

An Introvert's Guide to Writing Success

The Shy Writer

**Buy The Complete Version of This Book at
Booklocker.com:**

<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/1746.html?s=pdf>

Chapter 1

Understanding Shyness

- Your Hair Color
- Super Hero Syndrome
- Labels
- Introverts vs. Extroverts
- Your Comfort Level

Your heart races, banging against your ribs, your chest, your throat. Fingers grip a pen to disguise the shake. The other hand flattens on your leg, your side, and your leg again drying the moisture that never disappears. You did not bargain for exhibition when you entered the world of writing. What started as a reclusive haven for your creative muse evolved into a public forum to sell your work. Good work should sell itself, you say...you wish.

You read the lists, blogs and newsletters about making a living at a craft that requires hours of quiet time. We hear the stories about writers who self-publish to hold a book in their hands only to learn that selling it is a whole other issue. How-to books deny that writers are generally a reclusive lot, but face it, the majority of writers love to write, hate to sell, and wish the world would encroach only when beckoned.

I firmly believe that some writers quit writing because of the pageantry of marketing, and as one of those leery about staring at a roomful of people examining my hair and clothes, I felt some sense of salvation necessary. The genuinely shy writer needs

The Shy Writer

relief from such public scrutiny, whether from the masses or the few. After experiencing the agony of publicity and witnessing two-hour book signings where bookstore employees outnumbered the attendees, I decided writers everywhere needed a reprieve.

So you're painfully shy? Hope still flickers. You can dodge the public's eye and still remain successful as a writer. Just change your strategy and get savvy at behind-the-scenes planning.

Your Hair Color

Other sources advise you how to get over it, as if you wanted to. Shyness is a personal trait, and many people have no desire to overcome an inherent part of their personal composition. Social phobia is an extreme version of shyness, which requires assistance and training to overcome, occasionally with medication. But nervousness and an uncomfortable feeling in front of people is not a character flaw as many would like you to believe. It is as much a part of you as the real color of your hair.

Hmm...speaking of hair color, let's use that analogy. You have light brown hair. You hate it. You can't curl it, style it or cut it to your satisfaction and you assume others are not all that impressed either. So you put a little rinse on it and voila! You're a classy blonde. Nature gave you brown hair, but in the public's eye you glow blonde.

You are shy. Whether you like it or not, it can be an obstacle at times or even personally painful when you have no choice but to walk in front of people. But you have options – lots of options. You can “color” that shyness with a front of confidence. You can find other avenues to make a presentation without standing alone on a platform. You can create a gimmick that precedes you and makes the sale for you. You have all sorts of colors you can put on that shyness and feel good about yourself. But you always know what your natural hair color is and the type of person you truly are inside.

Yes, good work should sell itself, but in today's environment, hype and advertising sell products with quality taking a distant

third behind packaging and gimmicks. The big publishing houses make contract decisions based upon projected sales, not literary strengths. The shy writer today is at a disadvantage in that regard unless her name is already famous as an actor, CEO, or comedian, but they are not our targeted market. We are concerned with you – the writer.

I won't lie to you...public speaking can enhance sales. The public wants to see and touch the gifted, and published writers fall within that category. Of course, these writers might be making all of \$10,000 a year in royalties, but they published a book and that success is what others see.

For you to sell your writing, you have to decide:

1. Do you want to “get over” your shyness?
2. Do you want to disguise your shyness?
3. Do you want to leave well enough alone and deal from behind the shyness?

None of these decisions is wrong or right. Do not let finances be the only reason for making your choice. There are ways – lots of ways - to manage your shyness if you have grown quite fond of it, and you must decide what makes for a comfortable life for you as a writer. If it is a friend, keep it. If it is a foe, get rid of it.

You might have to read through the entire book to grasp where you stand. Change is not easy nor is it natural. But if you are hell-bent on building a new you, then jump in and start adjusting. If you are not so sure, take your time.

Super Hero Syndrome

I am a shy person. Some people who know me would agree – others think I am not. Some would call me downright cocky, while others know that my preference is a cabin in the pine-topped foothills of the Carolinas alone with my computer and Mother Nature. Of course, hubby can come along and the children can visit, but I never tire of solitude. Is that shy?

The Shy Writer

I worked for 25 years in the federal government where the public was my client. I met people daily who were dealing with private financial matters, unemployment, even foreclosure. After a few years I acquired the title of Boss, overseeing other managers, personnel issues, and budget dilemmas. The buck stopped on my desk a zillion times, usually requiring assertive behavior on my part to save someone's promotion, financial standing or even employment. I learned valuable lessons during those times by weighing the introvert versus the extrovert in me. The main lesson I learned was that when my behavior impacted someone else's life or livelihood, I traded my shyness for concern about him. Not a conscious effort, the shift from introvert to extrovert just happened. When I had the choice of getting involved or not, the innocent parties determined the extent of my active participation.

Let's call it the Super Hero Syndrome. Clark Kent and Peter Parker led docile lives with their costumes hidden. When thinking of themselves, they withdrew into their writing and photography (coincidental, huh?). But when others stood to be harmed, an alternate ego jumped forth as Superman and Spiderman. They were needed so they rose to the occasion and the shyness melted away.

That's how I deal with my shyness. I hate controversy. My mother will tell you I always have dodged controversy. But I deal with it when necessary. That dividing line is what you have to define. When is dealing with your shyness a necessity? Crossing that line is different for each person and once you understand that you develop a comfort level with your own character traits.

Labels

Often, people misconstrue shyness as other types of behavior. Shy people improperly receive labels such as:

An Introvert's Guide to Writing Success

- Insecure
- Unhappy
- Aloof
- Arrogant
- Devious
- Dumb
- Genius
- Anti-social

The general population likes quick labels. Why? Because people do not like uncertainty. Everyone wants to know who and what they are dealing with, and when faced with new people, they not only seek to put a name to a face, but they more quickly search for a comfort level with the strangers that wander into their world. You do it, too.

On the bus, you desperately want to know if the person seated next to you will pick your pocket or pose a threat, so you hold your purse a little tighter. With your guard up, you look for the ally and the foe from the first moment you report to work at a new job until labels are established. You wish for a banker you can trust with your private financial information and goodness knows it takes some soul searching to find a psychiatric or marriage counselor that fits seamlessly with your persona. And don't we discuss in chatrooms how literary agents must be perfect matches to capitalize on their services?

Before you label, you parley and dance with all the knowledge you can gather before allowing the person in. On the bus, you have limited time and little need to know the individual, so you make a judgment in a split second. A smell, a coat, a beard, bags under the eyes or dirt under the fingernails may tilt your decision one way or another. You have no need to query the person and breach your wall of shyness to reach a conclusion. So you keep to yourself; no one would blame you.

At work, however, you face the same people every day. You have more time but also you have more at stake. The wrong decision could mean being disliked by the boss or losing a project. Co-workers can erode your promotion or pave the way to it. Your veil of shyness slowly comes down, but only when the

The Shy Writer

facts are laid before you. It may take a few weeks, but you eventually recognize the friends, the enemies and the neutrals you must meld into the 40 hours a week you call your second home.

As a writer, however, you are faced with a sea of strangers, often an invisible audience, all with potential to support you or tear you down. You usually cannot touch them or see them. You cannot identify them, but you know they are there. What you do impacts them, and they impact you in return. Stop and think...you are no different than the President of the United States, Oscar-winning actors, and Chief Executive Officers (CEOs). They serve the public and find their careers in the hands of thousands or even millions. A public job is an awesome responsibility and the intimidation is enough to make anyone retreat.

So how do they lighten that burden? They do a market study and learn more about whom they serve. They reach for the needs of the many to see how they can provide satisfaction. Call it public relations or market analysis, but they each can tell you the segments of the general population that support them, hate them, or do not care at all. Then they channel their attentions in the appropriate directions.

The President might be a Democrat. Those people put him in office. And while he serves all, he has marketing people that identify the types of voters that put him there and those that did not, and if the numbers are close, he learns to reach those on the fringes. He isn't going to make too many people change parties.

An actor specializes in comedic movies. Some viewers go to the theatre for drama, romance or even horror but care little for humor on the screen. Does that actor strive to reach those moviegoers or does he focus on the comedy fans in the world?

Many CEOs are marketing gurus. They know which segment of what population will buy so many widgets for how long and for what purpose. Full-time marketing experts channel constant feedback to the CEO so that the company directs its resources in the most efficient and effective direction.

You provide entertainment and education in your words to the world. You hopefully know the readers that fall into your

genre. You know the professional groups, the editors, the publications, and the conferences that cater to you or pose as opportunity for your work. You need to have a serious feel for your readership. Your customers are your focus. With them you can lower a little bit of your guard.

Contained within those groups are the serious fans. If you do not have them yet, you will if you stick to writing. They buy the newspaper because of your column. They sign up for your newsletter to hear your op-ed. They lose themselves in your romance sagas, and feel goose bumps through your mysteries while looking forward to your next release. They identify with the little girl and her puppy in your children's book. Here is the ultimate shyness test. How much of yourself do you give to these people?

Introverts vs. Extroverts

The extrovert talks and talks and laughs and flaunts herself to her fans, potential fans, plus anyone else who will listen. She enjoys the limelight. The experts tell you that this type of person sells more books.

The introvert signs books and smiles and declines lone public appearances. He might sit on a panel at a conference but would lose his lunch if he had to speak alone. Book tours are not an option, and teaching a class is out of the question. The experts tell you that this type of person is less than successful.

Fact is, quiet and internally driven people process thoughts and information differently than the assertive and boisterous types. More and more studies prove that the two types possibly have different physiological make-ups. People draw out the strengths of extroverts. Calm introspection triggers the power of introverts.

Extroverts have no concept of how to deal with introverts. Energized by people and social situations, they thrive around human stimuli. If they cannot find people, they pick up the cell phone to reach someone for interaction. Extroverts want others to know all about them. They also enjoy the company of

The Shy Writer

introverts because the extrovert thinks that these calm souls absorb everything being said.

Introverts, on the other hand, know everything about extroverts. How can they not when the person is spilling everything? There is nothing an introvert likes less than talking about himself. Introverts thoroughly enjoy the solitude and usually need a ratio of three to four hours of “downtime” alone to one hour with people to maintain a sense of sanity. Interaction with other people wears down introverts and drains them of the same energy that empowers extroverts. Solitude, on the other hand, recharges the introvert.

Dr. Carl Jung's theories about the dynamics of the psyche placed mankind on a continuum with extremes on either end. These dynamics became defined in three principles of opposites, equivalence, and entropy. Within this thought he created a personality typology that distinguished the difference between introversion and extroversion. Many people remember him for little else.

Extroverts enter publicly visible positions like politics, marketing and corporate management. Such individuals receive much attention and therefore they tend to set the standard and expectation for the average person. Since they are often seen and frequently followed by the press, the public interprets their success and actions as the right path to follow. Popularity breeds desire. An extrovert equates to “people person,” an enviable trait in an interactive, competitive world. And this world interprets introverted as restricted, restrained and handicapped.

Jonathan Rauch wrote a column for the *Atlantic Monthly* in March 2003 entitled “Caring for Your Introvert.” He described introverted personalities as repressed in today's society since extroverts dominate public forums. He quoted Calvin Coolidge as one of few introverted politicians, “Don't you know that four-fifths of all our troubles in this life would disappear if we would just sit down and keep still?”

As a quiet person how many times have you wished a group, room, or audience would just shut up? I have innumerable times. Noise irritates me. I love focus and concentration as do most shy writers. In the quiet lulls of life the shy find motivation,

inspiration, and satisfaction. In my reading, research, and observation about these polar opposites, I find the internal thinkers are more intelligent as a whole, more refined, more sensible, and rather independent. Mr. Rauch pointed out that extroverts sometimes envision introverts as arrogant. "...it is probably due to our lack of small talk, a lack that extroverts often mistake for disdain. We tend to think before talking, whereas extroverts tend to think by talking, which is why their meetings never last less than six hours."

So are extroverts the most successful salespeople? Not necessarily. I have seen loud people sell little and insult many. And I have witnessed book signings where the quiet author sells out of autographed copies. The intensity of public display is not the driving factor of writing success. The quality of the message and the consistency of the delivery says it all and should be your foremost goal.

Your Comfort Level

In a few words...the successful writer fills a reader's need. And once you fill that need, those readers become fixed upon your product. They do not expect loud or soft words. They do not expect a fast talker or a slow presenter. They want satisfaction and your job is to produce.

If you can meet the needs of your readers from behind the scenes, then do it. If you need to step in front of a crowd, do it. And if you are ill from the effort, paralyzed by the fear, or nervous due to phobias, you will not meet the needs of your customers. They need to "see" your best side. If that means discarding the spotlighted book readings and avoiding live public appearances, then do so.

Writing is about the readers, but it is about the writers, too. The happy balance of pleasing the reader and enabling the writer is key to a fruitful career. An unhappy scribe is good for no one. Depressed novelists and suicidal poets make for interesting history, but today the point is to grab the gusto and enjoy life through the talents given you. Write with a passion, promote

The Shy Writer

yourself by honoring your worth and remember that your readers want you to be a success. Sacrificing your personality in the process is not the answer. The shy writer in you has choices. Your job is to capitalize upon those choices and find the methods that work for you and your readers. Being shy is not a problem; it's who you are.



The indispensable first step to getting the things you want out of life is this; decide what you want.

~ Ben Stein, Actor and Author

An Introvert's Guide to Writing Success

The Shy Writer

**Buy The Complete Version of This Book at
Booklocker.com:**

<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/1746.html?s=pdf>