

## Top Writing Tips

### Dr Gwee Li Sui advises writers to *get over themselves*....

Writers are really nice people. We don't say this enough to those we advise on writing: *get over yourself*. When we ask you to be passionate about what you're writing, we don't mean *you* be passionate. We mean *be* passionate. Be passionate to the point that you forget even about yourself.

We don't mean show us just how smart you are. The guy who is trying to be smart often doesn't enjoy much what is being done. If you can't find objective enjoyment in your own writing, there's a high chance that no one else will either.

And we're not encouraging you to psych yourself into believing that you are talented in spite of your work. A writer is not an amoral sales agent and certainly not a self-hypnotist. Write in a way where, even when your writing can't sell, you'll still be writing – because you alone understand its point.

The natural extension is this: *if you have no inclination to write, don't write*. If there is no point for a story or a poem, don't waste your time and your readers'. The world is already full of mediocre stuff cooked up with half-beliefs and confused sentiments.

Writing should seize you like an absolute need to snatch a breath, or it should *not* be undertaken. It should be something you want to do at the time you set down to doing it.

As such, *it is perfectly OK to decide to be lazy*. Don't live life in a hurry; take time to be curious. Be curious about connections around you or make connections in order to *be* curious. Ask how, why, why not, "wouldn't it be interesting if...?" – all those questions that shape the world invisibly.

And, if you try and try again but your work keeps falling short for yourself or your readers, *it is OK to stop writing*. It is utterly normal to enjoy literature just as a reader. Not everyone can be a writer in the way anyone can be an engineer or a politician. Like I said, get over yourself.