knees, etc.*

Symptoms: Pain and Stiffness. I'm serious. Some say Milton went blind from reading too much. Bob Cratchit no doubt had scrivener's palsy, an ailment of pre-PC clerks and accountants. Not too many of us do that much long-hand writing these days, but I still have the remains of a calcified lump on the finger where my pencil rested during my school days. I have many writing induced ailments from time to time, but thankfully not carpal tunnel syndrome . . . yet. Prolonged sitting is not good for you. Among other things, it makes you chubby. I walk, or exercise every day to offset my desk time. I consider walking working. It's a form of writing. It allows your brain to wander. Writers' thoughts need to wander. That's where creativity comes from.

Treatment: Egg Timer. Work fifty minutes, move ten minutes. This will recharge your brain with oxygen, making it perform better. Check the ergonomics of your workspace. Get a puppy. Take calls on a mobile phone and pace or climb stairs as you talk. I know of one writer who keeps a rowing machine in her study. I use the mouse left handed when my neck begins to hurt.