

Using Felt Sense for Writing: Core Guidelines for Composing

from *Being A Writer*, Peter Elbow & Pat Belanoff, McGraw Hill 2003, p 47

There's nothing sacred about the exact format or wording of the guidelines. They aren't meant to be a strait jacket. To help you adapt them to your own style and temperament, here is a short list of the four most productive moments in the process. After you try out the complete set (found in *Felt Sense: Writing with the Body* by Sondra Perl, Boynton/Cook, 2004), you can use these as an abbreviated version:

(1) Relax, stretch, clear your mind, try to attend quietly to what's inside--and note any distractions or feelings that may be preventing you from writing. Invite yourself to be aware of your body and your physical surroundings.

(2) Start by making a list of things you could write about. Often we can't find what we really want to write about until the third or fourth item--or not until that subtle after-question, "Is there something I have forgotten?"

(3) As you are writing, pause periodically and look to that felt sense somewhere inside you--that feeling, image, or word that somehow represents what you are trying to get at--and ask whether your writing is really getting at it. This comparing or checking back ("Is this it?") will often lead to a productive "shift" in your mind ("Oh, now I see what it is I want to say"). Do this a number of times.

(4) Finally, toward the end, ask, "What's this all about? Where does this writing seem to be trying to go?" And especially ask, "What's missing? What haven't I written about?"