

## Condensed extract on morning pages, from 'The Artist's Way', Julia Cameron (1993)

### 1. Morning pages as meditation

What are the morning pages? Put simply, the morning pages are three pages of longhand writing, strictly stream-of-consciousness: "Oh, god, another morning. I have NOTHING to say. I need to wash the curtains. Did I get my laundry yesterday? Blah, blah, blah..." They might also, more ingloriously, be called *brain drain*, since that is one of their main functions. It may be useful for you to think of the morning pages as meditation. It may not be the practice of meditation that you are accustomed to, but they are a valid form of meditation that gives us insight and helps us effect change in our lives.

*There is no wrong way to do morning pages.* These daily morning meanderings are not meant to be an art. Or even writing. I stress that point to reassure non-writers... writing is simply one of the tools. Pages are meant to be, simply, the act of moving the hand across the page and writing *whatever* comes to mind. Nothing is too petty, too silly, too stupid, or too weird to be included.

### 2. Unblocking the tap

The morning pages are not supposed to sound smart – although sometimes they might. Most times they won't, and nobody will ever know except you. Nobody is allowed to read your morning pages except you. And you shouldn't even read them yourself for the first few weeks.

Although occasionally colourful, the morning pages are often negative, frequently fragmented, often self-pitying, repetitive, stilted or babyish, angry or bland – even silly sounding. All that angry, whiny, petty stuff that you write down in the morning stands between you and your creativity. Worrying about your job, the laundry, the funny knock in the car, the weird look in your lover's eye – this stuff eddies through our subconscious and muddies our days. Get it on the page... if you can't think of anything to write, then write, "*I can't think of anything to write...*" Morning pages help us get to the other side of our fear, of our negativity, of our moods.

### 3. Silencing the Censor

... We are victims of our own internalised perfectionist, a nasty 'inner-critic', the Censor, who resides in our (left) brain and keeps up a constant stream of subversive remarks that are often disguised as the truth. The Censor says plausible, undermining things like: "*If you haven't done it by now you never will!*" and "*That's just who you are!*" And on and on...

Make this a rule: always remember that your Censor's negative opinions are not the truth. This takes practice. By spilling out of bed and straight onto the page every morning, you learn to evade the Censor. Because there is no wrong way to write the morning pages, the Censor's opinion doesn't count. Let your Censor rattle on. (And it will). Just keep your hand moving across the page. Write down the Censor's thoughts if you want to. Note how it loves to aim

for your creative jugular. Make no mistake: the Censor is out to get you. It's a cunning foe. Every time you get smarter, so does it.

Think of your Censor as a cartoon serpent, slithering around your creative Eden, hissing vile things to keep you off guard... making the Censor into the nasty, clever little character that it is begins to pry loose some of its power over you. The point is to stop taking the Censor as the voice of reason and learn to hear it for the blocking device that it is. Morning pages will help you do this. Beyond the reach of the Censor's babble we find our own quiet centre, the place where we hear the still, small voice that is at once our creator's and our own.

#### 4. Moving beyond your mood

Morning pages will teach you that your mood doesn't matter. Some of the best creative work gets done on the days when you feel that everything you're doing is just plain junk. The morning pages will teach you to stop judging and just let yourself write. So what if you're tired, crabby, distracted, stressed? You have a creative self within you that needs to be fed. Your morning pages will feed you.

#### 5. Moving beyond the survival brain

The left, 'Logic brain' was and is our survival brain. It works on known principles. Anything unknown is perceived as wrong and possibly dangerous. Logic brain likes things to be neat little soldiers marching in a straight line. Logic brain is the brain we usually listen to, especially when we are telling ourselves to be sensible.

Logic brain is our Censor. The Censor is part of our leftover survival brain. It was the part in charge of deciding whether it was safe for us to leave the forest and go into the meadow. Our Censor scans our creative meadow for any dangerous beasties. Any original thought can look pretty dangerous to our Censor.

The right brain is our creative, holistic brain. It thinks in patterns and shadings... it is associative and freewheeling. It makes new connections. The morning pages help us teach our left / logic brain to stand aside and let our creative brain play.

#### 6. Personal Discovery

We meditate to discover our own identity, our right place in the scheme of the universe. Through meditation, we acquire and eventually acknowledge our connection to an inner power source that has the ability to transform our outer world. In other words, meditation gives us not only the light of insight but also the power for expansive change. It is very difficult to complain about a situation morning after morning, month after month, without being moved to constructive action. The pages lead us out of despair and into undreamed-of solutions.

It is impossible to write morning pages for any extended period of time without coming into contact with an unexpected inner power. The pages are a pathway to a strong and clear sense of self. Anyone who faithfully writes morning pages will be led to a connection with a source of wisdom within.

Often the students most resistant to morning pages come to love them the most. In fact, hating the morning pages is a very good sign.

## Helpful hints:

1. You can ask questions and then write what the voice inside you answers, like ‘What should I do about the job offer?’ or ‘What am I really so angry about?’
2. If you’re worried about writing, begin by writing about your worries.
3. If you want to know what you want to get from writing the pages, begin by writing about what you want to get from writing.
4. If 3 sides feels like a lot – as it does for me – start small with half a page, and force yourself to add a line a day until it feels long enough to get to the the heart of things for you... but it must be more than a side of A4!