

On the pages that follow, you'll read an example of the typical communication that is exchanged between a writer and a ViaWrite Facilitator. The first page is the letter that describes the next writing assignment. In this case, it is Week #5 in a 6 Week Course. Following the letter, you'll find the writer's submission and the facilitator's feedback.

Dear [Anonymous],

You finally allowed yourself to dream about a successful future! This is a huge leap from where you started.

Now, you can see yourself as a successful entrepreneur, making and selling a product that people need and want. And it's something you can make happen. You don't have to have a college degree or loads of money. Having a healthy childhood is not a requirement to get started. Past mistakes won't make or break this venture. All that matters is that you are here now and this is what you want to do!

**So, here's your assignment for Week #5:**

Think of all the things that YOU might do to derail this dream. Notice, I said "the things YOU might do." I don't want to know about Aunts who break promises or brothers getting you evicted. I want you to zero in on the things you do to sabotage your own success.

**Here are a few examples:**

- Staying stuck in the victim role (I don't deserve to be successful.)
- Fear of failure. (I will be devastated if this doesn't work out.)
- Fear of success. (I can't even imagine how a successful person behaves in the world.)
- Negative self-talk. (Everything I do is a failure.)
- Unrealistic expectations (We didn't meet our sales goal, so we should just quit.)

There are loads of other things people do to derail their own success. And please know that this is not just some personal flaw that you carry alone. Millions and millions of people do these things to themselves every day. It's not just because of your upbringing. Completely healthy people with stable upbringings also find ways to keep themselves from following their true dreams.

The key to overcoming this is to identify the behavior so that you can STOP IT!

Let me know if you have any questions! I look forward to reading your next assignment!

All my best,  
Stacey

----- THE REPLY -----  
*(In the following text, you'll find the writer's original submission in black.  
Feedback from the ViaWrite Facilitator is in green.)*

Things that I do or feel that could stop me from being successful:

1. First I am afraid that people won't like my soaps, and I won't make enough money to provide for my family.

It's true; your soaps won't be for everyone. But that's okay. Think of all the national brands on the shelf right now. There's Dove, Olay, Dial, Ivory, Caress, Irish Spring, Burt's Bees, Lever, Yardley . . . the list goes on and on.

Now, Irish Spring is not for me. In fact, I don't know anyone who uses it. But it's still on the market. So someone is buying it!

And do you think the makers of Irish Spring care that I don't like their soap? Nope! They have a small group of loyal customers who buy their product because they like it just the way it is. And that's what your goal needs to be. Find and build a small group of loyal followers who like your soap because it's *just right* for them. Cater to them. They'll tell their friends about your soap and your business will grow from there.

So cross this "fear" off your list. It won't get in the way of your success!

2. Secondly, my lack of being able to look positively into my future, I have a hard time visualizing my future. When I think about my future I do have goals and dreams I just have a hard time picturing how I can achieve them and seeing myself doing it. Like I know I am making soap I just don't visualize me in a storefront or selling them to other stores, even though that is what I want for my future. I try to picture it in my mind but my mind wanders away from the original thought and I end up thinking about something negative, or I can't seem to get my mind to wrap itself around what I am trying to picture so I end up picturing someone else's dreams.

Okay, so there's this large group of self-help gurus out there who have pretty much force-fed us this idea that if we just think positively, or if we can just visualize our positive future, then it will happen! But that's all a bunch a junk!

For instance, I need to lose about 20 pounds. I can think positively about it all day long. I can even visualize myself skinny while I gain another 5 pounds!

Here's another example! Teenage boys think about sex all the time! They visualize it happening. They are positive it will happen with every girl they meet! But how often does all that positive thinking lead to success? Not too often!!!

**Thinking and visualizing DOES NOT make stuff happen. Planning and taking action makes stuff happen. That's the bottom line!**

So cross this one off your list! Negative thoughts won't derail your success! In fact, negative thoughts often lead to realistic problem solving and avoiding costly mistakes.

3. I give up easily now, I am not as resilient as I was in my youth, I don't bounce back from mistakes or disappointments as easily. Every mistake or wrong turn I make is devastating to me now.

This is one that you need work on! Why? Because if you "give up" – well—of course you're never going to succeed!

"Giving up" is an easy, go-to response when you begin to feel uncomfortable. The trick here is to be okay with feeling uncomfortable for a bit. It's when we fight against our uncomfortable feelings, or try our hardest NOT to feel them that we end up making bad choices (like giving-up).

So you feel disappointed. So what? Feel it. It's just a feeling. Feel it and then let it pass. Tell yourself, I feel disappointed. Allow yourself time to feel disappointed. Reflect on what went wrong so you can make rational choices on how to move ahead from there.

4. I feel like I am old and that I don't have much time left to get my life in order, and every time I make the wrong decision I am delaying my happiness which makes me think that I will never be happy with my life.

You are not even close to “old!” I know it can feel that way, but statistics are on your side! The media tends to glorify things when “young” people make it big, particularly in the DOT COM businesses. But the quiet fact is that people in your age group make up the largest (and most successful) group of entrepreneurs in the country. [This study](#) found that out of “nearly 5,000 companies that began in 2004, two-thirds of firm founders are between the ages of 35 and 54.”

Cross this one off your list! Your age won’t get in the way of your success!

- I don’t assert myself, I let people do whatever they want even when I don’t agree with it, which makes me angry and I just hold my thoughts and emotions in until I explode and say something hurtful . I don’t express my true feelings when I should. Sometimes it is because I am afraid to hurt their feelings and sometimes it is because I don’t know what to say until after I have left the situation and the person is no longer in my face.

There are three main personality styles that influence your role in a conflict: passive, assertive and aggressive. The goal is to aim for the “assertive style.” And the good news is that you can develop this. You don’t have to be born with this trait. It takes practice, but anyone can learn it. Here’s a breakdown of what each of the styles look like:

|                                   | PASSIVE  | ASSERTIVE   | AGGRESSIVE   |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|--|
| Description                       | You put everyone’s needs first—while ignoring your own.  | You stand up for your rights while showing respect for the rights of others.  | You stand up for your own rights—but violate the rights of others.   |
| How You View Your Self and Others | <b>You may think:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I am not important.</li> <li>I don't matter.</li> </ul>         | <b>You believe:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Everyone is important.</li> <li>We are all equal.</li> </ul>                                   | <b>You tell others:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Your feelings are not important.</li> <li>You don't matter.</li> <li>I'm superior.</li> </ul> |
| Verbal Habits and Styles          | <b>You:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Apologize frequently</li> <li>Speak in a soft or unsure voice.</li> </ul> | <b>You:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use “I” statements (to take ownership of your own actions).</li> <li>Speak in a firm voice.</li> </ul> | <b>You:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use “you” statements (to blame or accuse others)</li> <li>Speak in a loud voice.</li> </ul>               |
| Non-Verbal Habits and Styles      | <b>You:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Avoid eye contact</li> <li>Stand with stooped shoulders</li> </ul>        | <b>You have:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Direct, non-threatening eye contact.</li> <li>Relaxed posture.</li> </ul>                         | <b>You:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stare with accusing eyes.</li> <li>Have a tense posture, with clenched fists.</li> </ul>                  |
| Outcomes or Results               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Low self esteem.</li> <li>Not respected by others.</li> </ul>                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High self esteem.</li> <li>Self respect.</li> <li>Respected by others.</li> </ul>                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Low self esteem.</li> <li>Disrespected.</li> <li>Feared.</li> </ul>   |

- I am afraid of rejection so I don’t talk to people I don’t know, I am very introverted, I prefer to not have to deal with people, I like to work alone, but I am in a business with my friend and she wants us to make our products together which I am struggling with accepting even though I said that I would.

This is one of those “developmental” issues we talked about a few weeks ago. It’s all about “trust.” You don’t trust people not to hurt you, so you isolate and keep even your closest friend at a distance. So this is one of those opportunities for you to begin to “parent” yourself and teach yourself how to trust. This may require a leap of faith and some uncomfortable feelings. But remember, it’s okay to feel uncomfortable. It’s just a feeling. It can’t hurt. And it will pass.

Here’s a good article to get you started: [How to Trust People Again](#).

7. I don’t like having to rely on others for anything, and making our products together means that I will have to rely on her being able to do her part. I feel that I can only rely on myself and God everyone else is unreliable. I have a very hard time believing people will do what they say they will do.

This is the trust issue again, but it’s one that can be solved with a little assertiveness. And keep in mind, anyone who goes into business with a partner is taking a risk. It’s important to lay out all of your needs in the beginning.

Think about what you need from your business partner in order to feel comfortable enough to do this together.

- Maybe you need more consistent communication. You could schedule regular “staff meetings” every two weeks (or something like that).
- Or maybe you need to each clearly define your roles so that you are both fully aware of what the other is doing. Maybe each of you could write your own job description, outlining your responsibilities and your goals.
- You may also need a “tap out” signal. When wrestlers fight, one guy can tap the other to let him know he needs to end the round. You and your friend could agree on some way of letting the other one know if help is needed. Then the other has to agree to be able to step in and help. Otherwise, things could go undone for too long and before you know it, your production is behind.

8. I am not confident of my abilities so I don’t talk to people about what I am doing , I don’t go out and meet new people and talk about my soaps or anything that I know. I find it hard to spark up or even keep a conversation going, when I do talk to people I tend to only say a few words and then walk away or not speak any further. The only time I open up for extended periods of time is when I am drunk or when I am in a competition with someone playing a game like dominoes, cards, board games, or video games, I am a serious trash talker lmao.

Again, this is the trust issue. It’s that important developmental milestone that you got robbed of as a little girl. But you can turn this around! Remember, you have to be willing to feel the uncomfortable feeling when it’s time to talk to someone—but then to do it anyway!

9. Lastly I don’t have very much patience anymore I feel rushed all the time because I am running out of time to get things accomplished. I am 38 and I feel like I am just starting to figure things out like I am 18 and I am at the beginning of life, so I don’t have time for setbacks because I am so old. I always feel like I am at a starting point I never seem to reach the finish line, I feel like I take one step forward and it is actually ten steps back so I never move forward only backwards. So every move I make is unsteady and not thought out very well for the long term.

See answer to #4!

10. I have had the same goals since I was 18 years old I have yet to accomplish any of them which makes me angry and depressed, and I linger in my depression for too long. And sometimes I try to stop my depression and only make things worse, like this one time I thought that if I just fasted, prayed and meditated I could get a closer connection to God and maybe he could help me with my problems if only I was closer to him. So I fasted for almost seven days

with no food or water I figured if Jesus did it for forty I could surely do it for a seven. I didn't talk to anyone about what I was doing because I didn't want anyone to interfere with what I was trying to do, but on the fifth day my best friend came over to my apartment and saw how I looked and asked me what was going on and I told her and she got really upset with me for not telling her and for not drinking water for five days straight. She said I could have killed myself because I am diabetic and made me promise to never do it again, which I did promise.

Hooray for your friend. She saved your life! I'm glad you promised never to do that again.

Feelings of depression can be overwhelming. It can feel like it's never going to pass. And it can lead us to make really poor choices, like the one you describe here.

But it's important to remember that depression isn't a weakness, nor is it something that you can simply "snap out" of. Depression is an illness that usually requires medical treatment. Most people with depression feel better with medication, counseling or a combination of both.

11. I probably have more things that I do, or feel, or not do which could derail my dreams, but I can't think of them consciously so this is where I am stopping. I want to stop all of my self-destructive ways before I do actually hurt my chances for success in life or actually accidentally kill myself trying extreme measures to make my life better.

You CAN and you WILL get all this sorted out! It's going to take planning, hard work, uncomfortable feelings, and perseverance!

#### **OVERALL IMPRESSION:**

What a great list! I don't mean it's great that you have all these "issues" to overcome, but it's great that you have the self-awareness to see that what you are doing may be getting in the way of your success. Just recognizing it is the first step in turning it all around!

As I went through your piece, I separated things out into small, manageable chunks, and I numbered them. You'll see that some of the chunks are really not problems at all. I consider these things "the monster in the closet." Once you shine a light on the monster, you realize it's nothing more than a combination of shadows! Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7 and 8 are merely monsters in the closet!

The other things are your BIG issues. Numbers 6 and 10 are where you need to focus your attention. These involve your ability to trust and managing feelings of depression. These are the things you may want to start with once you find a therapist you are comfortable with.