

What Authors Can Do During the Covid-19 Pandemic

Isolation during the pandemic can have the unfortunate effect of making individuals believe they are alone in the world. Particularly sensitive and introverted writers, like myself, may begin to wonder what to do, now that the comfortable and safe places of the world are shuttered or limited in some way. But, I am not the only author in the world impacted by the covid-19 pandemic. So, what can *we* do, especially those of us who need that extra encouragement to step outside our comfort zones and try something new to address possibly dismal sales figures? I have found that the most important step I can take is to shift away from negativity and seeing only problems, to instead ponder the opportunities that are now available, to consider solutions. Yes, there are many possibilities for authors to find, even those who shy away from the public's eye or those who find virtual events intimidating, so that they may, at the very least, enjoy modest success, too. Making this shift away from what no longer works toward re-imagining my life as an author, has enabled my creative inspiration to lead the way. Of course, that always begins with writing something, so here I am.

What can I do now?

- Recognize the basic fact that we are all struggling to regain our footing. Make the shift toward adapting to a changed market.
- Educate yourself in ways to take advantage of rapidly growing, on-line, virtual events.
- Engage in supporting other authors, reading *their* books and leaving reviews for *them*.
- Make yourself visible by submitting press releases to radio and newspapers, posting on a variety of social media sites, posting on blogs, leaving comments for authors of on-line articles, utilizing free or low-cost ways to market on-line, or paying for marketing if and when you can afford it.
- Donate author copies to libraries and their affiliated Friends of the Library, to fundraisers for non-profit organizations, or to your local Little Library, perhaps even starting one of your own.
- Host a socially-distanced reading in your local park. Organize a book reading event for local authors at your town's drive-in where the audience sits in their cars.
- Host a covid-safe, "Local Author Book Sale" in your driveway or front yard, advertising with a sign at your street corner.
- Trade a copy of your book with another of equal value at a used bookstore.
- Take a chance and ask gift shops, cultural centers, local businesses, etc. if they will carry your book in their store.
- Remember, go at your own pace, follow your instincts, and have fun!

Nurturing the muse during challenging times:

Being an author is not just about marketing and earning some bucks. Entering contests, doing research, taking classes, mailing out a newsletter, submitting stories and poems for publication in literary journals and magazines, are some of the many aspects to life as a writer. We may use the time alone the pandemic has inflicted upon us to get organized, spruce up our websites, or write in our journals. But, that is not all there is to being a writer. Every writer needs to have time to themselves, time to contemplate life and observations made during the course of a day. We need to safeguard our precious creative energy and nurture our ideas. Having a place to go where one's muse is sure to awaken is part of a commitment to, not just life as a writer, but life as an *artist*. Whether a quiet lane where the leaves of autumn may be seen, a sunny patio (hey, I'm in southern California!), or a quirky gift shop, wherever you experience inspiration, go there often and allow yourself to dream, to take joy in life's oft-missed beauties.

Take care of yourself. Yes, we are writers and we need to sell what we write, but we are not machines. We need to rest, to step away from the job and simply enjoy life. If social media brings you down, avoid it or limit your time spent scrolling. If Amazon appears unfair and greedy to you, time to step away and focus on what matters most. Be thankful for your writing gift. Be thankful for getting published. Be part of the team, not selfish and competitive. Give to others what you wish to receive. Most importantly, *breathe*. Returning to one's breath, to one's heart and center, has been the greatest lesson I can share with others, with all of you, my fellow writers. It is from where our best life is lived, the heart center, and from where our best work and our writer's voice patiently awaits expression.

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