

Dr. Gwyn Erwin
Healing For Your Life™

Sparking the Flame

Guides for Writers Who Feel Lost, Overwhelmed, or Stuck

by

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Sparking the Flame

Have you never had creative savings as a writer to draw on? Do you believe you have no fire of your own yet — just a longing to write and no sense of whether you're allowed to begin? Has your creative fire been banked so long, you've forgotten it's still smoldering?

Maybe you have real fire, banked deep, but it's been smothered — buried under outlines, rules, and "shoulds" until you can't find the flame under all that structure anymore.

Or maybe you created something real once — finished it, published it, found readers — and now what? What next? Do you have more fire in you?

Wherever you are, here is the truth: your fire has never gone out. It has only been waiting.

THE TURN

There's an old hearth practice called "banking the coals" — preserving a fire's heat overnight so it can be restarted by morning, carried somewhere new, or given to someone else to light their own. Nothing is lost. It's simply held, quietly, until it's needed again. It's no accident this same instinct — something small, protected, left to grow — is also where we get the concept of banking in the financial world itself.

I've spent 32 years in clinical practice as a psychodynamic therapist, using writing as one of my tools for healing — watching people discover that what they thought had gone out completely, their voice, had only been banked. And for even longer than that, I've worked as a professional writer, editor, book doctor, and writing and creativity coach, helping writers find and kindle the fire in their own work. This guide holds both of those lifetimes of practice.

Finding the Ember

As a beginner writer, do you have the fire in you to write? Does daring to call yourself a writer feel like borrowing someone else's coals?

Core teaching: You don't need permission, and you don't need to know your whole book before you begin. Every writer has some ember, even before they've made a single draw on it. You don't need more fire — you need to notice what's already flickering, and I'm here to lend you what I've spent a lifetime learning, so you can start your own.

Feed the fire: Using my Flow Writing technique, write for thirty minutes each day following a single prompt — taking dictation from your mind, not "thinking." No outline, no audience, no editing. Just kindle the ember.

The Smothered Fire

Are you a writer whose coals have been compromised? Do your many unstructured pages suffocate you, or do your pages have nowhere to go, or is an outline so rigid it's cutting off the oxygen your fire needs to breathe?

Core teaching: This is where most writers get stuck — not for lack of discipline, but because they've only ever been taught one kind of structure: the outline. There's another way. Design — not outlining — gives your work enough shape to hold the heat, and enough air to give it life.

Feed the fire: Take one piece you've abandoned. Instead of asking "what's my outline," ask "what design do I need to structure my work?"

Ready to Reignite

Is your fire real, just banked? If you've already written, finished a writing project, and published, are you stuck? Being stuck is not for lack of skill. You have savings. How do you draw on them to light a new fire?

Core teaching: What looks extinguished usually isn't. Igniting doesn't mean starting over — it means tending what's already yours, and letting it compound into something bigger.

Feed the fire: Name one finished piece of work. Ask: what would rekindling my banked embers look like? What writing structures and techniques would help me ignite a new fire?

Feeding the Fire

Wherever you are — lost, smothered, or stuck — the fire is tended the same way: breath by breath. You don't have to choose one flame over the others. You only have to know which breath you're on right now.

First breath — Flow Writing, always. Whether you've never started, you're buried under structure, or your fire has simply gone quiet from disuse — this is where every writer begins. My Flow Write Journal: Seasons for Authorial Voice gives you a full year of prompts to free the writing itself — or, if what's been smothering your fire feels less like craft and more like an old pattern of protecting yourself, the Therapeutic Flow Write Journal: Seasons of Healing illuminates season by season what has been stifling your flame. Either way, you can start with a single season if you'd rather ease in one step at a time. **Find the Flow Write Journal here**.

Second breath — Design. Once the writing is firing, Design gives it real architecture — not a rigid outline, but a shape that holds the heat and lets it breathe. Designing Your Fiction Work takes you through the architecture of every kind of fiction, using the Necklace Metaphor to give you a visual design for your story. Designing Your Non-Fiction Book walks you from nascent ideas or a wealth of scattered material into your book's true design, breath by breath. Both are self-paced, both come with lifetime access. **Learn more about Designing Your Fiction Work here**, and **Learn more about Designing Your Non-Fiction Book here**.

Third breath — Drafting Your Writing to Publication. From idea, a pile of notes, or scattered documents, your flickers of heat are ready to flame with my ultimate writing course! Launching Wednesday, November 4, 2026, Drafting Your Writing to Publication completes my Design to Publication: The Complete Writing Ecosystem for Fiction and Non-Fiction Writers. Each course stands on its own and each can be combined to realize the writing of your dreams. My new Drafting course will carry you draft by draft from the embers of your ideas to your publishable manuscript ready for submission. **Join the course here**

Whether you're kindling your first banked coal, clearing away what's been smothering your fire, or ready to reignite embers that were never really gone — you are not starting from nothing. You are relighting what was always there.



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