

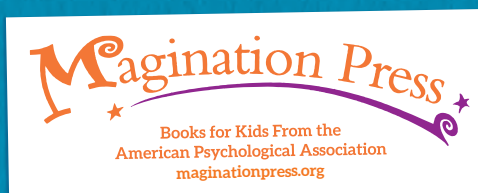
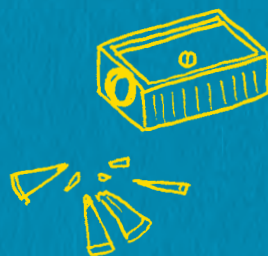


Neon Words lets you view your writing and yourself in a new light!

With sections dedicated to honoring, strengthening, and playing with your ideas and words, you will:

- Learn the art of creative writing
- Spark your imagination to find the artist within
- Explore what it's like to create evocative prose with powerful language
- Engage with words to be more present in life
- Use language art techniques for self-discovery and emotional well-being

Whether you want to be a writer, or just want to explore what it's like to create with language, you'll have lots of fun . . . and maybe learn something about yourself in the process! Who knew writing could be so enlightening?



COVER ART BY MELISSA JANE BARRETT

U.S. \$14.99
ISBN 978-1-4338-3049-5



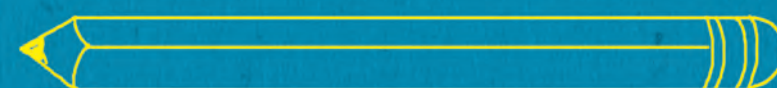
PELLEGRINO & SATHER

NEON WORDS



NEON WORDS

10



Brilliant

Ways to



Light

up

YOUR

Writing



MARGE PELLEGRINO & KAY SATHER

CHAPTER

1

*Make It
Personal*

PERSONALIZED JOURNAL

Explore your identity through a personalized journal and a self-portrait.

Throughout *Neon Words* we share lots of ways writing can make you stronger, and many include using a journal. Whether you create different journals for different projects, or you put all your writing adventures into one journal, you can claim it as a receptacle of your thoughts.

Choose a journal that's lined or not lined, hardcover, spiral-bound or softcover. It doesn't need to be new. It could be an old notebook with usable pages, even ones you could paint over or use as a jumping-off point. Check a thrift store. Check your closet.

Whichever you choose, consider personalizing the cover of your journal by collaging images from magazines or your own artwork. You could use stickers or stick-on letters or shapes. Try decorating with colored tapes, glitter paint, or fabric. In some way, visually claim the cover. If you date the inside cover and each day's entries, you'll always know when you wrote them.

On the inside cover or the cover itself, consider writing or collaging an intention, such as: "Take care of MYSELF" or "Make a difference!" It could be a phrase that will remind you what you hope to achieve while using the journal, or a goal you'll reach before the pages are filled, like "Write three poems I'll be proud to share." Because the cover and inside cover of your journal are places you'll look at frequently, the intention will be strengthened in your mind—even unconsciously.

On Zines

If you find that you love the visual design aspect of your journal, you might be someone who would enjoy producing and sharing your own (maga)zine. Carlee Ricketts did it when she was 15—we were subscribers and looked forward to each issue that arrived in the mail. Here's what she says about her inspiration (personal communication, 2018):

"I was homeschooled and very thin-skinned—the kind of girl too wrapped up in daydreams to have felt anything but lonely most of the time. Except in pages. Pages and pages of all sorts of words and stories.

It will still be a couple decades before I've percolated a book, but I've written poems for years. The Weetzie Bat series by Francesca Lia Block was a favorite kind of modern and alternative fairy tale that eventually my adult life would resemble. In my endless library loitering, I found out she had co-authored a non-fiction book about zines! Xeroxed and handcrafted magazines of all kinds! Printed pirate radio! I didn't know how to get to a punk rock show, and I didn't know my favorite songs yet, but I was 15 and I knew enough to fill a diary-like zine every few months, and that was a revolution.

The words I've written and the words I don't have time for now and the words I feel building everyday are so magic it's stupid. The words that I read every day from old and new voices, both renowned and unknown, are the blood of our human community."

CONSCIOUS BREATHING



Thinking about your breathing keeps your mind from wandering and prepares you to focus on writing.

There are many ways to do the ancient practice of deliberate breathing, which comes to us from India. The version outlined below is inspired by ocean waves breaking on the shore and then receding. You can do it anywhere, in any position—sitting, lying, or standing.

Inhale deeply through your nose.

Hold your breath for five seconds at the “top.”

Exhale slowly to empty your lungs.

Pause again for a count of five at the “bottom.”

Repeat for five breaths.

This exercise is really relaxing, especially in the pause at the end of the exhale.



SIMILE SELF-PORTRAIT

Similes, as you may know, are phrases that compare one thing to another using “like” or “as.” For example: My toes are little like peanuts. Or: I’m as tall as a tree. (Variation: I’m tall as a tree.)

This springboard activity is a three-for-one. You’ll end up with a unique self-portrait, two simile-inspired poems, and a clearer idea of metaphors.

Begin by drawing yourself. Use your non-dominant hand if you’d like to push your usual visual reality. Detailed or spare, black and white or color—it’s up to you. Now attach some similes to different parts of yourself.

Check out this self-portrait by artist and writer Terry Owen and the similes he attached to it:



Your similes don't have to follow the pattern "My ____ is like a ____." You could also use active verbs like curl, light, and bend (see Marge's list below).

My hair curls like a slow river.

My hair is brown, like the bark of a tree.

My brain is as curious as a monkey's.

My smile lights up my face like a light bulb flipped on.

My voice is as smooth as a song.

My heart is warm, like dinner rolls fresh out of the oven.

My knees bend like a hinge.

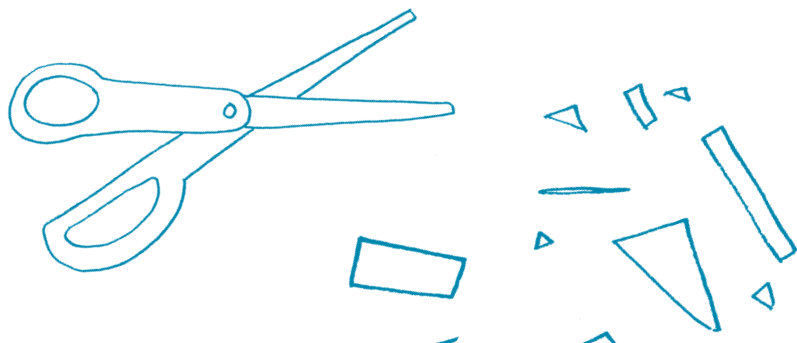
My hands can be as strong as superglue or as gentle as a lamb.

My legs run as fast as the wind over an airplane wing.

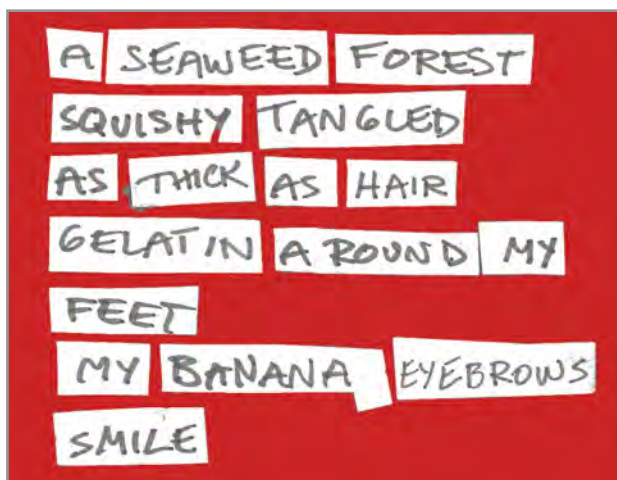
Now type out your similes and then enlarge them, either by enlarging the type on the computer or with a copy machine. Or forget the typing and just rewrite them bigger, so they're easy to cut out and move around. You won't need all the words. Choose the ones you consider strong.

Once you've written and cut out your favorite words, you're ready to play with syntax—that is, to manipulate their order. The more you challenge the common order of things the better. When you drop the "like" and "as" you're creating metaphor.

As you find word combinations you like, set them aside. Move the lines and phrases around to find an order that feels right. At this point, you can add words that make it complete before you glue them down.



Here's the imaginative poem pulled from Terry's self-portrait:



This activity also presents an opportunity to play with alliteration—to weave in an echo, a repetition of sound, as in “brown like bark” or “smooth as a song” or “strong like super glue.”

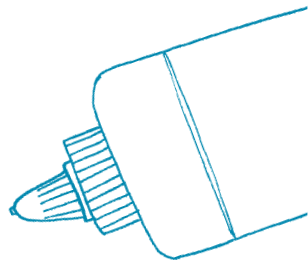
Finally, here's the poem Marge found in her similes:

With My Bark-Brown Hair

and light-switch smile,
my monkey brain
thinks in slow curls
curious

With knees hinged
and wind-fast legs
my feet move me
swift

Watch how far I'll go!
– MP



CHAPTER

6

*Trash to
Treasure*

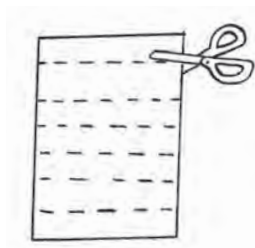
BOOK BYTE WITH A MARBLEIZED COVER

How do you cope? Find a strategy that's uniquely yours. Create a hidden pocket to hold a personal moment of transformation.

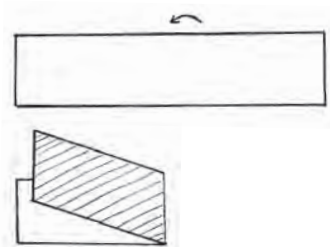
Here you'll make a tiny book that transforms used tea bags into something beautiful.

Book Byte: Begin with a flyer, or any paper that's been used on one side before.

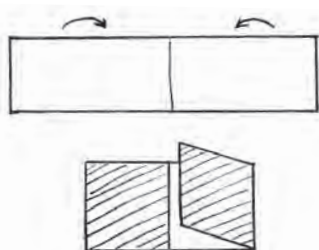
Directions:



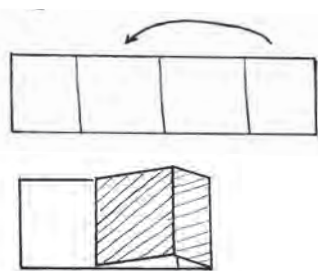
1. Cut the page into strips, lengthwise or width-wise. We've cut it into seven strips here.



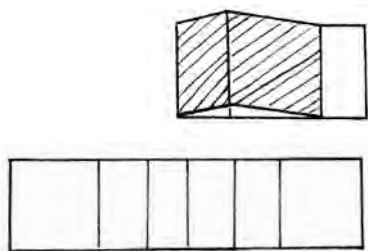
2. Take one of the strips and fold it in half with the printed side out.



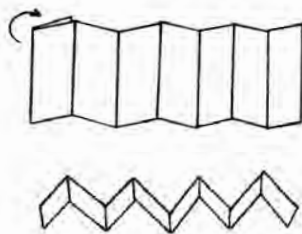
3. Fold both outer edges into the center.



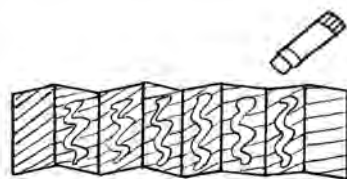
4. Open the strip completely. Now fold the right edge in so it hits the first fold on the left.



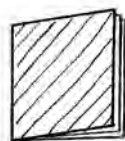
5. Open the strip again. Now fold the left edge in so it hits the first fold on the right. Now you should have five folds that delineate four small rectangles and two longer rectangles at the ends.



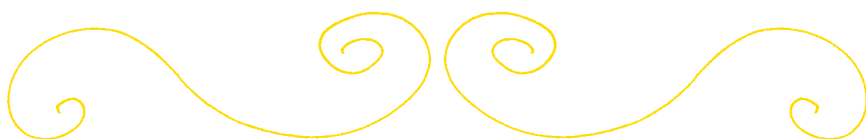
6. Next you'll make the strip into an "accordion." Do this by folding one of the long panels in half toward the back. Then continue to gather the panels together until all the panels are stacked. When you let go, you have four "mountains" and three "valleys."



7. Turn it over and apply glue to the middle six panels of your accordion, on the printed side. Gather it back together and press. You'll now have a blank, four-spread book.



8. You could collage with colored paper or images from magazines, or you could make something special to cover the book by using the following directions.



Marbleized Cover: Your book byte is now ready for your marbleized tea bag cover!

What you'll need:

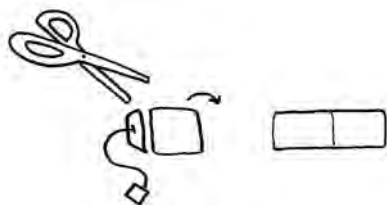
- Small pan with sides (for your paint palette)
- Used, dried tea bags (you'll use only the paper)
- Scissors
- Shaving cream (plain, with no aloe or other emollients)
- Paint in several colors (watercolor is easiest to clean up)
- Pencil
- Newspaper or an old phone book or a towel (as surface protection)
- Spatula or a used plastic gift card
- Glue stick
- Spoon, or paintbrush if your paint is in jars

Optional:

- Glitter, or paint containing glitter

These directions are for a single book, but you'll want to make more than one piece of tea bag paper because of the effort involved—and how much you'll love your results!

Directions:



1. Open the tea bag and shake the tea leaves into your compost bin or outside under a plant. Some tea bags will need you to cut off the staple that holds the string on. Others can be gently pulled apart.



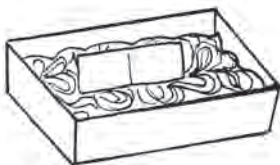
2. To prepare your paint setup, cover the bottom of your pan with a thin layer of shaving cream.



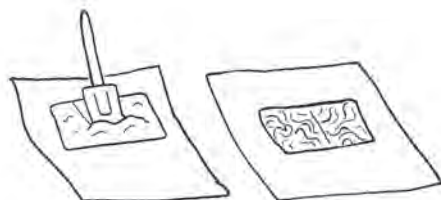
3. Now apply dollops of paint to the shaving cream "canvas." If your paint is in bottles, squirt it on in squiggles; if in jars, use a spoon or fully-loaded paintbrush.



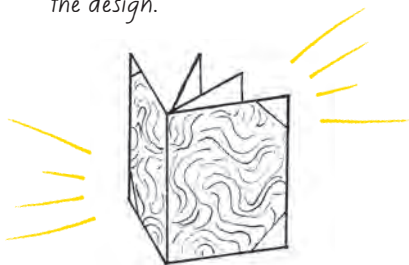
4. Using your pencil, swirl the paint minimally across the surface, once or twice. Avoid mixing — it will muddy your results.



5. Lay your tea bag paper onto the painted shaving cream, pressing it into the paint so the entire paper meets the surface and picks up the design.



6. Pull the paper off, and put it shaving-cream-side up onto your newsprint. Use your spatula or plastic card to scrape off the excess shaving cream. If you're using glitter paint, you can apply it to the paper now, or after it's dry. When you're finished, move the paper onto another piece of newsprint to prevent sticking.



7. When it's dry, you're ready to apply your tea bag creation to your book byte. Just glue it to the first and last panels and trim off the excess. Or, if you prefer a collage-effect cover, rip your marbled paper into pieces and glue them on.

Your book byte is ready to hold your proudest poem or other short piece. (See "Haiku Holder" in Chapter Four for short-form ideas.)

BLIND WRITING

This tool will keep you moving forward. Simply cover each line you finish writing with a piece of paper, so only the line you're working on is visible. Or, if you're on the computer, shrink your writing window so you can only see one line at a time.

The idea behind blocking out what's already written is that it keeps you from getting picky about your writing before the first draft is finished. This is an especially good strategy for perfectionists, who can get bogged down by self-criticism. It's a great way to beat a nagging internal editor.

Why would you want to wait to call in your inner editor? Your editor-self uses a different skill set that can stifle the wonderfully messy, exploratory,

Blogging 2.0

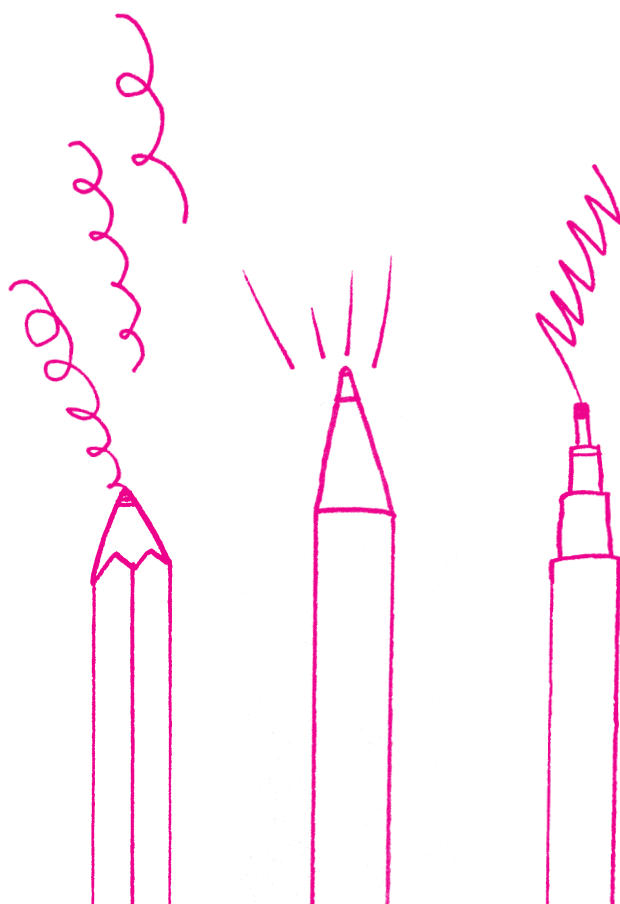
I started keeping a journal in first grade, but it took on new meaning with the advent of the Internet. Writing in a private, paper journal was the first step—for record-keeping, for copying, for planning, for dreaming—but keeping a blog came next. Sometimes it was rewriting my own journal entries to present a more refined and reserved form of expression that my friends could read, and other times it was a way to meet new people by throwing my thoughts, opinions, and questions out into the ether and letting people discover them. Then blogging went 2.0 and became a way for people to create a brand for themselves and to write more professionally, but still with a personal bent. It's more edited, but still a way for people to work out problems and discover themselves—in a public sphere, a meta-journal with comments and hyperlinks. That circular writing and publishing model is where I've met some of my best friends, acquired my greatest mentors, and discovered my role models. Writing separately but together has informed my most personal analog journaling. It's now what I respond to, what I incorporate into my own voice, and what informs the person I am becoming.

—Sarah Hannah Gomez, MA, MSLIS (personal communication, 2018)

and sometimes chaotic nature of first drafts. You can always pick up the mechanics later. With Blind Writing, you can let early drafts have their way. Let your writing go all over the place!

You can reign it in later if you decide you'd like to work more with these thoughts, themes, or ideas. But either way, know that whether you mine these pages or not, the process of writing *whatever*, without worry, is powerful for insight as well as for coping and problem solving.

Try it! Write for twenty minutes with just the line you're writing visible. Is your first draft freer? More spontaneous? Does it have more energy? Is your output more substantial? If so, good for you! Use the Blind Writing tool next time you get stuck. If not, good for you! You tried something new.



TRANSFORMING TROUBLES



We all have metaphorical trash in our lives. Bullies, disagreements, pain, failure, lack of confidence, betrayal, death. What's yours?

Some trash we can't do a thing about, but there are strategies out there to help us cope. Remembering those strategies is sometimes difficult when we're in the middle of our troubles. It's hard to be logical when we're emotional.

Here, you'll create another book, this one with an elegant cover made from old paper—a tangible metaphor for transforming trash into treasure. It will also remind you of your coping strategies and a personal moment of transformation.

For the inside pages, reread and follow the directions for the three-spread book in Chapter Five. If you use 8 ½ by 11" paper, the new book's pages will fit inside the handmade-paper cover. This one won't be reversible, but it will give you a secret compartment.

What you'll need:

- Colorful, used paper with a matte finish—old flyers, color printouts. It can be printed on both sides as long as there's at least one blank margin for you write on. This random paper will ultimately become your handmade-paper cover, so consider the colors you collect. (Avoid slick paper as its fibers are slippery and won't readily bind with themselves or other paper.)
- Embroidery hoop or other stiff frame, like an old picture frame. Its diameter/width must be at least seven inches, and not much bigger, or your cover will dwarf your finished book.
- Watertight basin big enough to hold your embroidery hoop—and your fingers!
- Two pieces of plastic window screening, cut larger than the hoop.

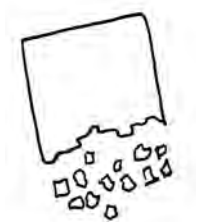
- Blender
- Tabletop protector such as newspaper or a towel
- Water
- Sponge

Optional:

- Thin ribbon

Directions:

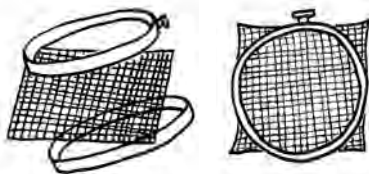
1. *Begin by writing! On the margins and blank areas of your scrap paper, note those things that drive you crazy, memories that hurt, situations that make you angry, injustices, anxieties. Students have written about gossip, bullies, war, humiliation, divorce, the death of a friend or relative, money worries, sibling fights, rejection, loss of something cherished, sickness, depression, failing a class . . .*



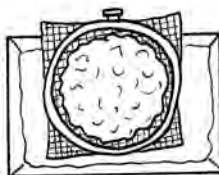
2. *This step feels really good. Tear the paper into nickel-sized pieces. If you want to make certain colors, sort as you tear, putting your color choices into bowls.*
3. *Fill the blender with water (almost to the top) and throw in a handful of torn paper.*
4. *Blend on a medium speed. How long you leave the blender on will determine how many bits of letters and print are retained from the scraps. Bright and neon scraps will pop. Experiment! If you blend until you no longer see scraps, the colors will mix together almost like paint—for example, red and yellow scraps will make orange. If you stop sooner, solid bits will remain intact and give the final paper a fun confetti feel.*



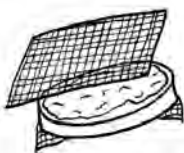
5. Pour the pulp into your basin and add more water until the mixture is more or less the consistency of egg-drop soup or a melty milkshake. You can add pulp or water at any time to get the consistency you want.



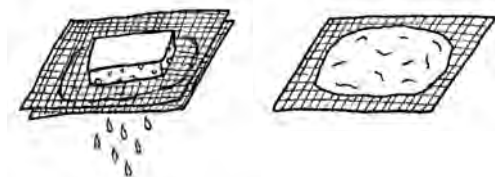
6. Place a piece of screen over the embroidery hoop. Secure it with the second section of hoop. If you're using a picture frame or homemade frame, just attach the screen in a waterproof way, such as with staples.



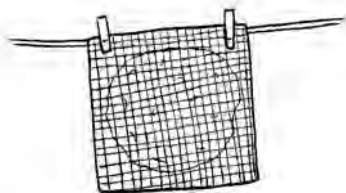
7. Dip the hoop into the basin and scoop up enough pulp so that a thin layer of it is left on the screen when you pull it up out of the water. Don't worry — if you don't like your results you can just toss the screen back into the water, swish it around, and dip it again. If the pulp is too thick, the dried paper will crack when folded. If it's too thin, the paper will tear and be more translucent. In either case, no big deal — you can use either "mistake" for collage.



8. Working over your tabletop protector, place another piece of screen over the pulp. You now have a pulp "sandwich": screen, pulp, screen.
9. If using a hoop, you can remove it gently at this point so you just have the screen-pulp-screen sandwich. Otherwise, it's fine to leave it in the frame!



10. Now, press your slightly damp sponge onto the top screen to absorb some of the water. Squeeze the accumulated water back into the basin. (Papermakers call this "scooching.") Continue to pat (not wipe) the screened-in pulp until the sandwich is no longer dripping and the paper fibers are cohesive. The paper should hold together as you peel off the screens.
11. The way you dry your paper can affect its texture. Here are a few suggestions:



- Hang your pulp sandwich with both screens still attached. You'll end up with a fine grid texture on both sides.



- Remove both screens and lay the paper between newspaper. If it's still wet enough, your paper will have a wavy surface.



- Remove one screen and slap the paper onto a countertop or window. This will give the contacted side a slick finish.

For Some Cool Effects . . .

. . . take these additional steps. You'll need two extra screen pieces. Make your first piece of paper, press the excess water off with a sponge, then take off the top screen and set it aside. Using a new piece of screen, make a second piece of paper, press it with the sponge, and take off this top screen as well. On one of the two pieces of paper, draw a design in coarse sand as though you were a Dine or Buddhist sandpainter. Put the other paper on top so that the sand is the inside of the paper sandwich. Sponge the screen again. Your design will appear in relief when the paper dries. Or use an actual ribbon (instead of a ribbon of sand), draping it in a straight line across the middle of one circle of paper. Apply the second circle to the first—you'll again have a screen sandwich, but with two pieces of paper with a ribbon inside. Sponge again—the pressure will help fuse the two papers. The point of the ribbon is to be able to tie your half-circle cover (which should resemble a taco) shut with a bow once it's dry, so make sure your ribbon tails are long enough.

When your fabulous cover is dry, fold it in half. Now it's time to get started on a book that's worthy of this masterpiece!

Finish making the three-spread blank book, if you haven't already. Mark an X on the front and back panel—these will be glued onto your handmade cover once it's dry. The other pages are for recording your trash-to-treasure strategies.

Now it's time to write! You could start with a title on the first page of the book: "Transformational Strategies" or "Trash to Treasure."

Gather ideas that you, your friends, or your family have successfully used to transform a bad situation into a tolerable one—or even an ultimate victory. Don't feel like you have to fill the pages right now. You can have your antennae up and add to it over time. But you no doubt know some strategies already. If not, consider these:

Talk through a situation with a friend.

Listen to uplifting music.

Write in your journal.

Take a walk, a run, a hike, or a bike trip.

Hit a baseball. Kick a soccer ball.

Watch a movie.

Delve into a book that takes you away—or a book that makes you look the situation in the face.

Take some time to enjoy nature.

Now let's open up a secret space in this book to write about a transformation—a moment when you successfully turned a situation around.

Open your small book all the way back to its 8½ by 11" size. Now, write about that time you made a bad situation better. Or the time when something in your life stank and your attitude made it smell sweet. Then refold the little book and glue the X-marked pages into your dried handmade paper cover.

The next time something trashy happens, this small book will remind you of strategies you can use and a moment when you've triumphed before. If you did it once, you can do it again!

Remember that optional ribbon? Use it to tie your creation with a bow—a gift to yourself.



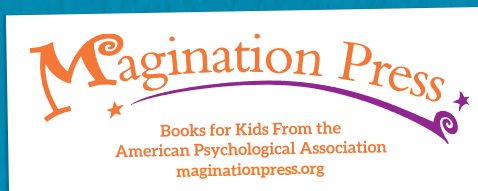
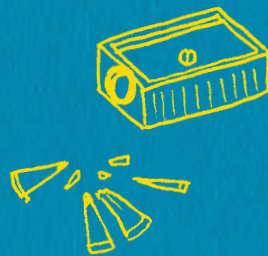


Neon Words lets you view your writing and yourself in a new light!

With sections dedicated to honoring, strengthening, and playing with your ideas and words, you will:

- Learn the art of creative writing
- Spark your imagination to find the artist within
- Explore what it's like to create evocative prose with powerful language
- Engage with words to be more present in life
- Use language art techniques for self-discovery and emotional well-being

Whether you want to be a writer, or just want to explore what it's like to create with language, you'll have lots of fun . . . and maybe learn something about yourself in the process! Who knew writing could be so enlightening?



COVER ART BY MELISSA JANE BARRETT

U.S. \$14.99
ISBN 978-1-4338-3049-5



PELLEGRINO & SATHER

NEON WORDS



NEON WORDS

10



Brilliant

Ways to



Light

up

YOUR

Writing



MARGE PELLEGRINO & KAY SATHER