



WriteHere, RightNow

Unique 'live' coaching writing retreat connecting to the heart of academic life

- Dedicated, focused and productive writing time
- Better confidence, motivation and mood management
- Greater awareness of what gets in the way and how to overcome it
- Strategies for consistent and productive writing practice in the context of wider academic work
- Learning from the collective wisdom of the group
- Commit to a personal writing practice

Some rise to the pressure of writing the 4* piece, while for others it can be the main hindrance to their writing. Creating a productive writing habit is a challenge for many academics, often leading to frustration and a feeling of never having done enough. That can soon become a feeling of anxiety and a sense that "I'm not good enough". Fortunately the demands of the job mean other tasks can get done while the big challenge of writing gets pushed aside until that evasive blocked-out time appears.

WriteHere, RightNow offers a unique format that brings together the space of a writing retreat with the provocation of live coaching to enhance and sustain an effective writing experience. The basis of these retreats emerged from coaching academics to take a step back, realign with the purpose of their writing and engage in strategies to bring writing back into the heart of their work. The retreat provides a powerful format to get writing done, harnessing the collective energy of the group, while the live coaching invites greater awareness of how to shape the writing experience. By bringing a focus on maximising the potential of the writing, and learning to creatively manage interferences, performance becomes the outcome of an effective practice rather than a hindrance.

This unique combination of retreat and live coaching means that, while working on a current piece of writing, participants also engage in a series of coaching-based experiments. These experiments are designed to embed motivation, instill confidence and generate productive writing habits beyond the retreat itself. The retreat combines the power and wisdom of group learning, individual provocation and writing practice.

"Really excellent. Such a good use of my time - wish I could do this weekly! Will is fantastic - flexible, adaptable, supportive, unpredictable." (Lancaster University, 2018)

"Wonderful – well delivered, organised, effective, thought-provoking and fun. Delivered aims, met my objectives." (University of Liverpool, 2017)

"Enlightening, empowering, thought-provoking, confidence inspiring." (North Academic Research Training Initiative, 2015)

"This was the most worthwhile event I've attended. Should be widely available and also have follow-ups offered." (Lancaster University, 2014)

Who is it for?

WriteHere, RightNow is for academics at any stage of their career who want to create a more effective writing experience. The retreats have been attended by PhD students, researchers, lecturers and Professors, sometimes at the same time. They have been attended by people from all disciplines – from physicists to creative writers, sociologists to mathematicians. The process of *WriteHere, RightNow* is powerful for those who feel they are stuck in a rut, finding it hard to fit writing into their schedule, lack motivation, need more confidence, are inhibited by fear, find it hard to prioritise, feel overwhelmed by writing, have lost the habit, or simply want to find their mojo.

The retreats have been run at department, faculty, and university level as well as cross-institutionally. Research groups and departments have used the retreats to enhance shared understanding and working together.

What's involved?

WriteHere, RightNow is designed to enable participants to move forward with their writing, generate insights about their writing practice and identify personal strategies to create productive writing habits. Key elements of the retreat are:

- **Setting up:** introducing a coaching approach and the relationship between performance, potential and interferences; sharing current experience of writing and how participants would like it to be; establishing what participants want from the retreat; setting intentions.
- **Engagement:** developing an agreement amongst the group for the time together; when it's writing time, write (Write it. Write about it. Write about you), separating Drafting and Crafting (writing to think and editing to present); being curious with a beginners mind. Warming up, Warming Down.
- **Live coaching experiments:** reflective exercises that lead to insights to be applied to focused writing time. Themes include: setting intentions; realigning with vision and purpose; managing fear (the inner critic, the saboteur, the impostor); being present; mood as perspective; writing with joy, confidence, creativity, focus and rhythm; being with your writing.
- **Developing strategies and commitment:** applying the principles (write here, right now; draft and craft); setting the conditions; developing writing habits that sustain momentum; identifying personal commitment to writing practice.

Through the retreat participants engage in personal reflection, focused writing time, group sharing and, when appropriate, individual interventions from the coach.

Outcomes from *WriteHere, RightNow*

- Dedicated, focused and productive writing time
- Better confidence, motivation and mood management
- Greater awareness of what gets in the way and how to overcome it
- Strategies for consistent and productive writing practice in the context of wider academic work
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"Excellent, well worth attending and justifies the over-booking. I think it's a difficult area, seems personal, but we all got something today." (Lancaster University, 2014)

"Enlightening. A breath of fresh air, resurrected my enjoyment of writing. Given me confidence to write. (North Academic Research Training Initiative, 2015)

"Liberating, inspiring" (University of Sheffield 2016)

Pre-Retreat email to participants

To make the most of the workshop:

- ask yourself: what do I want to gain from this workshop? As well as getting some writing done, I'll be emphasising reflection about your writing experience and process so you can put strategies into place beyond the day.
- have something you want to write and prepare what needs preparing in order to be able to write! You know your priorities – it's good to write something rather than edit, however if editing is where you are at, I understand. Come having prepared material to write – e.g. do the reading you need to do in order to be able to write before the workshop rather than in it.
- be on time. It makes a huge difference if we kick off to a good start. Be plugged in, computer open and ready to go.
- bring a laptop and power lead. You will be writing throughout the day (you can write by hand if you prefer)
- as well as your writing documents, have a blank document open called 'Writing here Right now' which we'll use for some exercises throughout the day.
- be curious, open minded about your writing, and be willing to explore different ways of changing the experience.
- do what you need to do to be able to write for the day – what preparation does that involve for you? What do you need to turn off, put away or put on hold?

And smile! Dare to enjoy your writing ...

NOTE: this workshop will not involve assessment of your writing or engage with the content, writing style, grammar or English. *It is about the experience of writing.*

Beyond the retreat

Participants will identify personal strategies for their writing and be challenged to put those into practice. Approximately 6 weeks after the retreat participants are invited to attend a webinar to 'check in' on their progress since the retreat. The webinar will be held in a coaching format working through themes that participants bring to the call.

Participants who want to go further and embed their writing habits can:

- Form their own writing club (for example meeting regularly or arranging regular 'check-ins').
- Join a facilitated virtual writing club, providing shared commitment, accountability and continued learning.
- Explore one-to-one coaching.

"What a fantastic workshop. It provided our group with a wonderful opportunity to spend time getting to know more about, and sharing our individual experiences of, passion for and values associated with writing. We delved deep into what writing means to us as individuals and as a group and explored the range of barriers that routinely interfere with us enjoying our writing and being as productive as we want to be. Will was sensitive yet demanding and he required us to regularly and repeatedly step out of our comfort zone, both personally and professionally. His expert facilitation provided a safe and comfortable space in which to engage critically with our writing practices. The tasks were varied and illuminating and we all took away tips and ideas that will support our writing into the future. Individually, and collectively, we learnt so much about ourselves and each other and about the importance of writing to our personal and professional identity. We would highly recommend this workshop to academics, irrespective of your discipline and experience."
(University of Edinburgh, 2015)

About Will

As a professional certified coach and coach supervisor, and a former academic with an international research reputation, Will brings a highly qualified coaching skill set uniquely combined with an intimate understanding of the experience of academic life. Will is passionate about enabling people to be at their best while recognising the need to balance academic work with the rest of life. Working with Will, participants gain clarity, courage and commitment to creating the experience they want and to deepen the connections that matter to them. Will offers an holistic approach that recognises the context of academic work, including the balance between being productive in meeting the immediate demands of the job, investing in the future direction of the work and maintaining personal resilience and well-being.

Will's Coaching

A Professional Certified Coaching (PCC) and Coaching Supervisor with the International Coaching Federation (ICF):

- Private coaching practice – 1000+ hours logged having coached clients across the UK, Europe and North and South America, and from a range of professional backgrounds, including: lecturers, professors, PhD students, undergraduate students, teachers, neuroscientists, medical researchers, care-workers, counsellors, writers, consultants, and youth workers.
- Group Coaching – has worked with over fifty groups, including undergraduates, PhD students, academics (at all stages of career) in University and NHS settings.
- Coaching programmes – designing and delivering commissioned programmes utilising coaching methodologies and training in coaching skills. Programmes include face-to-face workshops, on-line group coaching, writing workshops, coach supervision, 1-1 coaching, 'train the trainer' and team coaching. Clients have included: the Universities of Lancaster, Liverpool, Edinburgh, Lincoln, Leeds, Manchester Metropolitan, Goldsmiths, Essex, Newcastle and Sheffield, Northern Advanced Research Training Initiative (NARTI), VITAE, ESRC North West Doctoral Training Centre, North West Enterprise School, Striding Out, Modernising Local Government, Unilever, and North West NHS R&D.
- Publishing – coaching training material for VITAE (including report on coaching for research, report on coaching for leadership, two training manuals on peer2peer coaching, two coaching books (Your PhD Coaching (2013) and Get Sorted! (2015).
- As a Professional Certified Coach Will works within the code of professional ethics of the International Coaching Federation. He also has regular supervision.

Will's Academic Background

As a PhD Student (1995-2000), contract researcher (2000-2006) and Lecturer (2006-2013) Will was a REF active researcher, well versed in the challenges of interdisciplinary and cross-institutional research. As a social scientist, often working in collaboration with scientists in the field of water management, Will had a reputation for developing high-impact research involving strong stakeholder involvement. As a Principal Investigator and Co-Investigator, funding bodies included European Commission, National Research Councils (ESRC and EPSRC), UK Water Industry Research, Government Departments, Private Sector Companies, and Local Authorities. Two of his projects as Principal Investigator were evaluated as 'Outstanding' by the ESRC, one being awarded second place in the ESRC Celebrating Impact Awards (May 2013).

Will's approach to workshops

Will is deeply committed to ensuring all participants gain from the experience, offering an appropriate balance of professionalism, emotional sensitivity and humour to develop the right conditions of challenge and support conducive to participant engagement and learning. His sessions are regularly scored as 'excellent' by participants and comments have included: "respectful, sensitive to needs of the group", "Fantastic, created really safe atmosphere to expose the issues raised", "Excellent. Very patient when dealing with quite a few of us, kept us on track ", "Exceptional – humane, forgiving, thoughtful and able to bring out the best in a diverse group" and "Excellent, professional, honest and inspiring".