



Bloom



ROOTS
AND
BRANCHES

Exercises for marking progress, celebration, and redirecting attention

Many creatives get self critical about our perceptions of progress, and it's helpful to have some tools in your metaphorical toolbox at the ready for when you're feeling self-critical.

These tools help you redirect your attention towards the writing you want to do, the kind of writer you want to be, and towards the many ways you're already well on your way to those goals. This includes keeping track of your progress as a writer!

One critical component is celebrating our achievements: celebration, however big or small, lets that progress really sink in, and helps you pave the path to your new writing practice in a way that's easeful and fun. Making note of, and celebrating, our progress also helps us keep momentum.

Tracking progress and celebrating that progress also keep us oriented to where we are in our writing so it's easy to dive back in quickly with each new session.

Here are some of my favorite exercises and practices for cultivating a positive writing mindset and marking progress:

- Keeping a folder of positive feedback, milestones, achievements, etc. I can look at: I have one on my hard drive and for each of my email inboxes (I label them "happy things", you might have another label you like better).
- self-reflective paragraph: Basically, a brief paragraph at the end of the week, reflecting on my writing practice. What worked for me? What didn't?
- 2 sentence wrap up: This is a helpful way to reorient yourself at the end of a writing session. The first sentence is "what I've done" (X number of words or paragraphs,

researching a given topic, etc.) The second is "what's next", or the next steps you plan to tackle when you sit down to write again. Seeing what you did, and giving yourself a quick reminder of what's upcoming helps keep you oriented and mark progress without taking up a ton of time. Like I've said in "Reconnecting with Momentum and Joy," putting these notes in a single notebook, or a single document, gives you a tangible record of your progress.

- Any other tools you have for reinforcing your expertise and marking your progress are great to put front and center in your writing space: Maybe that's physical objects like your diplomas or awards, an encouraging note from a colleague, the gift you bought yourself when you got your first job, etc.

Or maybe it's something you create: for example, creating a list of skills and accomplishments you're most proud of. Or, as I saw one writer on Twitter do, make a paper chain with each link representing either a period of time or a component of the work in progress, adding a link each time you reach a milestone. This one is helpful both for celebrating and for reminding yourself of all you do!

Celebrating your progress is critical too, and is easier to do when we set aside time to celebrate, give ourselves permission to bask in our accomplishments, and make celebration easy to engage with (rather than something that causes planning and logistics-related stress). Here's how I do that:

- Celebration lists: I keep two running lists of ways to celebrate myself. There's no right or wrong way to make these lists, no celebration too large or small to include. What matters most is that these celebrations feel special and fun to you, and let you focus on celebrating rather than on the effort of planning. Having both lists ready to go means you can dive right into the celebration itself!
 - Daily or weekly celebrations: these take little time and effort and allow me to build in space for consistent celebration. Some examples might be: getting a favorite treat from a local coffeeshop, going for a walk, meeting a friend for lunch, dedicating a few minutes to a hobby, etc.
 - Big celebrations: When I launch a workshop (like this one), hand in a book manuscript, or hit some other big milestone, I do a longer, bigger celebration. For example, when I launched this workshop I went to Jeju (the local Korean spa) and took myself out for dinner. Maybe you want to take a short road trip or staycation, buy yourself something you've had your eye on, or just spend an afternoon resting.
- Find time to celebrate: Once you've decided how you like to be celebrated, start to think of when you can fit in time to celebrate yourself, even if it's just a few minutes a week. For those few minutes, you and your accomplishments are paramount, and you get to relish in being the center of your own universe: everything else can wait.

