

## Writing From Experience: When it Hurts To Heal, Does it Heal The Hurt?

By: Michelle Cuttino

F. Scott Fitzgerald said it best: “*The reason one writes isn’t the fact he wants to say something. He writes because he has something to say.*” To some, writing is a healing process, a way to work through the pain. For others, it’s a welcome escape from reality. Then there are those who write in hopes of helping someone else cope with and/or overcome their situation, whatever that situation may be.

When life becomes overwhelming, writing becomes the emotional outlet many need. Where else can one work publicly through their issues without judgment? Writers often pour a little of themselves into every story they write. Whether their characters take on the persona of someone they met casually, wears the same perfume or cologne of a loved one, favors a person they met in passing, or reacts to life in a way that mirrors that of the writer. Whatever the trait, it is usually carried over into their writing.

The same holds true when writers are looking for a channel to help through a painful or traumatizing situation. Writing then becomes the catalyst that helps them overcome their circumstances or the motivation needed to help take back control of their lives.

For Julia Press Simmons, writing was a personal testament – a way of shattering the silence that surrounded her abusive relationship. Julia was only thirteen years old when she met the man who would later become her husband and persecutor. It didn’t take long for the verbal abuse to start and then the physical violence to follow.

Julia was so paralyzed by fear that leaving him or staying away from him weren’t even viable options. Her only real escape was writing, and thus her breakthrough novel *Strawberry Mansion* was born. She gave voice to her pain through her main character, Tabitha Williams, who lost her freedom in high school when she hooked up with a boy who would impregnate her and make her his punching bag. Julia says, “Tabitha is absolutely identical to the Julia that I was way back when. She is nothing like the woman I am now.”

Exposing her most vulnerable self between the pages of *Strawberry Mansion* was the pipeline to her healing process. Writing helped her cope, and helped her release all the pent up anguish she possessed. In telling her story, Julia not only broke free from an abusive relationship, she also used her writing to help others that may find themselves in a similar situation.

Writing through the pain while suffering through the hurt, has helped many with healing and liberation. It not only brings their reality to the forefront, but it is also their way of putting an end to their trials and tribulations. With domestic violence, women

are so afraid to talk about it. They are terrified of what their abuser will do to them; they are scared of how their friends and family will perceive them; and they are fearful that people won't believe them. Their fear is what keeps them silent, and their silence is the secret to their abuser's strength.

Writing from experience isn't about exploiting your situation, or glorifying your pain. It's more about helping yourself heal and overcoming whatever barriers are in your way. The first step to healing is acknowledging that something is wrong and then taking the necessary steps to make it right. When it hurts to heal, a writer's key to healing the hurt is to write through the grief and loss--to articulate their experience and to use the therapeutic aspect of writing to take their readers along on their redemptive journey.

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If you or someone you know is in an abusive relationship and need help, please make the call today! You *CAN* make a difference!

National Domestic Violence Hotline: (800) 799-SAFE (7233) or [www.thehotline.org](http://www.thehotline.org)

National Sexual Assault Hotline: (800) 656-HOPE (4673) or [www.rainn.org](http://www.rainn.org)

National Teen Dating Abuse Hotline: (866) 331-9474 or [www.loveisrespect.org](http://www.loveisrespect.org)