

Danielle LaPorte

The Nitty-Gritty of World-Changing Writing

session #3 of the



by Pace and Kyeli of the [Freak Revolution](#)

*If you're reading along, we've highlighted important phrases with bold text.
Below is a key to help you track the text along with the audio,
to find your place if you're starting in the middle,
or to find a particular passage that you want to revisit.*

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The beginning

Pace: Hi! This is Pace –

Kyeli: This is Kyeli!

Pace: – with the World-Changing Writing Workshop! Today we are talking to Danielle LaPorte of White Hot Truth. She is totally awesome, ridiculously passionate, ridiculously authentic. She has done a bunch of amazing things. Her latest amazing thing is the Fire Starter Sessions, which I'm sure we'll be talking about on the call. Today she'll be telling us about the nitty-gritty of world-changing writing. Hi, Danielle!

Danielle: Hello! Thank you for having me. Thank you for doing this.

Kyeli: Thank you for being with us. We're so excited.

Pace: So one of the things that we want to talk about for the nitty-gritty is figuring out how to extract things that you have to share in writing that you might not even realize are special and helpful to share because you're taking them for granted. I think that's where it starts.

Being witnessed

Danielle: Yeah – here's the word for that. It's about being witnessed – getting a witness to give you feedback, to explore with you, to be in the midst of your creative process, to be objective. You can't be effectively creative – and when I say "effectively creative," I mean "happy world-changing" – alone, and by yourself, and in a creative vacuum. And – we'll talk about this later, but – this is one of the benefits that comes from working with a publisher. They throw a team of hungry, wolf-like editors at you to challenge you.

So I suggest you do a couple things. Get yourself an editorial board, if you need one. Writers' groups, I think, can be effective; they can also be really ineffective, in that you don't get the real critique – the objective critique – that you need sometimes. Sitting around a café working on your creative writing can lead people to just tell you nice things. So if you're in a group where you're getting pushed, and you really feel like you're getting pushed and hearing some things that are uncomfortable sometimes – and also, not just being pushed and, "Hey, that sucked, I think you need to work on that," but also being pushed to your greatness, like, "Wow, I think that's genius, and I hear real talent in that," and seeing yourself expanded - that's a good form of being pushed.

So if you're not getting that kind of effectual objectivity from a group, then you need to go pay for it. I talk a lot about being a big fan of coaches. I, myself, have a writing coach

– and it’s paid editorials. Not someone who’s just doing proofreading for you, but someone who knows who you are; they are there to support your writing style, they are there to hear your voice, and they will pull out of you where you want to go. It’s like my friend, writer Bindu Wiles, calls it “diamond cutting”. It’s about mining, and it’s about listening to voice, and it’s about technique.

Get interviewed

I think there’s great value in using your voice in a multimedia format. So I often tell my Fire Starter clients, in terms of how they get clear on their brand, that they need to get interviewed. I see this happen a lot with writers. Writing is our first language. We are comfortable at the keyboard, or with pen and ink, whatever it is in terms of our tools. But if you sit down in front of a video camera and talk about your thing – whatever your thing is – for an hour, you will be amazed at what you see and what you hear. And even some of us who are not even necessarily gifted writers, but feel that natural ease with writing, will say things that we would never actually write out in a sentence with a period. Some of those things are jewels.

Technically, practically, what I recommend is: you get with a friend who’s your intellectual equal – and if they’re not, and they don’t quite get you, love works too; maybe you just need a few glasses of wine and to give them some questions – and get yourself properly interviewed. It depends on what you’re writing about. It could be anything from, “Where did that character come from?” to, “Why are you doing this?” “What’s your message?” “What are you passionate about?” “What’s been your worst experience ever working with clients or in the field?” “Why are you an activist?” And just let yourself roll.

The other, often unintended, benefit of that – other than hearing your voice, and hearing your passion, and saying things in a way you might not normally say them if you were writing – is that you get really cheap media training. A good media trainer will charge you \$5,000 for a day to sit in front of a camera and be grilled. They will tell you when to sit up straight. They will tell you when you light up and when you shrink. And you will see all of this when you see yourself on camera. It can be incredibly uncomfortable, and incredibly inspiring.

Kyeli: Yeah.

Seeing your voice

Danielle: You watch yourself and say, “Wow, I say ‘um’ and ‘hmm’ and ‘in any case’ so often.” And also the value of seeing your body language. See when you literally start to hunch when you talk about a certain subject. You know what? You probably shouldn’t be writing about that subject. You’re not passionate about it.

Seeing when you sit up straight, when your voice sounds really clear and solid, not high-pitched and panicked – you know what? Whatever you’re talking about when you’re at that place, you probably should write more about.

Pace: Yeah – people talk about finding your voice, and a lot of times, people don’t realize that you can take that literally. If your actual speaking voice lights you up when you talk about something, then your writing voice probably will too.

Danielle: Yeah! And you know what? I have actually – I never even thought about this until right this moment –

Kyeli: It’s exciting!

Danielle: Isn’t it? I’m having an epiphany live. I love it. And it’s being recorded. I’ve worked with a voice coach before, and I worked with a voice coach to be a more whole, rockin’ human, but also because I do on-stage speaking. And now I would have to say that it did affect my writing. It deepened me and – when you work with a voice coach, you really will get called on where your blocks are, and where you’re free and where you flow – and where I’m free and where I flow vocally is what I really want to talk more about. There you go, insight.

Kyeli: That’s beautiful!

Finding an editor

Pace: Yeah! So to bring it back to nitty-gritty, if people want to find a writing group or find someone to interview them, we have a World-Changing Writing Forum that you can go to. What if someone is looking for a professional editor?

Danielle: I’m a long-time subscriber to mediabistro.com. It’s free. They have an advanced subscription level – I think it’s \$60 a year – called AvantGuild. And it is everything you need to know about finding editors, finding agents, what’s happening in the whole industry of book publishing, online publishing – they’ve got a great series called “How to Pitch,” and it’s everything from how to pitch Slate.com to how to pitch Redbook Magazine. So you could definitely find editors there. There’s also – I’m not 100% positive about this. Publishers Weekly and Publishers Lunch have some great resources, but I don’t know if you could find one there. So yeah – that’s where I would start.

Pace: Thank you.

Your own personal voice

Pace: I want to ask you another question about voice, because you have one of the most distinctive writing voices of anybody I know, and I'm wondering if you can help your listeners develop their own voices. How can you find a voice that's yours and is authentic, as opposed to getting stuck in a professional business voice or just emulating somebody else's voice?

Danielle: Courage. Just old-fashioned everyday courage of putting your heart on your sleeve. How do you generate that courage? You practice. You keep writing. I think we often, as writers, are so focused on the end goal, which is writing a great piece, that sometimes we forget to pay attention to how we feel while we're creating what we're creating. This is really simplistic, but the better you feel while you're writing it, I can bet you, the truer the voices for you.

And – again, I think this goes back to literal voice – I think it shows up in your body. When you feel good and hot and bothered when you're writing a piece, and you know it's good, that's the real you. That's your authentic self responding to you. Coming through you. And then you could just take my advice, which is – people want to have a relationship with you and your writing. We all know – anyone who's listening to this knows the old adage – that storytelling is the most effectual way to convey a message and to teach. And the most powerful stories you can tell are your own.

This is one thing I learned from a public speaking coach whom I've worked with, Gail Larsen – she's wonderful; I think she's gaillarsen.com. What she taught me was that what we typically do as creative, whether you're speaking or you're writing, is that we come up with our message – the story that we want to tell – and we go through all of the things we've experienced in our life to find a story that's going to support that message, to help us get our point across. And really we've got it backwards.

Look for the stories

This was really paradigm-busting for me. Her point was that the most powerful thing that you can do is forget about your message and what you're trying to convey and first, start looking for the stories. There's a reason that certain things that you've experienced in your life, that you've overheard, the stories you keep telling, those magic moments that become little chapters inside your head. Those are staying with you because those prove your point, in a way. Those are the stories that want to be told. Because they're hanging out in your heart and your psyche, that's your authentic voice. That's your message. So just tell the stories that have been living with you the longest or that stay with you in the most powerful way. That really changed everything for me.

I can tell you from experience that authenticity is magnetic. You cannot attract your tribe if you're being inauthentic. Why would you want to – let me use writing a bio for example. I see this happen all the time – bios written not in first person. So, "Danielle was executive director of a think tank in Washington, DC." What? Boring. Wouldn't you

rather work with someone who says, “Hey, I was an executive director in Washington, DC, and I rocked it.” Who would you rather hire? It’s about writing in first person. It’s about trusting that your voice is going to resonate with the people you want to work with – that you want to subscribe to your stuff, that you want to be your editors and give you a publishing deal. If you’re fake, you’re going to attract people who don’t quite see the world in the same way that you do, because you haven’t been clear. You need to send a clear signal.

(Not) Playing to the suits

Pace: Have you ever found it necessary to play to the corporate people? The people in suits – do they ever say, “You’re not formal enough, you need to fit into this box here.” Has there ever been anyone like that whom you actually did choose to cater to, and has that been useful at all?

Danielle: That’s a great question. Not in my current incarnation. Right now, in terms of my one-on-one Fire Starter Sessions and being a “strategist,” I work with entrepreneurs. That’s it. I don’t have a need at all to appeal to corporations. Like I mentioned, I worked at a think tank in Washington, DC, and I consulted with Army generals and Navy commanders. So, you know, I didn’t say “fuck” a lot in those meetings, I didn’t talk about my energy field and stuff. Although you’d be surprised how many woo-woo dudes there are at the Pentagon – closeted metaphysicians. It’s amazing. They’re there. It really changed the whole way I looked at the government.

What I would say about that is that being authentic often requires you to break the rules. Speaking in your own language, being your own color, so to speak – and I mean character, and being animated. But you need to know the rules that you’re breaking before you break them.

The cover letter

I have an illustrative story for this. When you’re going to get a book deal, you need an agent. Most literary agents require – I’ll say demand – of you that your query letter to them – to see if they’ll take you, if they’ll look at your stuff – be written in Times New Roman, double-spaced, no more than two pages. And when I was going to get the book deal for my first book, Style Statement, which came out in print, I attempted to do that, and it was awful. And my business partner at the time came in and said, “This isn’t us. You are anything but Times New Roman.” So I’m Helvetica and I’m not double-spaced, right? So I knew the rules that I was breaking, I knew the risk that I was taking, I knew I did have to speak in a certain way. I knew my cover letter had to hit the right notes, and I knew I needed a hook within the first paragraph. I knew I had to fit everything in less than two paragraphs, basically.

And what I did was I created a package that was physically beautiful. I did a sort of accordion booklet, I had it linen-bound. I had a great traditional cover letter with a hook, about the concept, what we were going for, who our audience was, and how we were a proven success. And then I wrote the rest of it in prose. And I tied it with little chocolate-brown grosgrain ribbon, and sent it off to the woman who happened to be one of the most powerful literary agents in the world, and it got her attention. “This is the most beautiful package I’ve seen in ten years in the business.” This is someone who represents Malcolm Gladwell and Jane Fonda and Al Gore. And it got her attention. And that was the point.

I think if you’re going to break the rules, when you’re playing in a conventional stream, it’s gotta be in a reasonable way – it’s gotta be all about getting to the top of the pile and being classy about it.

Kyeli: That is completely amazing. I love that. We talk a lot about breaking the rules and knowing the rules you’re going to break, and I think that was one of the most elegant examples of knowing the rules that you’re going to break and breaking them on purpose that I’ve ever heard. Thank you for sharing that.

Exposure

Pace: So this was to get a book deal. I was hoping you could talk about the different ways to get your writing in front of people. I mean, there are tons – there’s traditional publishing, self-publishing, blogging, magazine articles, and a dozen others. Which ones are you familiar with, and which ones are the best in different situations?

Danielle: I’m familiar with them all. Tell me a little more about what you mean when you say, “get your writing in front of other people.”

Pace: Well, people are here because they want to change the world with their writing. And no one is going to change the world if you’re writing in a journal and then keeping it under lock and key. It’s only going to happen if your world-changing ideas spread. There are dozens of different ways to spread your ideas, and they all involve having other people read what you write. That’s the context.

Danielle: Ah. Exposure. You need to write. I think we live in one of the most exciting times ever, in terms of being artists and creative and activists. We have the Internet, and we cannot underestimate – I could wax so philosophical about how it’s shifting consciousness. It’s what philosopher Peter Russell calls “the Global Brain.” We are a global breathing brain. So you need to blog. If anybody’s heard any other interview with me, you’ve heard me say that I hate the word “blog.” It reminds me of snot. It’s one of my least favorite words. I rue the day that it got collapsed from “weblog” to “blog.” But – to put it in the most elegant way – you need to write online. You need to bring people to your online writing. It’s powerful. It’s magical.

Just write

I could talk specifically about driving traffic to that, but let me just run through the different ways to get out there. There's having a blog, and I would say – just start. Don't worry about your voice, don't worry about an audience. I can't believe I'm saying this, but don't even worry about the aesthetic. Just get it out there. You need to worry about all of those things eventually. But what I see happen often is that people are waiting to find their message and their brand, and what are they going to write about? They get all flustered, and that fluster just stymies them. I'd just say, "Go to WordPress.com, and start writing." Give yourself six months of online writing – and when I say online writing, I mean writing knowing that people are possibly going to read it – to find your voice. Six months to find your voice. I had been writing online for quite some time before I started White Hot Truth, which was a year and a half ago. So I had my groove, but still it was about three months before I figured out – most importantly for me – what I was not going to write about. I've got a lot to say about a lot of things. I've got a lot to say about parenting, I've got a lot to say about relationships – and I actually felt pretty bored about those. I've got a lot to say about style. Never want to write about style ever again. It took me about three months and I had my groove. I write about self-realization and intense entrepreneurship, and that's it. So – do it.

Pitch your stuff

The exercise of pitching your stuff to editors is so educational. If you want to get into print magazines, and you don't think you're ready, I'd say just pretend you're ready and just put it out there. Some of those editors will actually give you really valuable criticism. You will learn how hard it is to get in. You will learn the magic of getting into magazines. But even if you think you're a year away from being at the caliber to be accepted by a top-tier print magazine or a highly-trafficked website, start reading all of their editorial guidelines. Start paying attention to what columns they're introducing and phasing out. Really look for voice in other people, especially in columns. Everything in those magazines is so strategic. It's all about advertising, at the end of the day. If Suzie Q. has a column in a particular voice, she's hired and retained to do what she does because her voice is going to work with an advertiser. Again, go back to mediabistro and look at other people's pitches.

We're going a little off on the side here about being seen. If you think about your online space, your blog, as if it were a magazine, it completely shifts how you approach writing. You start to think of your online space in terms of themes, columns – which are really, in blog speak, categories – and you start to think in terms of your audience. If you want your writing to be read – if you want to get out of your journal – you absolutely need to be thinking about your audience. Secondly, but they are as important as your voice.

This answers your original question; it also fans out into monetizing your stuff, which we can talk more about if you want.

Interviews

There are diarist formats, there's journalistic formats, there's interviews. Again, thinking of your online space in terms of a magazine, who would you like to interview in your realm, in that theme? You might be amazed at how much interviewing people can crack you open. Also, it's a great traffic builder. You interview me for your website, and I'm going to tweet about it, I'm going to Facebook about it, I may even mention it on my own website. Your traffic will lift. There's also playing the role of an editor, and sometimes, if this is done right, doing editorial and anthology types of writing and products – like an eBook – can be really effective and useful. And when I say “effective,” I mean valuable – someone would actually want to buy it. Let's say someone's writing about natural childbirth. You would be doing people a wonderful service to go interview twenty moms who had natural childbirth, twenty moms who didn't, ten experts who are midwives, ten MDs, and turning that into a product.

This also gets to the point of your gift and your voice. Some people are wonderful interviewers. They ask really penetrating, lucid questions. They're very conversational. If that is your propensity, you need to go there in your writing. You need to really rock that as a format. Personally, I think I'm a terrible interviewer. I'm way too self-centered. I'm asking these big questions about consciousness and I have no patience for small talk. Really, I'm committed to just – here's a useful thing – I know that what I do best in the world is to share my findings about my life, about consciousness and business and creativity. That's what I can do best. No one can do that better than I can. No one can tell my story better than I can.

The Hedgehog Concept

The reason I use the concept of what I do best in the world comes from Jim Collins, who wrote a biblical business book called Good to Great. It's not necessarily recommended for writers and creatives – but it's definitely a must-read for any kind of entrepreneur. He has three questions that he calls the “hedgehog concept.” One is, “What can you be the best in the world at?” Not what are you or what do you want to be, but what can you be – so there's a reality check in there. The second is, “What are you most passionate about?” I am most passionate about liberating the truth. The third question – and this really relates to entrepreneurs, and if you want to make money with your writing, you are an entrepreneur – is, “What drives your economic engine?” How do you make your money? In the case of someone who's writing about natural childbirth, what drives their economic engine might be pregnant women. What drives my economic engine is multimedia. No matter what form I put something in, whether it's a tweet or

an eBook or a speaking gig – those are all forms of media – somehow it will all lead to revenue for me. Someone's going to buy something that I'm selling.

Pace: One of the things that we talked about when we were preparing for this call – one of the things that you said – is that everybody is sitting on a bunch of awesome knowledge, and the questions to ask are, “Who wants what you've got?” and, “Who needs what you've got?”

Danielle: This goes back to the power of getting interviewed.

Pace: Yeah.

The \$100 Question

Danielle: So here's a question. What would someone pay you \$100 an hour today to teach them, because you know how to do it? And it might be that someone would pay you \$100 an hour to teach them how to cook, or to give them a crash course in how to ease into becoming a vegan. Because that is your expertise. So many of us are like fish, swimming in the water of our own expertise, and we don't see it. We don't see how much we really know and how much value we have to bring to people. In terms of creating your product, it's a combination of being clear about what you're passionate about, and what really lights you up that you want to express and write about and effect change in, and then really hooking into your expertise that you might not be seeing. So I think it's hugely valuable to pay very close attention to what people in your life thank you for, and if you have any kind of audience now, in terms of your writing or your business – if you have any kind of clientele that you're serving – pay extra-close attention to what they want more of from you. What are they always asking for? What are they questioning you about? And give that to them.

That's my point about gratitude: your genius, your gift, is living in the gratitude that's expressed around you. For years I got thanked for being a good listener by my girlfriends. Guess what? It's how I make my living. I make my living by listening. I listen to my entrepreneurs, I tell them what I see. I listen to what happens in my life and I write about it. People in your life may be thanking you because you're an awesome problem-solver or organizer? There's a way to convey that in your writing.

Sitting on empires

So many of us are sitting on empires, and what you said, an awesome bunch of knowledge. I think there's a relationship between what you envy, what inspires you, and what you have to offer. So if you really dig Martha Stewart, or Guy Gavriel Kay, or Isabel Allende, there's something that all those people have that you have. It relates to the awesome bunch of knowledge that you're sitting on, your style.

- Pace: And that ties back into that “no writer is an island” thing, and the audience being so important. Because, like you said, we take it for granted, the water that we swim in, and if we don’t listen to what other people are asking us for and thanking us for, then we’ll continually underestimate our own awesomeness. We’ll say, “Oh, that’s nothing special. I’ve been doing that since I was five.”
- Kyeli: It’s like if someone plays the piano fantastically, fabulously well, but they’ve done it since they were three or four or five, then we hear it as adults and we think that that is completely gorgeous and it’s amazing, but the pianist might not really think it’s any big deal. They’ve been doing it all their lives.
- Danielle: And I would say to that pianist, if they were like, “Hey, how am I going to make some money?” Other than concerts and recording a CD, you could teach kids, you could write about teaching, you could write about how to write about music, you could write a blog post on proper posture when you’re sitting on a piano bench. You could probably critique different music teachers, different music sites – you could be a music reviewer. You see? It’s all those things that you’re swimming in, that you’re naturally doing on a day-to-day basis.
- Pace: Yeah, you could talk about how to establish a daily practice, and not lose the habit of it.

The TMAC

- Danielle: Yes. I’m just going to give a totally shameless, unabashed plug right now for my digital product. There’s one session in there – I call my chapters “sessions” – that makes it worth every writer’s while to get the book. It’s a case study on working with – I did a speaking gig for the Travel Media Association of Canada. It’s a bunch of journalists who are travel writers. And some of them were old and crusty and dusty, and were really pissed off by this whole blogging thing, because it’s what they’d been paid to write all these years, and they weren’t gonna fucking write for free. Juxtaposed with these cute little chicas sitting next to them who were tweeting and hashtagging everything that I was saying.
- In an hour, I walked them through a hundred different revenue streams. Basically I said, “Look, you guys know how to sweet-talk editors. You could all probably write a book about how to write under pressure, how to meet deadlines, how to write a pitch letter. You could probably write some interesting story stuff about the days when you actually typed a story out and put it in a manila envelope and sent it to your editor, and they paid you two weeks later. You could give one-hour consultations to people who want to book round-the-world trips, because you’re also well-traveled. You could all get sponsored by Samsonite luggage or by Coppertone sunscreen.” Sponsorship is another very viable source of revenue for all of them in the travel industry. And I just went on and on, and I would say fifty percent of the things that we went through, that turned

into monetizable revenue streams, were things that they all took for granted because they did them every day, and they did it so naturally, or they had been doing it for so long.

Other ways to see the water

Pace: So how do you figure that out? You've already said, "Listen to what your audience asks you for. Listen to what they thank you for." Are those the two best ways? Are there other ways that you know of to find the things that you're taking for granted?

Danielle: You know, I've never suggested this, but I bet if you kept a diary of what you did in a week, half of those things you could put a price tag on. It would be as simple as "A Day in the Life of You." You loaded up a post to your WordPress blog. Hmm. Could you teach other stay-at-home moms how to rock WordPress? You copyedited an article for yourself and two other people. Do you want to charge for copyediting services? You cooked a great meal for all the schoolkids who came over after the school choir practice. Do you want to start a recipe segment on your site? Do you want to charge for recipes? Could you do an eBook on recipes? And that would bring you into the whole conversation of, "Could I charge for recipes? Could I do microcontent and do 99 cents a recipe? Could I interview other stay-at-home moms about recipes to feed kids and turn that into an eBook for \$20?"

Also look at – not necessarily the brands you resonate with, but the online writers that are successful, and they are writing about their life. A great example is Pioneer Woman. I think she has 80,000 hits a month. I get clients who are like, "I want to be the next Pioneer Woman," or, "I want to be the next Dooce." And I say, "Well, you're not going to be, because they've been in the industry for forever." Like, five years, which is like twenty years in blogging time. Like dog years. They got there first. They also have very unique stories. You have to find out not what's unique about you, but what you're going to make unique. I don't mean contrive, but what you're going to focus on. What's the story of your journey?

These chicks are writing about their everyday life. Depression and living on a ranch and homeschooling their kids. How to rock their blog and how to pitch ideas to targets so they advertise on their site. That's their life, and they're monetizing it, and it's working, whether you like them or not – I'll withhold my opinions. They're very authentic, and it's magnetic.

Don't forget the small stuff

Pace: Yeah. If you are going to write a day in your own life, and try to mine that for what you're taking for granted, you've gotta be pretty verbose, because since you take it for granted, you might not write down all the little things that you do that you take for

granted. If you accidentally write “A Summary of My Day,” you’re going to leave out most of the good stuff.

Kyeli: Right, like if you make breakfast, lunch, and dinner for your kids, then you may not consider cooking something that you do, it’s just one of the things that happens in the background.

Pace: Exactly. So if you’re going to try this out, be sure to be very verbose and mention the details, because that’s probably where the good stuff is.

Danielle: It’s the details of the doing and the details of the feeling, because your “story” is the feeling. Let’s say you did a day or a week in your life, and it’s about cooking for the schoolkids. Is it about the joy that you have being a stay-at-home mom and how happy you are to not be working for the Bank of America anymore? That’s your story. “I felt freedom in my day. I’m a corporate-dropout stay-at-home mom.” Great. That’s the tagline for your blog. “The journeys of a corporate dropout and the joy of being a stay-at-home mom.” It’s authentic, and there are thousands of corporate-dropout stay-out-home moms. Some of them are joyful, some of them are miserable, but they’re your tribe.

Kyeli: Right, and most of them probably feel like they’re the only one. So being able to find that tribe and connect with that tribe is going to be really super-powerful for those people.

You’re not alone

Danielle: Yeah – hence the Freak Revolution, right? You think you’re the only one, and you realize you’re leading a tribe, you’re not alone, and you’re doing a great service to tell your story that is so personal and so authentic. Guess what? People want to hear it, because other people are walking in the same size shoes, somewhere.

Kyeli: That is something that is very, very near and dear to my heart this year – telling my story while I’m going through this really severe physical trauma and the death of a dream that I held for three years, and all of this really intensely personal stuff that I’ve been going through, and having to take a step back and realize that there are other people out there that need to hear what I’m going through so they won’t feel alone, and so they won’t suffer in silence. That is helping me keep going in my really hard time – knowing that the more I write about it, the more other people will be able to connect with that.

Danielle: Yes, and – if you’ll allow me; can I take your very personal death-of-a-dream story and talk about being totally capitalistic and opportunistic about it?

Kyeli: Yes, absolutely. Thank you for asking!

Broaden your message

Danielle: So you've got something that's really personal, it's authentic, and it's going to hit a very particular nerve, a very similar nerve for some people. But in terms of a brand, and content, there are other people who are experiencing the death of a dream. You're going to appeal to people who have the death of your same dream, but let's say this was about you getting out there – I would be saying, "Who else is dealing with the death of a dream?" You need to get on those websites, and you need to be talking about the death of dreams in general. You need to be talking about grief, and you need to be talking about the process of letting go. So what I'm going to underscore here is – to whom else does your message apply? So let's take your message. Your message also applies to people who are losing spouses, people who are losing jobs, people with physical disabilities, people who are aging, romantic loss – all of that is about loss. And there may be X number of sites dealing with your particular loss, but there are a whole of sites dealing with the theme of loss in general. You can apply that theory to anything you're writing about.

I can use myself: I can write about consciousness in business, and then I can write about consciousness in parenting, and sex, and style, et cetera.

Kyeli: Absolutely.

The Q&A

Pace: Is it time for the Q&A?

Kyeli: It is time for the Q&A! I just noticed that. Are you ready, Danielle?

Danielle: Bring it on.

Kyeli: We're going to start with a really easy one.

Who's your writing coach?

Kyeli: LeAnn wants to know, "Who is your writing coach?"

Danielle: I work with two people. I work with Bindu Wiles, who is hot shit. Bindu is my favorite lesbian Buddhist in Brooklyn. She took the Fire Starter Sessions and went, "This isn't relevant because it's not your voice. This is where your voice is stronger." She just really turned my head inside out about it. BinduWiles.com – she's getting her master's in fine writing at Sarah Lawrence, and she takes a very holistic approach to writing – it's really about your voice – and she's a total Zen whip-cracker about technique.

I've also done a lot of work with a creative coach, Dyana Valentine – DyanaValentine.com – and Dyana's tagline is "Helping self-starters self-finish." It's not so much about creativity; it's just about getting the project launched. So I'd say first go to Bindu – and Bindu's very practical too, it's definitely about launching – and then maybe Dyana.

Kyeli: Thank you. Okay, let's see...

Social medial adventurers

Kyeli: Sara asks, "What advice do you have for aspiring social media and marketing adventurers? Particularly people who want to change the world by helping others market themselves?"

Danielle: Here's what I have to say about social media: your relationship with social media exists for two reasons and two reasons only. And this is in terms of you being an entrepreneur, not in terms of relationships with your family and tweeting and Facebooking about where you went for your holidays. Number one, it exists to raise your visibility. It is absolutely about self-promotion. And number two, your relationship with social media is about being a service. When you're clear on those two things, you're really clear on what you're going to tweet about, and what you're going to blog about. You have to be clear on your theme – what most people will call your brand – what your service is, what you're an expert at, the tribe you're leading, and only talk about that stuff. If it's not relevant to your brand and your message, you don't talk about it. That's why I don't talk about parenting. It's not relevant to the core of my brand. I hate the word "brand" – it's also up there with "blogging" for me. But it gets the point across.

Get off your website

In terms of growing traffic to your website – I'll talk for a minute on Twitter. The surest way to drive traffic to your website is to get off of your website. Which means you need to be blogging on other sites; you need to be doing guest posts. Some people will tell you that you need to be commenting on other sites, leaving great, riveting comments and chancing that someone's going to click on the link back to your site. Whatever. You can do that, but I would say – my personal request – be authentic about it. Don't do it just for the traffic. You can always tell someone who's leaving a comment on a site just to sell themselves, and it's shitty, okay?

Let me go back to make my point about getting published on other people's sites. The most outstanding example of this is Leo Babauta, who is the guy behind ZenHabits.net. I think he's got over 150,000 subscribers now. He got to 100,000 subscribers in about 18 months, and that's freaking phenomenal, okay? And how he did it was he guest posted. He wrote three to four other websites a week for six to nine months. Now that's just

crazy. That is cranking out tons of content, writing the same article ten different ways. But he was a writer and that's what he did, and you know, huge traffic. When I launched the Fire Starter Sessions eBook, I opened myself up to be interviewed. I think I've done over a hundred interviews now. My traffic doubled. So that's one way.

Interview other people

The other way, which I've touched on a little bit before, is to interview other people, to get people on your site. I used to do a series on my site called the "Burning Questions Interviews." It was guaranteed that when I interviewed somebody, I'd have a traffic spike that day. They would tell everybody. Again, don't do it to be expedient. Only do it if it suits your voice and suits your content. Those are the sure ways.

Social media

In terms of Twitter and Facebook, those are the only other social media tools that I use. In general, I would say to experiment with things. If you want to try FriendFeed, give it a try for six months. It may really work for you. If you want to do LinkedIn, do it and see if it works. I'm on LinkedIn; it doesn't really bring me any traffic or joy, so I don't really bother with it. Twitter is a phenomenon; you cannot underestimate the power of it. The quickest way to build your following on Twitter is to follow other people. Again, you need to do it with integrity. Let's say you're writing about yoga; I would do a search for the keywords "yoga," "vipassana," and "wellness," and follow twenty new people a day. There's a protocol on Twitter that if you follow me, I'll follow you – not everybody follows that protocol – but if you follow twenty new people a day, fifteen of those people are probably going to follow you back. The reason you want to follow just twenty a day is that you don't want to do the scummy thing of trolling – like, stay up 'til three in the morning and follow a thousand people while you have 50 followers. That's just not great. But also, doing it in little chunks allows you to actually communicate with your community, to know who you're following. We could do a whole other hour on the magic that happens on the social media that is called Twitter. You know, it's saving people's lives. People are falling in love, growing a business – it's amazing.

Pace: Yay Twitter.

Kyeli: Yay Twitter! Okay, let's see.

"Where did you go to college?"

Kyeli: Ellie asks, "How do you share the idea you have with people who don't already agree?"

Danielle: Don't bother.

Kyeli: Yeah, that's a good answer. That ties into someone else's question. Jane says, "How do you stop holding others' expertise or credentials in such high esteem that it prevents you from believing that you have something new and different to offer?" I feel like those questions are related.

Danielle: Yep, they are. You don't want to work with people who don't have the same worldview as you. It's always a disaster. You are going to burn up a lot of energy trying to convince people to see things the way that you see them. It's a waste of time; it's a waste of energy that you could be pouring into your authenticity and expressing yourself, and being of service to your tribe. Letting other people's expertise eclipse you, or scare you, put you into a place of insecurity – that's just the deep, ongoing human exercise of believing in yourself.

Kyeli: Right.

Danielle: I'll use myself as an example for twenty seconds here. I was executive director of a DC-based think tank, and consulted to the Pentagon on the dynamics of social change, and I never went to college. I graduated from grade 12. The reason I tell you that is that yay, it can be done, but also, I learned to leverage my "lack of qualifications". When you work in Washington, DC, you're going to be asked on a daily basis where you went to university, and someone's going to ask you some tricky question to figure out if you're a Democrat or a Republican, and so whenever I got that question, I just said, "Nowhere."

It was impressive, at the time. They think, "Wow, you must be really smart." I worked with a client earlier this year who was an interior designer who was making over \$100,000 a year, and still thought that she needed to go back to school to get certified in interior decorating. And I said, "You know what your bio needs to say? That you're self-taught." You can wave the self-taught flag. And this all goes back to waving the flag of your passion. Your passion is your qualification. It's your leading qualification.

Pace: Yeah!

Kyeli: That's awesome.

Danielle: Next question.

Blogs and business websites

Kyeli: Leah asks, "What do you think about attaching your blog-"

Pace: Blog! Sorry. We just have to say the word "blog" as many times as possible.

Kyeli: Blog blog blog. "What do you think about attaching your blog to your business website? If you do, which do you lead with? Your business page or your blog?"

Danielle: Okay. I'm on a mission to create a global paradigm shift in how people think about their blogs versus their websites. What happens is – we're seeing less and less of this, because I'm on this mission – people think they have a website that usually functions as a brochure to talk about their services or their product, and then they have a blog, which is regularly-updated content. And when you have them separate, it's like having a clothing store and selling pants in one store and then saying to your clients, "If you just go around the blog to my other store, you can buy shirts." You want everything to fit under one umbrella, because you never know why someone's there. You don't know if they're there to sign up for the World-Changing Writing Workshop or to hire you for coaching. You never know exactly what they're looking for. So you want to give them your whole banquet in one fell swoop. I think – it depends on the business – that the blog content should be – not necessarily front and center, but – up front. If you're writing and giving your opinions on a regular basis, it's only underscoring your expertise, and anybody who's going to hire you or buy from you wants to see that. So I'm not saying the blog takes up your whole home page, but at least give me one post that I can access, and then I can click on something and drill down to your five most recent posts, and then give me categories. So that's a long, detailed way of saying yes, merge them, absolutely. If they're related to each other. If you're writing about your sex life on your blog, and you're selling dog food, maybe don't merge them. But if they're relevant, if you're writing about your industry and the stuff you're selling, then yes, they live in the same place.

The Closing

Pace: All right. So it is time to wrap up, and Danielle has a wrap-up exercise that you can all do after the call. It's called "Desired Feelings," and it comes from her Fire Starter Sessions, and it is about creating the feelings that you want to feel in your life. It's awesome, and I'll email it out to you. That's about it. Thank you very much for being here with us, Danielle. For everyone else listening, we'll email you the wrap-up exercise and the recording tomorrow, along with the notes from today's call, and we'll see you next week!

Kyeli: Thank you for being with us, Danielle. It was wonderful.

Danielle: Oh, this was great. This went by so fast. Lots of love, and everybody – go forth and be authentic. It's magnetic. Just shine. It's so efficient to just shine.