

Write to the Heart of Motherhood  
*connecting to our true voice in the middle of our messy lives*

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Week 5. 'WHAT and HOW'



**1) Assignment + Artistic Prompts**

**2) A Technique to Practice**

**3) Methods for the Mother-Writer**

Hello, wonder Mama :)

Welcome to your *What and How* toolkit for week five! I wish you tenderness and tenacity as you set forth on your unique adventure of experimentation and play, and a warm reminder of this week's theme: **Creating and Dismantling**. I hope you enjoy clarifying these realms of your practice, alone and together. Enjoy!

**1) ASSIGNMENT + ARTISTIC PROMPTS:**

**Your assignment this week is to write a eulogy.** Using the questions from the theme and guidance piece (which I will paste below), create a eulogy praising the parts of your identity, ways of being in relationship, and ways of engaging with the world and your creative work that have been dismantled or retired in the process of becoming a mother and/or amplifying your creative life. In a traditional zen funeral the deceased is both praised AND held in honest accountability for their shortcomings, so if you'd like to bring that lovingly honest critical lens as well, you're welcome to do so.

This eulogy can be crafted and refined into an essay, poem, or any form you feel drawn to, OR it can be completely raw in your journal. This is your tribute to the parts of you that have died or are dying, as you are reorganized into *mother* and *creator* — let it come out as raw as it wants to. Let yourself feel the full range of feelings associated with writing these words. Give thanks. Get mad. Get quiet. Honor this holy, dark, gorgeous, unfathomable transformation you went through and/ or are going through.

You may want to share your eulogy with others — out loud or in writing — or do a solitary reading of it with some sort of burial ceremony. Or both. If you choose to do a burial ceremony with your eulogy (perhaps you bury the eulogy itself, or a couple objects that symbolize the parts of you that you are laying to rest), it may feel right to also plant a seed there to grow as your new identity grows, from the soil where your old pieces of identity are buried. You may wish to also write a “poem of becoming” or even just a list of qualities that name who you are growing into. The questions below from the teaching piece may help you cultivate this poem or list, declaring and consecrating who you are now becoming.

**Identity Transformation Questions (from the end of this week’s Theme and Guidance):**

1. Since becoming a mother, whether that’s 4 months ago or 40 years ago, what parts of myself or my identity do I feel have dissolved away, been dismantled, or been destroyed? What parts of me died when I had my kid(s) and was reborn a mother? What in my identity still needs to be released, and what is still finding form? How have I participated in caring for, ritualizing, grieving, and celebrating this transformation? Is there anything else I am inspired to do to honor these processes of dismantling and creating in my own identity since becoming a mother?
2. As I have deepened and amplified my creative life over the past four weeks, what parts of myself or my identity do I feel have dissolved away or been dismantled? What parts of me are holding on to existence or holding on to being front and

center, that my creative process would benefit from dismantling, or submitting to a different aspect of my identity? What new parts of myself are emerging or flourishing, which support my work-play as a writer, and how can I nurture these pieces of myself to thrive?

3. Since becoming a mother, what interpersonal ways of being have weakened or disappeared? How am I different in my relationships? What ways of being would I benefit from changing or “killing”? How could I do this? Who could I enlist for support and accountability? What are some new ways of being interpersonally that I’ve developed since becoming a mother? Which ones do I want to celebrate, honor, and grow even more?
4. Since deepening my commitment to writing, what ways of being with others have dissolved, and what interpersonal habits would I benefit from dismantling or destroying? What relational habits are emerging, and which ones do I want to nurture and develop to support myself, my community, and my work?
5. Since becoming a mother, what ways of engaging with the world — work, politics/activism, house holding, religious or spiritual practice, etc. — have shifted, fallen away, or emerged? What ways of being in the world do I want to help to die away, and what behaviors or activities do I want to strengthen?
6. What habitual activities and behaviors take up time, energy, and attention that I’d rather spend on creative endeavors? Am I ready and willing to dissolve, dismantle, or destroy these activities and commit the resources that open up to my creative life? How could I stay on track with this change? Who could help keep me accountable?

7. Finally, in my writing work itself, when and how am I willing to destroy (remove, trim down, or drastically rearrange) parts that feel unclear or off the mark, in order to give power to what's left on the page?

### **Additional Artistic Prompts:**

You may also wish to explore these writing prompts within your eulogy and/ or “poem of becoming,” or as separate inquiries altogether:

- Growing in my garden is...
- In my compost right now is...
- The strangest thing in my trash right now is...
- Something I would never say out loud is...
- The things I miss most about myself or my life before motherhood are...
- When I am in old age, the things I imagine I'll miss most about myself and my life in this current chapter are...

### **2) A TECHNIQUE TO PRACTICE:**

Our technical prompts will always be relatively simple and fun to engage. You can practice them on their own, like practicing scales on the piano, simply to develop the skill, or you can include it as a cue and prompt within whatever writing you are exploring.

#### **This week's technique is *enjambment*.**

Enjambment occurs in poetry when a line ends somewhere other than a punctuation mark. This creates a “mixed message” with layered meaning, since there's a pause at the end of the line, but the content and meaning continue and flow into the next line. Sometimes the meaning added by the words after the line break create a double meaning or an irony or a

joke, or simply a surprise. Enjambment is like an extra kind of punctuation we get to use in poetry.

Here's an example of enjambment from the poem "Your Beauty" by Alfred K. LaMotte:

*silence and shadow, the mistakes you make and things*

*you leave unfinished, settling just where eternity intended them.*

You can see how once we read "you leave unfinished" in the second line, we get the meaning that "things" at the end of the first line is exactly an example of "things you leave unfinished." Enjambment is a tool to create these extra little potencies, added bits of meaning. Have fun playing with line breaks and enjambment to create new layers in your work!

### **3) METHODS FOR THE MOTHER-WRITER:**

These are sneaky tricks for connecting to your writing in the middle of your mothering, which I've discovered work for me, and I hope might work for you!

- 1) Take a break from writing. Instead, pick up a biography, autobiography, or book about writing or creativity written by one of your favorite writers or artists. Or, turn on a documentary or biopic about one of your favorite writers or artists. Let yourself get lost in their story — their twists and turns, ups and downs, in life and in creative process. Let yourself feel connected to a larger web of creative spirit, and return to your work heartened and re-inspired.

2) Bribe yourself. Whether it's early in the morning, or at night, or during your child's nap, if it's difficult to get to your writing, but you genuinely want to, bribe yourself. I use coffee — it's my favorite guilty pleasure. I would never have written my book early every morning for months without the reward of coffee luring me out of bed and to my laptop at 5:00 in the morning. Chocolate works too. And cookies. Maybe write in a hot bath? I dunno... what works for you? Just don't be afraid to go there... and simply bribe yourself into your creative flow. And then the even-deeper rewards will come once you get yourself to the page.