

Writing When Life Happens: A TLC resource guide for writers during lockdown and beyond



Writing When Life Happens

A resource guide for writers during lockdown and beyond

Events in our lives or in the wider world can often present challenges to our writing. TLC has always existed to support the writing community and help writers respond to these challenges. Although this guide has been written in response to the Coronavirus pandemic, it can also apply to writing during any challenging or uncertain time, and to writers at every level.

Contents:

- *Every Writer Deserves a Good Editor; Every Story Deserves a Platform*
- Support for Writers During Lockdown
- Support from our Writing Partners
- Support for your Wellbeing
- Managing Remote Working
- Funding Support

Writing When Life Happens: A TLC resource guide for writers during lockdown and beyond

The Literary Consultancy is the UK's leading manuscript assessment service, providing writers with professional, market-aware editorial advice. Our founding principles are:

Every writer deserves a good editor

Wherever you're at in your writing journey, we provide you with objective feedback from a professional reader who is best suited to your type of work, to make your project the best it can be. Our experienced editors read fiction, non-fiction, memoir, children's books, poetry, short stories and drama, TV and film scripts at all stages of development.

Every story deserves a platform

We support quality writing across the literary community. As part of our Quality Writing for All campaign, we work with regional writing partners across the UK to serve as many communities as possible. We welcome stories from underrepresented voices, and provide bursaries for low income writers through our Arts Council England-supported Free Reads Scheme.

Support for writers during lockdown

For over two decades, TLC has led the way in making writing advice accessible to all. Throughout lockdown, we're working to bring you all our usual editorial services, as well as offering extra support remotely through virtual events and on our website.

Manuscript assessment and mentoring

TLC's core [manuscript assessment](#) service, [other editorial services](#) and our [Chapter and Verse mentoring scheme](#) routinely take place remotely and are continuing to run as normal throughout lockdown.

Helping you stay inspired

Part of our regular [Writers' Corner](#), our new [Inspiration Page](#) is designed to help writers stay healthy and creative in difficult times. Featuring easy-to-follow exercises

Writing When Life Happens: A TLC resource guide for writers during lockdown and beyond

and tips on writing and wellbeing, you can browse by category or scroll through the whole range, from 10-minute yoga to 10 Things I've Learnt About Love. As well as things to do, there's also poetry and short fiction to enjoy.

Virtual events and tutorials

Being A Writer is our new programme of online courses, podcasts and other resources designed with creativity and resilience in mind. Starting in June, we're also offering a series of [Online Writing Workshops](#), as well as offering writers direct access to our professional feedback through [Online Writer's Surgeries](#). Do keep an eye on the [TLC Events page](#) for all the details.

eBooks

TLC's Mini Guides are small but mighty ebooks filled with practical advice on aspects of writing craft, from structure, plot and character to self-editing. The guides are available for £1-£3 each from our website [here](#) or for free when you sign up for our Premium Mentoring or to Being A Writer.

Writers' Journey Wizard

Our [Writers' Journey Wizard](#) can help you discover what stage you're at in your writing and how to get the best from TLC.

Useful Links

Our [Useful Links page](#) has a large collection of resources for writers from all over the web, featuring literary magazines, news, resources, submission tips and inspirational people in literature. Most of these are totally free.

Festivals and events

All large gatherings planned for Summer 2020, including the TLC Writers' Day, have been postponed until early 2021, pending further advice. All TLC Writers' Day ticket holders have been informed and will be kept up to date on future plans. There are a number of virtual festivals for writers taking place within the industry, including Stay At Home Fest, Big Book Weekend, Virtual AWP, and Lockdown Lit. Writers' Week-

Writing When Life Happens: A TLC resource guide for writers during lockdown and beyond

end Winchester has just announced a 4-day digital run. Do also look for things like the Society of Authors' 'Tea with...' series, starting with Philip Pullman.

Our team

Team TLC are currently working from home during office hours. We look after our own wellbeing as much as we do our writers, and have put together remote working guides for our staff, and digital reading guides for our readers who are now all reading and editing online. As well as regular contributions from writers in TLC's network, you can read updates and advice from the team on our Blog.

Keeping you in touch

You can follow us on Twitter (@TLCUK) Instagram (@theliteraryconsultancy), and on Facebook by searching 'The Literary Consultancy.' You can also email us at any time at info@literaryconsultancy.co.uk

Support from our writing partners

TLC's writing partners have also launched a range of online resources for writers. We have listed some of them here.

Arvon

While its writing centres and retreats remain closed, Arvon is running virtual courses and readings with inspiring writers, including readings with Q&A from Mark Haddon and Louise Doughty at just £5 each. Check the [Arvon at Home](#) page for more.

Free Word

The [Finding Power In Isolation](#) season is a series of online events running from April to June 2020. Podcasts from previous seasons are also available to download, including the Writing Our Way Home season, which explores the right to belong in an unstable and uncertain world. TLC's contribution to Finding Power in Isolation is this [free digital workshop](#) with award-winning novelist Patrice Lawrence.

Spread the Word

Spread the Word is moving its programme of courses and masterclasses for writers

Writing When Life Happens: A TLC resource guide for writers during lockdown and beyond

[online](#) during the crisis, and is also running a new campaign to increase accessibility to their digital offers: [create-write-connect](#).

Creative Future and the National Centre for Writing

The National Centre for Writing and Creative Future present the [2020 Norwich Writers' Day online](#): short talks and Q&A sessions for under-represented writers.

Find out how to start and advance yourself as a writer and what support is out there. The Writers' Day is aimed at new/emerging writers who face barriers to opportunity, due to health, mental health, identity or social circumstance.

New Writing South

New Writing South's [The Coast Is Queer Festival](#) is going virtual as part of the Big Book Weekend, with an event featuring Juno Dawson and Patrick Ness taking place online 10th May. They are also sharing weekly writing prompts on their blog, [The Inkwell](#).

Wasafiri

Wasafiri have partnered with Bookbound to offer the [Bookbound Literary Festival](#), a virtual literary festival running for one week from April 28th. Their annual writing prize, the Wasafiri New Writing Prize, is also open now.

Bridport Prize

The Bridport Prize is currently open for submissions from previously unpublished writers submitting to its [First Novel Award](#), on which TLC is an industry partner. Also open are the short story and flash fiction categories of the Prize. The [website](#) also has a Resources page including tips and inspiration for writers.

Writing and your wellbeing

Writing can be isolating even in good times, and in times of high stress it's important to remember to take care of yourself as well as you can. The challenges faced during the pandemic, and at other times of high stress, can include:

Writing When Life Happens: A TLC resource guide for writers during lockdown and beyond

- Uncertainty
- Adjusting to remote working if you're not used to it; or helping others to adjust if you are
- Ill health, or health-related anxiety
- Dealing with grief
- Poor mental health
- Having less time to write
- Having more time to write but difficulty focusing

Some wellbeing advice it may be particularly helpful to bear in mind right now:

Try not to worry about getting enough done

It's natural to feel you're not being productive, but realistic to ask less of yourself, especially if you're combining writing with new adjustments to your life on top of regular responsibilities. If you still have writing deadlines to meet, try to work out a schedule based on what you're likely to achieve, rather than what you would expect to normally.

Remember that heightened emotions are normal

Dealing with many stressful or uncertain events is often considered a form of grief, and feelings or reactions similar to bereavement are normal. The most complex forms of grief are sometimes referred to as 'Grief, but with the volume turned up.' As a writer, if you're working on lighter material it may be hard to relate to that mindset, and difficult material may feel even heavier than usual. Finding yourself having strange dreams or going back over old events is common. If this is causing difficulties, writing yourself a reminder that what you're feeling is a normal response and will pass can be a creative way of managing.

Look for writing advice which is supportive, not competitive

Advice on writing practice can be very helpful, and virtual communities are a great way to connect with other writers. However, advice shared online or on social media is sometimes presented in a prescriptive and aggressive way, and can make you feel

Writing When Life Happens: A TLC resource guide for writers during lockdown and beyond

anxious or defensive. A lot of advice also might not relate to your situation. TLC believes writing advice should aim to motivate and support writers with compassion, and our resources are put together with this in mind.

Respect that other people's situations and writing journeys will be different

Whether you're struggling or thriving, now is a helpful time to remember that there are as many writing paths as writers.

Try and respond to your feelings in your writing

Many forms of writing deal with isolation or uncertainty in some way. Focusing on these themes in your writing, and other activities such as mind-mapping and journaling, can help you find creativity in difficulty.

Try and think of your writing as a process; not just an outcome

When you're involved in anything creative, it's always useful to remember that projects can change can happen at any time, and in response to all kinds of events. Writing often adapts to situations, or evolves from other writing. At TLC we encourage writers to see this as part of a healthy process of development rather than a sign of failure. This is also one of the reasons why, although we support writers who aim to be commercially published, we don't believe in making guarantees. As the current pandemic highlights, commercial markets are sensitive and can be influenced by factors well outside our control. Being published depends on where a book fits into the current market, finding the right publisher and above all, the quality of the writing. Often a published author will have worked on many unpublished books before getting to that stage, and learned many valuable lessons along the way.

Managing remote working

If you write full time, you may be used to working from home but not to having others at home with you. If your regular job is event or office-based, lockdown may be your first experience of working from home for an extended time. What works best

Writing When Life Happens: A TLC resource guide for writers during lockdown and beyond

for you will depend on your where you live and who you live with, but some simple tips can help anyone:

Make your workspace as comfortable as you can

Use a stand for your laptop, make sure your back is supported and take regular breaks. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has a [detailed PDF guide](#) to setting up your workspace.

Try to manage distractions

Pausing your inbox or limiting online notifications where you can be particularly valuable if you struggle with being distracted.

Try relaxation exercises

If you're too busy or don't have the space at home for a virtual yoga class, meditation and positive visualisation can help. Our Inspiration Page contains some simple exercises. Grounding exercises similar to meditation may also be helpful. These involve focusing on your breathing and the contact your body has with the ground or chair, and are designed to relax you into a task.

If you normally work from home...:

Even if you've worked at home for a long time, stressful times can bring your habits into focus. This may be time to revisit helpful advice you've found difficult to stick to over time, such as getting fresh air once a day, taking breaks and setting routines.

Coping with cabin fever

If you're struggling to stay focused, or extended writing is too much, our website's Inspiration Page has some quick, simple writing prompts which can help you break the monotony.

Funding support

There is financial support available at this time for writers and creatives, both as individuals and organisationally. We have listed some of the main sources below.

Writing When Life Happens: A TLC resource guide for writers during lockdown and beyond

Arts Council England: [Covid-19 Support and Emergency Funding](#)

Arts Council of Wales: [Resilience Fund](#)

Creative Scotland: [Covid-9 Impact Funds](#)

Arts Council of Northern Ireland: [Artists Emergency Programme](#)

The Society of Authors: [The Authors' Emergency Fund](#)

Royal Literary Fund: [Hardship Funds](#)

Unlimited: [Micro Grants for Disabled Artists](#)