



WHAT KIND
OF PENCIL
DO YOU USE?

The person who fails the most, wins

Stephen King, one of the most beloved, famous and bestselling authors ever, often goes to writer's conferences. After he talks for a little bit he says, "Any questions?"

Inevitably, someone raises their hand—I'm paraphrasing here—and says, "Mr. King, you are one of the most beloved, famous, and bestselling authors ever. What kind of pencil do you use to write your books?" It's almost as if knowing what kind of pencil Stephen King uses will help them be more like Stephen King.

People often go up to folks who invent and create and say, "Where do you get all your good ideas?" This is a really bad question.

The right question is, "Where do you get all your *bad* ideas?" Because if you have enough bad ideas, you'll have absolutely no trouble having enough good ideas. That's what people who create do, they let the ideas out. They sit and they do the work and the ideas come.

Bad ideas, good ideas, it is not yours to judge until later. Right now, your job is to only produce. After you produce, you can curate. You can select. You can censor. But now, have bad ideas. Lots and lots of bad ideas.

The second half of that rule: once you've got the best that you have you must ship it, interact with the market and engage and see what happens.

The rule is simple: the person who fails the most will win. If I fail more than you do, I will win. Because in order to keep failing, you've got to be good enough to keep playing. So, if you fail cataclysmically and never play again, you only fail once. But if you are always there shipping, putting your work into the world, creating and starting things, you will learn endless things. You will learn to see more accurately, you will learn the difference between a good idea and a bad idea and, most of all, you will keep producing.

No such thing as writer's block

Some people need to be motivated. Or so they think. They need the right cosmic alignment and the proper mood to do their creative work.

Actually, some people tell themselves this, but it's a form of hiding.

Motivation, Zig Ziglar used to say, is a lot like showering. It's useful, but it doesn't last, so you need to repeat it often.

If you find that motivational books and talks and a circle of people help you get going, by all means, use those tools; they worked for me and they might work for you. But they're not necessary.

There are two things that are necessary:

A. to see the cultural and economic shift and to realize that it is, in fact, your turn;

and

B. to develop a habit. A habit of showing up on a regular basis, of writing when it's time to write, raising your hand when asked, pitching in every single time. The habit is part of what it means to do work. Your posture of leaning into this opportunity, of connecting and creating and picking yourself: this is your work. How motivated you are today has nothing to do with the opportunity and the obligation you face.

