

INTERVIEW WITH SARAH TIECK

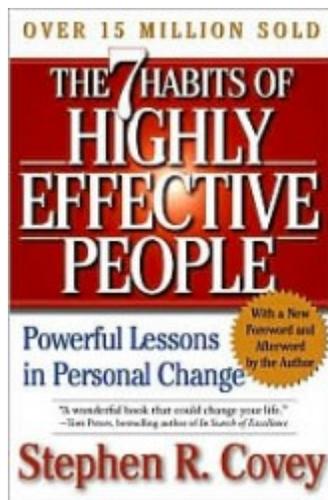
Dara Girard

Sarah Tieck is a professional writer, editor and teacher based in Minneapolis, Minnesota. I decided to interview her because after a number of years of correspondence, I found her views about writing and being a writer held such wisdom I thought they would benefit others. I hope you enjoy!

1. What is the number one reason most aspiring authors don't make it?

I believe **confidence** and **persistence** are the two keys to success—many writers produce beautiful words and great ideas. But, only a few truly believe they can follow up and pursue those dreams. And, even fewer have the focus to bring their dreams to fruition. The good news is that if you do have focus and persistence and a vision, you will find a way to your dream.

2. What nonfiction book(s) has helped you most as a writer?



There have been so many that have inspired me and taught me! I don't know that I can credit just one of my resources. But, one book that is having a lot of power for me right now is Stephen Covey's *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. I've just started a 12-week study of it, and the ideas in that book stretch into every part of life. I can see why it has been popular for so many years. It truly is a transformative way of thinking.

3. How do you stay motivated between projects?

I take classes, I connect with my community, and I set goals in 12-week increments. All of these give some urgency to goals that are part of my bigger vision but don't have a deadline attached to them. Also important is doing the mental work to create excitement.

4. What techniques do you use when you hit a rough patch in your writing?

Awareness is the first key. After that, much of pushing through rough spots is about pushing through my own mental blocks. And, I have all sorts of exercises up my sleeve to move myself through those tough spots that are a normal part of the writing process.

So, lately, I've been using questions as tools to help propel me forward—using the 10-10-10 technique (Will this matter in 10 minutes? 10 weeks or months? 10 years?) learned in *O magazine*, I consider tomorrow and what I'll wish I'd done. I ask myself what choice

will be most to my benefit—sometimes I'll even weigh the advantages and disadvantages of pushing through in a Cost-Benefit Analysis. And, sometimes, I just whine to my journal or a friend—spend 10 or 15 minutes complaining about how I can't do it—and that seems to empower to move into what I CAN do!

That said, I did the Cost-Benefit Analysis with a group of students the other night. For some students, it worked beautifully, and for others, it was doing the opposite of what I'd expected. So, now I'm looking at that ... when the exercise doesn't work the way you expect. So far, I think it is about lining up with what you want and as Covey would say, being proactive taking responsibility for what you want. I'm going to [blog](#) about this, so stay tuned!

5. What is a common misconception people have about writing or the writing life?

That once you get to a certain place, or reach a certain goal—for instance getting published—that the work will become easier. Even though I've published and sold many pieces, I continue to seek out new challenges and learn new skills. It keeps me excited about what I'm doing and grows my writing skills.

6. What do you tell people who have excuses as to why they haven't started (or can't finish) a writing project?

I used to try to “fix” them and convince them they can do it and should do it. Now, I understand the difference between interest and commitment and, realize that many times they may be interested, but aren't ready to commit to a project. If someone truly wants something, they'll go after it and ask for what they need to move to the next level.

If someone is only interested, it is more important that they work on figuring out what they want to do. This one is a really individual question. And, almost universal because I think almost every writer—or every person with a goal—explores this in some way.

7. As a writing teacher you meet many writers. What advice could you give aspiring writers on how to select an instructor or class?

Trust your instinct! If the topic or instructor energizes you then likelihood is, you'll benefit from the class. Classes—both online and in person—provide wonderful opportunities for connection and growth. If you feel uncomfortable or something doesn't feel right, that's worth noting, too, because the class or instructor may not be a good fit.

8. What are some of the reasons why talented writers don't succeed in publishing?

Many times, there's too much focus on the nuts and bolts of how to get published and not enough on creating a high-quality piece of writing. I teach my students both, but encourage them to focus on crafting a quality piece first. I've been a freelancer and an in-house writer and editor, and I know that the time spent developing quality writing will do more to sell their work than all the how-to-publish tips out there!

You can find out more about Sarah Tieck by visiting her [website](#).

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