

## **The Perils of Being Published—Burn Out: The Cure**

By Gerry Bartlett

Last month I whined about burning out. I was stuck in neutral on my manuscript and wanted company at my pity party. I feel that I owe my readers at least an attempt to give them some encouragement. That there is hope for the stalled writer. It was timely that there was an interview with GERALYNN DAWSON aka Emily March in February's RWR. She apparently experienced burn out when she decided to quit writing. Yep, she just stopped cold turkey and didn't intend to go back. But then her stories started coming back to her. Yes, the true writer has those little voices in her head. Since we refuse to admit we might be, um, off, we call them our muse. So after a year Dawson started writing again. And the stories were a departure for her, nothing like what she'd been successful with before. She didn't have a contract, just wrote. It was liberating. And ultimately a gamble that paid off in a fresh start.

It's no coincidence that what Dawson did is similar to the advice in the "Artist's Way" by Julia Cameron. Cameron believes that if we forbid ourselves to write for two weeks, we will soon rediscover the need that drove us to the keyboard in the first place. It's funny but I know when I tried it years ago it did work. Cameron also has a thing called Morning Pages. That's where you write stream of consciousness first thing every day, just get all the junk out of your head before you get down to the real business of writing. One or two pages max and you will be surprised what comes up. I used to vent about my husband or throw out an off the wall story idea I'd dreamed the night before. Some of it proved useful later.

What else can help you reignite your writing passion? Well, you can write something totally different from what you've been doing. Everything from non-fiction to young adult to that women's fiction saga you've had on the back burner of your brain for years. Maybe that will be the spark that fires you up again. If you have a contract that must be fulfilled, alternate the

obligation with the exciting new project. In a new book on creativity, “Imagine: How Creativity Works” by Jonah Lehrer, there are great ideas for getting your ideas kick-started—daydreaming, travel, even collaboration. Of course many famous authors turned to drugs and alcohol to loosen their stalled imaginations. Not anything I’d recommend. You have to wonder how productive Hemingway might have been if he hadn’t wasted half his days hung over.

My final word on burn out? Get over it. Yes, my friend, if you are reading this? I’m talking to you. Take the stress of having a deadline and use it as fuel to push you forward. Use the money the publisher throws at you as validation that someone has read what you write and thinks it’s worthy. Read the fan mail you get almost daily on Facebook and BELIEVE it. You are talented. A higher power blessed you and put you in the right place at the right time to get your books into the hands of people who love what you write. It is a gift that’s not given lightly and should not be squandered. If you choose to treat it lightly, there will be pay back. Isn’t there always? Think about it. Every word we write that goes out to the public is read and judged. So we owe it to ourselves and to our readers to do our best and then move on. If we seriously just can’t do it anymore? Quit. Yep, I said it. Hang it up. And maybe a year from now you’ll suddenly wake up one morning with a new story and the enthusiasm to write it. Because, like it or not, you’re a writer.

Gerry Bartlett is the bestselling author of the Real Vampires series. **REAL VAMPIRES HATE SKINNY JEANS** is an April, 2012 release. She is hard at work on number nine in the series. No excuses.