[0:03]

So the cool thing about writing, and finding your voice, is if you find your voice as a writer, you’ll also, in a very significant way, be connected to finding your voice as a human being; finding out who you are and being genuine and relaxing into who you are. Just in the way that it’s stressful trying to pretend to be someone, to pretend to be cool, trying to fit in—all those are things we think about in junior high and often through the rest of our lives—how to cover up our insecurity, how to be cool. All those same attitudes affect you as a writer.

[0:37]

So often, we’ll read whoever it is, whatever writers you admire, and you’ll start writing like those writers. And that’s actually a wonderful process. See, you need to try on the outfits of every writer, the styles of every writer you ever read. So it’s okay if you want to write like Hemingway or write like whomever after reading them, but you need to get through that.

[1:02]

So one of the main ways to do that is to put in your, whatever it is, 10,000 hours. You need to write, write, write, write. Write consistently. But don’t worry about writing consistently in this sort of type-A, uptight way. Just write as a craft. I recommend not writing privately all the time. You can have a journal—that’s a wonderful voice to work on, that’s kind of your natural voice, who you are. But also write publicly, because connecting, writing, is an act of connection and communication. It doesn’t have to be, but it can really help to have that mirror come back at you.

[1:39]

And then we’ve talked about writer’s block. So writer’s block is often a sort of internal wisdom saying, “Don’t do this. This doesn’t feel right. This doesn’t feel natural.” And often, we try to get through writer’s block, but the way to get through writer’s block is to relax. It’s almost like you get a tight thing in your neck, and the way to get through it is not to throw your head around, but to just kind of relax. You know, get in a hot tub, or get a massage, and relax that knot. So writer’s block is like a knot. You don’t want to be overly aggressive with it. You want to relax, and then your writing can be kind of “Zenny”. And I don’t use that casually; I’ve studied Zen. “Ordinary mind” is something they talk about a lot, and it’s okay to be ordinary. It’s okay to be you. You don’t have to be pretentious. You don’t have to be Jonathan Franzen, not that he’s pretentious. You don’t have to be anyone. You don’t have to pretend to be anyone. Eventually, you’ll just be yourself.

[2:33]

And if you read Elizabeth Gilbert or Malcolm Gladwell or Michael Pollan—whatever writer you like—you like them not really because they’re them. Who cares that they’re them? They poop, they eat, and they do everything like you do. But you like them because they have relaxed and become themselves, and their voice comes through, unadorned, and powerful. And unadorned can mean adorned, ironically. Your style could be adorned-full, or it could be very ordinary, but either way, it’s just what it is. It’s genuine.

[3:06]

Thank you so much, and good luck!