

# don't write *that* book!

## Episode 27:

### Writer's Block is Not Real

**Mike Michalowicz** ([00:01](#)):

Welcome back to the Don't Write That book podcast where you can learn how to write your bestseller and own your authorship. Follow along with us as we give you an insider's view of the book industry. Now, here are your hosts. Myself, Mike Michalowicz and AJ Harper.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([00:15](#)):

Welcome to *Don't Write That Book*. Thanks for joining us today. You know, there's a lot of, perhaps mythology around writer's block, and AJ has a personal story about it.

**AJ Harper** ([00:28](#)):

Do you want to do intros first?

**Mike Michalowicz** ([00:29](#)):

I do, I do. I first, I wanted to get, it's called a teaser <laugh>. It's called a teaser. Get people Excited. Woo.

**AJ Harper** ([00:35](#)):

Let's talk about the time that I totally failed at being a writer.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([00:40](#)):

So and let me introduce my cohost, AJ Harper. I don't know if you know this, AJ drives down here to our studios in Boonton from Nyack, and it's an effort to be here. I mean, it takes some time. And today in particular, you said it was a pretty difficult traffic.

**AJ Harper** ([00:56](#)):

It was like being in a video game, driving video game.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([00:59](#)):

Really?

**AJ Harper** ([01:00](#)):

Right. Fog, A car accident, random people stopping,

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**Mike Michalowicz** ([01:04](#)):

Someone trying to wave you over to hit Tiger.

**AJ Harper** ([01:06](#)):

Well, not quite.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([01:08](#)):

Where did you end up parking?

**AJ Harper** ([01:10](#)):

In front, right? I'm a rockstar with parking.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([01:11](#)):

I don't know how you get that spot all the time.

**AJ Harper** ([01:13](#)):

I always get it.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([01:15](#)):

<Laugh> I, it's unbelievable. So I just wanted to thank you for making an effort to be here. You're volunteering your time. This is earnestly, so are you? Yes, but I'm not making the drive. And we're here to earnestly help authors because so many authors are writing that book when, when they don't need to. So thank you for what you're doing.

**AJ Harper** ([01:36](#)):

Yeah, of course. But you know, I should introduce you. You will also come to me. We've had a reciprocal driving relationship. <Laugh> (We have, we do.) We even have the rule about who pays if the person drives, then they don't. If, if we eat right today, we don't eat on podcast days. Right. But, well, sometimes we get lunch. But if I drive here, you pay. If you drive to Nyack, I pay. (That's the rule.) Although this week there's going to be four of you, so

**Mike Michalowicz** ([02:01](#)):

Oh, that's going to, it is going to bury you. <laugh> I know. No, we'll, we'll cover that one.

**AJ Harper** ([02:04](#)):

That's all right. We're going to go to Mickey D's. <laugh>

**Mike Michalowicz** ([02:07](#)):

And I've got to say Nyack has the superior restaurants. I actually love the little restaurants here.

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**AJ Harper** ([02:12](#)):

You do have some good ones. But we have, we are superior.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([02:14](#)):

Very eclectic.

**AJ Harper** ([02:15](#)):

Yes.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([02:16](#)):

The food's extraordinary. My favorite restaurant, I don't remember the name of it. You know where the one it is? It's near the library. Yeah. Near the waterfront.

**AJ Harper** ([02:23](#)):

Our cafe.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([02:23](#)):

Our cafe. I love that place. Well, today we're going to talk about a, a moment that perhaps transformed you, not in a positive way, but maybe a reflection it has. And you went for, for quite a period of time?

**AJ Harper** ([02:38](#)):

Years without writing. Can you imagine? No, we wanted, we wanted to do a, an, an episode on writer's block. Yep. A lot of people talk about it. I think the definitive resource to fight it is *The War of Art* by Steve Pressfield. !! no surprise to people who follow me that I'm saying that it did change things for me, but I think we need to talk about how bad it can get and what it is and how to get out of it, because it's real for a lot of people, even though I don't really believe it exists anymore.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([03:11](#)):

And that seems kind of to be a dichotomy. You say it doesn't exist, and yet you went through it for years?

**AJ Harper** ([03:18](#)):

Right? Because I believed in the mythology.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([03:21](#)):

Ah, okay. So why don't you tell me about your experience, what happened? And then I want to know about the mythology.

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**AJ Harper** ([03:26](#)):

Sure. So I, I actually tell this story, and when I host editing retreats, so those people who have been to one will remember it. But I was a playwright and I had some success. And success as a playwright can mean a lot of, you know, we, we, it might mean that you have a lot of you have get a little commission or you get a workshop and it doesn't really translate to the kind of success that say Lin-Manuel Miranda has, you know, but I, I was doing all right in terms of my growth and moving up in my community, but then I got my first professional production and I was young. I think I was 21, maybe. (Wow.) Maybe I was 22. I have to think about it. And it was for a play, a one act play called that. I titled "Jack and Jill Have Lunch on Thursdays." <laugh>. And I love that freaking play.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([04:21](#)):

I love that title.

**AJ Harper** ([04:22](#)):

And I would go stand at the back of the theater and just laugh my off <laugh>, which absolutely poor perform <laugh> not, I think you might do it, but for the playwright to sit in every performance and just be that person Yeah. In the back. Oh, this is so funny. Yay. I love myself so much. Oh, yeah. It was not, I mean, I was a young kid, so, and then reviewer came from *The Star Tribune*, which is the Minneapolis paper. And so I knew that there would be review in the paper the next morning. And that day I did the same. That performance, I did the same thing. I stood in the back and I just laughed my off. Yeah. And then in the morning, I waited until I knew the papers. I called before to find out When did the papers arrive to the, it was like a 7-11, but not, yeah. When in, I was too excited. So I went in my pajamas, and at that time I drove a blue Dodge Dynasty.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([05:20](#)):

Oh, beautiful.

**AJ Harper** ([05:20](#)):

Like a boat. Yeah. Drove over there. Six o'clock something, five o'clock in the morning, I don't remember now. It was many years ago. Got several papers because I was Sure, sure. <Laugh>, I'm going to want to keep these and share them. Pass them out. Yeah. Just pass them out. Sit in my car in the sad 7-11 parking lot in my PJ's, turned to find my review. And the first line was, "I think Harper meant this play to be funny."

**Mike Michalowicz** ([05:55](#)):

Oh! <Laugh>

**AJ Harper** ([05:57](#)):

True story. I do not remember the rest of the review. It was awful. I was in shock because I was a kid and everybody had told me how amazing I was, which isn't something that's very helpful. Yeah. And I, I

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didn't know, but nobody told me how to process that. And quite frankly, I, I, I, I, I lost it. When I say I lost it, I mean, I stopped writing. I actually had a commission at that time, and I couldn't complete it. Actually, strike that. I had two commissions,

**Mike Michalowicz** ([06:32](#)):

And you couldn't complete it.

**AJ Harper** ([06:34](#)):

Yeah. I couldn't finish them.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([06:36](#)):

Wow.

**AJ Harper** ([06:36](#)):

So, and you should know that playwriting is my great, great love. Yeah. I love writing plays still to this day. It's magic for me. And I, I quit. I just... and I tried. I tried, but I, what I told myself was, I'm blocked, un blocked, un blocked, un blocked. And I would try, I tried everything I could think of, and I, I would say, oh, you know, I just, I'm not in the zone. Right. I don't, I can't access the muse. I'm not in flow. I tried every single thing I could think of writing at different times of day, writing with specific music, writing in different places, writing prompts. I pulled out all my old bag of tricks. I could not make it happen.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([07:21](#)):

So you get this shocking news, review, you stop and then you say, I just have to approach it in a different way. That's my problem. And you start trying all these little hacks.

**AJ Harper** ([07:30](#)):

Right. Because I think I'm blocked. So I think that I have to call forth the flow, right? Yeah. Right. So I just need the right configurate, like an athlete. Right. Gotcha. I just, I've got to have the right configuration of the right order in which I do things. I just haven't found the optimal time of day. I, I need, I need to go be inspired somewhere. I need to go on a retreat. I need to whatever. Finally, I just months and months and months went by. And then those months turned into years.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([08:05](#)):

Oh. I was listening to a podcast from ESPN Sports News around this concept of overthinking. And they highlighted a quote unquote famous situation where a kicker for a football team was positioned to score the winning field goal and shanked it and missed it.

**AJ Harper** ([08:23](#)):

Choke artist.

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**Mike Michalowicz** ([08:24](#)):

And they said, this individual at the most important, he, he was one of the best performing kickers when it didn't matter. And when it mattered most, he choked. And they said, there's this process of overthinking when there is this pressure, that some people will revert to the individual steps. They won't go fluidly anymore. They'll go into each micro step. And that's what I'm hearing here is now the pressure's on. Harper thinks she's funny. That's the gut punch. And it sounds like you start going to this overthinking, oh, maybe it's this, maybe it's that. Lemme go through all these steps. It's like you, the beginning.

**AJ Harper** ([09:02](#)):

Well, I was crushed. I mean, let's be real. I was crushed. I understand. I know how to deal with a review now. You know, I've, I, I'm, I, I would hurt, but I, I could manage it. It's not going to crush my soul. But I had to deliver these two commissions. I also was up for a Jerome Fellowship at that time. Oh gosh. I was a three time finalist for a Jerome Fellowship, which is at my age. I had, at the age of 22, I'd already been up three times for a Jerome, which is a big deal, or was at the time. And it was coming together, right. Two commissions. The Jerome I had, it was right there. You should know that I had this fear of being a choke artist. Just like you said. It's funny you mention that, but that's because I had seen, she's not going to listen to this, so I think it's going to be okay. I had seen my mom, I'm going to get emotional now. I had seen my mom get right there.

**AJ Harper** ([10:07](#)):

She's a genius. And I had seen her just get right there. And then at the moment of truth, you know, miss the goal. It's almost as if she didn't want it. And in the end, I think she didn't, because she ended up, when I was seven 15, she ended up just basically going to live in a rural area and staying there and not doing any of the things she was poised to do. But I had that behind me. This, I thought, oh, that's my legacy choke artist. And I hadn't, was too young to have really processed that emotion. So I just believed it. I just thought, "See?" Because then I didn't turn in this one commission, and then I didn't turn in the other commission. And then I wasn't writing. And I, there were other deadlines I had set for myself. You know, in playwriting there's all this sort of submission deadlines, and you kind of use them to set your own deadlines so you can submit to competitions or fellowships or things. They all just kept flying by. And I just used that as further evidence that I was a choke artist.

**AJ Harper** ([11:22](#)):

And it was years. And it was pain. It was pain. Because this is what I love to do.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([11:27](#)):

So your heart's calling out to do it, but it sounds like your mind is saying, saying...what?

**AJ Harper** ([11:36](#)):

Well, you obviously don't have what it takes. (<Laugh>. Okay.) That was all. (Yeah.)

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**AJ Harper** ([11:42](#)):

And you know what I'm going to be on? This is why I always tell the authors that I coach and teach and edit. I always say this to them, I would never blow smoke up your and tell you you're good at something if you're not. Because that is cruel to do that. So it's not that I wasn't good at what I was doing back then, but if you heap a lot of praise on a young person and to suggest there's some sort of prodigy, but you don't actually, you're not really tempering it. You know, at the same time this happened, I was working on a script, and my mentor, her name was Randy Sue Latimer, I hand gave her a play that I had been working on, and I invited her to come have dinner at my house. And I, she normally would just gush, she's Oh, your words and delicious. And she's just feeding the whole ego thing. Right. And so I was ready for, it's like, we're going to have a great dinner, and she's just going to lavish me with compliments and tell me about this script I wrote. And she comes over to my house and she says, "You know, I don't really have any comments." I said, "Why not?" And she said, "You're not a good writer."

**AJ Harper** ([13:00](#)):

I mean, okay, so a bad review, and you're not a good writer. This is piling, piling, piling on me. What she meant was, in fact, she said she qualified. I, I was like, knife, knife to heart. She said, "You're not old enough to be a good writer." (Experience?) Yes. I, now I'm I'll be 51 this month. She was correct. Wait, what do I know? What do I know about relationships, marriage, children, death? You know, like, what the hell do I know? I know nothing. Yeah. So, but her words were here and the reviewer's words were over here, and then the trolls, and then I didn't finish. And then evidence, and then my mom and, and that's my own stuff. But we each have our own collection of nonsense that comes in. And then we believe "I'm blocked. That's it. I'm blocked." And you, we try to find all these ways around it.

**AJ Harper** ([13:58](#)):

But what's really happening, what I've come to understand, it's not that we're blocked to say we don't trust ourselves and we don't trust the creative process. (Okay.) That's what's really happening. There's no trust. Yeah. So we're not willing to sit down and write something bad. We're not willing to sit down and get a, explore something that won't go anywhere. We're not willing to even try at that point, because we don't trust that it will ever turn into something good. And yet the way that we gain trust is to go through the process so that we know it will turn into something good. So it took me a long time to learn that that's actually what I needed to do. And the way that I figured that out was by two ways. One is I started to realize that I was the most productive when I was focused only on the numbers. So, you know, I say this all the time. The first draft is just math. (Yes. Yes.) That comes from, I re I assessed, I looked back and I thought, when did I get the most done? Oh. When I was just trying to hit my quota.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([15:09](#)):

Interesting.

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**AJ Harper (15:10):**

I wasn't trying to write something amazing. I was trying to hit my quota. I talk about this in my book. I, when I lived in LA, this is long before the production, I worked a full-time job. I was broke. I didn't have a car. I had one of those Apple II-e computers.

**Mike Michalowicz (15:26):**

I love those.

**AJ Harper (15:27):**

So it's not coming with me to the cafe <laugh>. (Yeah.) So I had a yellow legal pad, and I really wanted to finish a play. And so I was like, oh, how am I going to get this done? I'm working a full-time job. I can't, what am I doing? So what I would do is I would leave my job in Beverly Hills, take the bus in LA. Who does this?

**Mike Michalowicz (15:48):**

<Laugh> What genius sells their car to be in LA?

**AJ Harper (15:48):**

Many people, <laugh>, I know many people do, but do people really sell their car before they move to la? Probably not me. That's the person who did that. I would take the bus to this coffee shop I loved and buy, buy a coffee. That was all I could afford. Yeah. And sit down. And I would, I figured it out. Okay, I want to be done by this time. How many pages do I need to write? I did this whole math thing. It's all in my book. And then it turned out to be ten pages. So I would write ten pages. Handwritten.

**Mike Michalowicz (16:20):**

That was your daily quota.

**AJ Harper (16:20):**

Daily quota. And I wouldn't allow myself to go home until I did it.

**Mike Michalowicz (16:25):**

Oh that's great.

**AJ Harper (16:26):**

So like, you have to stop here, write your ten pages. And sometimes the last two pages were just like, rah, I hate this fricking rule. I get made for myself. But I just got it done on the weekends. I took all my pages, and I typed them up on the Apple. Oh, did it over and over again. That actually became a, a powerful play that I wrote. And so when I was in the writer's block phase, I thought, when did I, how did I do that? Oh, I didn't care. I didn't care. I wasn't actually writing for a commission, a submission deadline. I just, I wanted to write it. And I had set my own goal, and I just focused on the numbers.



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(Yeah.) That's how I eventually got out of it. So years we're talking years, I'm now living in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and I'm in so much pain. Just, I yearn for it.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([17:21](#)):

But you, but you were getting through it, but you were, you were—

**AJ Harper** ([17:23](#)):

I wasn't writing anything. I just kept trying. Okay. I just little fits and starts,

**Mike Michalowicz** ([17:28](#)):

But I just want to be clear. You simply said it's ten pages a day.

**AJ Harper** ([17:32](#)):

That was before. So let me, let me orient everybody. (Okay.) The writer's block, that lasted years to get out of it. I thought about when, in the past was I prolific in this.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([17:43](#)):

It was when you were doing ten pages a day,

**AJ Harper** ([17:43](#)):

Like, oh wait, maybe there's a connection between just having a quota.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([17:48](#)):

So let me tie this back to the ESPN story. They said this kicker when he simply focused on making the field goal, he made it right. When he focused on how the first step, right. Then swing the leg properly. That's when he got into this minutiae and he destroyed it. I'm, I'm seeing a parallel here. You simply said it's ten pages a day. Yeah. And then everything else kind of came into alignment. And then when you're in this writer's block, it sounds like you're looking at the individual elements. What time of the day is it? I have to have perfect words. Every word.

**AJ Harper** ([18:20](#)):

Well, yeah. You're looking to feel inspired in that moment. You want to be in that flow. You want to have feel like, this is it. This is working, this is jiving. And the thing is, most writing days are not like that.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([18:32](#)):

There's no flow.

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**AJ Harper** ([18:32](#)):

No flow. There's no flow. Yeah. It's just you in your, you know, cement shoes, <laugh>, trying to slog through mud. You know, it's, it can be like that a lot of the time. And I just didn't understand that, that that was part of it. So to me, that was evidence. Oh, that this is hard. You're not getting anywhere. This sounds terrible. You must suck. And then that just, everything just came to make me paralyzed for a number of years. Then finally, the pain was too great. And when I say pain, y'all, I mean pain, like deep, profound sadness.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([19:12](#)):

Depression?

**AJ Harper** ([19:14](#)):

Yeah. From, yes. Over a lack of missing my creative life. It, it was really, really hard. So finally, I was desperate. I was in Santa Fe, so thankfully that is where Julia Cameron lives in New Mexico. She doesn't live in Santa Fe, but she wrote *The Artist's Way*. And there was a class, and it was being taught at the Borders Bookstore where I used to hang out. And I just drudged up the money. I was like, "I'm taking this class. I don't know what's going to happen, but I've got to find it." And it was in that class. I, she does morning pages. It's the famous things everyone knows. Morning Pages are, you know, three pages in the morning without stopping stream of consciousness to kind of clear everything. And that's how I remembered, oh wait, I used to be able to do this when I just had my quota.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([20:08](#)):

Mm. Okay. Okay.

**AJ Harper** ([20:09](#)):

So then I was like, okay, let me just try it. Let's see if that's the thing. And I again, had a full-time job, <laugh>. But I made myself drive to Borders. I would do three pages and I told myself it can be on anything. And then I would allow myself to go home.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([20:26](#)):

I love those Borders that you were loyal to that since you had the experience there, you kept on returning to Borders.

**AJ Harper** ([20:31](#)):

Well, it was the best option in Santa Fe at the time.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([20:34](#)):

I got you, okay. Okay.

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**AJ Harper** ([20:35](#)):

Sometimes I would get, you know, most of the time I could barely get the three done. I even made it so easy on myself that <laugh>, this was not the yellow legal pad. I'm telling you that little journal was probably like four inches by four inches.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([20:47](#)):

Itty bitty piece of paper.

**AJ Harper** ([20:48](#)):

It was like, I just have to do three of these pages.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([20:50](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. Okay. Okay.

**AJ Harper** ([20:51](#)):

And I had nothing for the longest time. And it still felt bad. And then one day my wife showed up at the coffee shop because I was still working.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([21:01](#)):

Was that the breakthrough?

**AJ Harper** ([21:02](#)):

I have goosebumps right now. Like, I cry right now.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([21:04](#)):

I'm getting goosebumps too.

**AJ Harper** ([21:05](#)):

I'm emotional about this. You should be. She's like, are you going to come home?

**Mike Michalowicz** ([21:09](#)):

It's like, and you're like, what time is it?

**AJ Harper** ([21:10](#)):

Exactly.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([21:12](#)):

Oh my God.

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**AJ Harper** ([21:13](#)):

Yeah. And then I was like, all right, I'm onto something here. If I give myself a quota, I can cut through this noise.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([21:21](#)):

Did you feel in that moment I got it again? Or was it, this could be something and you—

**AJ Harper** ([21:27](#)):

This could be something. (Okay.) It wasn't until then later my wife and I had moved back to the Twin Cities and I read *The War of Art* by Steve Pressfield. So I had a pretty good handle. But then he talked about why he said it's resistance. Anytime we go into creative act, there's a law of the universe. He calls it equal to say, gravity, that will resist pushback whenever you try and create something from nothing. And he said it's a law, meaning you can't fix it. So the problem with writer's block, if you believe it's true, is that you think that you yourself are blocked. Which isn't wrong. Which isn't right. And you think it's something that you can somehow fix. Which, so, but resistance is not about you. It's nothing to do with you. It's not personal. It's just a law of the universe.

**AJ Harper** ([22:20](#)):

Once he took out the personal part, no, you're not a choke artist. Yes, you can finish things. No, you don't suck. You can be funny. Like, that was all personal. That led me to be blocked. But he took that out. He said, "This is true for everyone. You're not special." Okay! And it's going to keep coming back. So I think, oh shoot, okay. That, I needed that reframe to let myself off the hook. Then I went about perfecting the quota. So now I know what will work. It's focusing on just the numbers. But if you have a clear... So, if you're writing nonfiction, you would need an outline. You know, it's not like you're just going "Woo!" Right? Woo! (Right.) But if, you know, you might do some exploratory writing like that. Well,

**Mike Michalowicz** ([23:08](#)):

Well, it does sound like the morning pages is kind of the—

**AJ Harper** ([23:10](#)):

Well, that's different. Yeah. That's a tool that Julia Cameron uses, which is to clear your mind of the mess. Yeah. The monkey mind. Yeah. That if you're writing to write. Correct. You want to have some idea of what you're doing. Unless it's specifically exploratory writing. But let's say you need to get something done, you need to know kind of where you're going for this to work. Word count. Hit it, move on. Unless you're in a groove. The other component is regular writing practice. This is key. So you, what was, what was a factor there? Every day after work, I went to the coffee shop and didn't let myself go home. That was my writing practice. It was only weekdays. It's so funny, because that was in the '90's, and I still do weekdays.

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**Mike Michalowicz** ([24:03](#)):

Interesting.

**AJ Harper** ([24:04](#)):

Yeah. You can choose whatever you want. Maybe it's Monday, Wednesday, Friday. Maybe it's Saturdays maybe. But it has to be that same practice. Yeah. Routine. Whatever routine your practice is, pick it, stick to it. So that's the second element. And then over time, I realized something else. I really went back. I really thought, what is it? And I remembered, I was also really prolific when I was writing with other people. So I used to go with my pal Zoe Bird. You know Zoe Bird? I do, I do.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([24:32](#)):

Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([24:33](#)):

When we were kids, we used to go to yet another coffee shop, and we would take Natalie Goldberg's books *Writing Down The Bones* and *Wild Mind*. And they're full of all these writing prompts. And we would sit there with our coffee and hate to say it, cigarettes, <laugh> back in the back in the day, trying to be grownups and write with each other and just side by side. I thought, Oh God, I was writing like a ton when I would write with Zoe. (Yeah.) Oh, and I put all three together. So you put the quota together, the practice, regular practice with community, and you're just golden. But the main thing was understanding that writer's block is not, it's tied to what you believe about yourself, and it actually has nothing to do with that. Because it's by focusing just on the numbers, then you're just trusting that it will eventually work. Now, the benefit that I have now after all these years is I do trust it because I know, because I did it. So that's the, that's, that's the hard part, is you have to get through those first few creative projects for you to realize, I don't know where it's going right now, but it'll get there someday. Right. And you know that now.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([25:56](#)):

I do know that.

**AJ Harper** ([25:56](#)):

You, I think you had more stress in the beginning. For

**Mike Michalowicz** ([26:00](#)):

Sure. For sure. Yeah. And it's ironic, right? The less thinking about it, the less stress the better. The book *All In* was the least stressful in some ways. And the quality of the book? It's the best book.

**AJ Harper** ([26:16](#)):

Well, but I think in the beginning when you were writing, you were so focused on, you weren't sure how it was all going to work out.

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**Mike Michalowicz** ([26:22](#)):

Oh. Yeah. For sure.

**AJ Harper** ([26:22](#)):

But now we can say, what do we have here? I don't know. We'll see. We'll, we, we can sit down and do an outline and go, Hmm. YAnd maybe this before you would say it had, we have to get this. Exactly. So yeah. And now you understand that there's, it changes and it shifts. But we'll get there.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([26:41](#)):

Back to that ESPN story. The episode concluded by saying games are won on the practice field. It's that routinization that just goes through the process over and over again, and it gets you out of the micro thoughts. And it gets you to just seeing the outcome and fluidity. And that sounds exactly what happened to you.

**AJ Harper** ([27:03](#)):

Yeah. I mean, writer's block isn't real, it's just that you don't trust yourself and you can build trust over time by following this routine. And you have to do it even on the days that don't, you don't feel like it. That's the key is that's why you focus on the quota.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([27:19](#)):

You have a favorite quote from Steven Pressfield about resistance.

**AJ Harper** ([27:23](#)):

Oh, it's the best he said it. He actually said it on... You know, Oprah had that Super Soul Sunday show. Yeah. I don't even know if it still exists. I don't know. He said put your ass where your heart wants to be. (I love it.) So in other words, if you want to be a writer, sit in the freaking chair and write.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([27:45](#)):

I can't think of a better conclusion to today's episode. AJ, thanks for sharing that story and those insights. I hope you, my friends, got tons of value out of this. I do want to encourage you to get the free materials we have and join our email list so you don't miss any of the bonus content or a single episode. Go to, don't write that book dot com. So dwtb podcast.com. Thanks again for joining us on today's episode. You will overcome that writer's block because, hey, it doesn't exist. And don't forget, don't write that book. Write this one.