

WRITE TO IMPACT CHANGE

Tips from 27 writers

Compiled by Heather Plett

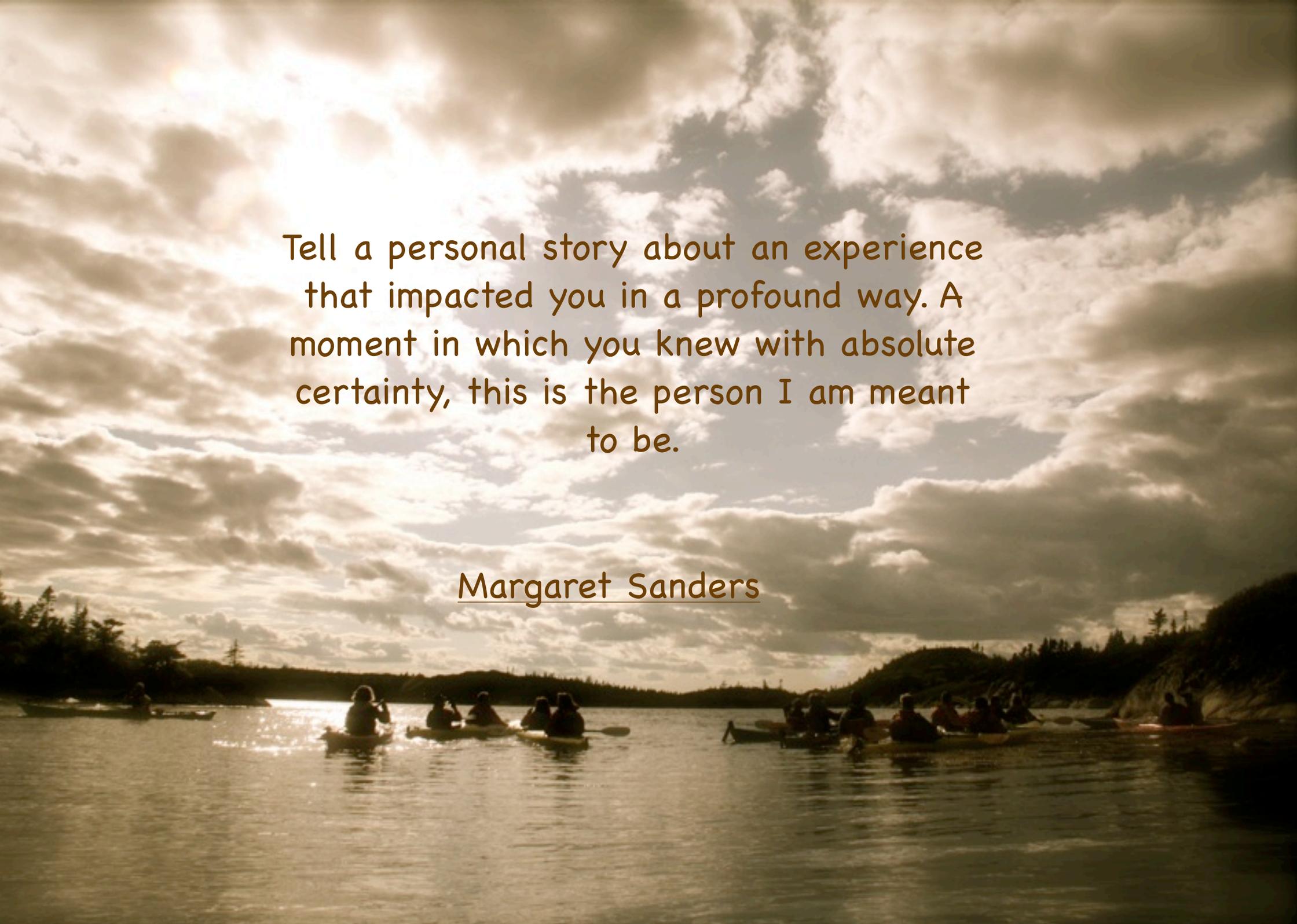
All photography by Heather Plett

www.sophialeadership.com

Be specific.
Be PERSONAL.
Be vulnerable.
Be yourself.

Christine Claire Reed



A group of people are kayaking on a calm lake during sunset. The sky is filled with large, dramatic clouds, and the sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow. The water reflects the light from the sky. The kayakers are silhouetted against the bright background. The shoreline is visible in the distance, with trees and a rocky bank on the right.

Tell a personal story about an experience that impacted you in a profound way. A moment in which you knew with absolute certainty, this is the person I am meant to be.

Margaret Sanders

A photograph of a single, gnarled tree covered in a thick layer of snow or frost. The tree stands in a vast, flat, open landscape that appears to be a salt flat or a desert. The ground is a uniform, light-colored expanse. The sky is a pale, hazy blue-grey. The overall mood is one of isolation and resilience.

Focus on possibilities. Show me
someone just like me who's
made the change and is happy
about it. Make it seem
attainable.

Heather Plett

1. Do not compare your writing to others. Your voice is unique and powerful and needed. Let your voice come through strong and clear. You can admire and study other's writing but keep your individuality.

2. Push boundaries. Take a stand. Have a point of view. Own it.

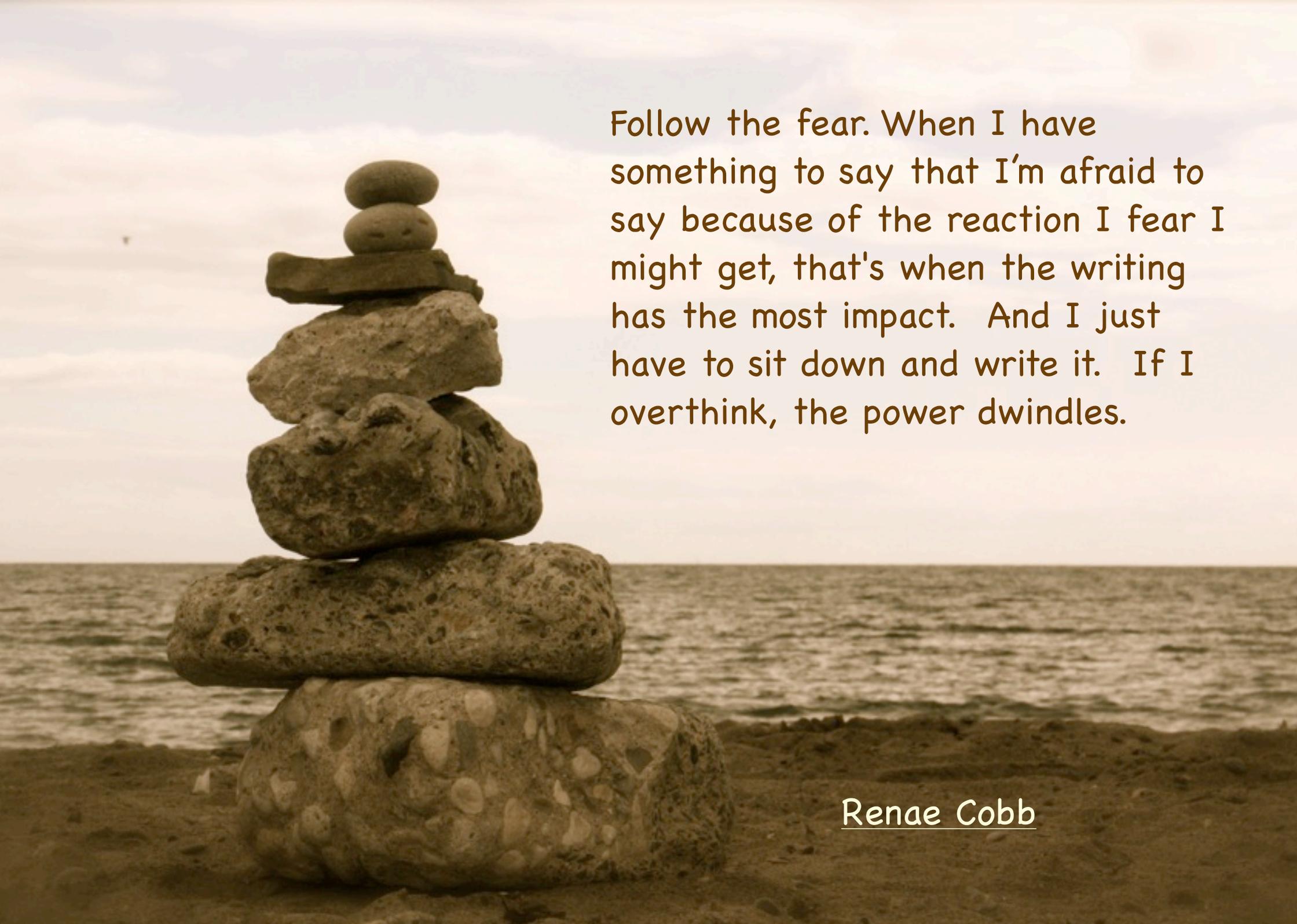
3. Be fearless.

4. Be honest. Let the voices of your stories shine through in all of their pain and glory.

5. Write. Write. Write...and then write some more.

Desiree Adaway





Follow the fear. When I have something to say that I'm afraid to say because of the reaction I fear I might get, that's when the writing has the most impact. And I just have to sit down and write it. If I overthink, the power dwindles.

Renaë Cobb

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a single, brown, dried maple leaf. The leaf is held between the thumb and index finger, with the stem pointing downwards. The leaf's veins are clearly visible, and it has a few small dark spots. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green, suggesting an outdoor setting with trees or grass. The lighting is natural, highlighting the texture of the leaf and the skin of the hand.

Write it for the people, not for
yourself.

Jarda Dokoupil

1. Start with: "I want to tell you that..." You're going to erase that line once you're done your piece, but I find if I start with that bit of sentence, my writing is more focused on what I really want to say, and what I really want the reader to remember.

2. Once you think your piece is polished, go back and cut 20 percent more. Most of us write too much and you would be surprised how much you can cut without losing your message. Your message will be more clear because you've taken out all the extraneous words. If you are really long winded, you might even need to cut 30 percent.

3. Believe what you are writing about. Bullshit doesn't make for behavioural change.

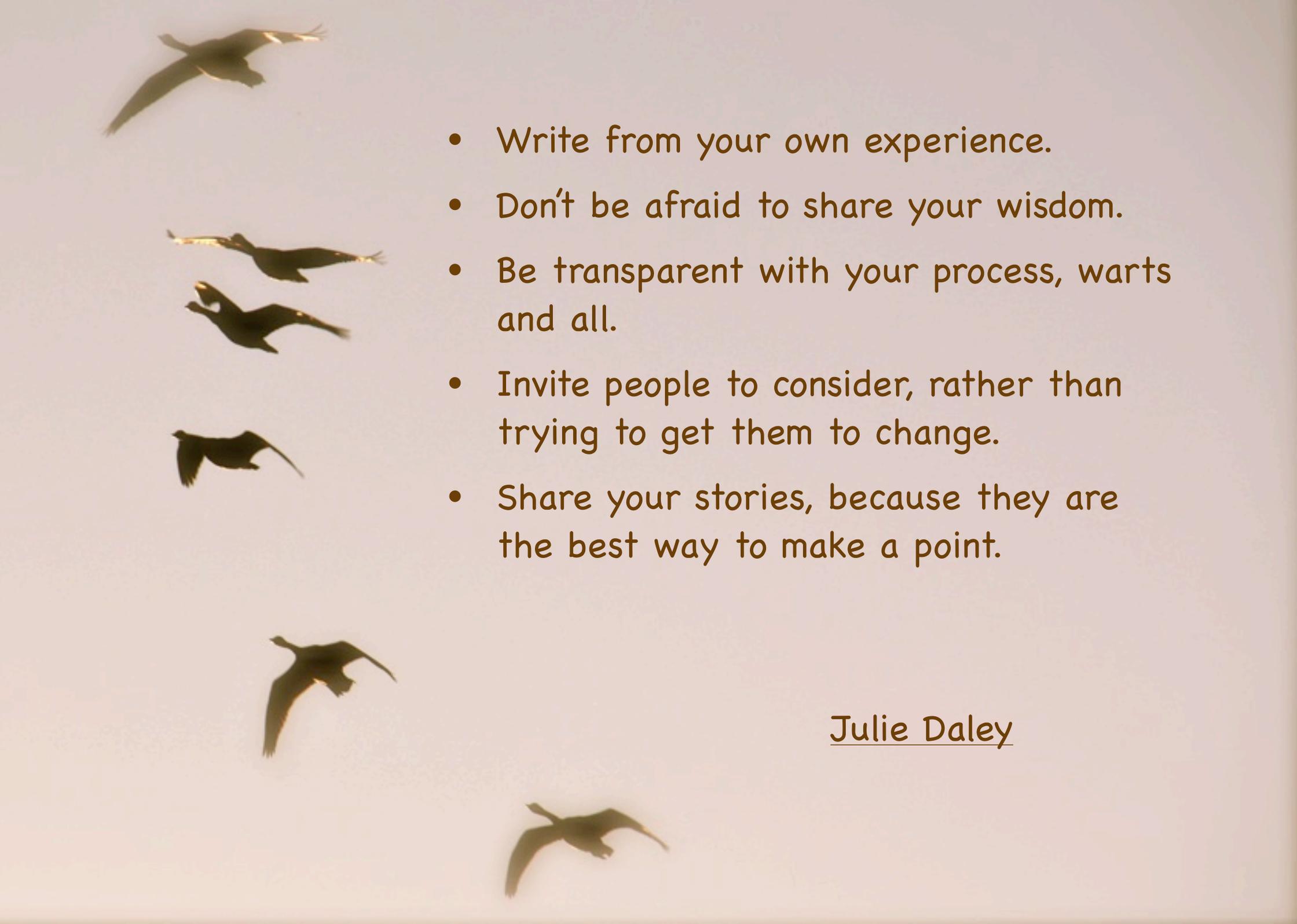
Michele Visser-Wikkerink



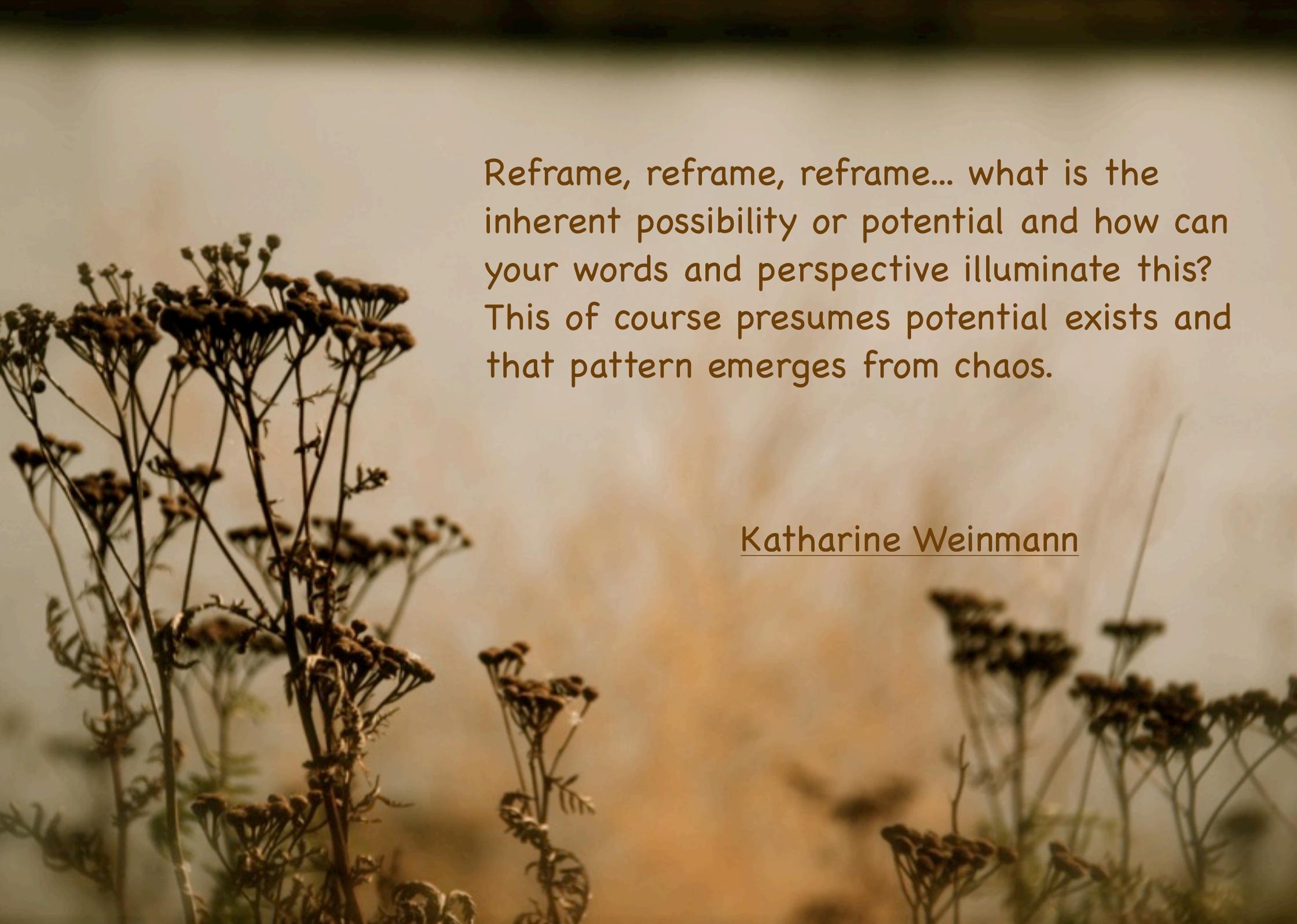
Think of a time in your life when someone said something to you and it changed everything. It may have been as simple as yelling out "Stop!" as you were about to step into the street. It may have been hearing that someone believed in you. Or that they didn't. For me, it was when my boyfriend looked at a sign for theatre auditions and said to me, "Hey, you might like that!" It changed my life forever. What words have changed your life?

Jamie Ridler



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- The background of the slide features several dark silhouettes of birds in flight, scattered across the light-colored background. The birds are captured in various stages of their wing strokes, creating a sense of movement and freedom. The overall aesthetic is clean and minimalist, with the text and birds providing the primary visual elements.
- Write from your own experience.
 - Don't be afraid to share your wisdom.
 - Be transparent with your process, warts and all.
 - Invite people to consider, rather than trying to get them to change.
 - Share your stories, because they are the best way to make a point.

Julie Daley



Reframe, reframe, reframe... what is the inherent possibility or potential and how can your words and perspective illuminate this? This of course presumes potential exists and that pattern emerges from chaos.

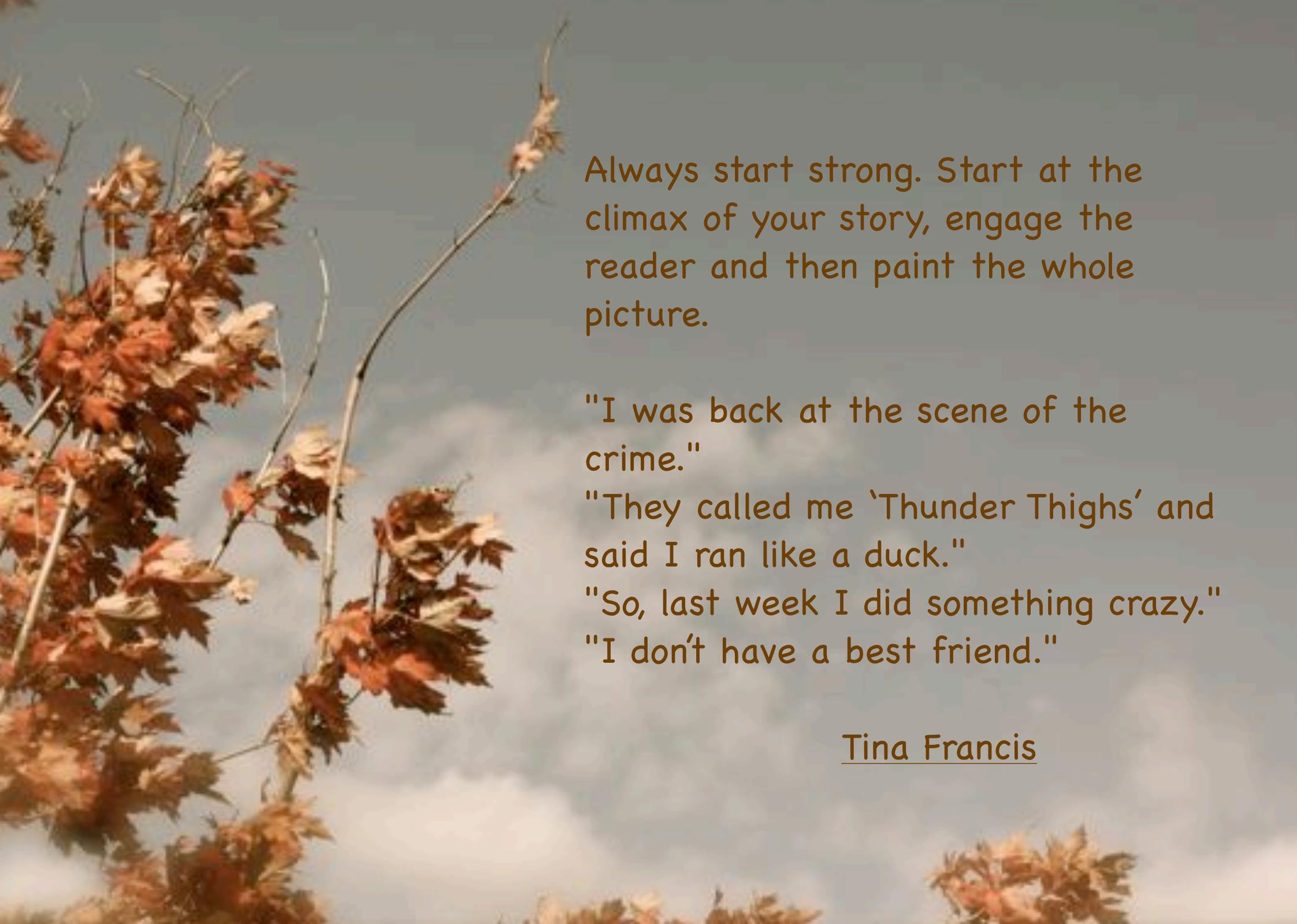
Katharine Weinmann

Consider these questions:

- Who are you talking to?
- What do you want to say to them?
- What are your feeling?
- What qualities do you want to infuse yourself and your world with?
- How can you be the change you want to effect?

- Hiro Boga





Always start strong. Start at the climax of your story, engage the reader and then paint the whole picture.

"I was back at the scene of the crime."

"They called me 'Thunder Thighs' and said I ran like a duck."

"So, last week I did something crazy."

"I don't have a best friend."

Tina Francis



Write from your heart.
Invite your writing. Every day. 10 minutes.
More when time, space and
inspiration allow.
Oh, and write from your heart.

Kathy Jourdain

I think if you come to the page thinking “I have to impact positive change” you’re going to shut yourself down immediately.

I think the most important thing is to TELL THE TRUTH, because the truth speaks for itself. Open, honest, vulnerable writing will influence readers.

Susan Plett

- Meet people where they are - make sure they feel GOTTEN - empathic messages before emphatic messages.
- Understand change has stages.
- Give baby baby baby steps.
- Share specific stories, “before and after” style that help people see themselves both now and in the positive future you’re inviting them to.

Michele Lisenbury Christensen

Use fewer words. You may not like it that most North Americans read at an 8th grade level and have the attention span of a gnat, but that's the reality. If you want to communicate, you have to live by it.

Create strong metaphors. If it's wimpy, don't use it. If it's stunning, it will stick.

Rachelle Mee-Chapman



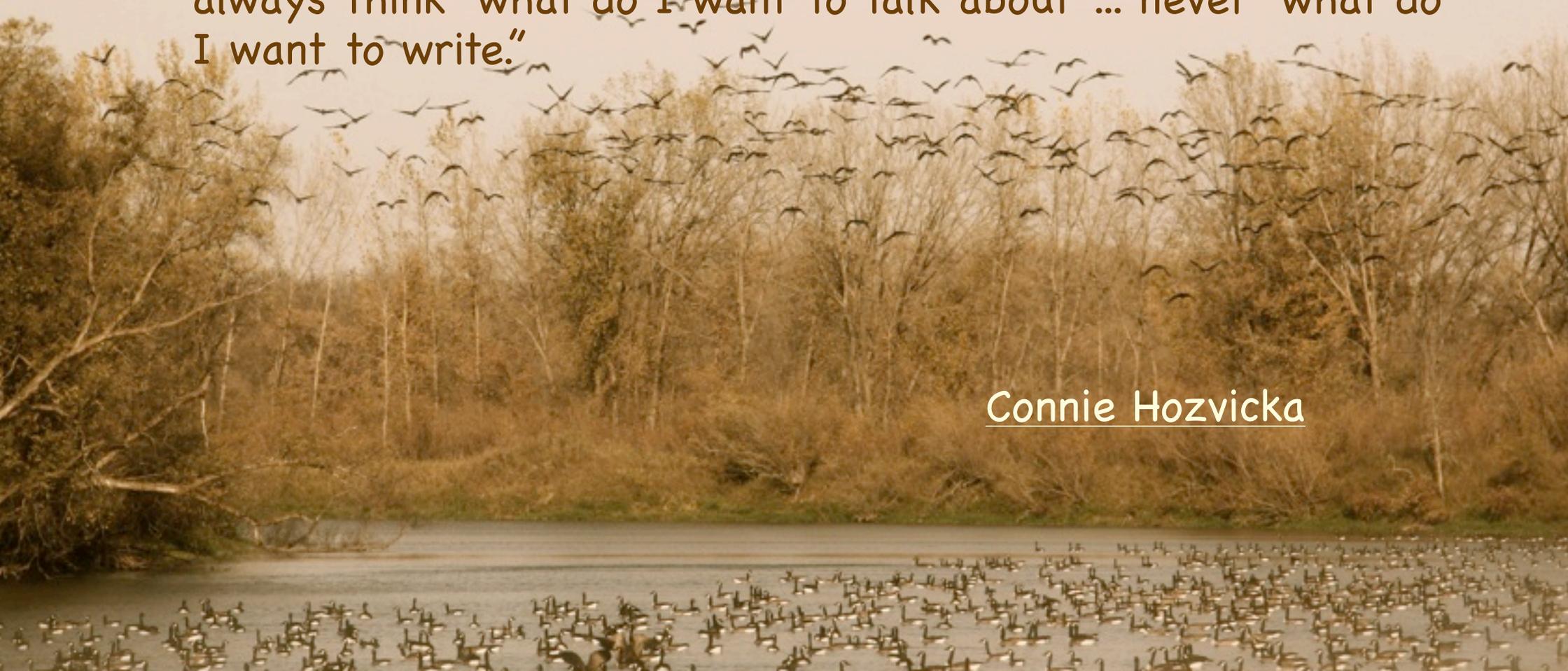
Write for the intellect AND the emotions. If you convince both, you can impact change. If you convince only one, the other may put up roadblocks.

Heather Plett



My writing advice is to be brave enough to make yourself vulnerable in your writing -- while still being honest and respectful to yourself -- and your words will resonate on a deeper level with others. When I write on my blog, I write for myself with the intention that by sharing it, my words will touch others. I try to never write at them, but to include them in my thought process. When I sit down to write I always think "what do I want to talk about"... never "what do I want to write."

Connie Hozvicka





TELL THE TRUTH! Write in vulnerable ways. Write from your soul. Write from your own experience - or even lack thereof. Just acknowledge to us that your words are grounded in your own passions, doubts, strengths, weaknesses, questions, hopes, fears, etc.

Of course, this has to be appropriate to audience, but I think somehow, no matter the subject or the context, the best writing comes from the heart. When I read that kind of writing, I am changed. Over and over again.

Ronna Detrick

Never underestimate the power of fiction to effect positive change. Sometimes the truth can be told best in a story we create. The characters are not us, but we get to know them as we write them and their emotional truth (which may overlap with ours) emerges. So, read it, and write it.

Dora Dueck



As I am editing my draft memoir I am finding it very important to be clear and to use truthful words. Sometimes I find it extremely difficult to find the words to put together a sentence that will make an impact, but then I sit down to the page and take a deep breath and trust the process. I trust that I am using the right words to make the impact that is intended. To tell the story and hopefully it will be remembered.

I find it helpful for me to read out loud what I have written, to see if it makes sense. Are the words I am using the right fit for the intention? I like this process.

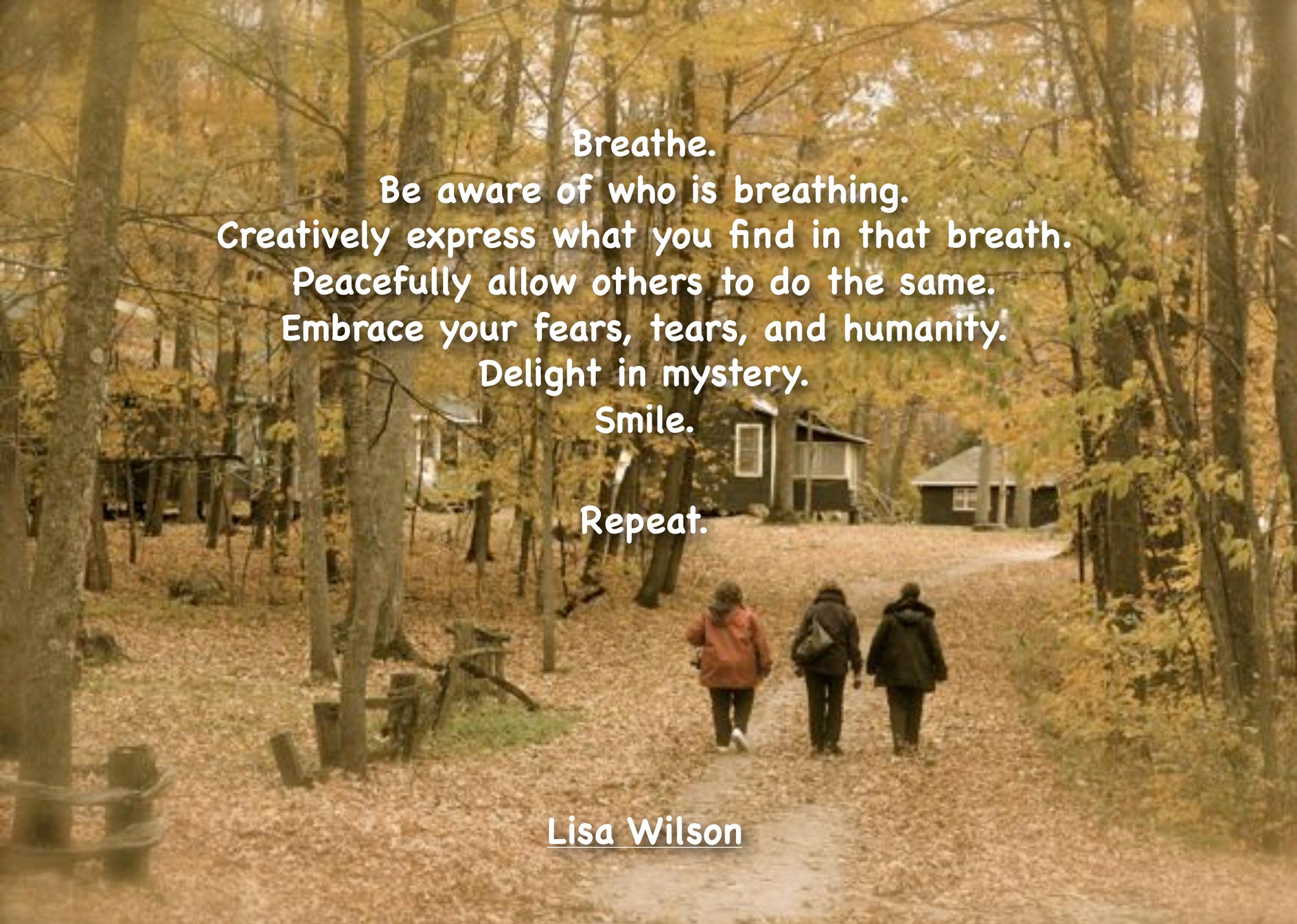


Marion Ann Berry



Step away from judgement
and into curiosity.
Judgement creates
divisions, curiosity creates
openings.

Heather Plett

A photograph of a forest path in autumn. The path is covered in fallen yellow and orange leaves. Three people are walking away from the camera down the path. In the background, there are several houses partially obscured by trees with vibrant autumn foliage. The overall scene is peaceful and scenic.

Breathe.
Be aware of who is breathing.
Creatively express what you find in that breath.
Peacefully allow others to do the same.
Embrace your fears, tears, and humanity.
Delight in mystery.

Smile.

Repeat.

Lisa Wilson

Use stories! Not theoretical language.

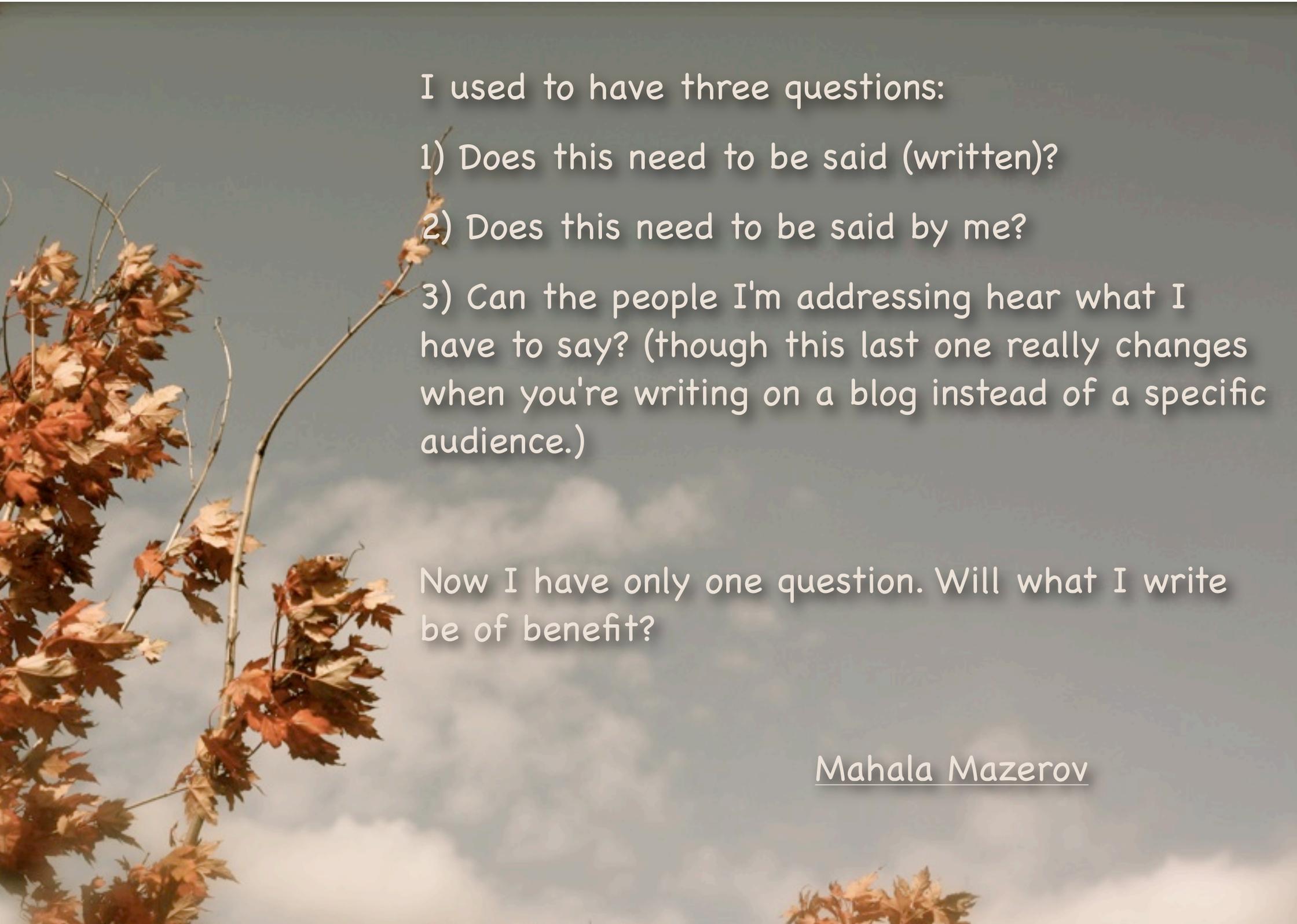
Tara Sophia Mohr



Write what you want to know more about. Write toward truth. Write every day. (You'd be amazed at how many people who tell me they want to be writers, don't actually write. They don't keep journals. They don't copy down conversations overheard in cafes. They don't keep a pen and legal pad beside the shower (and on the passenger seat of the car) where, every writer knows, some of the best ideas happen.) What I mean is, if you want to be a writer, do those things they don't do.

Amy Oscar



A photograph of a branch with autumn leaves in shades of orange and brown, set against a background of a cloudy sky. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

I used to have three questions:

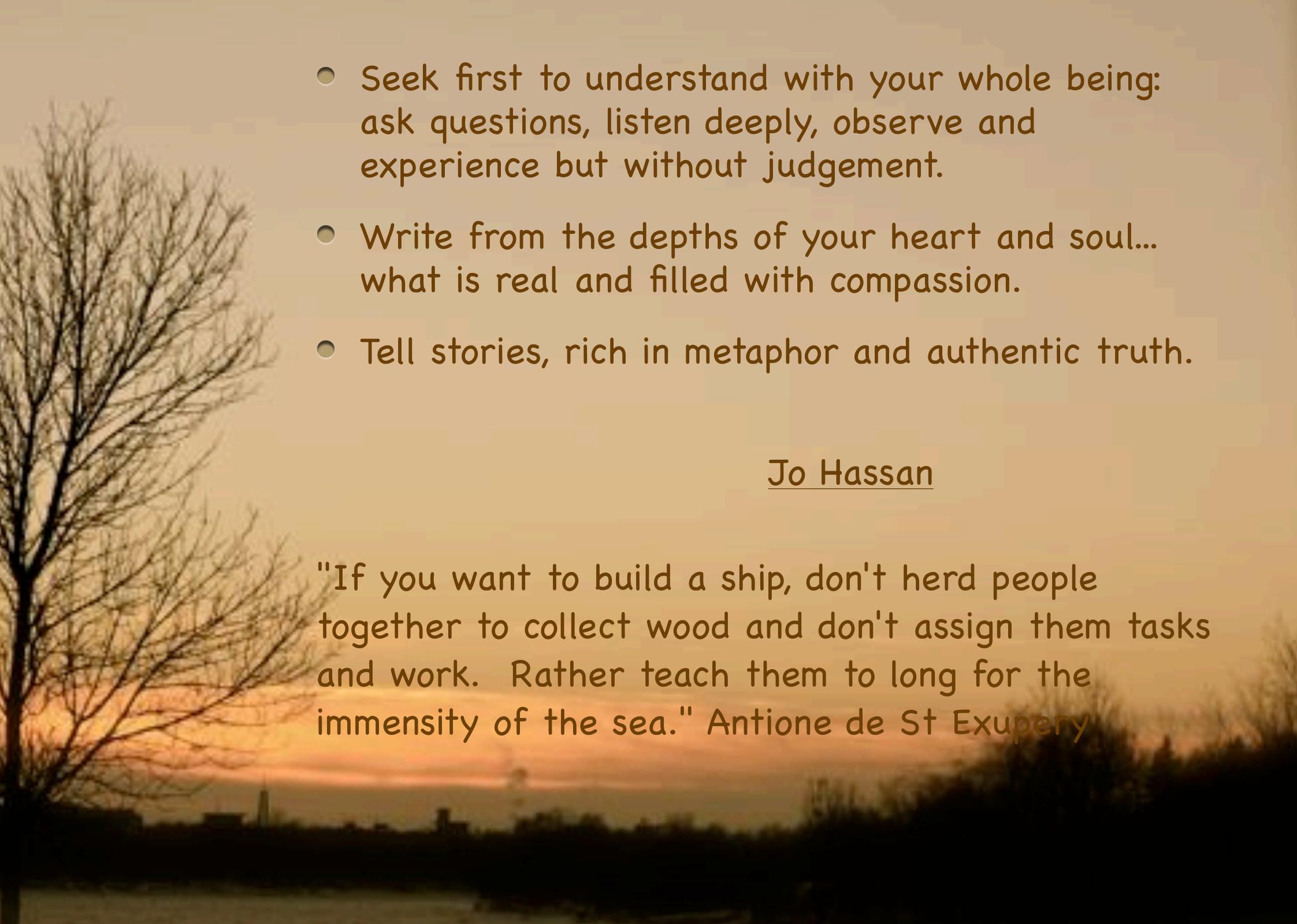
1) Does this need to be said (written)?

2) Does this need to be said by me?

3) Can the people I'm addressing hear what I have to say? (though this last one really changes when you're writing on a blog instead of a specific audience.)

Now I have only one question. Will what I write be of benefit?

Mahala Mazerov

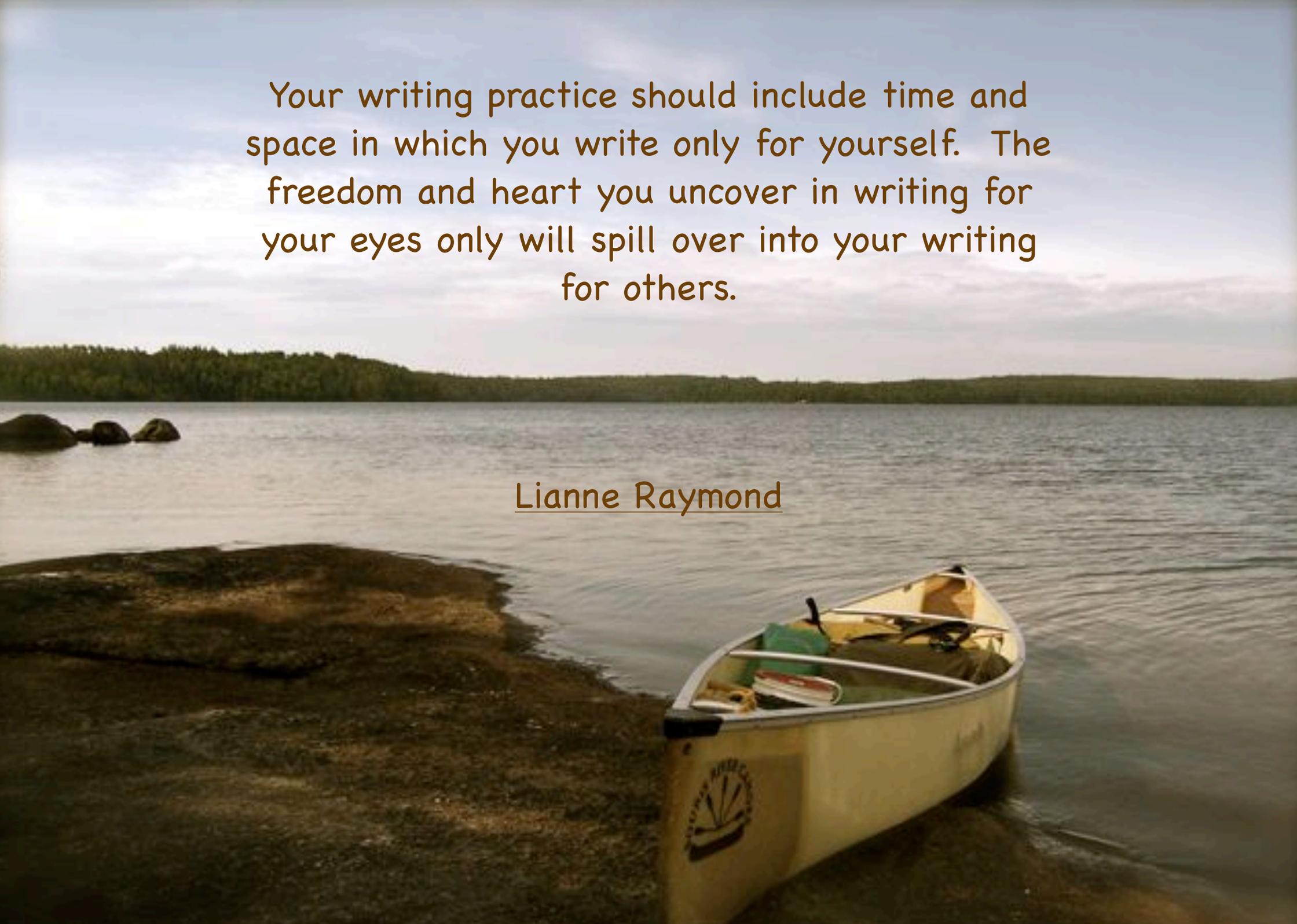
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- Seek first to understand with your whole being: ask questions, listen deeply, observe and experience but without judgement.
 - Write from the depths of your heart and soul... what is real and filled with compassion.
 - Tell stories, rich in metaphor and authentic truth.

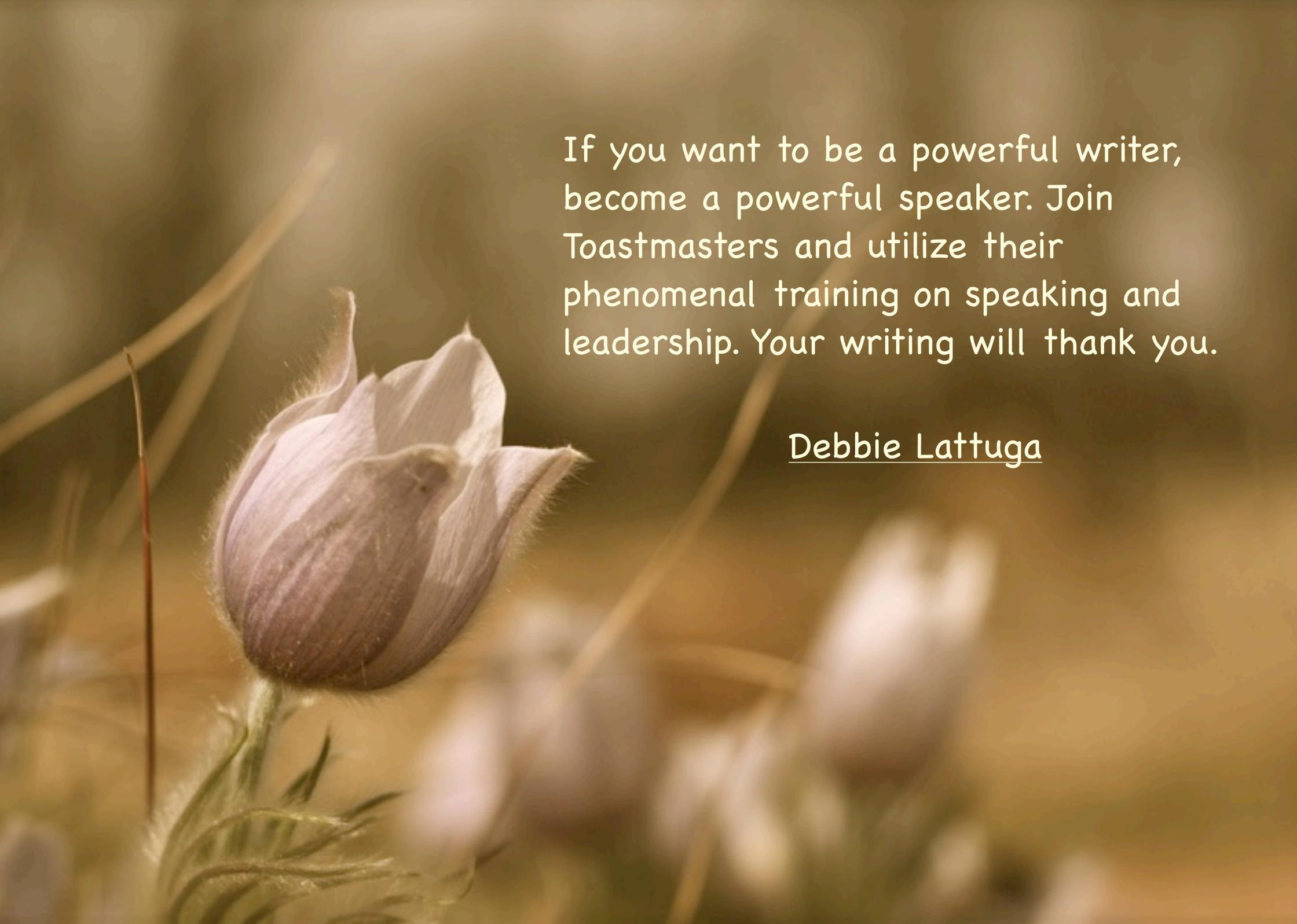
Jo Hassan

"If you want to build a ship, don't herd people together to collect wood and don't assign them tasks and work. Rather teach them to long for the immensity of the sea." Antione de St Exupery

Your writing practice should include time and space in which you write only for yourself. The freedom and heart you uncover in writing for your eyes only will spill over into your writing for others.

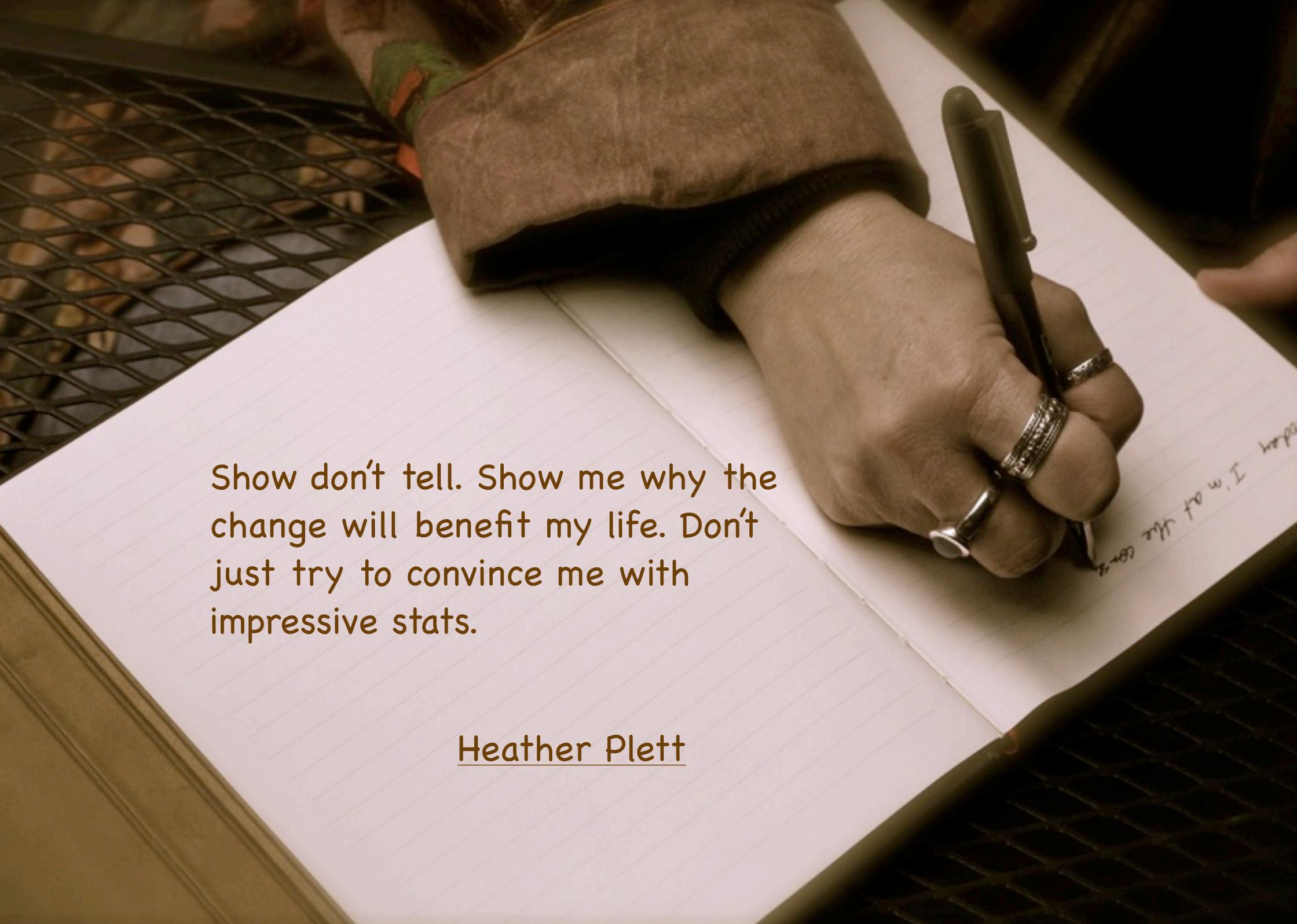
Lianne Raymond





If you want to be a powerful writer,
become a powerful speaker. Join
Toastmasters and utilize their
phenomenal training on speaking and
leadership. Your writing will thank you.

Debbie Lattuga

A close-up photograph of a person's right hand writing in a lined notebook. The hand is wearing a brown suede jacket sleeve and several silver rings. The person is holding a black pen and writing on the right page. The left page is blank. The background shows a dark metal mesh chair.

Show don't tell. Show me why the change will benefit my life. Don't just try to convince me with impressive stats.

Heather Plett