



## WRITING TO FREE THE BODY

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By Julie Mariouw

People don't realize it, but they hold stories in their bodies. I see them hanging out, especially in the joints. They're comfortable there, an easy escape, not so much of them visible. I never knew, until I started writing, that I carry stories too, especially in my left leg. Which brings me to my subject – my left foot speaking to my left knee. An unlikely pair of conversationalists, but I heard them talking, very clearly, the moment I put pen to page.

The foot said, "Not much here."

The knee replied, "Oh, yes, there is!" And so on and so on.

I have gotten so used to my body speaking when I write that now I wait for it, rely on it, really. Without it I would not know how to proceed. But this is not the way it used to be. My head was in charge. Thought it knew everything. The master planner. Until that day my professor told me my writing was technically good but a complete bore. Ouch!

That was the day I started listening to my body. How did I begin? Well, to be honest, *I* didn't begin – *it* did. I had been writing daily for quite some time when something shocking happened. Suddenly, one of my characters tried to kill her baby. At the very same moment my body jumped out of the chair. The best I can describe it is like a dolphin jumping out of water. I believe this broke some chains from my ankles.

I began to notice certain movements happening regularly. My body would sit up very straight, tilt my head to the right or left, or even turn me completely around. I would follow it and stare until I saw what it wanted me to see. Stories lay waiting to be picked up. I would gather them and write them down on the page. I could hardly keep up with all the words.

Then there was the rocking. My body would rock forward and back or side to side. I noted the movements, paying attention to the patterns. I figured I could understand them later.

In another instance, my characters tapped their fingers as if sending me Morse code. I believe they really were sending me messages, but I have not yet been able to decode them.

So what does this have to do with my left leg? A lot of energy is stored right in the middle of the joints. I broke my left ankle falling down the stairs, tore a ligament in my knee, and every once in a while my entire left leg gets ice cold, while the right one is just fine. I'm convinced there's a novel hiding there.

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All of this writing has begun to heal me. After ten years I notice less pressure in my joints, less tension in my muscles. Overall I am healthier, more flexible, and I feel less pain.

I am also more creative than I used to be. Stories tumble out easily. Particular themes arise from particular areas in my body, and I notice them working together to help me create each finished piece.

But most miraculous of all has been the emotional and spiritual healing that has occurred. When I first began to write I held many traumatic memories in my body. I could feel them pressing to get out. Somehow I knew to write, and keep on writing, to help those memories escape. I have a feeling this was pre-ordained, for I have written scenes in which I see words wrapped around characters' wrists or floating near a character's head. I don't know how the words got there, but I know they are working together to save me. I pick them up and place them on the page and they tell the story of my life through fictional characters – not as I think the story should be told, but as the universe wants me to tell it so that I can be healed.

If you are a writer, or just someone who wants to heal, I recommend you write with your body regularly. You will be led, as if by magic, to a healthier version of yourself. Stay out of your head and let the words escape. You will be amazed by the healing that occurs.



Julie Mariouw is a published author, trained Amherst Writers & Artist workshop leader, English teacher, and owner of *Wellspring Writing Workshops LLC* through which she offers creative writing workshops in the Ann Arbor area. Julie helps people bypass their internal critics, go directly to feelings & memories, and tap into the healing power of writing.

